

MWALIMU

Why secondary schools are failing to implement new curriculum

UNEB to set four sets of examinations this year

✓ In February 2020, the Government rolled out the new lower secondary curriculum. Its implementation has, however, become a challenge in many schools, writes **Ibrahim Ruhweza**

In February 2020, the Government rolled out the new competence-based curriculum with the aim of producing students whose skills match the current demands in the job market.

In her statement to Parliament in 2020, the Minister of Education and Sports, Mrs Janet Museveni, said the new curriculum was long overdue.

The minister said the old curriculum was churning out graduates whose skills were not matching the demands in the labour market.

Consequently, teachers were trained to shift from

the old curriculum to the new one that emphasises practical skills.

In a previous interview with *Mwalimu*, Jimmy Turyagenda, the former secretary-general of the Association of Secondary School Headteachers of Uganda, said the competence-based curriculum, now being implemented in lower secondary, presents an opportunity to change the country's education system.

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TEACHERS GRAPPLING WITH NEW CURRICULUM

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Under the curriculum, the national exams constitute 80% of the final mark, while practical projects account for 20%.

However, reports indicate that four years down the road, many teachers, especially in the rural areas, have failed to implement the new curriculum. Some of them have not been well-trained to implement the new curriculum, while others say their schools are not well-equipped to take it on.

NO RESOURCES

Julius Amanyire Rujumba, a former teacher of English and literature at Nyakasura School in Fort Portal city, says the new curriculum needs a lot of resources, starting with teachers, who need gadgets such as laptops, computers plus projectors and audio machines to simplify learning. He says projectors ease demonstrations and help learners to follow the instructors.

Amanyire says some schools are under-resourced to the extent that they cannot even afford to pay their own teachers. This means providing materials for learners to use in practicals becomes complex.

He says the workload of teachers has increased since the introduction of the new curriculum.

Amanyire says when the Government introduced the new curriculum, his workload rose from about 16 to 24 lessons per week. He says the workload needs to be reduced to at least 17 lessons to give teachers time to develop new ideas and also relax.

Amanyire also says projects in the new curriculum need a lot of funding, which some schools cannot afford.

"This creates an imbalance in terms of learning since some students are left behind. For instance, parents should provide some of the learning materials, but only a handful do," he says.

Callistus Baryabanohe, a teacher at St Henry's College Kitovu in Masaka district, says the time given to teachers for lesson preparation makes it hard to achieve the desired results.

NO ASSESSMENT TOOLS

Baryabanohe also highlights the challenge of lack of evaluation tools, which the ministry has not explained



Students in a baking class. Shortage of resources, especially in rural schools, has delayed the implementation of the new curriculum

PARENTS, NCDC SPEAK OUT

Alfred Nkojo, a parent of a Senior Three student, says laptops and the Internet are some of the things demanded now.

Nkojo says for the new curriculum to yield the expected results, it should have begun with Primary One.

"Up to now, learners in primary school are still studying what a map is, the source of the Nile, things that cannot challenge them to think hard. Now, when they join secondary school, introducing them to the new curriculum is like opening a new page of a book they have no idea about," Nkojo says.

Grace Baguma, the executive director

of NCDC, says the new curriculum is good, but the problem is that teachers do not want to be creative.

She says the curriculum needs to be taught in the field so schools that lack funds for transport can use raw materials within their surroundings.

"Teachers also need to be creative. We can't keep complaining. How come they order children to bring toilet paper?" she says.

Baguma believes teachers want to continue doing things the old way, yet the world is changing to nurture people who can solve problems.

to the teachers. Assessments and evaluations are intended to improve students' learning and play an important role in understanding the overall effectiveness of programmes and revising classroom practices.

Well-designed assessments help students use the knowledge and skills they have learned and indicate their level of performance.

"Without these tools, the results expected are hard to determine. Furthermore, the high expectations from stakeholders like parents, headteachers and the community are making everything complicated for teachers," Baryabanohe says.

The modes of assessment are changing, given the technological development, which calls for teachers to be retooled after a given period of time through continuous professional development. Baryabanohe says the

Some schools have not been trained to implement the curriculum while others say they are not well equipped.

National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) has not empowered programmes such as the Secondary Science and Mathematics Teachers, to follow up on professional development.

ASSESSMENTS AT SCHOOL

The school-based assessment, which comprises activities of integration and project-based learning, is equally a nightmare to most teachers.

Gerald Okoth, the co-ordinator of competence-based curriculum at Seeta High School main campus in Mukono district, says there is still a big challenge in coming up with test items by teachers since Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB) has deliberately kept to itself on assessment, areas of constructs, and the types of scenario-based questions expected at the end of the cycle.

UNEQUAL PAY

Okoth says the government policy to pay science teachers sh4m, while their arts counterparts hardly earn sh200,000 killed the little morale left in arts teachers to implement the curriculum.

Ronald Wabwire, an English language and literature teacher at Seeta High School in Mukono district, says there are several expenses schools, parents and children incur for the proper implementation. However, these are costly.

Wabwire observes that sometimes the materials to use in executing some projects are rare.

"In my village, you do not just go to people's gardens to get grass because they have animals to feed. Plastic bottles are collected by other people and sold to recycling companies. Will students compete with them?" he says.

Abel Ndiunze, a chemistry teacher at Katooke Secondary School in Kyenjojo district, says most schools lack support and supervision.

Ndiunze admits that he does not know if he is doing the right thing.

"The curriculum is good because it looks at problem solving. However, our supervisors should come on the ground and advise accordingly," he says, faulting the NCDC for not supplying enough books to simplify adoption.

TWO SETS OF UNEB EXAMS

This year will be the first time O'level students sit national exams under the new curriculum. However, since some schools have lagged behind in adapting to it, UNEB will set two sets of exams.

"This year, UNEB will conduct four sets of examinations, which will

STUDENTS, TEACHERS SPEAK OUT

Beth Dyan, Senior Three student at Seroma Christian High School:

My parents support me in executing the assigned class projects. However, some of my classmates fail due to lack of support from their parents. The only thing they afford in time is school fees yet the new curriculum in most cases needs one to have a smartphone connected to the Internet.

Godwin Mikka, teacher at Seroma Christian High School:

Whereas the new curriculum seems to be hard for some teachers, it has helped me to teach in a better way. In the past, learners would do cram work, but today, they are taught on scenario-based questions, which involves being assigned in a community to find a problem and develop solutions. To the teachers that have failed to master the new curriculum, change is a process.

Raban Akoragye, Senior Two student at St Janan Luwum Bombo campus:

The new curriculum has changed my perception about life and employment. It has built my confidence. I can now make paper bags for sale. We sit in groups to execute our projects. Most of us are progressing and we have some knowledge on how to sustain ourselves.

include both the Primary Leaving Examinations, and the Uganda Certificate of Education and Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education for both the old and new curriculum," UNEB executive director Dan Odongo announced on May 24.

Odongo said this will be a one-off opportunity given to anyone who would like to be assessed under the old curriculum.

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