



NATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON UGANDA'S EXAMINATIONS & ASSESSMENT SYSTEM: PRESENT & FUTURE PROSPECTS

Report by
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FOREWORD

The theme of assessment and exams is a hot topic in Uganda as evidenced by on-going plans and strategies developed by government institutions to reform Uganda's approach to exams and assessment, public debate (including in the media) and the number and variation of assessment activities currently undertaken in the country.

Assessments are key components of all education systems and play a critical role in students' learning journey. By measuring student achievement and skills' mastery, assessment helps students learn, teachers improve instruction, administrators decide how to allocate resources and policy makers to evaluate the efficacy of education programmes. Assessment in Uganda takes many forms from end of cycle public examinations (PLE, UCE and UACE), to sample-based standardised assessments (NAPE, EGRA), classroom-based assessment, tests created by private vendors, practice exams used by schools and household based assessment conducted by NGOs (Uwezo). Uganda's assessment system is a complex and interconnected web of all these forms of assessment, together with the actions of institutions and people involved directly and indirectly with the processes and results of assessment.

Before launching the National Symposium, we asked ourselves whether or not the current assessment system produces the results that Uganda needs and wants in terms of developing its citizens for current and future economic, social and political circumstances to match the national vision 2040 and the Sustainable Development Goals. The concerted effort of the various stakeholders who participated in the symposium resulted into clear and concrete actions that will strengthen our current system and address the priority areas that need to change for the better.

Our ultimate goal is to fulfil the great potential of Uganda's children. Getting assessment right is a key part to unlocking this.

Mr. Kakooza Alex
Permanent Secretary,
Ministry of Education and Sports

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The symposium explored how best to improve assessments and examinations in Uganda over the next five years. It paid specific attention to the growing concerns about both the lack of effective formative assessment and the summative assessments for which students get certification at primary, secondary and tertiary education levels. Through consultative and exploratory approaches, the symposium investigated the systemic shortfalls of the assessments and examinations practices/system in Uganda and identified potential system-wide solutions. From the symposium it emerged that national and international education experts and stakeholders find that the assessments and examinations system in Uganda has challenges that affect its capacity to contribute to quality learning outcomes and education. Some of the challenges identified ranged from ineffectual classroom practices, poor attitudes and command of pedagogy among some teachers, commercialisation of examinations, lack of expertise/interests in school level assessment, mistaking examinations for assessments and the endemic challenge of examination driven teaching practice.

As detailed in this report, delegates proposed a Ugandan solution to the assessment and examination challenges. Preferably one grown from an informed/collective understanding of current realities, the reform of teacher education, better curricula implementation, underpinning assessments with competences instead of syllabus coverage or grades. The symposium concluded that Uganda's assessment and examination system is a complex, interconnected and interdependent web of disparate types of evaluation, institutional and personal practices/ processes and results.

Reform must be holistic and systemic if the country is to transition to a system that produces results that can be used in developing a citizenry and economy aligned with the National Vision 2040 and sustainable development goals (SDGs). Hence, the need to focus on progressing to a system in which teaching primarily towards results in the current end-of-cycle schools examinations is changed to teaching that produces better learning outcomes both in and outside the classroom.

It was recommended that Uganda adopt a systemic reform approach that corresponds with the National Vision 2040 and its implementation strategies. From a systems perspective, reform and enhancement of Uganda's assessments and examinations is not a simple, easy and quick process. It must recognise and reflect: a multi-stakeholder perspective (including, for example, employers, parents, and other government agencies), understanding of the impact of systems interactions on relevant actors, expected outcomes, establishing the boundaries of the desired reforms, and appreciating that reform is a dynamic process. Thus, a six-step reform process was recommended in terms of: desired outcomes, bridging gaps between current and desired outcomes, evidence-based interventions, prioritising actions, implementing intended interventions, and evaluating interventions and cost, showing evidence of impact on gaps. For the reform to result in an assessments and examinations system that is fit for purpose in the next five years, the relevant policy implications and key priority activities associated with the six steps must be considered concurrently.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AFL	Assessment for Learning
CCTs	Centre Coordinating Tutors
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
DES	The Directorate of Education Standards
DFID	Depart for International Development (United Kingdom)
DIT	Directorate of Industrial Training
ECD	Early Childhood Education
EFA	Education for All
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
GPE	Global Partnership of Education
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
MoES	Ministry of Education and Sports
NAPE	National Assessment of Progress in Education
NCDC	National Curriculum Development Centres
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NTCs	National Teachers' Colleges
SADC	South African Development Community
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
TEVET	Technical Vocational Education and Training
TIET	Teacher Instructors' Education and Training
UBTEB	Uganda Business and Technical Examinations Board
UNEB	Uganda National Examinations Board
USSIA	Uganda Small Scale Industries Association
UVQF	Uganda Vocational Qualifications Framework



1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Symposium

Assessments and examinations remain a hot topic in education. This is evidenced by on-going government programmes aimed at reforming Uganda's approach to assessment and examinations. Assessment is a key component of all education systems and plays a critical role in a student's learning journey. By measuring students' achievements and skills mastery, assessment helps students learn, teachers improve instruction, and administrators to take decisions while policy-makers evaluate the efficacy of education programmes. Uganda's assessment system is a complex and interconnected web of assessment types, institutions and actors concerned with its processes and results. It is argued that Uganda's assessments and examinations system does not produce the requisite results to build a labour force fit to meet existing and future economic, social and political demands pertaining to the National Vision 2040 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

1.2 Main Objective

The overall aim of the symposium was to gather information and generate recommendations for improving assessments and examinations in Uganda.

1.3 Specific Objectives

The specific objectives are:

- i. To share and discuss existing policies, practices, evidence and experiences of the assessment system as it currently operates in Uganda.
- ii. To agree on focus areas to enhance the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and equity of the system in the next 5 years.

1.4 Scope of the Symposium

The symposium focused on assessment and examinations, paying specific attention to concerns regarding formative and summative assessments at primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education for which students are presented for certification. Therefore, the event focused on the schools currently examined by UNEB, Certificate and Diploma Awarding Institutions, Vocational/Technical institutions assessed by Uganda Business and Technical Examinations Board (UBTEB) and household-based assessments; without covering university assessments. However, since they are involved in training of the teachers that are later engaged in the schools, personalities from the universities (Particularly Faculties/ Departments of Education) participated in the symposium or constituted a pool of papers presenters/discussants who reflected on the quality of pre-service teacher training on assessment.

1.5 Purpose of this Report

The purpose of the report is to provide an overview of the discussions that took place during the Symposium and to document the critical challenges and proposed recommendations for action in order to strengthen Uganda's assessment and examination system over the next five years.



2. The Current State of the Assessment & Examination System in Uganda

Introductory remarks by Mr. Kakooza Alex - the Permanent Secretary (MoES)
Introduced by Dr Kedrace Turyagyenda - Director, Directorate of Education Standards (MoES)

The Permanent Secretary underscored the role of educational assessment as a key component in the students' learning journey. The speaker remarked that assessment is vital for supporting students' learning, improving teachers' instructional skills, appropriate resource allocation and evaluating the efficacy of education programmes at policy-levels. He further called upon the symposium to establish whether Uganda's current assessment and examination system produces the outcomes the country needs to develop its citizens. He urged participants to recommend clear and concrete actions to build on the strengths of the current system and address future priority needs areas.

