

# MWALIMU

## 2025: The year of tough govt bans in schools

### Round-up

While there was a lot to celebrate about Uganda's education sector in the year 2025, there were some challenges such as the government teachers' strike which affected the large part of the third term, writes **MARTIN KITUBI**



Children in class at a school in Kampala. In 2025, the Government made many pronouncements to regulate activities in schools

basic accommodation and food to the students. Besides working at the farms, the students would also reach out in the neighborhood to closely work with the smaller farms.

The move was welcomed by stakeholders, who said the intervention would fill the gap in the overly stretched extension services.

#### PLE, UCE RELEASE

Within the same month (January), the education ministry released both the Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE) and Uganda Certificate of Education (UCE) results on time, which allowed the candidates resume studies promptly.

Although the 2024 PLE performance was better than that of 2023, there were fewer candidates with distinctions and the majority of the top performers were the candidates scoring between aggregate 11 and 30.

This forced several top schools to lower Senior One cut-off points.

During the release of the PLE results, the First Lady and Minister of Education and Sports, Mrs Janet Museveni, recommended that Primary Seven leavers continue with studies up to Senior Four before joining community polytechnics, technical and farm schools.

While it was a common practice that some Primary Seven leavers join community polytechnics, technical and farm schools for three years before being awarded a Uganda



The Minister of Education and Sports, Mrs Janet Museveni, announced the education policy changes of 2025

Junior Crafts Certificate, an equivalent of the Uganda Certificate of Education (UCE), Mrs Museveni noted that learners should continue up to Senior Four, before they can transition to Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET).

During her submission, Mrs Museveni explained that completing O'level enables learners to get grounded in basic knowledge of the natural sciences such as physics, chemistry, biology and mathematics.

These science subjects, she said, offer vital foundational knowledge

needed in TVET.

"For parents who may want to consider a career in TVET for their children, I want to urge you to encourage and motivate them to aspire to complete at least O'level. So please do not limit your child's aspirations to merely completing Primary Seven," Mrs Museveni said.

For Senior Four, the education ministry opened a window for repeaters who were under the old curriculum, one last chance to sit under the old system.

The Government offered to pay fees for this category provided they registered at a Universal Secondary Education-implementing school.

#### LEARNERS OPT FOR SCIENCES

Following the release of UCE results, more learners joining Senior Five chose to pursue science combinations. Many top schools such as St Henry's Kitovu and Ntare School ended up admitting only learners with science combinations at A'level.

#### GUIDELINES ON SCHOOL TOURS, EVENTS

After a lot of uproar from the public about school events and fees, the education ministry developed the guidelines to regulate co-curricular activities in schools.

The guidelines banned gifts, including success cards for candidates and tightly guided schools on the conduct of tours and prom parties.

"The school administration shall not

allow parents, and any other persons, to give success gifts to their children in candidate classes in the form of money or material goods at school," one of the guidelines read.

The education ministry did not only craft stringent rules for gifts, but also on students' election. This was after public reports that elections in schools were being commercialised.

As part of the guidelines for elections of student leaders, the ministry introduced a tight qualifying criterion for students.

The guidelines require that only students who can balance leadership responsibilities with academic commitments be allowed to contest.

"Every learner who intends to stand for a leadership position shall be vetted. The vetting criteria for prospective student leaders shall; Evaluate academic achievements to ensure the prospective candidate can balance leadership responsibilities with academic commitments," the guidelines read.

Continued on page 26

# HOW UGANDA'S EDUCATION FARED IN 2025

From page 25

The guidelines further indicated that students who induce voters-with monetary or material favours, including sweets and all other eats, would be disqualified.

The distribution of sweets and other materials was classified as bribery under the guidelines.

"Any candidate implicated in voter bribery, use of commercially produced materials or involving external groups shall be immediately disqualified from the process and disciplinary action shall be taken against him/her," the guidelines state.

As part of the guidelines, the education ministry ordered schools to ensure that no child or individual is allowed to hire vehicles, motorcycles, or helicopters to the school premises during the entertainment events.

Relatedly, the ministry banned a number of items during visitation days, and introduced a limit on the number of people allowed to visit a student.

Under the guidelines, the ministry restricted visitation day time from 9:00am to 6:00pm and every school shall hold not more than one visitation day in a school term.

Only parents or guardians with visitation cards are allowed entry into the school during visitation days, with the number of visitors restricted to just four per learner.

The guidelines also banned taking cooked or otherwise processed food, including fast foods, into the school by parents or relatives, cooking or preparing food in the school by parents, bringing alcohol or any other substances into the school, even for self-consumption by parents.

In addition, the guidelines banned camping in the school compound by large groups of families, relatives, friends or holding parties there.

The schools were also banned from charging parents money for visitation days, including money for meals,



Students of Elite High School arriving for their prom party in 2024. In 2025, the Government issued guidelines to regulate the conduct of such activities

and shall not permit outside catering service providers to sell meals to parents or the learners during visitation days.

The guidelines also introduced penalties for violations and that for students, offences and the corresponding punishments stipulated in the school rules and regulations shall apply.

Where a teacher does not adequately supervise learners during a school-organised entertainment, co-curricular event, or school tour/trip, the teacher shall be guilty of neglect of duty and shall be sanctioned in line with the disciplinary process in place.

Additionally, the guidelines indicate that a teacher who engages in sexual relationships with learners shall be dismissed from the teaching service, in line with the Teachers' Professional Code of Conduct.

