

What next for students who fail to meet pass mark?

Ultimately, examination results represent only one measure of ability, largely the capacity to express and apply knowledge in written form. However, with determination, proper guidance, and support from family and educators, students can still build successful and fulfilling futures.

BY GEOFFREY OYET OKWERA

Joseph Kilima does not qualify to proceed to the Advanced Level of education, having fallen short of the minimum requirements needed for admission. He also failed the special projects that accompany the written examinations, both of which form part of the overall assessment for progression to the advanced level of secondary education.

Since then, Kilima has been disappointed with himself for not making it to the next level and thinks his future is bleak.

However, Kilima and other students should not despair because there is still hope as not all is lost under the competence based curriculum (CBC). In this new curriculum, learners are recommended to pursue practical hands on skills at the technical institutions of learning. Education experts believe that no student can be completely without any areas of expertise in terms of practical skills.

Technical institutions

As such, these technical institutions in the first year are supposed to help identify specific areas where these students can excel in and then develop further.

The recent results released for both, Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE) and the Uganda Certificate of Education (UCE) have seen a number of learners across the country fall short of the minimum grades required to proceed to the next level of their academic journey.

For many students and parents, the release of the examination results brought a mixture of joy and disappointment. While some learners celebrated outstanding academic achievements, others had to come to terms with results that fell below expectations. However, falling short of the minimum pass mark should not be seen as the end of the road because, there is still light at the end of the tunnel.

Stephen Mukasa, an educationist in Kampala, observes that academic performance at one stage, does not define a learner's entire future. Education is not a one-size-fits-all journey; it is diverse and flexible, offering multiple pathways to success.

Mukasa says students who may not progress through the traditional academic route can explore alternatives such as; vocational training, technical institutions, skills development programmes, or even re-sitting examinations with bet-

IDENTIFY TALENTS

Joseph Mukisa, an expert under the CBC curriculum, explains that learners who do not progress to the next phase of formal education still have viable pathways. He notes that such students can enroll in vocational and technical institutions to acquire practical, hands-on skills, since every learner possesses unique strengths and talents.

"These learners can be trained in hands-on skills so that they are able to begin innovating and producing goods or services at an earlier stage," says Mukisa. After identifying the specific potential of each student, there is need to explore various certificate courses that align with their talents and interests, such as; hairdressing, catering and hospitality, welding, carpentry and joinery, mechanical works, electrical installation, civil engineering, among others.

ter preparation. Many successful individuals have built fulfilling careers through non-traditional routes that align more closely with their talents and interests.

"What matters most is resilience, guidance, and the willingness to keep moving forward. With the right support from parents, teachers, and communities, every learner can find a pathway that leads to growth, opportunity, and achievement," says Mukasa.

Competence Based Curriculum

Under the new secondary school curriculum, the Competence Based Curriculum (CBC), students who do not attain

the desired grades still have meaningful opportunities to improve and progress.

The CBC emphasizes mastery of skills and competencies rather than merely passing examinations. As such, learners who fall short of expectations can consider repeating the class to strengthen their academic foundation, deepen their understanding of key concepts, and build the confidence necessary for better performance in subsequent assessments.

Repeating a class under this system is not a punishment, but an opportunity for reinforcement and growth. With proper guidance from teachers and support from parents, students can use the additional time to address learning gaps and emerge stronger, better prepared for the next level of their education.

However, before subjecting a learner to repeat a class, Morris Onenchan, a counselor, advises parents to first consider enrolling them in counseling. He explains that some learners become psychologically distressed after receiving poor results, often internalising the belief that they are failures. That mindset can quietly sabotage future effort more effectively than any difficult examination ever could.

Onenchan stresses that academic setbacks can bruise confidence, and without emotional support, a learner may carry shame, anxiety or fear into the next attempt. Counseling helps rebuild self-esteem, reframe failure as feedback, and restore motivation, which is key to prosperity.

"It is important for these learners to understand that success and learning are not solely dependent on passing exams in a given year. The years ahead also present valuable opportunities for skills acquisition and growth," explains Onenchan.

He says the deeper truth of this matter is almost philosophical; as an examination measures performance at a moment in time, not the total capacity of a human being. "Intelligence is not a single event. It unfolds. When young people grasp that, the narrative shifts from 'I failed' to 'I am still becoming.' And that shift can change everything."

Onenchan reiterates.

Think holistically

He adds that failure should not be defined solely by poor performance in examinations; rather the emphasis should be on staying committed to skills acquisition. Although practical learning guarantees success, it is not only in passing examinations, rather in building a meaningful and sustainable livelihood.

According to Onenchan, education should be viewed holistically without necessarily putting attention to examination results alone.

While academic excellence is important, hands-on skills, innovation, and personal development are equally valuable in shaping a successful future. He encourages students who may have fallen short in examinations not to lose hope, but instead to explore alternative pathways such as vocational training, entrepreneurship, and technical education.

Onenchan stresses that when learners continuously equip themselves with relevant skills and knowledge, they position themselves for broader opportunities and long-term achievement beyond the classroom.

It is also important for parents and guardians to provide emotional support during this time. Encouragement, rather than blame, can significantly boost a learner's confidence, and resilience.

Ultimately, examination results represent only one measure of ability, largely the capacity to express and apply knowledge in written form. However, with determination, proper guidance, and support from family and educators, students can still build successful and fulfilling futures.

Many get disappointed for not passing and think their future is bleak.