2.1 Why the Focus on Assessment and Examinations?

Mr. Odongo Nokrach Dan - Executive Secretary (UNEB)
Ms. Grace K. Baguma - Director (NCDC)
Mr. Onesmus Oyesigye - Executive Secretary (UBTEB)
Dr. Kedrace R. Turyagyenda - Director (DES)
Dr. Jane Egau-Okou - Commissioner (TIET)
Moderated by Mr. Ed Barnett - Education Adviser (DFID)

The panel stated that public examinations are vital for the purposes of: certification, selection and placement of learners in appropriate educational courses, standardising educational achievements nationally, and accountability to various stakeholders. But, today examinations have been inappropriately used for instance in the ranking of the best schools and learners, rewarding and sanctioning of learners, teachers and head-teachers through promotions, transfers and demotions. Additionally, examinations greatly influence classroom practices towards teaching to the test. This arises from teachers' perceptions of what is likely to be examined or examinable. Thus, promoting continuous assessment at lower Primary level, through formative assessment would contribute to better learning outcomes. However, the growing public demand for end-of- cycle assessment limits the use of other forms of assessment. Despite being central to curricula implementation, the teacher today is insufficiently empowered to undertake an effective and comprehensive assessment of learners. Yet, assessment can be an indicator of learners' progress, teacher effectiveness and a means of involving parents in the education of their children. Hence, the need for reforms and a paradigm shift.

The Directorate of Education Standards (DES) is mandated to ensure continuous school improvement by setting, evaluating, monitoring and linking as part of their role in assessment. Therefore, DES has the scope to highlight the relationship between teaching and assessment as well as the need for applying quality indicators when evaluating the teaching process. Some of the quality indicators already in use include: lesson planning, the teaching and learning process, the learning environment, learner achievement, assessment and record-keeping. Regardless of the on-going evaluation practices, everyday teaching at school-levels is said to be majorly driven by public examinations. Thus, this is one way in which, the culture of teaching for examinations systemically affects the quality of education because it leaves teachers with little time for lesson plans or schemes of work.

Consequently, they fail to provide holistic education which focuses on the mind, body and heart, and all the aspects of the learner. This causes schools to spend a lot of time on tests in preparation for end-of-cycle examinations instead of teaching. This, in turn leads to over assessment with a negative impact on learning. The implication is that education becomes a process to pass examinations instead of achieving skills that can be used for future learning and employment. To demystify the idea that skills are difficult to assess, reference was made to how Uganda Business Technical Examinations Board (UBTEB) assesses skill based on institutional lectures and real life projects.

Challenges:

- Over-assessment due to high stakes' examinations.
- Examination driven classroom practice.
- Limited capacity and skills among people and institutions involved in assessment.
- Devaluing vocational education.

Recommendations:

- Capacity building for all institutions/individuals with roles in assessment so that they can focus on competences, generic skills and values.
- The system should shift its focus from a total focus on end-of-cycle examinations to include a focus on formative and continuous assessment.
- Explore the use of ICT in order to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of assessment.

2.2 Keynote Address: Uganda's Assessment & Examination System: Past, Present & Future

Presented by: Dr. Reg Allen - Director (CACSA Australia)

Moderated by Mr. Odongo Nokrach Dan - Executive Secretary (UNEB)

The keynote address noted that the current system shows long-term stability of more than 30 years. Despite the rise in numbers, increased participation, the range of technical interventions and curricula changes in more than three decades, the system has remained largely stable. The speaker emphasised that the most important function of an assessments and examinations system is to drive learning and ensure that valuable learning is promoted at the classroom level. However, much of the knowledge and skills learners need today and for their future has little or no role in the formal tests and examinations done in schools. Still, examination results currently provide the only information about students' performance that is reliable enough to use at the school level. And this is first available only after students have already completed seven years of school. Capacity-building and technical support by themselves (i.e. the "easy" tasks) are unlikely to bring the changes that are needed. The key lies in a Ugandan "solution," and one that originates from a shared understanding of current realities, agreement amongst stakeholders about changes and interventions that can be resourced, will be cost-effective and can be sustained. Although a long-term, complex and "hard" task, it is vital and worthwhile.

2.3 Roles & Responsibilities of Key Actors in Uganda Assessment System: Local Perspectives

Presented by: Prof. James Lutalo Bosa - Vice Chancellor (TEAM University)
Discussant: Dr. Yusuf K. Nsubuga - Former Director Basic and Secondary Education (MoES)
Moderated by Ms. Grace K. Baguma - Director (NCDC)

Examinations date as far back as the onset of industrial revolution. In the main, assessment refers to any procedure or activity that is designed to collect information about a learner's knowledge, attitudes and skills. However, the teacher being the facilitator of learning remains a frontline assessment actor. Besides teachers, other actors include: government through MoES whose role is to superintend over education activities, national examination boards charged with enhancing efficiency in the management of examinations for purposes of awarding credible certification, the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) with responsibility for developing and renewing curricula, development partners and private individuals or groups that produce commercial examinations for schools and NGOs such as Uwezo that conduct household-based assessment as an independent measure of learning.

2.4 Official Opening of the Symposium by Hon. Mrs. Janet K. Museveni - the Minister of Education & Sports

The Minister recognised that the symposium focused on a very important aspect of the education system. She emphasised that education is one of the pillars of poverty alleviation and Uganda's realisation of Vision 2040; and added that the government's commitment to the sector is identifiable through various programmes and investments. Since, the government's philosophy is that every child matters, can succeed and become a productive citizen, the curriculum remains a vital tool for ensuring that all children attain the desired competences through end-of-cycle examinations. However, there is growing concern that the common practice is flawed. Despite a general awareness of the numerous values of both school and national levels assessment results, stakeholders habitually concentrate on grades rather than what has been learnt and fall short of establishing whether what has been learnt is relevant for the future. Hence, educational assessment continues to be a topical issue informing public and media debate or discourses nationally. Therefore, the symposium should be the start of an objective and genuine journey of analysing and proposing solutions to the education system especially in assessment.

2.5 Thematic Panels: Emerging Perspectives on Impact and Effects of Uganda's Current Assessment & Examination System

Mr. Augustine Omare-Okurut - Former Secretary General (National Commission for UNESCO)
Assisted by the rapporteur, Ms. Atima Frances - Principal Inspector Secondary Standards (DES)

2.5.1 Classroom Assessment Practices

Ms. Grace K. Baguma - Director (NCDC)
Dr. Kedrace R. Turyagyenda - Director (DES)
Mrs. Regina Laboke - Head Teacher (Mount of Olives College)
Dr. Jane Egau-Okou - Commissioner (TIET)
Moderated by Mr. Patrick Kaboyo - Executive Director (COUPSTA)

Challenges:

- Current classroom practice is based on examinations-oriented teaching and learning.
- Classroom level assessment does not focus on all three domains of learning (i.e. cognitive, affective and psychomotor) or the development of competences.
- Classroom assessment practices continue to rely on commercialised resources.
- Some of the flaws of the existing classroom assessment practices either relate to or stem from ineffectual teacher training curricula.
- Inadequate continuous professional development (CPD) programmes for in-service teachers, unsatisfactory school levels support supervision/monitoring, large class sizes or low teacher-pupils ratio, absence of an assessment policy, ineffective transfer/application of research into practice as well as the lack of an education philosophy all affect classroom assessment.

