

UNITE emphasises practice-oriented training

Uganda National Institute for Teacher Education (UNITE) is fundamentally enhancing the quality of teaching in both primary and secondary schools. According to **Prof Betty Akullu Ezati**, the UNITE VC, the institution is professionalising teacher education by anchoring it at degree level.

Tell us about Uganda National Institute for Teacher Education (UNITE)

UNITE was established on July 5, 2024 through a Statutory Instrument No. 53 of 2024 under the Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act (UOTIA), Cap. 262, as an Other Degree Awarding Institution (ODAI).

UNITE is a multi-campus Institution with campuses in Kabale, Kaliro, Mubende, Muni and Unyama in Gulu. The establishment of UNITE was inspired by findings from the 2013 Teacher Initiative in Sub-Saharan Africa study, which highlighted gaps in teacher standards.

Following this, the National Teacher Policy 2019, recommended the establishment of a specialized institution 'UNITE' to lead transformation in teacher education.

UNITE is mandated to pro-

vide niche-based education programme for Pre-Primary, Primary and Post Primary Education as well as Continuous Professional Development (CPD).

The goal of CPD is to ensure teacher learning is continuous and responsive to modern education needs.

Through this mandate, UNITE is fundamentally enhancing the quality of teaching in both primary and secondary schools.

We are professionalising teacher education by anchoring it at degree level, strengthening continuous professional development, and embedding competence based, learner-centered pedagogies into all our programmes.

UNITE's programmes emphasises practice-oriented training. It calls on teacher educators, students and graduates of UNITE to use hands-on experiences in teaching and learning,



Prof. Betty Akullu Ezati, the UNITE Vice Chancellor. PHOTO/COURTESY

and to promote critical thinking and problem-solving skills in everyday life.

UNITE also emphasizes educational research to ensure that teachers are not only academically grounded, but also classroom ready and responsive to the needs of their community and of 21st century learners.

Ultimately, UNITE is not just training teachers, it is shaping a highly skilled, reflective, and innovative teaching workforce capable of driving improved learning outcomes and national development.

With the changes in curriculum across all stages of learning, what challenges are you facing to ensure that teacher training meets the required standards?

UNITE's programmes are competence-based which aligns to the curriculum in schools. Therefore, our challenge is inability of teacher educators to effectively facilitate learning of a competence-based programme.

Such educators may not be fully comfortable with approaches like project based learning or continuous assessment.

For example, instead of guiding learners to apply knowledge in real life situations, some still default to lecture methods.

Secondly, competence-based curriculum requires students to actively participate in the teaching learning processes.

It is possible that those who

are used to the old system may resist active involvement during teaching.

We're also dealing with resource gaps, some schools lack adequate teaching materials, and in certain areas, even basic infrastructure can limit effective delivery of the new curriculum.

How do you plan to address these challenges?

We are tackling this from multiple angles, including induction, continuous training and mentorship.

At UNITE, all teacher educators were inducted and have attended a series of workshops on facilitating learning of a competence-based curriculum, how to integrate values in teaching, how to design lesson plans, create assessment tasks, and simulate classroom situations, not just theory among others.

The institution has developed training modules on different areas to enhance the educators knowledge and skills. They are expected to attend training workshops every semester.

We're also strengthening mentorship. A newly trained teacher, or even an experienced one adapting to the new system, benefits greatly from coaching and peer learning.

TO APPLY, ADMISSION PATHWAYS

Applications for the 2026/2027 academic year are now open and UNITE welcomes a wide range of applicants, including: Senior Six leavers who want to become teachers
Diploma holders upgrading to degree level
Applicants can join through:
1. Direct Entry (Senior Six)
2. Diploma Entry
3. Certificate Entry (Grade III, Higher Education Certificate, or Mature Age Certificate)