

Poor grades don't decide your future - education experts

BY VICENT LUSAMBYA

KAMPALA. In a society where academic performance is often seen as the ultimate measure of success, it's refreshing to remember that poor grades don't define one's potential or determine one's future.

This is the advice of many who have been looking at the exam results released today.

Those results show that 77,080 or nearly 8 percent of those who sat for the 2025 Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE) completed their cycle ungraded. Some of these are unlikely to continue on their academic journey.

To those who are unsuccessful, many successful individuals have defied the odds, proving that determination, hard work, and passion can lead to greatness, regardless of academic achievements.

Take, for instance, the stories of entrepreneurs, artists, innovators, sportsmen, and women who have made it big despite struggling in school. They say this group are a testament to the fact that there is more to success than just grades.

With the right mindset and support, educationists say anyone can overcome academic setbacks and go on to achieve their goals.

In Uganda, where the education system drives towards academic prowess, educationist Mr Fagil Mande says it is crucial that young people push beyond the limitations of their grades to achieve success. This can be achieved through vocational training, entrepreneurship, or pursuing a passion, outside of academic excellence.

"It is time to shift the focus from grades to potential, and celebrate the diverse talents and strengths of every in-



The Uganda National Examinations Board (Uneb) Executive Director, Mr Dan Odongo, speaks during the release of the 2025 Primary Leaving Examinations results in Kampala yesterday. PHOTO/ UNEB

Educationists and counsellors advised that learners who fail in theoretical examinations shouldn't perceive it as an end but rather explore vocational edu-

tion, mechanics, or cooking, among others.

Mr Mande, however, stresses that learners shouldn't perceive vocation-

ures, noting that these require brilliant minds and are key drivers of development in all countries across the world.

"Somebody who can open an engine is not a fool; they are brilliant, they should therefore not think negatively about these courses. The most important thing is to have the skill and know they are not failures."

However, he advises learners to reflect on the reasons why they failed in theoretical studies and use them as stepping stones to success in their next course of life.

Mr Hasadu Kirabira, the chairperson of the National Private Education Institutions Association (NPEIA), urged parents that even where learners have not performed excellently, life has to continue with other aspects.

"We discourage learners from repeating classes. We want learners' poten-

Advice to parents.

Parents need to understand that...what is done in the processes of marking and preparing exams is also unknown. So, failing shouldn't be a case of crucifying children but rather encouraging these children to plan well, to best fit into the world using other avenues," **– Hasadu Kirabira, the chairperson of the National Private Education Institutions Association**

tial to be effectively utilised. There are many ways learners can take to get to their future. For example, driving and operating machinery skills; today, many young people are working in the Congo

Mr Emmanuel Gitta, a youth and adolescent counsellor and spokesperson at the Uganda Counselling Association, advises that learners who commit to repeat an academic level need to be empowered not to think they failed because they are deemed dumb.

"Learners need to know that failure doesn't define anybody because all of us try different things day in day out. For example, JK Rowling, a renowned British author, failed 12 times before her report was published. So the essence is to keep working to be better," he said.

Mr Kirabira added: "Parents need to understand that, because of the nature of the exams learners sit, it's not prudent for us to think that they will have to pass by all means. We should seek alternative ways for these learners to still get into the workforce," he said.

He added, "What is done in the processes of marking and preparing exams is also unknown. So, failing shouldn't be a case of crucifying children but rather encouraging these children to plan well, to best fit into the world using other avenues."

In addition, Mr Gitta advised that parents and educators should provide strong support systems for learners. This would enable them to process their emotions about failing healthily, necessitating the effective embrace of other alternatives to success.

He added that learners need to understand that there are still opportunities to improve and perform better at the next levels of life.

"Some people may not be very good at class work but could be good at hands-on activities. Parents and children should seek options outside theoretical teachings; people are multi-talented; we need to find out those talents," he