Recommendations:

- Create an inclusive assessment system and refine teacher training curricula to improve classroom assessment practices.
- The re-mapping of Centre Coordinating Tutors (CCTs) and Schools Inspectors' coverage could pave the way to enhance school support and monitoring.
- Institutionalise reflective practice at school levels.
- Adopt an assessment policy to guide and quality assure assessment and examination practice.
- Focus on getting research into actual practice.

2.5.2 National Assessments & Examination

Dr. Pido Saverio - Deputy Secretary (UNEB)

Mr. Dan Kyagaba - Principal Examinations Officer (UNEB)

Ms. Rose Izizinga - Head Teacher (Kitante Hill Secondary School)

Mr. Olok Moses - Chairperson (District Inspectors of Schools)

Moderated by Mr. James Tweheyo, General Secretary (UNATU)

Challenges:

- There are gaps in learning outcomes at lower primary as thematic curriculum prescribes instruction in local area languages. Yet assessments and examinations for these classes are programmed in English, which is only taught as a subject at that level.
- In response to the high stakes examination pressures, teachers are spot teaching only with the aim of passing or achieving grades. Consequently, the curricula prescribed for specific levels are not fully covered.
- The commercialisation of examinations has increased the cost of education not only per child/household, but also for the school. Learners who cannot pay for these practice examination papers are excluded.
- Dependence on commercial examinations affects teachers' assessment and examinations setting skills.
- Parents are ill-informed about the curriculum and often do not know what is best or what they want for their children.
- Schools/Practitioners across all levels of education hardly draw lessons from UNEB and other examinations boards' reports about teacher and learner performances.

Recommendations:

- Commercial examinations serve a purpose and respond to a strong demand, the suggested eradication should be cautiously reviewed (for instance, they introduce teachers to examinations setting and marking practise). Instead of condemning commercial examinations, it would be useful to fully understand how best they can add value and be regulated.
- Understand the full cost implications of current assessment and examination practice.
- Address teacher assessment skills through teacher training and CPDs that build teachers' capacity for assessment and prepares them to set and mark examinations.
- NCDC to establish benchmarks for expected outcomes and competencies so as to realign these with relevant assessment frameworks.
- Introduce assessment programmes that measure all subjects and learner ability levels.
- Increase parents' awareness about assessment so that they can make informed learning choices for their children.
- Implement strategies to enable practitioners to increase the use of UNEB and other examinations boards' reports from school to national levels.
- Use the language of instruction in assessment to reduce the discrepancies in learner achievements currently resulting from the two-language model, i.e. language of instruction vs. the language of assessment at lower primary level (P1 to P3).

2.5.3 Independent Assessments

Dr. Mary Goretti Nakabugo - Country Lead (Twaweza/Uwezo)

Dr. Robinah Kyeyune - Literacy Advisor, USAID/Uganda School Health and Reading Program (RTI)

Ms. Katie Pollman - Research Manager, Literacy Laboratory Project (Mango Tree)

Moderated by Dr. Byakutaga Beatrice - Chairperson, Principals' Association of Uganda (MoES)

Challenges:

- Teachers are often not fully aware of the actual level of the literacy and numeracy of their students.
- Despite recognising the differences between assessment and teaching, teachers are not keen on assessing their learners because they consider it time consuming and demanding.
- Teachers do not know how to use assessment reports for improving their teaching practice.

Recommendations:

- Concentrate assessment on competences and not syllabus coverage or attainment of grades only.
- Identify the hidden curriculum¹ to ensure that all learners' needs and competencies gaps are systematically addressed (at school level so that teaching and learning progresses accordingly).
- Leave scope for household-based one on one assessments of learners' key competences and application of school knowledge to the world outside school.
- Harmonise school-based assessment with public examinations to create uniformity in the system and its outcomes.
- Continue sensitising stakeholders on the benefits of assessment and how best it can be done as a way of improving their capacity and roles to conduct thorough assessment.

2.5.4 Assessment of Skills

Dr. Wilfred Nahamya - Deputy Executive Secretary (UBTEB)

Ms. Ethel Kyobe - Director (DIT)

Mr. Kawule Jooga - Head of Membership Department (USSIA)

Moderated by Dr. Oonyu Joseph - Associate Professor (Makerere University)

Challenges:

- Resource constraints and untimely delivery of materials, inadequate funds and the fast-changing nature of the relevant skills affect delivery and assessment.
- There are few trained and fewer re-skilled instructors, which affects curriculum delivery.
- The subjective nature of continuous assessment constrains assessors especially as the candidate-assessor ratio remains high.
- Despite attaining high class qualifications, the students' practice once in the workplace often does not reflect their high qualifications (forcing companies to train staff).

¹ Hidden Curriculum refers to the unwritten, unofficial, and often unintended lessons, values, and perspectives that students learn in school.

- There is limited assessment-related collaborations or knowledge exchange among institutions, e.g. the Uganda Small Scale Industries Association (USSIA) assessments are not linked to the curriculum.

Recommendations:

- Set up a Sector Skills Council to coordinate training, industry, assessment and certification of skills.
- In the process of re-skilling of instructors and assessors, liaise and work with the private sector and institutions.
- Normalise the retraining of qualified students when they join the private sector.
- Focus assessments to include both soft or 21st century skills as well as hard skills.
- Increase instructors and assessors' awareness of trends in the industries so that they can assess appropriately.
- Introduce a policy to encourage trainers to do some CPDs through industry participation every two years.
- Training programmes should introduce compulsory students or industrial training placement policy for employers as a means of attracting practitioners to relevant institutions.
- Involve the private sector in assessment and curriculum development.



3. The Assessment Reform Process

3.1 Keynote Address: Challenges and Opportunities in Assessment Reform: The Zambian Experience

Dr. Michael M. Chilala - Director (Examinations Council of Zambia)

Moderated by Dr. Cleophus Mugenyi - Commissioner, Teacher Education Standard (DES)

The presentation clarified that assessment promotes learning, the resources and principles of teaching and learning and it is a means of determining whether learning has occurred. Assessors are therefore obligated to report to learners, school systems, governments, professional bodies and other stakeholders. There are effectively three curricula: one that is designed, a second that is taught and a third that is learnt. It is essential to recognise these differences and to think what challenge this represents and the role that assessment plays in creating the variation. The paper drew on the Zambian education reforms to provide Uganda with a point of reference.

