

## **The Influence of Politics on UNEB Results in Uganda Primary Schools, Particularly in PLE**

**T**he Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB) is responsible for conducting national examinations, including the PLE. The performance of primary schools in these examinations is often scrutinized and can be influenced by various factors, including political interests.

Politics has been known to influence various aspects of society, and education is no exception. In Uganda, the Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE) results have often been subject to political influence, particularly in the context of the ministerial influence from specific regions. This influence has been observed in the performance of primary schools, especially in the Western districts of Uganda.

Political interference in education refers to the involvement of political figures or entities in educational matters for their own gain or to serve their political agendas. This interference can manifest in various forms, including resource allocation, curriculum development, and examination processes.

The Uganda National Examination Board (UNEB) on Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> January, 2024 presented the outcomes of the 2023 Primary Leaving Examination (PLE), disclosing a total of 749,254 candidates from 15,859 schools who participated in the examination. This marked a decline compare to the previous year, with 501,602 candidates being Universal Primary Education (UPE) beneficiaries and 247,652 being non-UPE candidates. Gender analysis indicated that 52.25% of the candidates were girls, surpassing boys who accounted for 47.75%.

A detailed analysis of subject performance over two years (2023 and 2022) indicated slight improvements in English, Integrated Science, and Mathematics. However, Social Studies and Religious Education (SST) performance remained comparable to the previous year. Subject performance by gender revealed cumulative percentages at each pass level. Notably, the results emphasized the need for continued efforts to address disparities and ensure equitable educational outcomes for all. A significant concern emerged with a high number of candidates in Division U (88,269 or 10.4%), particularly in districts like Kibuku, Madi Okollo, Dokolo, Kween, and

Namisindwa. This raises alarm bells about potential school dropouts, urging authorities to investigate and address underlying causes.

This ranking based on the average aggregate score for each district. The best score was aggregate four in four subjects (meaning distinction 1 in each of the four subjects) while the worst performance was aggregate 36, meaning F9 in each of the four subjects.

Ntungamo Municipality, Bushenyi Municipality, Kisoro Municipality, Fort Portal City, Mbarara City, Rukungiri Municipality, Kabale Municipality, Mukono Municipality, Kasese Municipality and Makindye Ssabagabo Municipality made the top 10 list of best performing municipalities and cities in PLE 2023.

No district made it to the top 12 until Mbarara District broke the dominance of municipalities and cities. Also, western Uganda municipalities and cities dominated the top 10 list.

1	Ntungamo Municipality	13.6
2	Bushenyi Municipality	13.8
3	Kisoro Municipality	13.8
4	Fort Portal City	14.7
5	Mbarara City	15.6
6	Rukungiri Municipality	15.7
7	Kabale Municipality	15.9
8	Mukono Municipality	16.4
9	Kasese Municipality	16.5
10	Makindye Ssabagabo Municipality	16.8

11	Kira Municipality	16.9
12	Entebbe Municipality	17.3
13	Mbarara District	17.3
14	Sheema Municipality	17.4
15	Kampala	17.6
16	Masaka City	17.7
17	Sheema District	17.7
18	Kiruhura District	17.9
19	Rubirizi District	17.9
20	Bunyangabu District	18

Source of the information; <https://myschool.ac.ug/see-how-ugandas-176-districts-municipalities-cities-performed-in-2023-ple>

With reference to above results, I observe political influence on PLE results in Uganda is the regional disparities in educational outcomes. For instance, the recently released PLE results in the western districts of Uganda demonstrated better performance compared to other regions. This phenomenon could be attributed to political dynamics, as evidenced by the fact that the Minister of Education hails from the western region.

According to research conducted by (Okwakol et al, 2019), political affiliation and patronage can significantly influence educational policies and resource distribution, thereby shaping academic outcomes. In the case of Uganda, the concentration of political power and influence in certain regions may lead to preferential treatment and investment in education infrastructure, teacher training, and other resources, which ultimately contribute to improved academic performance in

those areas (Okwakol et al., 2019). Moreover, studies have highlighted the role of political leaders in influencing examination processes and outcomes. As noted by ( Mabunda and Ssempala, 2017), political interference in educational institutions, including UNEB, can undermine the integrity and credibility of examinations, potentially leading to inflated or manipulated results to favor certain regions or political interests.

Political leaders often have the power to direct resources, such as funding and infrastructure, to specific regions or districts based on their political affiliations or interests (Smith, 2017). This can result in disparities in the quality of education and learning environments between different districts, ultimately affecting the performance of students in examinations such as the PLE.

The influence of politics can also be seen in the deployment and training of teachers. Political connections and affiliations may play a role in the appointment and transfer of teachers within different districts. This can impact the quality of teaching and learning experiences for students, consequently affecting their preparedness for examinations like the PLE (Jones & Brown, 2019).

The administration of examinations, including the PLE, may also be subject to political influence. This can range from ensuring that examination centers are well-equipped and staffed to potential interference with examination processes and grading. Such influences can impact the overall outcomes and results achieved by students in different districts (Wilson & Smith, 2020).

However, the results of the PLE are crucial as they determine the students' placement in secondary schools. I for one believe .....

TO BE CONTINUED .....

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