

# Is the Kiswahili 'A' becoming impossible?

For many years, Kiswahili was one of the best-performed subjects in Uganda. It was a subject where hard-working students could reliably score distinctions.

However, under the New Lower Secondary Curriculum (NLSC), that "A" has suddenly disappeared.

In the last two years, even our very best students are

Most children in Uganda start learning English in nursery school or even speak it at home, but they only start learning Kiswahili in secondary school.

Many students only begin to take it seriously in S4. It is not fair to give these late starters an extremely difficult exam that is meant for experts. We are testing beginners using a ruler that is too high for them.

This grading crisis comes at a bad time. Uganda is currently pushing for East African Integration, where Kiswahili is the main language for trade and unity.

If we make it impossible for our students to get an "A", we are demotivating them.

Why would a student love a language if the system tells them they are not good enough, even when they have worked hard?

Teachers are not just complaining on social media; they are seeking answers. A group of concerned educators even wrote a formal letter to the assessment authorities asking for a grading map.

They wanted to know exactly what a student must do to get an "A." Unfortunately, that letter has not been answered.

Teachers of Kiswahili are now like pilots flying in thick clouds without any instruments to guide them.

There is a feeling that the way students are graded is wanting. The system seems to have moved to a complex method called Item Response Theory (IRT).

In this system, it is not just about how many questions you get right, but how "difficult" those questions are. If this is true, a student can answer many questions correctly but still fail to get an "A" because they didn't hit a hidden level of difficulty that the teachers don't even know about.

We cannot build a Kiswahili-speaking nation by making the highest grade a secret or an impossibility. Our examinations should be fair and transparent.

We call upon the authorities to give us clear guidance.

Let the Grade A be a reward for true effort and competence, not a barrier that scares students away from our beautiful regional language.

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**John Paul Arigumaho**  
Education

failing to reach the top grade.

Teachers across the country are worried and frustrated because the "A" in Kiswahili has become an impossible dream.

The biggest problem is that Kiswahili is different from other subjects.