The key education principle adopted by Zambia was that of an outcomes-based education across all levels through to teacher education. This focused on giving learners practical experiences during the teaching and learning processes for skills development. According to this principle, quality education is measured based on: the inputs invested into the system; what happens within the system; and the outcomes of the system.

The quality of general and teacher education is measured from all three perspectives. However, the lessons for Uganda are that: the curriculum should allow learners the flexibility to learn what is relevant locally; it should be about life-long learning; use learning as a tool for meeting individual learner and societal needs; and it should promote reflective learning and the passing on of cultural heritage, values, traditions, language, knowledge and skills across generations.

Furthermore, Uganda could learn from Zambia's introduction of a national teacher education curriculum with a focus on improving the qualities of graduate teachers and enforcing of a standardised entry requirements policy. Moreover, integrating school-based assessments marks with end-of-cycle examination final grades, provides opportunities for assessing subjects that are considered non-examinable. On another level, setting clear guidelines for supervision and monitoring, would perfect the assessment of the learners' affective and psychomotor domains to complement cognitive outcomes. This would enable the system to provide feedback (after national examinations) that show schools exactly how learning is progressing along the lines of the national curriculum.

3.2 Thematic Panels: The Assessment Reform Process

Mr. Augustine Omare-Okurut - Former Secretary General (National Commission for UNESCO)
Assisted by the rapporteur, Ms. Atima Frances - Principal Inspector Secondary Standards (DES)

3.2.1 Why Teachers Do What They Do – Teacher Practices

Assoc. Prof. Joyce Ayikoru Asimwe - Dean Faculty of Education (Kyambogo University)
Dr. Charles W. Masaba - Director School of Postgraduate Studies & Research (St. Lawrence University)
Mr. Ssengendo David - Head Teacher/Chairman UPSHA (Buganda Road Primary School)
Moderated by Prof. Basheka C. Benon - Vice Chancellor (UTAMU)

Challenges:

- The disparities in teacher training/education programmes and practices affects teacher practices.
- During practice and training, teacher trainees often lack professional support in the schools where they are placed.
- The environments in which teachers operate influence their practice. Negative environmental influences often affect the competences and commitment of some teachers and head-teachers.
- The large class sizes contribute to some of the problems affecting teacher practices.
- Despite the rigid policies, the inspection system is weak.
- There is non-adherence to the code of conduct and monitoring by the School Management Committee (SMC). This weakens accountability.

Recommendations:

- Harmonise teacher training programmes, institutionalise CPDs, and implement the teacher scheme of service to motivate teachers to advance their competences and improve their practice.
- Re-orient head-teachers on curriculum implementation to improve their abilities to provide pedagogical support at school levels.
- Establish induction and mentorship system as part of teacher development for entry-level teachers and head-teachers to improve their capacity to reshape their practice.
- Introduce a teacher motivation framework linked to contractual arrangements for teachers' employment to positively influence their practice.

3.2.2 Alternatives to High-stakes Examinations as Remediation for Teaching to the Test

Dr. Pido Saverio - Deputy Executive Secretary (UNEB)
Mr. James Tweheyo - General Secretary (UNATU)
Moderated by Dr. Mary Goretti Nakabugo - Country Lead (Twaweza/Uwezo)

Challenges:

- There are no standardised assessment procedures to regulate activities.
- The school-level assessments are not uniform among schools.

- Teachers are not fully competent to conduct assessments and report on them.
- School examinations are not considered a reliable measure of students' learning outcomes.
- Lack of teacher motivation, the low teacher- student ratios and large class sizes.
- These challenges impact on the teaching and learning process and practices, and the cost of monitoring at school levels. As result, teachers are compelled to compile past UNEB question papers and use them as teaching resources/materials instead of relying on their schemes of work and lesson plans.

Recommendations:

- Standardise assessment tools and guidelines.
- Introduce disciplinary measures for teachers and schools that violate assessment guidelines.
- Implement a comprehensive teacher training programme and measures for reducing teacher workload to allow them more space to set and mark their own school examinations. This would reduce teachers' reliance on external examinations.
- Establish ways of improving teacher assessment.

3.2.3 Integrating Assessment of 21st Century Skills in Uganda's Education System

Dr. Saint Kizito Omala - Senior Statistician (UNEB)

Mr. Augustine Omare-Okurut - Former Secretary General (National Commission for UNESCO)

Mr. Gideon Badagawa - Executive Director (Private Sector Foundation Uganda)

Moderated by Ms. Rose Izizinga - Head Teacher (Kitante Hill Secondary School)

Challenges:

- The assessment system emphasises pen and paper examinations instead of soft and 21st century skills.
- There is a mismatch between curriculum and work-place skills demands.
- The Teacher Instructors' Education and Training (TIET) programme, Primary and Secondary curricula neither articulate nor favour development of 21st century skills.
- The subjectivity of observations as a tool for measuring skills affects its validity unlike self-reporting of soft-skills.
- School-based learning does not foster 21st century skills unlike practise-based learning.
- Attachments and internships are not sufficiently supporting learning since fewer industries are willing to take on students.
- Many parents are not aware of their roles in developing their children's soft skills and those who are aware choose to be passive.

Recommendations:

- Develop tools for measuring 21st century or soft skills to re-orient the system to recognise low grade learners and their final assessment results.
- Review curricula and clarify the skills to be developed or identify strategies for developing those skills to promote assessment for learning as well as the development of the 21st century skills.

- Review and include 21st century skills in UNEB test designs to encourage a move to a practice-project-based learning and assessment and the application of learner-centred methodologies across all levels (e.g. school, TIET, DES).
- Introduce a law prescribing that companies/industries accept learners for attachment/training (with incentives/concessions from the MoES).
- Schools could begin sensitizing and working with parents to increase their understanding of their roles in nurturing soft skills development in their children from an early age so that these skills evolve naturally with the children's development.

3.2.4 Using Learning Outcomes Data to Drive Change

Mr. Odongo Nokrach Dan - Executive Secretary (UNEB)

Ms. Ashleigh Morrell - Senior Policy and Training Associate (Poverty Action Lab)

Mr. Kibedi A. Nkuutu - Coordinator Teacher, Training and Education Project (MoES)

Ms. Angela Kyagaba - Senior Curriculum Specialist (NCDC)

Moderated by Dr. Kedrace R. Turyagyenda - Director (DES)

Challenges:

- Some challenges stem from the schools' attitude towards their learners.
- Schools are known to focus more on the students who are likely to attain the required grades while leaving behind those that are low achievers.
- Teachers lack clear guidance on how to conduct formative assessment.

Recommendations:

- UNEB should fully implement the Value Added approach to monitoring school effectiveness. This needs to be accompanied by careful sensitisation of parents, schools and the media. This approach would allow the public to better understand how schools develop their learner over time by comparing their ability on entry to the school and their final grades on exit.
- Implement teacher sensitisation (especially for public school teachers) on the role of formative assessments in promoting learning/change.
- Regularly revisit the curricula to enrich the guidance on how teachers should conduct formative assessment.
- In the process of introducing formative and continuous assessment, evaluate how assessment data improves learning.
- Introduce active teaching pedagogies at National Teachers' Colleges levels, to introduce trainee teachers to active teaching and prepare them to apply learner-centred methods during their practice.
- Adopt one-on-one testing of learners using tools that reflect the Uwezo model or regrouping according to test performance to disaggregate groups of learners based on identified learning needs (Teaching at the Right Level).

