

Editor

Wishing you a successful start to the first term

By this time, most schools around the country have resumed after a lengthy two and half month long term. It has been a lengthy holiday for some who have had to stay away to allow their parents, teachers and some colleagues take part in the general election season.

The start of the school comes at a time when the Uganda National Examinations Board is releasing the second generation of O-Level exam results set under the new Lower Secondary School Curriculum. One of the main points of interest to observers is the performance of many candidates on the special project course, for which all students are required to pass, to qualify for a certificate.

The school projects enable learners to acquire specialised skills in various practical subjects in various fields such as bricklaying, block-laying, and concrete practice; mechanical vehicle repairing; plumbing and pipe fitting; fashion design and garment making. Other areas include electrical installation and repair, confectionery, as well as cosmetology and beauty therapy.

The subjects have the potential to teach students the skills that are vital to life after school. These skills, usually called vocational, allow learners, who don't go on to seek blue collar jobs, or specialities in academia, the opportunity to establish their own enterprises. This in turn, enables the learners to add value to their lives, by contributing to creating employment and being creative.

However, there have been concerns about how these projects, which are a recollection of subjects that had been in the previous syllabus, in the 1970s and 1980s. There are concerns about what should form the scope of these practical subjects. How much should be taught to these students, and whether they need to get specialised qualifications for skills obtained from these classes, to enable future employment. There are also concerns about how much training the teachers who run these classes obtain, before they qualify. In some schools, there have been concerns by school heads on how to obtain ingredients needed to make these classes possible.

Finally, while the jury is out on the benefits of the new lower secondary school curriculum, many parents, whose children have been through this process, are pleased with the new skills imparted and are hoping that this will lead to some success for those who choose to make this their future. In this issue, we look in some details at how the school projects have evolved.

The NIE welcomes comments and suggestions from readers, especially secondary school students. If you would like your suggestions...