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"We still have
learners shunning vocational
education because they believe
and we need to

UNEB boss heads Africa's education body

By Cecilia Okoth

The executive secretary of Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB), Dan Odongo, has promised to intensify efforts to bring on board educationists from the Francophone, the Arab and Portuguese African countries to promote stronger collaboration and partnerships in the education sector.

He made the remarks in his acceptance speech, moments after being installed as the new president of the Association for Educational Assessment in Africa (AEAA) on Friday.

Last week, UNEB hosted the 35th AEAA conference at the Munyonyo Commonwealth Resort, under the theme: "Enhancing Efficiency and Effectiveness in Educational Assessment in an era of Education Change."

Odongo, who succeeded Esau Nhandara, the head of the Zimbabwe Schools Examinations Council, said one of his strategies as president of the body will be to pursue the opportunity for the presence of the AEAA to be established at the African Union (AU) headquarters in Addis Ababa, for liaison purposes with the African body.

"I assume presidency at a time when the AEAA has not only also a strategic plan developed, but has embarked on its implementation. I have a strong belief and I know that within our institutions, there exists an abundance of expertise in various aspects of assessment, which we can share for our mutual benefit, through

Experts discussed solutions to challenges faced by the education sector worldwide

regular benchmarking," he said. A total of 283 delegates from 23 countries presented papers, discussing solutions to the many challenges posed in regard to educational assessment worldwide.

The conference was officially opened by the First Lady and education minister Janet Museveni. In her remarks, Mrs. Museveni tasked the experts with addressing issues on how assessments can contribute to relevant and quality education, enhance efficiency and effectiveness in educational assessment and determine how the present assessment systems have contributed to the low quality of education on the African continent.

At the end of the week-long conference, the participants, who included examination board chief executive members, curriculum developers, assessment experts and practitioners came up with recommendations.

Dr Edmund Mazibuko, the executive secretary of AEAA, said it was resolved that assessment

practitioners consider harmonisation of test standards to ensure a more or less level ground for admission into higher educational institutions and for graduates in the competitive job market.

He said the solutions to the ineffective assessment of the curriculum should include effective alignment of the assessment to the curriculum.

Examination bodies conducting frequent reviews of their assessment procedures and instituting prohibitive penalties to contain examination malpractices and taking keen interest in the quality and efficiency, effectiveness and the process of administration of aptitude tests, were also recommended.

Closing the conference, Dr John Chrysostom Muyingo, the state minister for higher education, urged the experts to carefully study and translate the recommendations into actions that will move the assessment and education as a whole forward, to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

"An important area of concern to us as a country is how to make our school and tertiary institution leavers competitive and relevant to the demands of the world of work. We are laying emphasis on the acquisition of generic skills by our graduates," he said.

Muyingo, congratulated Odongo upon assuming the office of president of AEAA, promised to render him and the AEAA executive support.