

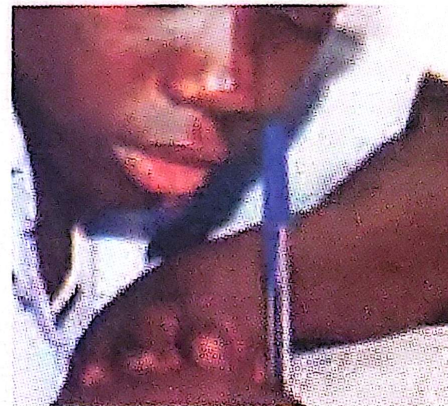
What leaking exams means

When images of Senior Four Uneb exams were trending on social media, it was hard to believe until the leaks were confirmed by examination body's officials. Exam malpractices and associated breakdown of the integrity of our academic system are largely a symptom of a moral crisis that has affected our society.

It is common knowledge that starting from primary, some pupils are helped to pass their Primary Leaving Exams (PLE). A couple of secondary schools also engage in the same vice. At some universities, some students obtain degrees not through hard work, but due to cheating. The costs of this leak to society may not be easy to ascertain, but it is enormous.

A country is as strong as the character and competence of its people. While competence is acquired through high quality training at institutions, character is built from childhood to adulthood through continuous training and having role models. Society has the responsibility of upholding certain values upon which the population depends. Sadly, academic institutions often concentrate more on competence, but less on character.

Character is also misunderstood



sometimes as having wealth or fame. These can come from the pillars of character, which include hard work, honesty, integrity, faithfulness and respect of set rules.

A society that deviates from this moral thread breaks its foundation of orderly progress and limits the growth of its people. Whether it is public or private sector, societal progress can only happen when there is an element of trust and integrity both at institutional and individual levels.

For example, contracts are concluded on the premise that the other party will honour their obligations and investors will invest if they are assured of transparent and functional institutions such as courts to enforce their rights.

They can only be dependable

and credible if there are persons of integrity behind the desk. Sadly, our institutions cannot produce people who cheat exams and then we expect a society of men and women of integrity. The loss of integrity and moral compass for the young generation, will mean a path worse than that of their predecessors. It is not hard to see that a person, who thinks it is okay to cheat at school, will also cheat at their work places.

A doctor who cheats his or her way through medical school poses a danger to society. Similarly, a driver, who due to bribery, obtains a driving permit without undertaking a driving course, poses a danger to other road users.

It is no wonder that citizens from neighbouring countries such as Kenya find it easier to be employed in some sectors of our economy than Ugandans.

Reversing this trend will not be an easy task. What is required are comprehensive, bold, robust and swift measures taken by leaders who have integrity; leaders whose decisions and actions are guided not by material gain but public good.

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