3.3 Keynote Concluding Remarks on: Refocusing and Revitalising Uganda's National Assessment System

Presented by Prof. John C. Munene - Director, Ph.D. Programme (Makerere University Business School)

Discussant: Dr. Reg Allen - Director (CACSA Australia)

Moderated by Mr. Ed Barnett, Education Adviser (DFID)

The symposium concluded that the process of refocusing and revitalising Uganda's National Assessment System would benefit from emerging institutional patterns, trends and the contribution of the key assessment stakeholders such as UNEB, NCDC, DES and TIET. However, these actors would also need the collaboration and buy-in from the institutions that have so far been active in assessment, including: The Global Partnership of Education (GPE), UNEB for Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA), and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) e.g. Uwezo for basic literacy and numeracy.

The new system could be designed to constantly develop, support and monitor and evaluate classroom teachers and the potentials of schools to produce practice-based examinations. On a cautionary note, the roles commercial test vendors play in the education sector cannot be dismissed. Instead, their contribution to the development of teachers' examinations setting and marking skills should be studied and reflected on.

Regarding the system-wide reform being sought, any change strategies to be adopted must be informed by research and fully coordinated by respective stakeholders. Therefore, all the relevant instruments of national assessment and examinations that make part of this system would have to be drawn into the reform debate. From a systems perspective, therefore before any concrete steps can be taken the intended reform should pay attention to the following:

- The education sector/system involve multiple participants (actors), with varying roles, responsibilities and interests.
- How the intra-systemic interactions would impact on actors and their roles.
- What are the implications of the intended reform on how the system performs and the outcomes it generates.
- Systems are nested or neighbored – so set rigorous boundaries of influences.
- A system is dynamic and often reaches beyond its immediate spheres of control, influences and concern (i.e. more than its parts).

3.4 Key Recommendations & Identified Steps for Examinations Reform in the Next 5 Years

Mr. Odongo Nokrach Dan - Executive Secretary (UNEB)

Ms. Grace K. Baguma - Director (NCDC)

Mr. Onesmus Oyesigye - Executive Secretary (UBTEB)

Dr. Kedrace R. Turyagyenda - Director (DES)

Dr. Jane Egau-Okou - Commissioner (TIET)

Moderated by Dr. Yusuf K. Nsubuga - Former Director Basic and Secondary Education (MoES)

Based on all the perspectives presented earlier, a stakeholder-driven adaptive approach from implementing the reform was recommended according to the following steps:

- Step One:** Agree on desired outcomes for the new system
- Step Two:** Identify the gaps between current and desired outcomes
- Step Three:** Develop evidence-based interventions strategies for reducing said gaps;
- Step Four:** Prioritise the gaps to be addressed
- Step Five:** Implement selected reform interventions
- Step Six:** Evaluate interventions in terms of cost and evidence of impact on gaps (efficiency and effectiveness).

According to the six steps above, there are clear policy implications of the key priorities for assessment and examinations reform over the next 5 years.

Going forward, the desired reform and its impact would include:

- An assessment system that is fit for purpose.
- A National Assessment Policy.
- Educators with improved capacity to undertake essential skills assessment.
- Using systems thinking or approach(es) in to strengthen Uganda's approach to assessment.
- An outcome focused assessment system.
- Setting up and equipping practical skills assessment centres.
- Introducing Value Added measures to monitor school effectiveness.
- Limiting isolated actions by embracing and strengthening relevant systemic collaborations, interactions and/or linkages.
- Assessment of and for learning and continuous assessment.
- Constitute a National Policy taskforce to oversee and guide assessment and examination reform for the next 5 years. The same body should remain central in actualising the recommended six steps.



Appendices

Appendix 1: List of Participants

Ass. Prof. Aaron Wanyama, Deputy in Charge of Academics, Kyambogo University
Ms. Agola Florence, Principal Examinations Officer (TD Primary), UNEB
Dr. Akim Okuni, Country Director , Aga Khan Foundation
Mr. Alex Kakooza, Permanent Secretary, MoES
Ms. Angela Kyagaba, Senior Curriculum Specialist , NCDC/MoES
Prof. Anthony Mugagga Muwagga, Deputy Principle, Makerere University, College of Education and External Studies
Mr. Aribo Justus, Deputy Principal UCC Kabale, UBTEB
Ms. Ashleigh Morrell, Senior Policy and Training Associate, Poverty Action Lab
Ms. Atima Frances, Principal Inspector Secondary Standards, DES
Ms. Audrine Nabateregga, Public Relations Officer, MoES
Mr. Augustine Omare Okurut, Former Secretary General, UNATCOM
Ms. Ayo Jolly M., DEP. M&E Manager, Educate!
Mr. Balyogera Patrick, Ag Commissioner Basic Education Standards, MoES
Mrs. Barbara Radelli, Teacher training expert, BTC
Prof. Basheka C. Benon, Vice Chancellor, UTAMU
Ms. Benedeta Karuhanga, Deputy Director, NCDC/MoES
Mr. Benjamin Mulinda, Technical Expert, LIZ-SOGA
Dr. Betty Nalukenge, Research officer, UNEB
Mr. Byakatonda Patrick, PEO/BE, BTOBA
Dr. Byakutaga Beatrice, Chairperson, Principals' Association of Uganda, MoES
Ms. Capuc Florence Obong, Senior Research Officer, UNEB
Dr. Charles W. Masaba, Director School of Postgraduate Studies & Research, St. Lawrence Univeristy
Dr. Cleophus Mugenyi, Commissioner in Charge of Teacher Education Standards, DES
Ms. Consilous Rwanyonga, Senior Education Specialist, LARA/RTI
Mr. Dan Kyagaba, Principal Examinations Officer, UNEB
Dr. Daniel Nkaada, Commissioner, Basic Education, MoES
Dr. David Kabugo, Representing the Principal, Makerere University, College of Education and External Studies
Dr. Derek Nkata, Deputy Chief of Party, SHRP/RTI
Ms. Diana Sekaggya, Education specialist, World Bank
Ms. Dolorence Naswa Were, Executive Director, Uganda Society for Disabled Children
Mrs. Ebal Joyce, Principal Examinations Officer (TD Secondary), UNEB
Mr. Ed Barnett, Education Adviser, DFID
Ms. Elizabeth Ninan, Senior Education Specialist, World Bank
Ms. Emily Cupito, Associate Director of policy, J-PAL
Ms. Emily Ikiriza, School Team, British Council
Ms. Enid Kamwine, HOD Research, NCDC/MoES
Ms. Ethel Kyobe, Director, Directorate of Industrial Training
Ms. Eva Namukwaya, Country Director , STIR Uganda
Mr. Filbert Baguma, Deputy General Secretary, UNATU
Ms. Florence Sembatya, School Team, British Council
Mr. Fred Galiwango, HOD STEPU, NCDC/MoES
Mr. Gabriel Obbo–Katandi, Curriculum Specialist, NCDC/MoES
Ms. Generous Kazinda, HOD of Special Needs, NCDC/MoES
Mr. George Mutabaazi, Chairperson ULGA, ULGA/Lwengo District
Mr. Gideon Badagawa, Executive Director, Private Sector Foundation Uganda

