



Students of Kisojo SS Kyenjojo, showcase their school project of manufacturing sanitary pads, during the national enterprise challenge programme (ECP) last week in Kampala. PHOTO/DAVID WALUGEMBE

How entrepreneurship is shaping learning

Business acumen. By embedding entrepreneurship in school activities, the curriculum is empowering students to develop business acumen early, preparing them to create jobs.

BY DAVID WALUGEMBE

A quiet revolution is unfolding in Uganda's classrooms, armed not only with textbooks but also with practical business ideas, learners are transforming school projects into real enterprises.

This shift follows the introduction of the Competence-Based Curriculum (CBC) by the Ministry of Education and Sports in 2020, a reform designed to move education beyond theoretical learning to practical skills and innovation.

By prioritising a learner-centred approach and embedding entrepreneurship in school activities, the curriculum is empowering students to develop business acumen early, preparing them not just to seek jobs but to create them in a competitive labour market.

Reaping from early enterprise

William Ampulire, a student at Mityana SS, said through the CBC arrangement he acquired skills in making pavers and tiles from plastic waste using simple school-level technology, shaping his skill development.

For the target achievement, Ampulire said they formed a group of seven learners who contributed Shs50,000 each to buy the materials to use during the construction for the project success.

"We managed to collect Shs 400,000 with the support of our teacher; we used the instalment method," Ampulire stated.

On top of the money, they also collected 35 kilograms of plastic bottles and 15 kilograms of polythene bags for the

start-up from the surrounding communities to start the project. He said they aimed to produce products from plastic waste materials, saving the environment and acquiring skills.

"After the process, we produced 16 boxes of tiles and 80 pavers, selling each paver at Shs1,800; leading us to Shs144,000, with each box of tiles costing at Shs 40,000, hence collecting Shs 640,000 from the entire project," Ampulire explained.

Ampulire noted they will transform the entrepreneurial skills acquired to advance their experience in the job market rather than seeking jobs after graduation.

Affordable sanitary pads

Another learner, Harriet Katusiime, a senior two student at Kisojo Secondary School, said she acquired practical skills to make affordable eco-friendly sanitary pads.

Katusiime said they also formed a group of about seven members and collected money to buy sewing machines, cotton cloth, and toilet paper as materials they use to make the pads.

"We chose this project to save the girl child from missing classes due to menstrual hygiene," Katusiime noted.

Michael Kintu, a senior three student at Makokoto SS, Kasanda, said they also practise growing vegetables in the school garden, a project that has given them exposure to learn proper vegetable handling, harvesting, and budgeting.

"We prioritise selling healthy greens to the surrounding communities of Kasanda, which has enabled us to get money. We meet every evening to get modern gardening lessons and budgeting from our teacher," Kintu said.

One of the teachers, Mr Exavier Maseruka, dean of students of Kisojo SS, said they form groups of students and a teacher mentor who is responsible for imparting skills to learners, meet once a week every evening for trainings, and also organise inter-school competitions to choose the best two schools that appear at a regional level.

Maseruka said by equipping learners with entrepreneurship, they aim

at grooming learners with the business skills to impact Uganda's economy, hence reducing the rate of unemployment. "We want to change the mindset people right away from a lower level. We need to proactively find solutions to problems within our communities," Mr Maseruka said.

Challenges learners face

Elizabeth Nabulime, a senior two student from Mityana SS, urged the government to increase funding for the vocational skilling of children right away from primary to enable learners to gain enterprise knowledge. She said as much as they get skilling support, they are limited by resources.

"Each group member contributed Shs50,000, but some of us never had it. This slowed down our process. We urge the government to support such initiatives at the school level for the brighter future of students," she recommended.

"We lack advanced technology equipment to speed up our work and increase production to produce more pavers and tiles, making our business more profitable," she further added.

Bridget Kimuli, a senior two student at Makokoto SS, Kasanda, appeals to schools to make timetables that favour both academic work and skills.

"Sometimes when we are supposed to be in class, we are expected to make materials," she explained.

Unemployment analysis

According to the recent MasterCard Foundation report, only 12.86 percent of Ugandan graduates secure formal employment after studies. Out of 700,000 graduates entering the labour market annually, only 90,000 secure formal employment, leaving hundreds of thousands languishing in the employment arena.

The unemployment rate stands at 12.3 per cent, with 42.6 per cent of youths aged 15-24 not in employment, education, or training, according to the Uganda Bureau of Statistics' 2024 National Population and Housing Census report.