

Govt bans purchase of external tests for students assessment

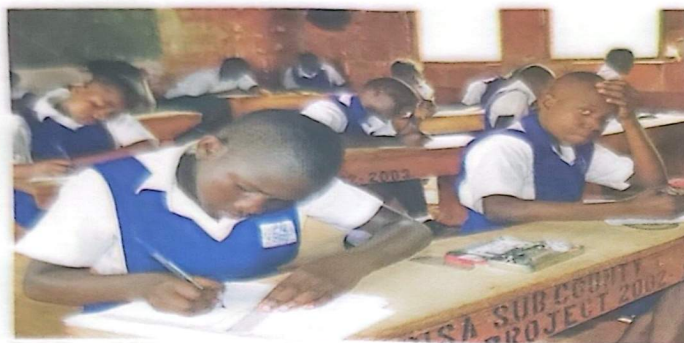
By Gloria Nakajubi

"Education bureaus are the new mushrooming business. It is a test for this and a test for that. What then is the role of teachers?"

Those are some of the sentiments that were shared by Robinson Nsumba-Lyazzi, the director of basic and secondary education, on why the education ministry has banned the purchase external tests to assess students.

According to a circular issued by the ministry recently, the ban also covers the incessant tests being administered in schools.

"The ministry is extremely concerned about the escalating practice of frequent and endless testing of learners in schools. The wanton testing is unfortunately at the expense of effective teaching and learning, premised on the competent lesson preparation, delivery and follow-up," read the circular.



Pupils sitting exams. The education ministry is against frequent tests in schools

According to the ministry, administering of commercially-generated tests from persons who are not directly engaged with the learners and in total disregard of the curriculum

is detrimental to the learners' cognitive development.

Probably, one of the reasons for the unemployability of school-leavers, Nsumba-Lyazzi explained, is that most schools

- Testing should be used only as part of the teaching and learning process.
- Tests must be justified in schemes of work and lesson plans
- Head teachers should ensure that all their teachers prepare tests instead of buying already prepared tests.
- Schools should desist from buying and administering externally generated tests.
- District education officers and inspector of schools should emphasize the supervision of the teaching and learning processes.
- Districts should adopt district-based mock examination panels.

KEY DIRECTIVES

have become 'test centres' and not learning areas.

"They are pushing learners to cram instead of conceptualising issues. We have people going through the system and not acquiring an education."

The educationists argued that because of the numerous tests,

teachers have given up on their cardinal role of teaching and resorted to 'spotting' questions that are likely to appear in the national examinations.

"Learning is our major objective. You cannot have a student thinking about the next test and think they will

focus and understand. That is why they can't even apply the knowledge from school to the real world." Nsumba-Lyazzi stressed, adding: "This must stop forthwith".

In the wake of an earlier ban on extra charges in schools, the officer explained that this is one of the areas where schools spend a lot of money. This cost is eventually transferred to the parents in form of hiked fees.

Assessment according to the director of the National Curriculum Development Centre, Grace Baguma, is much more than just administering tests.

The curriculum, she argues, recommends continuous assessment.

"The whole idea of assessment has been turned the other way round. A good teacher should be able to assess their learners through class interactions and observations, not just buying question papers," she said.