

BY NELSON MANDELA MUHOZI

UACE: FIRST LADY ROOTS FOR

The First Lady and Minister of Education and Sports, Mrs Janet Museveni, has urged learners to consider technical and vocational education as a viable pathway to entrepreneurship and employment.

She said many young people often overlook valuable opportunities that could enable them to enter the labour market quickly and begin building sustainable careers.

Speaking on Friday during the release of the 2025 Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education (UACE) examination results at State House, Nakasero, Mrs Museveni emphasised that technical training institutions remain underutilised despite their strong employment prospects.

“What our young people appear not to appreciate are the opportunities available in our technical and vocational institutions,” she said.

The First Lady said graduates from technical and vocational institutions often find employment faster or create their own businesses because the training they receive equips them with practical skills demanded by the job market.

“So, I continue to encourage students to consider that career path. The rewards are visible,” she said.

The minister said the country is witnessing a steady rise in the number of learners progressing through the education system, with more students completing basic and secondary education than in previous years.

“We thank God for 1,402,434 of our children who completed the three levels of our basic and secondary education. This is an increase of 107,703, or 8.3% compared to those who completed in 2024,” she said.

Mrs Museveni expressed satisfaction that the school drop-out rate had declined across the different national examinations, saying the trend reflects the Government’s efforts to expand access to education.

The increase is particularly visible at A’level, where the number of candidates sitting for the UACE examinations has grown significantly over

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the past three years.

The First Lady revealed that candidature rose from 109,486 students in 2023 to 140,888 in 2024 and further to 165,175 last year, representing an increase of more than 55,000 candidates over the period.

“I am pleased to note the rapid increase in candidature at the UACE examination level over the last three years. The number has gone up very significantly, which means that more of our learners are transitioning to tertiary levels of our education system,” she said.

IMPROVEMENT

According to the results released by the minister, more than 21,000 additional candidates have qualified for university admission compared to those who qualified in 2024.

Mrs Museveni said the growing number of candidates eligible to join university is a positive sign that Uganda’s education system is enabling more young people to advance academically.

University admissions to degree courses have, up to date, been considering two principal passes as the minimum requirement. If this consideration is maintained, 113,291 (68.6%) qualify to be admitted, compared to 92,273 (65.5%) who qualified in 2024.

The Uganda National



Mrs Museveni during the release of the UACE results at State House Nakasero on Friday. (Scan image the image using the Vision Digital Experience to watch video)

Examinations Board (UNEB) executive director, Dan Odongo, said this is consistent with the significant increase in entries for the examination in 2025.

Odongo said the extra 21,018 university places should be available to absorb the extra numbers.

“In cases where one principal and two subsidiary passes are considered for admission to other tertiary institutions, for example Technical and Vocational Education and Training [TVET] institutions offering diploma programmes, 145,129 (87.9%) candidates will qualify,” he said.

MORE EFFORT NEEDED

Odongo said despite the increase in candidature at all levels, there is more work that the board needs to do.

He said cases of malpractice at A’level have remained low, adding that in accordance with the

UNEB Act, those involved in malpractices will have their results withheld pending completion of investigations.

“Cases were reported from 47 centres out of the 2,452 centres countrywide, involving 351 (0.2%) of the total candidates. Cases are mostly in receiving assistance in science practical papers, being in possession of unauthorised materials and impersonation,” he said.

Prof. Celestino Obua, the UNEB chairperson, said sustained investment in science infrastructure, teacher capacity and laboratory resources remain critical to building a robust pipeline into tertiary STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) programmes.

Although enrolment in STEM subjects shows a gradual upward trend, Obua said deliberate multi-sectoral interventions will be required to achieve national targets in science and technology

development.

“As more candidates qualify for admission into post-UACE institutions, an important policy consideration arises regarding the absorptive capacity of universities, tertiary institutions and other training pathways,” Obua said.

He added that assessment is not an end in itself, emphasising that it must be matched by expanded opportunities in higher education, technical and vocational training, and alternative career pathways to ensure that certification translates into productive national participation.

However, the First Lady assured the country that there are enough places in educational institutions to absorb the increasing number of learners.

“I am confident that we have sufficient places in our tertiary institutions, both

public and private, to absorb these learners,” she said.

INTEREST IN SCIENCE

Beyond the issue of career pathways, Mrs Museveni welcomed the growing interest among students in science and mathematics subjects, which she described as central to the country’s industrial development ambitions.

“The executive director’s statement indicates that entries for sciences and mathematics have been rising,” she said, but also acknowledged the importance of humanities in shaping society and promoting cultural awareness.

The First Lady stressed that STEM remains crucial for innovation and economic growth.

“I believe, as I am sure you all do, that STEM subjects are the bedrock for industrial development,” she said.

The minister also praised the improved performance of girls in the examinations, particularly their increasing participation in science subjects.

“I am pleased to note the good performance by girls, and I congratulate them on this remarkable achievement. I am particularly impressed by the steady increase in the number of girls taking on science subjects and they have done very well,” Mrs Museveni said.

She said the progress demonstrates that female learners can succeed in science and mathematics when given adequate support and encouragement.

“This demonstrates that there is nothing mysterious about mathematics and sciences. What we now need is more encouragement and the presence of role models,” she said.

PARENTS URGED

Mrs Museveni called on parents and guardians to play a more active role in guiding their children’s education and career choices.

“So, parents and guardians, I call upon you to intentionally step into your”

TECHNICAL EDUCATION

PHOTO BY MIRIAM NAMUTEBI

God-given role and be present and actively involved in your children's lives. Education is a shared responsibility, and its foundation is built within the family," she said.

