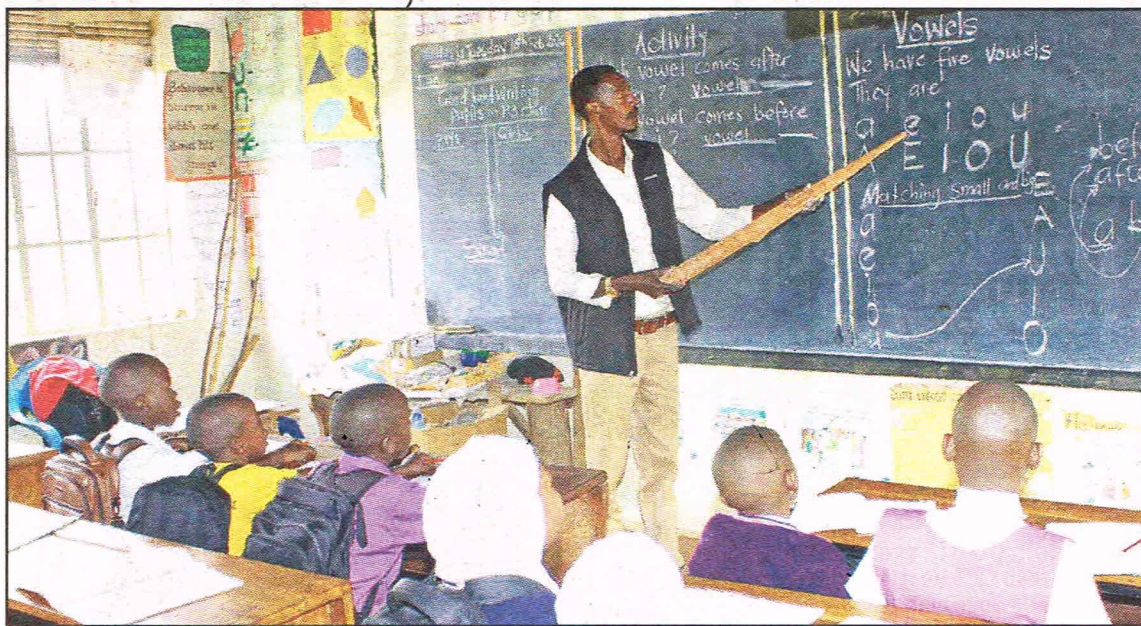


# GOVT REDUCES SUBJECT LOAD FOR PRIMARY LEARNERS

## CURRICULUM UPDATES

After studying the strengths and weakness of the current primary school syllabus, the Ministry of Education and Sports has announced changes to the curriculum, affecting mainly lower primary. Although the subjects have been cut, some have been merged, while others have more examinable areas, writes **Martin Kitubi**.



Primary Three pupils during a lesson at Kiyunga Islamic Primary School, Mukono district. The education ministry wants to roll out a new syllabus for lower primary school classes in 2028

It is nearly 20 years since Uganda rolled out the thematic curriculum at the primary school level, a system that made it mandatory to use local languages as the medium of instruction at lower primary and English in upper classes.

The curriculum has had several challenges, including schools not following the provisions and strictly drilling learners in the English language only.

However, this is about to change. As part of the ongoing review of the primary school curriculum, which will start with the lower primary (Primary One to Primary Three), the Government has reduced the learning areas (known as subjects at upper primary) from eight to four.

In addition, the Government will introduce Kiswahili at Primary Three (P3) in both public and private schools, while maintaining both English and a local language right from Primary One.

These changes are part of the draft Primary School Curriculum Framework developed by the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC).

The revised primary school curriculum, which is in advanced development stages, is planned to be piloted next academic year (2027) in selected public and private schools. The curriculum will be rolled out in 2028 across all primary schools in Uganda.

### DETAILED CHANGES

The four learning areas to be adopted for Primary One to Primary Three will include religious studies, mathematics, literacy and livelihood studies.

Under the old curriculum, the eight learning areas at this level were: mathematics, English, news, literacy I (for local languages), literacy II (with a blend of social studies and science), physical education, religious education and creative performing arts.

Many of these have been scrapped and integrated into the four learning areas mentioned earlier. For instance,

## LOCAL LANGUAGES TO BE KEPT

Currently, there are at least 54 local languages used for instruction from Primary One to Primary Three, under the thematic curriculum.

Despite their use, these local languages are not examinable at Primary Seven. Some experts are proposing that Kiswahili, like other local languages, be taught, but be excluded from examinable subjects at Primary Seven.

