

NEW A'LEVEL CURRICULUM CHANGES OUT

By Martin Kitubi

As Ugandans wait for the release of the exam results for the first cohort of students of the competence-based O'level curriculum, the Government has announced final stages of rolling out the transitional A'level curriculum.

The draft transitional A'level curriculum was approved on Friday by the governing council of the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC), according to a source. The council has members from the Ministry of Education and Sports, as well as the Uganda National Examinations Board.

While addressing school managers and journalists during the Senior One selection exercise in Kampala on Thursday, Dr Joyce Monku Kaducu, the Minister of State for Primary Education, said the ministry was in the final stages of rolling out the transitional A'level curriculum.

"By the time the Senior Four results come out, the country will know how the transition [from O'level to A'level curriculum] will be undertaken," Kaducu said.

Dr Kedrace Turyagyenda, the ministry permanent secretary, also indicated on Friday that: "We will start training teachers on the new A'level curriculum this week and we will start with headteachers."

KEY CHANGES

It should be noted that the transitional curriculum is different from the new A'level curriculum, whose development was paused last year due to limited funds.

The ministry plans to deploy the transitional curriculum for four years and thereafter, return to the new one.

As part of the transitional curriculum, the Government will change the teaching, learning and assessment approaches, as well as the overall curriculum focus.

Just like in the new lower secondary school curriculum, students under the transitional A'level curriculum will be assessed according to competencies.

Under the adjusted curriculum, the Government has eliminated obsolete content, overlaps and redundancies in all the subjects taught at A'level.

As part of the changes seen by *New Vision*, subjects such as divinity and biology, which had three examinable papers each at Senior Six, will be reduced to two.

In addition, history, which had three examinable papers, will reduce to two.

In addition, the Government has eliminated obsolete content such as the cathode-ray oscilloscope in physics, which introduced learners to technologies of making old television and radio sets.

BIOLOGY

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Experts who participated in the formulation of the A'level biology syllabus explained that the dissection of toads was removed for conservation purposes.

In addition, they indicated that the dissection of both toads and cockroaches did not have significant impacts on the learners' future.

However, as part of the biology syllabus, they incorporated food security, carbon footprint, pesticide resistance and antimicrobial resistance.

A source said the criteria for selection of courses at higher institutions of learning will be maintained.

NCDC EXPLAINS

Dr Grace Baguma, the director at NCDC, said they have developed the transitional curriculum to align the one for A'level with that of O'level.

Subsequently, she said, they have changed subject objectives into competencies and learning outcomes.

In addition, Baguma said, they have integrated concepts that were

removed at O'level and were not taught at A'level, removed content overlaps, as well as obsolete and redundant concepts.

"We are also realigning the assessment modalities to emphasise formative and summative assessment approaches at A'level with the competency-based assessment," she said.

Baguma said the new lower secondary school curriculum introduced learner-centred teaching, leaving the knowledge-based teacher-centred curriculum at A'level.

Now that the learners are transitioning to A'level, she said the sector needed to develop a

transitional curriculum to which the first cohort of the new O'level curriculum will be enrolled.

Following several interactions between NCDC and selected schools about the changes in the lower secondary curriculum, Baguma said they found that children enrolled onto the competence-based curriculum were different from those of the knowledge-based curriculum.

This, she said, called for a transitional curriculum which has since been prepared.

"Following Cabinet approval, we were tasked by the First Lady and Minister of Education and Sports, Mrs Janet Museveni, with developing a transitional A'level curriculum for the pioneer students who will be joining Senior Five this year," Baguma said.

"We have done the job, but we will have to wait for approvals from the First Lady to share the final syllabus for the transitional curriculum. As soon as it is approved, we will share it on our websites."

WHAT NEXT

The NCDC is expected to present the draft curriculum to Mrs Museveni this week.

Once approved by the minister, the curriculum will then be ready for deployment across all secondary schools in the country.

WHAT OTHER PEOPLE SAY

Vincent Elong, the national chairperson of the Uganda Professional Science Teachers' Union, welcomed the transitional curriculum, adding that it will facilitate a transition for the Senior Four candidates.

He is optimistic that the changes will not be that many and that the teachers will not have challenges adapting to the changes like they did with the O'level curriculum.

"The old A'level curriculum has been broad and it would have been hard for the O'level students to transition properly. It is welcome. As a teacher, we are ready," Elong said.

However, another A'level teacher said: "We are not against the curriculum, but our main issue is that the Government brings these changes in a rush. We had an entire year, with holidays, teachers should have been trained last year."

He added: "We have already made our lesson plans, now we are going to be trained on a transitional curriculum which requires us to develop new lesson plans. This is bad planning."



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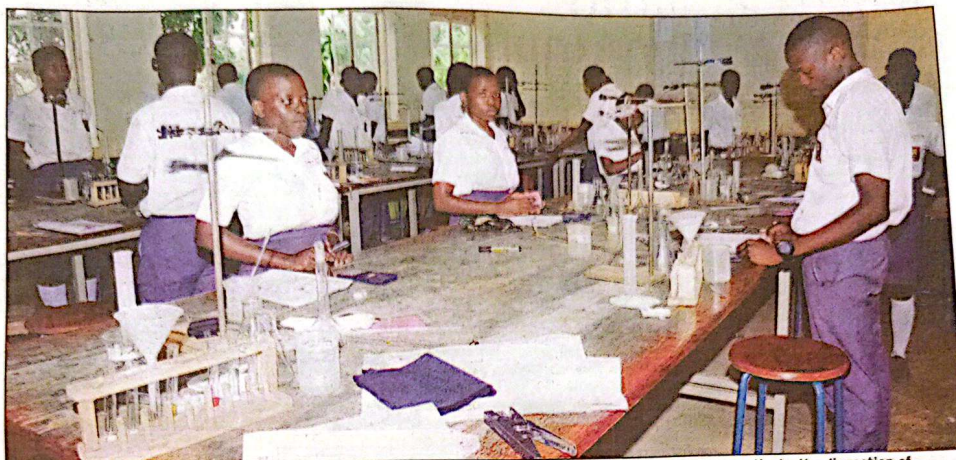
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