The First Lady further revealed that feedback from the examination process indicates that many learners struggle to apply classroom knowledge to real-life challenges within their communities.

"Comments on the work of candidates indicate that they do not relate the knowledge acquired to real-life situations in their communities," she said.

The Government, Mrs Museveni said, is addressing this gap through curriculum reforms aimed at making education more practical and skills-oriented.

CURRICULUM REFORMS

Mrs Museveni revealed that curriculum reforms are being implemented through the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC), which is currently reviewing and aligning the A'level curriculum.

"The Ministry of Education and Sports, through the NCDC, has embarked on reforming the UACE curriculum," the First Lady said.

She said the ongoing reforms have already removed unnecessary and duplicated content from the curriculum and aligned teaching approaches with those used in the lower secondary competency-based system.

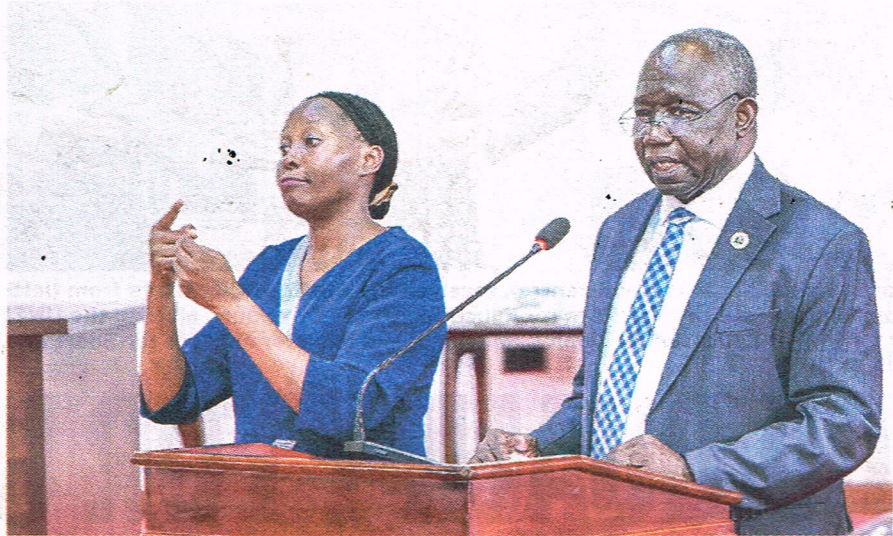
"Currently, we have an aligned curriculum being implemented where excess and unnecessary content has been removed and duplication of information across subject areas has also been addressed," Mrs Museveni said.

The First Lady added that the goal is to ensure a smoother transition for learners moving from the Uganda Certificate of Education level to A'level, whilst equipping them with more practical skills.

The minister commended teachers for their dedication in preparing candidates for the national examinations and described them as the backbone of the education system.

"My appreciation also goes to all our foot soldiers, the teachers, especially those who prepared the candidates. Your

Odongo (right) addressing stakeholders during the release of the 2025 UACE examinations at State House Nakasero on Friday



EDUCATIONISTS SPEAK OUT

Commenting on the learners' performance, Patrick Kaboyo, national secretary of the Federation of Non-State Education Institutions, said many learners were showing interest in their studies owing to the thought-provoking new curriculum.

"To a large extent, the new curriculum has encouraged A'level students to take greater interest in their own learning because they are thinking more about their future and appreciating the value of their work," he said.

However, Kaboyo said a critical issue that must be addressed is teacher integrity, particularly in relation to continuous assessment.

"If assessment scores are manipulated, we will not produce the right human resources. Therefore, strong emphasis must be placed on proper quality assurance and effective management of teachers," he said.

Regarding the education pathway in technical education, Kaboyo agreed that opportunities exist, but highlighted the need to clearly distinguish the different education pathways available to learners.

"When students are selecting subjects after primary school, the focus is largely on secondary education rather than on the broader range of schooling options. There should also be selection of pathways for vocational and technical education so that learners can choose where they belong at that stage, rather than making that decision much later," he said, adding that vocational training should not be treated as auxiliary but as a

priority. Kaboyo added that the vocational pathway requires significant investment in both the hardware and software components of the education system.

On his part, Dr George William Semivule, an educationist, said the competence-based curriculum is designed to prepare learners for a dual pathway, allowing them to either pursue a technical route or continue to A'Level education.

He said the previous system was largely meritocratic in a narrow sense and ended up producing many students who were left behind.

Semivule said the country may not yet have fully embraced the competence-based approach, but if the Government continues along the same reform path, the long-term outcomes could support national transformation.

He pointed to changing perceptions around career choices, saying a student who branches off after Senior Four to pursue a three-year nursing certificate could start earning about sh800,000, which is often higher than the roughly sh400,000 earned by some university graduates who begin their careers as primary school teachers.

This, Semivule said, highlights the need for a shift in the mindset about the value of technical and vocational education.

He added that as Uganda moves into the oil and gas production phase, it will be individuals with strong technical competencies who are likely to benefit most from the opportunities created in the sector.

commitment and consistent dedication to educating our children is truly commendable," she said.

Mrs Museveni congratulated candidates who performed well and encouraged those who were dissatisfied with their



Kaboyo

results not to lose hope, but to explore alternative education pathways, including technical training.

"The most important thing is to remain positive and not to lose hope in your ability to succeed and have a productive future," she said.