

By Annabel Oyera

Ugandan scholars have appealed the East African Community (EAC) to harmonise education curricula across member states, saying the move would improve graduate employability, ease student mobility and fairly avail young people with opportunities both regionally and abroad.

The call was made by student leaders from Ugandan universities ahead of their national meeting on January 7.

They made the appeal during a conference in the Lumumba conference hall, Makerere University on January 6.

Speaking on behalf of students and scholars, Erusaniya Menya, a student from Kyambogo University and the president of the Students Body Uganda, said they had tried for years to raise concerns through the Ugandan officials in vain.

"Because of this continued silence, we decided to make a public communication to the leadership of

the EAC, calling for an open platform where we can present and discuss issues affecting education across Africa, particularly in South Africa and Uganda," he said.

Menya raised the different curricula in the EAC as one of the obstacles to harmonised education.

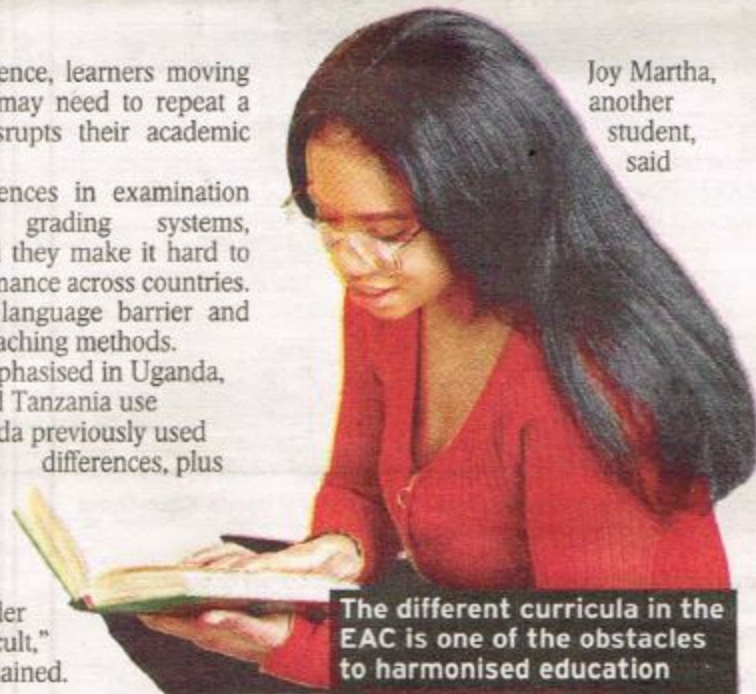
"The education systems in Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania and other countries differ significantly and this affects our competitiveness in employment, especially in South Africa and beyond. Many graduates struggle to compete fairly because of differences in curriculum structure, syllabus content, and accreditation," he said.

Hawa Naluwende, a student at Makerere University, said primary education in Uganda is seven years, yet in Kenya it is eight. She said because

of such a difference, learners moving across borders may need to repeat a year, which disrupts their academic progress.

On the differences in examination boards and grading systems, Naluwende said they make it hard to compare performance across countries. She also cited language barrier and differences in teaching methods.

"English is emphasised in Uganda, while Kenya and Tanzania use Kiswahili. Rwanda previously used French. These differences, plus varying approaches to science and technology, make cross-border adjustment difficult," Naluwende explained.



Joy Martha, another student, said

The different curricula in the EAC is one of the obstacles to harmonised education

because of lack of jobs, many graduates are forced to move abroad, especially to the Middle East in order to do menial jobs.

"If our education systems were harmonised, graduates trained in Uganda could access professional opportunities abroad, rather than low-skilled work," she said.

#### UNIFIED PLATFORM

The students called for a unified university platform to collectively address the common challenges of the region.

The student leaders cited other African regions, such as west and southern Africa, where young people get access to leadership programmes, science initiatives and professional opportunities abroad.