

# Education



Students perform a rendition of a Michael Jackson hit



Victoria University's Conan Businge (L) celebrates a performance



The cultural performances were outstanding

## Mengo SS, Victoria University position MDD as a driver of future creative jobs

DUNSTAN MUKALAZI

**D**r Lawrence Muganga, the vice chancellor of Victoria University, says there is a need for an urgent repositioning of music, dance, and drama (MDD) within Uganda's education system as a critical driver of future jobs, innovation, and economic transformation.

This position was emphasised during Mengo Senior School's annual Music, Dance and Drama festival on April 25. Dr Muganga, who was represented by Conan Businge, the university's marketing and student recruitment manager, noted that globally, the world of work is undergoing a fundamental shift driven by artificial intelligence, automation, and digital transformation.

"As routine and repetitive jobs decline, the demand for uniquely human skills continues to rise. MDD is one of the most powerful platforms within secondary education that naturally develops these competencies," he said.

"The global creative economy is a multi-trillion-dollar opportunity. Cultural and creative industries generate approximately \$2.3 trillion annually, contributing about 3.1% of global GDP. I also observed recently from data from the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (Ubos) that the creative economy contributed approximately

3% of Uganda's GDP in 2023, which was valued at about Shs 4.2 trillion. So, these figures confirm that creativity is no longer a soft skill; it is an economic engine with the capacity to employ over one million Ugandans, mostly the youth."

At the end of his speech, an inspired Businge announced that Victoria University had offered five scholarships to exemplary MDD performers as will be recommended by the school.

### FABULOUS FESTIVAL

It is not farfetched to claim that Mengo SS is the biggest school in the country. With more than 7,000 students, it was no surprise that thousands of students, teachers, parents and former students converged at the school playground to witness the two-day festival that had students compete amongst their eight houses.

Competition day one had items like Western choral singing, drama, and speech delivery.

The main day's items, in turn, had traditional folk singing, creative dances, pop stars' songs and traditional dances.

The students exhibited dances and folk songs from across Uganda, including Buganda (Bakisimba, Nankasa, and Muwogola), Ankole, Bugisu (Imbalu Dance), Tooro (Runyeye Ntogoro), Kigezi (Ekizino), Karamoja, and Acholi (Bwola dance).



Headteacher Dr Nantagya Grace Ssebanakitta at the event

Students, who had clearly dedicated themselves to the rehearsals, treated guests to energetic performances.

David Mubiru of George House stood out and had the audience eat out of his palms for his pop star item from the 1980s.

George House also put on a wonderfully-choreographed creative dance that had the audience ululating as they sought to have an encore of that particular item.

Samuel Mukasa Mulindwa, the chairman of the PTA [also a former teacher at the school], noted that it is from such MDD activities that Mengo SS has been able to produce notable artistes such as Angela Kalule, Joseph

Mayanja (aka Jose Chameleone), Daniel Kaggwa Sseninde (keyboardist with The Afrigo Band) and Julius Jjuuko (formerly of The Afrigo Band), among others.

Artiste Alice Rebecca Jingo (of Beat FM) also attested that she is a product of these performances, letting the audience know that while at Mengo SS, she took an active role as Sempa house prefect. She later performed one of her songs.

Francis Derek Mutesaasira, the head of MDD at the school, said parents should encourage their children to actively showcase their talents, as these talents are known to create opportunities that academics may not. Mutesaasira is also the director of the Namirembe Cathedral Choir.

Dr Nantagya Grace Ssebanakitta, the school headteacher, said these and all out-of-classroom activities help the school to mould a holistic learner and expose them to all areas of learning.

"MDD is not extracurricular; it is foundational to the future of work. If properly harnessed, MDD can transform learners from consumers of academic knowledge into performers, producers and leaders in the creative economy," he said.

### GEORGE HOUSE CHAMPIONS

At the end of the day, George house emerged as the winner and was rewarded with a bull.

Luboyera house finished first runners-up and took home two goats, while second runners-up Nsubuga house got one goat. The order also had Sempa house, Armitage house, Kennedy house, Bunjo house and Busuulwa, which carried the wooden spoon.