

# Education must go beyond exam scores

**THE** Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB) last week released the 2025 Primary Leaving Examination (PLE) results, setting in motion a nationwide scramble by parents to secure places for their children in what are perceived to be the best schools. For many parents, academic performance remains the sole benchmark for judging school quality.

However, while academic excellence is important, grades alone are no longer sufficient to prepare learners for the realities of the 21st century world of work. Education must go beyond examination results to nurture well-rounded individuals equipped with a broader set of life skills.

A 2016 *World Economic Forum* report observed that success in today's labour market demands a broader and more diverse set of skills beyond foundational skills, such as literacy and numeracy that were previously required.

Education should also help children develop soft skills, such as communication, confidence, empathy, identify, nurture and grow their individual talents.

These interpersonal traits determine how effectively individuals work with others and lead in diverse environments. Unlike



## EDITORIAL

**Editorial Tel:** 0414 337000/337139/337125;

**Fax:** 0414 235843; P. O. BOX 9815 Kampala.

**Email:** news@newvision.co.ug;

**Marketing/Advertising Tel:** 0414337000

**Fax:** 0414 232050

**Email:** advertising@newvision.co.ug

Member of the Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC);

Company listed on the Uganda Securities

Exchange

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technical skills, they are transferable across careers and are increasingly critical

for employability and long-term success. Parents should, therefore, seek schools that

deliberately cultivate these attributes.

Equally important are talents in areas, such as football, netball, volleyball, swimming, music, dance and drama. These skills can provide alternative career paths or supplementary sources of income later in life. A school that supports talent development alongside academics offers learners more options for the future.

As parents move around searching for schools, they should look beyond classrooms, dormitories and examination results. Attention

should also be paid to playgrounds, sports facilities and co-curricular programmes such as farming, bakery, cookery and other practical activities.

These platforms help children acquire life skills that complement academic knowledge. Ultimately, a school that combines strong academic performance with the nurturing of soft skills and talents offers a more inclusive and relevant education. Such institutions deserve to be rated more highly than those that focus narrowly on grades alone.