Ms. Goretti Kiiza Mbabazi, M&E Specialist , QED
 Ms. Grace K. Baguma, Director, NCDC/MoES
 Mr. Grandfield Omonda Oryono, CAO, Moyo District
 Mr. Ibrahim Bigabwa, Assistant Commissioner-Pre-primary Education, MoES
 Ms. Irene Agudu Muiri, Programme Officer, DFID
 Prof. John C. Munene, Speaker, MUBS
 Prof. James Lutalo-Bosa, Vice Chancellor, Team University
 Mr. James Tweheyo, General Secretary, UNATU, UNATU
 Dr. Jane Egau, Commissioner, TIET, MoES
 Mr. John Mary Vianney, Principal, LGIHE
 Ass. Prof. Joyce Ayikoru, Dean Education, Kyambogo University
 Dr. Julius Atuhurra, Senior Program Officer, Twaweza East Africa
 Mr. Jumanyol Kennedy, Examinations Officer, UNEB
 Mr. Kasadha Baker, Chairperson DEOs East, MoES
 Ms. Katharina Anton-Erxleben, M&E Fellow, USAID/Uganda
 Ms. Katie Pollman, Research Manager Literacy Laboratory Project, MANGO TREE
 Mr. Kawule Jooga, HEAD - Membership Development, USSIA
 Mr. Kay Leherr, Education specialist, USAID
 Mr. Kayabuki T. George, Senior Inspector ECD Standards, MoES
 Mr. Kazeera Jackson, Deputy Secretary (Secondary), UNEB
 Mr. Kibedi A. Nkuutu, Teacher Training and Education, MoES
 Mr. Kibeti Chrysostom, Deputy Secretary (Primary), UNEB
 Ms. Kwikiriza Jane Kakama, PEO/GUC, MoES
 Ms. Laboke Regina, Head Teacher, Mount of Olives College
 Ms. Laura Brown, Chief Technical Officer, PEAS
 Mr. Lubwama Joseph, Ag Principal basic Education Standards, MoES
 Fr. Lucian Arinaitwe, Executive Secretary Education, Uganda Catholic Secretariat
 Mr. Lwanga Fred, Senior Inspector Social Studies, MoES
 Mr. Maayan Frenkel, Educate!
 Mr. Mafabi Peter, Curriculum specialist, NCDC
 Ms. Makweta Justine, Research Assistant, MOFEPD
 Mr. Mali Michael, DEO Moyo District, MoES
 Dr. Mary Goretti Nakabugo, Director, Uwezo
 Ms. Mary Mutende, School Team, British Council
 Dr. Mary Ocheng, Specialist Curriculum and Evaluation, East African School of Higher Education Studies and Development, Makerere University
 Mr. Mauro Giacomazzi, Technical Advisor, LGIHE
 Dr. Micheal M. Chilala, CEO, Examinations Council of Zambia
 Dr. Moses Twesigye-omwe, Chair Principals UTCs, Chair Principals UTCs
 Mr. Muganga Christopher, Curriculum specialist, NCDC
 Mr. Muhindo Jimmy, Technical Director, SIPRO Educational Services Ltd
 Mr. Muhumuza Apolo, Senior Inspector Sciences, MoES
 Mr. Mukwasibwe Silver, Principal Technical College Bushenyi, UBTEB
 Mr. Musazi Andrew, Principal Technical College Mbale, UBTEB
 Mr. Nabendra Dahal, Chief Education, UNICEF
 Dr. Nansubuga Florence, Senior Lecturer, Makerere University, Institute of Psychology
 Ms. Naome Atako Muhwezi, Education Advisor, Irish Aid
 Mr. Ngobi Joseph, Senior Communication Officer, MoES
 Ms. Ntete Mary Gunteese, PEO/GCC, MoES
 Rev. Ocheng Vincent, Chairperson DEOs North, MoES

Mr. Odongo Nokrach Dan, Executive Secretary, UNEB
 Mr. Ogwang Samuel George, Principal Research Officer, UNEB
 Mr. Okiror Andrew Henry, MoES
 Ms. Okwong Okoch Patrick, Lecturer/Biology Assessment, Makerere University
 Mr. Olok Moses, Chairman for Uganda National Inspectors' Association, DIS representative
 Mr. Omona Frank, Design and training coordinator, Educate!
 Mr. Onesmus Oyesigye, Executive Secretary, UBTEB
 Dr. Oonyu Joseph, Assistant Professor, Makerere University
 Hon. Opolot Jacob R., Vice Chairperson Education and Sport, Parliament of Uganda
 Prof. Opuda-Asibo John, Executive Director, National Council for Higher Education
 Mr. Patrick Kaboyo, Executive Director, Coalition of Uganda Private Schools Teachers Association (COUPSTA)
 Mr. Paul Kyalimpa, Principal Researcher, UBTEB
 Pr. Peter Bamwitirebye, Acting Chairperson DEOs West, MoES
 Ms. Rachel Jordon, M&E, USAID/Uganda School Health and Reading Program
 Dr. Reg Allen, Director, CACSA
 Ms. Rehemah Nabacwa, Monitoring and Evaluation Manager, USAID/Uganda School Health and Reading Program
 Dr. Robinah Kyeyune, Literacy Advisor, USAID/Uganda School Health and Reading Program
 Dr. Robinson Nsumba-Lyazi, Director, Basic and Secondary Education, MoES
 Ms. Rose Izizinga, Head Teacher, Kitante Hill
 Ms. Rosemary Rugamba-Rwanyange, Education specialist, UNICEF
 Ms. Rosie Agoi, Secretary General, Uganda National Commission for UNESCO
 Ms. Saeeda Prew, Chief of Party, SHRP/RTI
 Dr. Saint Kizito Omala, Senior Statistician, UNEB
 Mr. Sanctus Cale, HOD of Assessment, NCDC/MoES
 Ms. Santa Ojok, Principal Education Officer-Primary Education, MoES
 Dr. Saverio Pido, Deputy Secretary (Research and Data), UNEB
 Mr. Ssenabulya Evans, Director, SIPRO Educational Services Ltd
 Mr. Ssengendo David, Head Teacher/Chairman UPSHA, Buganda Road PS
 Ms. Teddy Mutoni, Communication Officer, LGIHE
 Mr. Tony Mukasa Lusambu, Assistant Commissioner Primary Education, MoES/Primary Education
 Mr. Tumuhimbise Zadock, UNATU national Chairperson, UNATU
 Dr. Turyagyenda R. Kedrace, Director DES, MoES
 Mr. Turyahikayo Benjamin, Chairperson, Principal's Association of Uganda/Principal Kabale NTC, MoES
 Mr. Turyatamba James, Principal Examinations Officer (Exams Management), UNEB
 Mr. Tusiime Stephen, Chairperson of UCC Principals, UBTEB
 Mr. Vincent Dusabe, HOD Pre-primary & Primary, NCDC/MoES
 Prof. Vinansius Baryamureeba, Chair Board of Trustee, UTAMU
 Mr. Walter Odiya, Chairman Committee for Technical and Vocational Examinations, UBTEB
 Mr. Wilber Wanyama, Senior Education Officer, TIET
 Dr. Wilfred Nahamya, Deputy ES, UBTEB
 Dr. Yusuf K. Nsubuga, Former Director Basic and Secondary Education, MoES

