

Advice. Head teachers have been advised to buy apparatuses and chemicals early enough to enable the students practice.

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Teachers blame fake lab chemicals for poor grades

KAMPALA. Science teachers have singled out fake and expired chemicals used in practical exams as one of the key causes of high failure rates in science subjects across the country.

The government on Wednesday blamed teachers for the poor science grades in the recently released Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education exams, saying the teachers employ poor teaching methods.

But Mr James Bato, the dean of upper schools, also Biology and Chemistry teacher at Kitante Hill School in Kampala, told *Daily Monitor* in a telephone interview that students cannot get the expected results when they conduct practical exams using expired or counterfeit chemicals that have flooded the market.

Issue

He said sometimes teachers who are not experienced fail to identify the original chemicals and are given ash instead of zinc carbonate, among others.

"If you are an experienced teacher, you can carry out experiments and know the results of the genuine chemicals, but if you were not exposed, you cannot differentiate between the genuine and fake ones. This affects the outcomes of what students do in their practical exams," Mr Bato



said. He also said the reluctance of some head teachers to buy apparatuses and chemicals early enough to

enable the students practice and get acquainted before the final practical exams affects their performance.

BACKGROUND

Intervention.

Government has since 2017 promised to recruit at least 1,500 science and 500 arts teachers to supplement the existing numbers.

Practical.

Students during a practical exam. Teachers have blamed poor results in sciences on fake lab chemicals.

FILE PHOTO

"Some apparatuses are breakable so teachers keep them away and only get them out towards the final exams. This lack of exposure robs the students of the confidence in whatever they do," he added.

He also said there are few science teachers outside the urban schools, with only one science teacher serving several schools.

He added that the teacher-pupil ratio remains imbalanced at 1:90 instead of the required 1:50 at O-level, while it stands at 1:50 instead of the recommended 1:25 at A-level.

The imbalance, Mr Bato said, makes it very difficult for science teachers to give enough attention to their students.

He urged the government to initiate deliberate efforts to support teachers and schools in achieving better performances in the science and also address the issue of poor remuneration for teachers to make the profession attractive.

Education ministry permanent secretary Alex Kakooza during the release of Senior Four exams results said they were working with the Public Service ministry to cater for recruitment science teachers.