UVTAB pushing for dual learning in schools

By John Masaba

The Uganda Vocational and Technical Assessment Board (UVTAB) has proposed a dual learning approach that combines academic education with vocational skills training as part of efforts to bridge the gap between training and employment.

UVTAB chairperson Dorothy Okello said the push is aimed at addressing a growing mismatch between classroom learning and labour market demands, where many graduates struggle to find jobs.

Citing the 2024 Uganda National census report, which indicates that 75% of Uganda's population is comprised of young people, she noted that available formal jobs are not keeping pace.

Okello made the call during the King's College, Budo Career Day held on Wednesday. She emphasised that while the traditional academic path from Primary Seven to University is the norm, it often leaves a gap between theoretical knowledge and the "tangible solutions" needed by communities.



Students of King's College, Budo showcasing road traffic safety innovation during the Career Day

Okello noted that the traditional academic pathway often leaves learners with theoretical knowledge but limited practical ability to solve real-life problems.

She encouraged students to enroll in short courses such as welding, electrical installation, catering, and fashion and design, which can be completed within a short time and lead to certification.

"These are not just holiday activities. They are opportunities for young people to gain skills that can improve their employability or enable them to start their own businesses," she said, dismissing the notion that vocational training is meant for academically weak students, but that even top-performing students need practical skills.

"This is about building a generation that can create jobs, not just look for them," she added.

TVET REFORMS

The remarks come at a time when government is implementing reforms in the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sector aimed at expanding access to skills training across the country.

Some of the reforms under the TVET Act 2025, include the introduction of modular learning, which breaks (TVET) courses into smaller, flexible units that learners can complete progressively.

The Act also provides for the establishment of skills training centres that admit learners based on their interest in specific trades, rather than academic grades alone.

Under the new framework, learners in the TVET system can now progress through the education ladder up to PhD level without necessarily passing through the traditional (non-TVET) academic pathway.

In addition, the Government has introduced a system that allows skilled workers who acquired competencies on the job, such as experienced mechanics and tailors to undergo formal assessment and receive certification, even if they have never attended a classroom setting.

THE INNOVATIONS

During the event, there was a vibrant exhibition of practical innovation and unveiling of technology-driven solutions aimed at addressing challenges in health, environment, energy, and security.

King's College's headteacher, Godfrey Kasamba, said the showcase was part of the school's ongoing efforts to implement Uganda's competence-based curriculum as well as apply science, engineering, and technology to real-life problems.

He noted that the pace and quality of output from learners were clear indicators that the transition from the old curriculum to the new system was beginning to bear fruit, despite early scepticism when it was introduced.

Chef Henry Wanyama, Director and Founder of Culinary School Uganda, noted that while professions, such as law, medicine, and engineering remain important, they are becoming increasingly competitive and limited in capacity.

"Not everybody can fit there," Wanyama explained.

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