However, there is also a proposal to reduce the number of local languages used under the thematic curriculum for instruction due to failure to develop orthography, bilingual dictionaries and genre. The move would affect about 34 local languages.

The affected languages lack course books, teachers are not conversant with them or the content has hardly been revised. This has affected learning in those areas, making it expensive for the Government to deliver education.

The development is part of the Government's findings from a recent study on the most feasible languages for instruction, which will be used in the development of curriculum and language policy for schools in Uganda.

The National Curriculum Development Centre and the education ministry are undertaking the study. Based on the study findings, a total of 22 languages have been identified and recommended as the most feasible languages for use as the medium of instruction in Ugandan schools.

The recommended languages are Luganda for the central region and Kiswahili for the entire country. In the eastern region, the recommended languages are Lusoga, Lusamia, Lunyole, Lugwere, Lugisu, Dhapadhola, Ateso, Kupsabiny and Kumam.

In the north, the recommended languages are Acholi, Langi, Akarimojong, Lugbara, Kakwa and Alur, while in western Uganda, the languages are: Runyankole-Rukiga, Runyoro-Rutoro, Lukonzo, Lugungu and Rufumbira.

Although 37 local languages currently have orthographies, the 22 mentioned above meet at least two requirements for use as languages of instruction in schools.

the new literacy learning area will have all the languages: English, a local language and Kiswahili.

On the other hand, the new livelihood studies will see learners study five key areas: Performing arts, art and technology, social environment (covering social studies), natural environment (covering integrated science) and physical education.

### GOVT SPEAKS OUT

Dr John Chrysostom Muyingo, the minister of state for higher education, said the ministry is undertaking curriculum reforms to align all levels

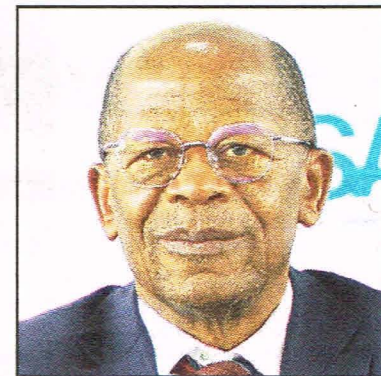
of education, from the primary level right up to higher education.

Muyingo said the education ministry has since presented to Parliament the timelines and resource requirements to enable the pilot of the new curriculum next year, starting with Primary One to Primary Three.

"The ministry, led by the First Lady and Minister of Education and Sports, Mrs Janet Museveni, is undertaking several reforms in the education sector. One of the many reforms is curriculum review at primary [education]. The system will now focus on skills and competences,



NCDC director Dr Nambi



State minister Dr Muyingo

as opposed to reproducing content during final examinations," he said.

While appearing before the parliamentary committee of education and sports on April 9, education ministry officials, led by Muyingo, said NCDC requires an additional sh4.08b to train teachers and print the Primary One to Primary Three syllabus documents in preparation for the pilot.

Dr Bernadette Nambi, the director of NCDC, explained that the primary curriculum is not aligned to the lower secondary curriculum in terms of design, methodologies and assessment.

In addition, she said the old curriculum is teacher-centred with a lot of repetition and redundancies, as well as obsolete information that must be changed.

Currently, Nambi said NCDC had developed and validated the Primary Curriculum Framework as well as the Scope and Sequence for all the subjects to be taught.

"For primary, we have also drafted the syllabi for the learning areas on the lower primary curriculum, as well as the draft assessment and implementation guidelines. These were quality assured, and the comments are being acted upon in preparation for submission to the next level," she said.

Nambi confirmed that the primary school curriculum will be piloted in the academic year 2027 and rolled out in 2028.

### PROPOSED CHANGES

Under the proposed primary school curriculum, there will be practicals for each of the subjects, and learners will be required to have projects.

For instance, the English subject, which has been 100% written, will consist of an oral assessment for learners. Learners will be assessed on reading, speaking and listening skills in the language.

During assessment, it is proposed that the oral, as well as written assessments, will each account for half of the learners' score at the final national examination.

Under English, repeated content, such as language structures taught at Primary Four, Five and Six classes, is proposed to be studied once. According to sources, the learners will not study the same in the subsequent years.

For instance, the topic on print media taught in Primary Five is to be merged with all other media-related topics. In addition, the topic of letter writing is to be transferred to Primary Four.

Under integrated science, it is proposed that topics, such as germination, have practical sessions, with learners expected to grow actual crops. This is intended to assess their competencies.

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