Uneb chairman wants change in PLE grading

He proposes that candidates should instead be ranked based on the actual scores obtained in all subjects, as was the case before 1983, when the current aggregate system was introduced.

BY JANE NAFULA & STEPHEN OTAGE

The Chairperson of the Uganda National Examinations Board (Uneb), Prof Celestino Obua, has pledged to push for a change in the grading of Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE) to avoid what he termed as the magic of Aggregate 4.

Speaking after taking the oath for his second term of office, Prof Obua said the current grading system was causing a lot of anguish among candidates, especially those who narrowly miss the top mark.

Prof Obua, who took over as chairperson of the 13-member board at an event held in Kampala yesterday, suggested that candidates should instead be ranked based on the actual scores obtained in all subjects, as was the case before 1983, when the current aggregate system was introduced.

"What if we used absolute marks? If four subjects are supposed to garner 400 marks, you grade the children according to what their total score is," Prof Obua advised.

He added: "There should be a certain ranking of students based on the actual scores obtained, so that if you want to admit 100 children in Senior One, you rank them according to their total score."

Prof Obua described the current grading system as unfair. "I hope you appreciate the gap I'm talking about that exists between someone who scores an Aggregate 4 and an Aggregate 8.

"For example, if the cut-off point for a distinction one is 80 marks, the person who scores 80 percent throughout will get 320 marks out of 400, which is equivalent to Aggregate of 4," he noted, explaining further that a candidate who scores 79 percent in all subjects gets 316 marks out of 400 or about gets Aggregate 8.

"The magical Aggregate 4 is giving a lot of anguish to children," the Uneb board chairperson emphasised.

Prof Obua also cautioned teachers against derailing learners with questions obtained from examination bureaus, saying such questions were simply confusing learners, adding that they are not based on the syllabus.

"Examination bureaus are a problem. They are misguiding certain teachers. They disguise themselves by using the Uneb letterhead, and then they present as if it originates from Uneb, to make money. Schools should not waste their time going for the so-called examination bureaus. You find a pupil being marked and graded by a classroom teacher, and some of them are doing so to get favours from the school proprietors.

"Some parents are duped with the idea that their child is Aggregate 4 material, but when that does not happen, this becomes an issue," he explained.

Prof Obua added that during his second term as Uneb board chairperson, he would focus more on the digitalisation of the exam body's services as well as checking examination malpra...

Presiding over the swearing in... sion, Mr Brian Kajubi, the legal ... of Uneb, urged the new board mem... to serve diligently.

"Pay attention to the principles of... porate governance and ensure int... ty and quality of the national exam... tions," Mr Kajubi advised.

Mr Dan Odongo, the executive ... tor of Uneb, tasked the board mem... to be cautious of stakeholders who ... jeopardise the integrity of the exam... tion body.

"Some board members are ... proached by individuals or schools... For example, we have right now ... of results that have been withheld ... cause the schools are suspected to ... involved themselves in malpract... Heads of some of these schools, pare... and directors want to see certain m... bers of the board and ask them if ... is something they can do to make ... that the results are released. This ha... pens all the time. I was telling them ... that they should expect such approach... es, and obviously, when they get ap... proached in that manner, they should ... know how to handle those matters," Mr Odongo said.

He added: "The board plays a very ... nificant role in guaranteeing the cred... ibility of the education system of our country. If the functions are carried out well, the nation's certificates are recognised throughout the world, and that makes mobility for citizens, either for further studies or employment, easy. [This is] In addition to playing an oversight role in ensuring that the day-to-day activity is carried out by the secretariat under the executive director."

Mr Odongo also reminded the board members to be prepared for criticism, most of which is very unfair, coming from sections of the public, especially those that do not know the functions of the board.

The State minister for Higher Education, Mr John Chrysostom Muyingo, who presided over the inauguration ceremony, said the appointment of the new board marks an important milestone in the collective effort to strengthen the integrity, credibility, efficiency and effectiveness of the national examinations system.

The minister also pledged that the government would avail the required resources to enable the board undertake its mandate.

Inaugurated Uneb board members



Jerry Atwine. PHOTOS/STEPHEN OTAGE



Zulaika Nabukeera.



Dr Cleophus Mugenyi.



Harriet Nabusoba Ssebabi.



Bernadette Karuhanda.



Prof Rose Clarke Nanyonga.



Mohammed Kaaya.



Beatrice Adiru Asimasia.



Patrick Kabooyo.



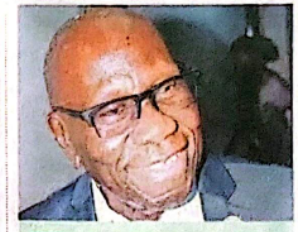
Herbert Mukasa.



Juma Mulesa.



Frances Atima.



Argument.
What if we used absolute marks? If four subjects are supposed to garner 400 marks, you grade the children according to what their total score is...There should be a certain ranking of students based on the actual scores obtained, so that if you want to admit 100 children in Senior One, you rank them according to their total score," Prof Celestino Obua, the Uneb board chairperson.