

# CBC: Lessons for the second A-Level cohort

**A-Level.** Having spent four years under the new system, the learners are expected to continue with a similarly Aligned A-Level curriculum with the same components.

## CURRICULUM

BY SYLVIA KATUSHABE

**A**s Uganda's shift to competence-based education continues to take shape, Educationists say the gains and challenges experienced at Lower Secondary Competence Based Curriculum should now inform the implementation of Aligned A-Level curriculum.

The students joining Senior Five in March are the second cohort to sit the Uganda Certificate of Education (UCE) exams under the Competence-Based Curriculum (CBC) introduced by National Curriculum Development Center (NCDC) in 2020. The programme is intended to equip learners with practical skills relevant to the 21st Century through a learner-centred approach that emphasises critical

thinking, problem solving, research and Continuous Assessment.

Having spent four years under the new system, the learners are expected to continue with a similarly Aligned A-Level curriculum with the same components.

In November, 2024, the government carried out a review of all A-Level subjects to create an abridged curriculum for the first cohort of senior four candidates that were then joining senior five under the Competence-Based curriculum.

The revised syllabus changed the method of instruction from a knowledge and objective based approach to an integrated and learner centered competence based approach. Some content across all the 29 subjects has been rationalised, integrated and merged with overlaps and similar skills dropping topics that had been studied at Lower secondary or are no longer critical and relevant for

the current learning.

Project and project based learning was also introduced in the revised Aligned A-Level curriculum to promote active and experiential learning and enhance creativity and innovation among learners. According to NCDC guidelines, Learners are required to identify real world problems, carry out scientific investigation to find practical solutions or products and write scientific reports.

The learners are also encouraged to select projects that are relevant, engaging and aligned with different topics in the syllabus. However, several teachers noted that unlike for the lower secondary where extensive orientation and phased support were provided, many A-Level teachers have received limited training on the new curriculum.

### Follow ups

"At O-Level, there were multiple training, follow-ups and materials to guide teachers where given out on time, at A-Level, many teachers are still relying on traditional methods because they lack adequate orientation," Ms Oliver Tushabe a teacher, at a government secondary school in western Uganda.

She noted that continuous teacher training, regular capacity building is still needed to gradually adapt to the A-level curriculum.

"Teacher preparation made a big difference at lower secondary where teachers were trained and supported making implementation smoother. The same level investment is needed at A-Level," Ms Tushabe said.

She added that timely provision of teaching materials is another critical factor, noting that delays in

the distribution of textbooks and learning materials have slowed down the implementation in many schools. Mr Gerald Wambi, the director of studies at Musese Secondary School in Mbale district said that the alignment of A-Level Curriculum with the new lower secondary is already benefiting learners.

"The learners are benefiting because they moved from O-Level with that curriculum and are continuing with it. At first we were worried they would study the new curriculum and the shift to the old one at A-Level but the government aligned the system," Mr Wambi said.

However, he noted that instruction materials remain a major challenge as teachers are still using the old textbooks.

"Not all the subjects have textbooks, so there is uncertainty in teaching. For science subjects, the Ministry has provided some equipment but we still need more for A-Level," Mr Wambi said.

Mr Daniel Okot a Geography teacher at a seed school in Kumi district, said many schools have not received the new textbooks for the Aligned A-Level curriculum and that schools are still using the old ones.

"What do you expect teachers to use if there are no books? We are using the old ones, yet some topics have been removed and others added but there is no information on those particular topics that have been added," he said.

He further noted that teacher training has been inconsistent, to the extent that some educators have never attended formal orientation. Mr Abdul Nyakamatura, another teacher at Gombe Secondary school also noted that schools are

currently relying mainly on syllabuses as a guiding tool, while adapting old materials to suit the competence based approach.

"The government has not come up with the textbooks to use. So we are using a syllabus as a guiding tool," Mr Nyakamatura said.

He also called for recruitment of more teachers to improve on the learner teacher ratio for easy implementation of the revised A-Level curriculum.

"When you look at it, their ratio is not corresponding. The learners are many and teachers are few and classrooms are congested. So at the end of the day, it requires each class to have at least two as the other one is instructing and the other one is supervising," Nyakamatura said.

The educationists are calling for national wide orientation for all A-level teachers, recruitment of additional staff, Aligned A-level curriculum text books, well equipped laboratories and other learning materials.

Dr Dennis Mugimba, the spokesperson in the Ministry of Education and Sports says teachers should read and implement the syllabuses for each subject noting that printing of new textbooks is not required.

"The teachers can read and implement the syllabuses for each subject we have sent them. The printing of textbooks will not be required. Teachers are just advised to teach the topics listed in each subject using old textbooks," Dr Mugimba told *Daily Monitor* last year.

The ministry highlighted that there is continuous training of teachers aimed at equipping teachers with the knowledge and skills to effectively interpret and deliver the competency-based curriculum.



Christ the King High School Bweya students carry tree seedling for planting as a way of conserving the environment. This part of the learner's school project aimed at protecting the environment. PHOTO/ GEOFFREY MUTUMBA