Appendix 2: Media Coverage

Stakeholders to Discuss Evolution of Uganda' Assessment, Examination System

by Kim Aine, Posted on June 5, 2017 - **The Uganda Today**



The Ministry of Education and Sports, in partnership with the UK Department for International Development (DFID), has organized a Symposium on assessment and examinations in Uganda. The symposium, under the theme *“Evolution of Uganda’s Assessment and Examinations System: Current and Future Prospects”*, will aim at gathering views and information that would assist in generating recommendations for improved reforms in the assessment and examinations of Uganda. Janet K. Museveni, the Minister of Education and Sports, is expected to officially open the symposium in the presence of Ministry officials and key education stakeholders for a two day dialogue with the objective to share and discuss existing policies, practice, evidence and experience in the current assessment and examination system. Stakeholders will also agree on focus areas in order to enhance the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and equity of the system in the next 5 years. The theme of assessment and examination is a hot topic in Uganda. Assessments are key components of our education system and play a critical role in the students’ learning. It is argued from different perspectives that the current assessment and examination system is not fully responding to Uganda’s needs in terms of developing its citizens for the current and future economic, social and political circumstances to match the national vision 2040 and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Hence, the need to focus on the improvement of assessment and examination system to limit the practice of teaching only to pass exams and to foster better learning outcomes in and outside the classroom. The scope of the symposium, according to officials, is limited to assessment and examinations both formative and summative at primary, secondary school levels and other training institutions that present candidates for national examinations for award of diploma and certificate. Therefore, the focus is on schools currently examined by UNEB, Certificate and Diploma Awarding Institutions, Vocational/Technical institutions assessed by Uganda Business and Technical Examinations Board and household based assessment and exams. The stakeholders will elaborate a list of challenges that need to be addressed in order to improve the system. Moreover, the dialogue shall generate a common understanding of the roles that different institutions, agencies and organisations need to undertake in order for a reform effort to succeed; what needs to be done, how it could be done and who would take the lead to achieve the desired assessment and examinations reform.

Janet Museveni Wants Solutions to Declining Ranking of Uganda's Education

by Paul Ampurire, Posted on June 7, 2017 - **Chimp Reports**



The Minister of Education and First Lady, Janet Museveni has asked experts in the education sector to come up with solutions that will address the inefficiencies in the quality of learning. She said that this has widened and deprived Ugandans of the standard that the country once boasted of in the entire East African region. Janet Museveni largely attributed the inadequate skills among Uganda's graduates to the assessment and examination system which she said is more focused on grading instead of the content being taught in schools. The Minister was speaking on Tuesday while opening a two day symposium on the state of assessment and examinations in Uganda's education system, held at Royal Suites in Kampala. "Uganda has been a hub for quality education in Africa. Most Presidents of the countries in East and Central Africa studied in Uganda." "However, there has been disturbing research reports of late rating the proficiency of Ugandan learners to be lower than desired and the competence, attitude and performance of our graduate rated lower than regional counterparts," she noted, asking that the trend be reversed. She worried that the public is increasingly judging the education performance entirely on examination results, not whether learners are being equipped with the skills required in the world of work. "If all children are to acquire quality education, then the entire teaching and learning process has to be effectively handled," she said. According to the First Lady, the curriculum should be right and able to spell out the desired competencies learners should achieve and teachers must have the capacity to interpret the curriculum. This however she says doesn't seem to be the practice both at the end of the cycle assessment and examinations.

The symposium attracted educationists, policy makers, NGOs, civil society, representatives from private institutions of learning, officials from examination bodies among others. Most of the participants submitted that while Uganda's has made strides in increasing access to education, the teaching still relies on the colonial approach and does little to address current demands. Dr. Reg Allen, the Director of CACSA Australia who delivered a keynote address pointed out that the central purpose of assessment should be to influence learning to ensure students get the skills that will facilitate their careers. "Examination results such as those of PLE, UCE and UACE are not enough to understand the performance of a student. We need valid information on students outcomes in terms of outputs and outcomes not simply inputs and processes," Dr. Reg said. He said there is evidence of a significant mismatch between what students are expected to learn and what the Ugandan employers see as the needed competencies, adding that this could frustrate the nation's development agenda.

Some have previously proposed that government invests more in technical and vocational training which seems to impart more practical skills compared to the secondary and university models. This could explain why people with technical and vocational training are much more employable compared to university graduates. Onesmus Oyesigye, the Executive Secretary for UBTEB the examinations body for technical institutions told Chimp Reports that government should involve the private sectors in future assessment of learners. “We have been told oftenly that the graduates coming out of institutions are not the ones the working environment wants. Therefore like we have done as UBTEB, let the private sector for whom we train should know what we assess and advise us on the skills to be given priority,” Oyesigye said.

Educationists ‘Blame’ Teachers Over Assessment of Learners

by Yudaya Nangonzi, June 12, 2017 - **The Observer**

Education minister Hon. Mrs. Janet Museveni has implored experts to identify gaps that are slowly but surely widening and depriving the country of quality education in the region. While opening a two-day education symposium at Royal Suites in Bugolobi last week, Ms Museveni said Uganda has been a regional hub for quality education. She insisted most heads of state in East and Central Africa had studied in Uganda. “There has been disturbing research reports of late rating the proficiency of Ugandan learners and graduates to be lower than desired...,” Mrs. Museveni said. “What could be the cause of this occurrence? How has our assessment and examination system contributed to this? How can the situation be reversed so that Uganda regains its former glory in education provision?” Museveni said if all learners are to acquire quality education, then the entire teaching and learning process has to be effectively handled by teachers interpreting the desired competences for learners at every level. “At the moment, this does not seem to be the practise because school owners and teachers concentrate on what, in their opinion, is testable and ignore the prescribed curriculum and vital areas of skills, values and attitudes,” she said.



The minister’s remarks followed papers presented by senior educationists, who primarily blamed teachers for failing to assess and examine learners as stipulated in the curriculum. Themed Evolution of Uganda’s assessment and examinations system: Current and future prospects, the symposium was organised by the ministry of education in partnership with the UK Department for International Development (DFID).

