

of PWDs and organised them to empower them, urging individuals to believe in their potential. "Several PWDs believe that they cannot make

annual special power... provides Shs5 million per group of five to boost businesses and household

Other initiatives... poultry, mushroom growing, and

Medics list grounds for rejecting new education, internship policy

BY TONNY ABET

KAMPALA. Leaders of professional associations representing medical practitioners, nurses, pharmacists, and medical students have threatened to take legal action against the government over a new medical education and internship policy.

They argue that the new policy should be reversed because it violates existing laws, undermines professional standards, could cause exploitation of students and their families financially and that it was passed without involving them. But the Ministry of Health challenged this.

The new policy, advanced by the ministries of Health and that of Education, would delay graduation for medical students, including those pursuing degrees in medicine, pharmacy and nursing, until they complete their mandatory one-year supervised internship. Currently, students graduate with

their degrees after university training (typically five years for MBChB), then undertake an internship as a separate requirement for full registration and a permanent practising license.

While addressing journalists yesterday at Mulago, Dr Alone Nahabwe, the Uganda Medical Association (UMA) secretary general, said the association has rejected the policy on six grounds.

Dr Nahabwe said the policy would cause conflation of academic training and professional licensure. "Graduation from medical school is an academic certification issued by universities confirming that a student has successfully completed the prescribed curriculum and examinations for the Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBChB)," he said.

Dr Nahabwe explained that an internship, on the other hand, is a supervised professional apprenticeship period required for licensure by the Uganda Medical and Dental Practitioners Coun-

cil (UMDPC), to enable one to practice medicine.

"Linking university graduation to completion of internship conflates two distinct processes governed by different institutions. Universities are responsible for academic certification, while an

THE SIX GROUNDS

- Conflation of academic Training
- Risk of delays due to internship deployment constraints
- Increased financial burden
- Socio-economic and psychological impact on medical graduates
- Internship is a national service year not a tuition year
- No evidence that duration alone improves quality

internship is a professional regulatory requirement for independent medical practice," he added.

Dr Nahabwe also said an internship should be regarded as a national service year, not a tuition year.

According to the UMA president, Dr Frank Asiimwe, the new policy would also create regulatory ambiguity regarding the roles of universities, hospitals, and professional regulators.

"We have yet learnt from newspapers that the Ministry of Health meted out injustices on us, the medical fraternity, and we're not going to take it lying down. We would like to make it clear that interns are not students. They have satisfied the requirements for the award of a Bachelor's degree," he said.

"From our side as supervisors, if you give us a student who has not been graduated, and is not licensed (with an initial temporary licence), I cannot supervise them. So it already puts the internship programme in a very precari-

ous situation," he added.

Under the changes, set to take effect from July 2026, internship would be integrated into the degree programme, extending overall training to six years.

Dr Diana Atwine, the Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Health, said earlier that this would improve the quality of the healthcare workforce.

But UMA stated that there is no evidence that duration alone improves quality of the health workforce released into the job market.

They said the ministries should instead work on the quality of students admitted into medical school and how they are trained.

Dr Asiimwe said they would like to meet President Museveni over the matter so that this policy can be revisited. But Dr Atwine said the relevant associations and professionals were consulted during the policy formulation and that "nothing has changed except the time of the graduation."