For a driver who drives recklessly, the guidelines indicated that such shall be charged under the relevant laws similarly, and shall not be allowed to drive a vehicle carrying learners.

#### FEES COLLECTION

The year 2025 saw other

reforms in the education sector, including the plan by the Government to take over collection of fees in the government-aided schools.

As part of the government plan, all school fees, including charges for requirements, across all public schools, will be managed by the Bank of Uganda.

The move will see the school fees collected by public schools become part of the Consolidated Fund.

The Consolidated Fund is a government account managed by Bank of Uganda, onto which all government revenues and funds are paid and from which money is withdrawn to fund all government activities.

The move to revise the management of school fees is entailed in the National Development Plan IV (NDP IV).

"Fees charged in public schools should go through the Consolidated Fund," the NDP IV reads.

While the implementation of the NDP IV started this financial year, it is not clear when the Government will start collecting fees from public schools.

#### MENTAL HEALTH

A report by the Government indicated that 30% of schoolchildren suffer mental problems.

The new report released in June revealed that three in every 10 (30%) school-going children aged between 11 and 17 in Uganda were struggling with mental health issues.

The study, conducted by Butabika National Referral Mental Hospital in collaboration with Makerere University School of Public Health, highlighted a worrying trend of emotional and psychological distress among adolescents.

The findings showed that many children experience emotional problems, including being bullied, abused or called derogatory names.

#### TEACHERS' STRIKE

The month of June was marred with a strike by arts teachers, who were demanding equal pay with their science counterparts.

Subsequently, several school activities were suspended as teachers stayed away from work.

## STAKEHOLDERS' REACTIONS

Jeff Serunjogi, the director of St Julian High School, Gayaza in Wakiso district, described 2025 as a pivotal year in education.

"We have come from far. We are producing skilled learners with the new curriculum. With the quality of innovations coming from our schools and learners, the future is bright," he said.

Didas Orikiriza, the executive director of National Private Education Institutions Association, said the year has been fair, and that the Government is finally bringing private players on board in the development of policies and reforms.

The return to class for arts teachers was on and off during second term and it progressed during the third term of the calendar year.

Despite several engagements with participating teachers' unions, the strikes went on even during the time when candidates were writing the final examinations.

During the month of July, the Government unveiled a comprehensive salary enhancement plan for teachers of arts and humanities.

The Government called on striking arts and humanities teachers to resume work in the interest of learners and national progress.

While the arts teachers were on strike, the Government announced a pay rise for ICT teachers who were initially not covered as scientists in the 2022 enhancement of salaries.

#### SCHOOL FEEDING, RECRUITMENT

In the month of September, the Government announced plans to roll out a free national school feeding programme aimed at improving learning.

The programme would also enable the Government to reduce on dropout rates across the country.

Relatedly, the Government also announced plans to tackle teacher housing shortages in the next financial year (2026/2027).

Although this is a challenge across government primary and secondary schools, priority will be given to government secondary schools.

The same month, President Yoweri Museveni announced a grand plan to recruit at least 50,000 secondary and primary school teachers in the next few years.

The recruits will fill the existing deficit at both primary and secondary school level. According to the education ministry, the country has a deficit of about 78,000 teachers at primary level and another 20,000 in secondary schools.

While the Government announced the plan, the Education Service Commission, the recruitment agency for the Government, announced that it plans to recruit at 4,000 new teachers and support staff to serve at the recently commissioned seed secondary schools.

#### TOWN HALL EXAM CENTRES

In 2025, the Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEb) announced that they had phased out town hall examination centres due to the demands of new lower secondary school curriculum.

It should be noted that the new curriculum demands that the candidate must have obtained marks from Senior One to Senior Four under continuous assessment, which account for 20% of the final examination administered.

The UCE would then be marked out of 80%, bringing the total to 100%.

This meant that the candidates who initially sat at town halls cannot have the 20% marks.

Relatedly, UNEb also adopted the practice of pretests where the board would set questions similar to those in the final examinations as part of the preparation of candidates under the competence-based assessment.

In the same year, the education ministry shared a plan which will see the merger of UNEb and the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) into one institution.

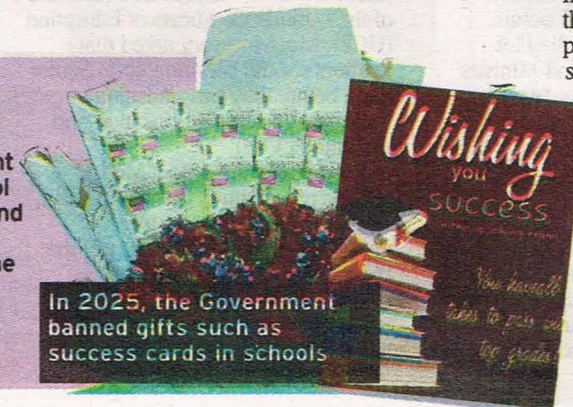
These two will give birth to a new institution which will be in charge of both curriculum development and assessment of candidates.

The plan to merge the two is enshrined in the draft National Curriculum, Assessment and Placement Policy, under development by the education ministry, which *Mwalimu* has seen.

## REFORM OF SCHOOL BOARDS

As part of the proposed changes in the Education Act, the Government announced plans to tighten the appointment of members of the school governing boards, which will trim the powers of the founding bodies and individuals, and foster independence and growth of institutions.

As part of the proposed reforms, all members serving on either of the organs will be required to have at least a degree qualification and must have performed management roles before, according to the proposed amendments to the Education Act.



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