

## LETTERS

### UCE 2025 results: The crisis of interpreting new grades

Following the release of Uganda National Examinations (Uneb) results of Uganda Certificate of Education (UCE) 2025, there has been a mixture of consternation, muffled complaints, unanswered questions and in some cases uproar. Why could this be so?

The revised secondary school curriculum dubbed new curriculum in public speak, was introduced and examined in 2024 and 2025.

The revised curriculum necessitated a new approach to teaching and learning which involved not only re-tooling and attitude change of teachers but also resource mobilisation to meet new curriculum demands.

It seems some schools have been more prepared than others. One of the subjects that was done exceptionally well by schools that seemed more adjusted to the new curriculum was the project.

In an educational environment where students were accustomed to cramming and regurgitating notes, it required extra discipline by students to work on a project which calls for attention, skills, timelines, etc.

For a project to be successful, it requires close supervision by teachers and a lot of patience and perseverance when dealing with students not used even to executing ordinary daily chores like washing clothes.

One of the most problematic areas that I could sense when results were released was the continuous assessment marks which were submitted to Uneb prior to final exams.

Since the continuous school-based marks were a compilation of students' marks spanning a longer period, schools with students that are irregular in attendance or with indiscipline seemed to have suffered.

Some schools with focused students and a positive learning environment seem to have scored all the 20 marks.

Complaints seemed to arise from schools with highly professional and integrity conscious persona who scored students in line with deserved performance and alleged the giving of free marks by teachers in some schools.

One teacher remarked, 'If in some schools, teachers are hell bent on cheating for students, how much more when they have a chance to award students without any external supervision? As for the Uneb assessment criteria, it left majority of the public in suspense to fully appreciate which students had performed excellently or not.'

The most common statement by headteachers was that 'All the students are in result one and passed.'

Now exactly what is result one, nothing near the grade one perhaps that they were used to.

The grading system from distinctions to credits, passes and failures was replaced with a new one of letter grades A, B, C, D, E reflecting skills, creativity and ability to solve problems instead of memorisation of information.

The media frenzy of publicising the new curriculum grades created more challenges in interpreting of the new grades since while some media houses ranked schools based on average scores of candidates with As - Os, some received plaudits for having scored more As and Bs and others praised schools that had the biggest number of As irrespective of which subject.

If one of the key intentions of the Ministry of Education was to realise a shift from the highly competitive display of grades, it seems this is not being achieved.

Despite the ban on displaying photos of students who excelled in exams, a quick fix solution was designed between media houses and parents since the latter are excited to have their children appear in the media.

Isn't it reasonable to expect Uneb and Ministry of Education to give guidance on what constitutes very good school performance instead of leaving such a sensitive professional task to the public?

The cost of disseminating unprofessional information maybe enormous in the near future since ordinary folk treat whatever they read as a gospel truth yet there could be some misrepresentations.