TEACHERS TO BLAME

The minister’s remarks were echoed by presenters such as Dr. Yusuf Nsubuga, the former director, Basic and Secondary Education, at the ministry. Dr Nsubuga said traditional methods of assessment by teachers through random tests are no longer tenable. “Whereas our assessment system is guilty and should be charged for stifling innovation and creativity, I want to put it to teachers that they are responsible for neglecting these aspects of learning,” Dr. Nsubuga said. “Unless Ugandan teachers generously improve on their responsibility and accountability, are creative and critical thinkers, whatever reforms on the curriculum will not succeed.” According to Prof A.J. Lutalo-Bosa, the vice chancellor, TEAM University, much as some teachers especially in urban centres claim to conduct regular, weekly or fortnightly tests in schools, they lack validity and reliability as they leave no guidance to learners after they are marked. He told The Observer that the situation is no better at universities and other tertiary institutions where individuals are recruited into lectureship simply because they are holders of a Master’s or PhD qualification. “If the significance of assessment in the learning process is to be upheld, then the recruitment of individuals should take into account the position of pedagogical and assessment skills of the applicants,” Dr. Lutalo-Bosa said. He said though the privatization of education policy in Uganda has increased access to education, it has expanded the hiring of unqualified teachers.

“There are more private institutions at all levels; therefore, the challenges associated with assessment might have multiplied several fold,” he said. For some time, private individuals or groups have replaced teacher’s roles by setting up assessment units which produce examinations and sell them to schools. This, Lutalo-Bosa says, is an unfortunate approach because there is no evidence that those who run these units have competences in designing test items and skills in assessment. “So, learners are exposed to unprofessionally set tests. The other bad aspect of this is that teachers in those schools end up not making any effort to gain competences in test item writing which would ultimately make them better teachers,” he said. Grace Baguma, the director of the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC), agrees with Dr. Lutalo-Bosa that teachers are currently preparing learners to pass exams, something that has compromised the quality of education. “Assessment today has a lot of gaps in that teaching has shifted from what we know professionally to giving tests and exams. We are saying this thing is wrong because children are supposed to learn and acquire competences so that they can manifest them when they go out,” Baguma said. She added that continuous review of the curriculum will also not help much to improve quality since NCDC attempts to guide teachers on how to assess learners but this has not been followed. “What we need is to strengthen that part on assessment so that teachers are able to bring out exactly what is in the curriculum. Reviewing the curriculum is a very expensive venture which ideally should be done between five and 10 years,” she said.

CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT POLICY

As public examinations continue to influence what goes on in the classroom, Dan Odongo, the executive secretary at Uganda National Examinations Board, advises that a continuous assessment policy will guide various sections of the education system. “UNEB is already implementing some element of continuous assessment at lower secondary level for vocational subjects but for primary schools, a lot of work has been done by UNEB and what we are waiting for is a policy framework from government within which we are going to operate,” Odongo said. According to Dr. Jane Egau, the commissioner of Teacher Instruction, Education and Training (TIET), the policy can go a long way in holding teachers accountable for failing to execute their duties. “I want to agree that teachers are no longer playing their part. They are well trained but when they go to the field, they find people who make for them schemes, lesson plans and examinations,” Egau said. “These people have taken away the role of a teacher and made them look very lazy and forgetting the skills of teaching.” Dr. Egau says a professional teacher is supposed to teach, assess learners and set exams because he/she knows better how far the syllabus has been covered and weaknesses and strengths for each learner. She urges the ministry to ban all individuals and organisations selling teaching and assessment materials in schools. “I don’t want to see my teachers being made redundant yet they have been taught what to do. A teacher who cannot assess learners effectively is supposed to be at home but not in a class,” she said.

EXTERNAL VIEW ON ASSESSMENT

Meanwhile, in his keynote address, Dr. Reg Allen, an assessment expert and the director, Curriculum Assessment and Certification Systems Architects (CACSA), based in Australia, summarised Uganda’s assessment and examination system as complex and interconnected. “Uganda’s assessment shows a long-term stability; in some of its essential features it has changed little over the last thirty years, even given the large increase in numbers of learners and curriculum changes,” Dr. Allen said. He explained that an assessment system is ideally meant to drive learning in classrooms, but Uganda’s system falls short of doing so. “Much of the knowledge and skills learners need today and for their future has little or no role in formal tests and examinations as it is done in schools,” Allen said, adding that there is still room for change though the task is long-term, complex and “hard” but important and worthwhile. At the symposium, he also shared a report describing how the ministry of education can adjust from an examination-oriented curriculum but develop a more robust, resilient, self-improving and adaptive assessment system.

WHAT OTHERS SAY?

Alex Kakooza, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education & Sports

It is true that assessment and examination must be carried out as teaching and learning goes on. Today, there is too much teaching in schools with the biggest driver being examinations.

Dr. Kedrace Turyagyenda, Director of Education Standards

The exams given to learners in schools are more of a mini UNEB examination. We need to go back to the drawing board and see what went wrong. How come by the time we went to school teaching was the driver of school activities and not examinations?

Progressive Primary School, Luzira Learners

Education today in Uganda is full of challenges for students, teachers and parents. There is no breathing space; something must be done by government.

Dr. Mary Goretti Nakabugo, Country Director, Uwezo Uganda

On teachers, this should not be a blame game because during assessment there is not only one key player. Let every actor do their job holistically and fix the system that is not working very well.

Uganda Proposes Overhauling Examination System

by Damali Mukhaye, June 7, 2017 - **The Daily Monitor**



The Ministry of Education in partnership with the Department for International Development (DFID) of the United Kingdom are discussing methods of overhauling Uganda's education, assessment and examination system to equip learners with the relevant skills. During a symposium on Tuesday, Education and Sports Minister, Hon. Mrs. Janet Kataha Museveni said the public has continued to judge the education success only in terms of examination results and grades attained by learners instead of what has been taught and learnt. She noted that this has pushed school heads, teachers and parents to concentrate on what is testable ignoring the prescribed curriculum and vital areas of skills, values and attitudes. She said skills of Ugandan learners are lower than the desired and competent attitude towards work. "As you are all aware, Uganda has been a hub for quality education in the African region, however, there has been disturbing research reports of late rating the proficiency of Ugandan learners to be lower than the desired skills," Mrs. Museveni said.

She said: "I am glad that most of you are educated experts and I implore you to critically look at our education system and identify the gaps and propose solutions to our education system especially assessment and examination which influence classroom practice," she said. The symposium seeks to reform Uganda's approach to exams and assessments that will enable Ugandans get the relevant skills needed in the job market. Meanwhile, the Executive secretary of Uganda National Examination Board Mr. Dan Odongo Nokrach said that the country has lost focus on what assessment is since schools have concentrated more on exams to assess students. "We are looking at what we can offer our students with the basic skills and continuously assessing them through their education at each stage instead of basing on the tests and grades they have acquired," Mr. Odongo said. Dr. Yusuf Nsubuga, the former Director Basic and secondary education proposed that there should be a training of teachers examining students because students are exposed to unprofessional tests and exams being set by unprofessional teachers. "Since teachers are the facilitators in examining our students, our focus should be in training these teachers to ensure that whatever they set for students matches the relevant skills needed in the job world," Mr. Nsubuga said.



