

Students show projects on housing of how to improve slums. PHOTO/FILE



#### EDITOR'S PICK

#### CBC: Lessons for the second A-Level cohort

Having spent four years under the new system, the learners are expected to continue with a similarly Aligned A-Level curriculum with the same components. / P29



#### Term One is open

The first term of 2026 started in several phases. The first students reported for school on February 10. Senior One learners will also start school on March 2, 2026, while their Senior Five counterparts will start on March 5. / P22



# Project Work: Gaps that must be fixed

**Creativity.** Under project work, learners are expected to come up with innovations that they believe can address real life problems in society.

## PROJECT WORK

BY JANE NAFULA

When the Ministry of Education and Sports commenced the implementation of the Competence-Based Curriculum (CBC) in 2020, with the aim of preparing students for the demands of the 21st century, the school project work became a key component of this curriculum.

Under project work, learners are expected to come up with innovations that they believe can address real life problems in society.

Teachers facilitate the project work process

by guiding learners to select topics that solve the real problem and also supervise their progress. The project work is assessed through competencies such as project planning, implementation, reporting with specific indicators to assess its competency.

Schools submit project achievements of learners from Senior Three and Four for evaluation to the Uganda National Examinations Board (Uneb). Project work is assessed at school level and it is presented as a standalone on the Uganda Certificate of Education (UCE) certificate, reflecting a learner's creative competence in addressing real life problems.

Many educationists appreciate the idea of project work, but they also believe that this component will achieve its intended purpose only after some lingering or perceived challenges are tackled.

Dr Dennis Mugimba, the spokesperson of the Ministry of Education and Sports, says the ministry appreciates the efforts of the learn-

ers, teachers, parents and school administrators who are striving to ensure the implementation of project work is a success.

However, Dr Mugimba urges learners and teachers to desist from plagiarism, a vice that he tasks school administrators to guard against. According to him, originality is a fundamental aspect of any project, especially in the area of academics.

"The originality is good for both creativity and innovation. For school administrators to guard against plagiarism, they need to be updated. They need to read and know what is happening in other spaces. With the advent of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and social media, they are soft spots for someone to run and simply see what someone else did and because the teacher does not know yet, the learner may present it as the original concept," he says.

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# Project Work: Gaps that must be fixed



A student of Wanyange Girls while washes her hands using water from a tank made out of waste plastic bottles. PHOTO/FILE

## PROJECT WORK

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Dr Mugimba explains that tertiary institutions have databases, where plagiarism tests are done to ensure that content generated is original concept. He also challenges schools to ensure that competencies that are desired out of project work are realised.

“There is the issue of team work, creativity, innovation and learners being able to apply the knowledge that they have gained. It is different from simply copying and pasting other people’s concepts,” he emphasizes.

For his part, Mr Hassadu Kirabira, the chairperson of the National Private Educational Institutions, agrees that although schools are trying to undertake project work, a number of challenges still linger. These, he says, include limited retooling of teachers and failure by some schools to differentiate between project work meant for Uneb and school projects meant for school exhibitions.

“I can say that schools are trying to comply but they are not on track. That is the fact. Some don’t know exactly what to do,” Mr Kirabira says. “Some schools confuse what is supposed to be a school project, with what is meant for school exhibitions with the projects meant to have marks supposed to go to Uneb. [Recently], I visited some schools on the same, since the project is an issue, especially as far as academic details are concerned. Others lack understanding of the processes of coming up with a genuine, recommended project.”

Mr Kirabira also notes that the hypothetical tracking system for this project work increases the risk of schools forwarding marks for these projects to Uneb, especially when the work done does not exist.

“That’s why you see some people forward without actually doing the projects, [since] there is no system for tracking the results of the same and the applicability of the projects on the ground to inform the marks that are being sent to Uneb,” he says.



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– Dr Dennis Mugimba, the spokesperson of the Ministry of Education and Sports,

Mr Kirabira adds that there is a need for a mechanism that brings on board a reality of what is taking place on ground, upon which marks are being given.

He also cites the limited resource envelop amid tight school budgets, as yet another challenge that schools are grappling with. Mr Kirabira’s plea is for parents to understand how the system of education works under the new dynamics and give a hand to schools for successful project implementation.

Mr Richard Joseph Kirembeka, a co-author of A step by step guide for project planning and implementation for secondary schools, dubbed, “My Project Work”, says the introduction of project work into Uganda’s lower secondary curriculum marked an important shift towards learner-centred education, but notes that both teachers and learners are yet to get to terms with this particular component of the curriculum.

“As with any new component in the education system both teachers and learners are still adjusting to its requirements, expectations and practical implementation. There is a growing need for a clear, structured guidance in handling project work effectively. Social innovation is a journey,” he explains.

Mr Joshua Ewo Moi, the deputy head teacher of Fr Aloysius Secondary School in Kole District, says teachers in his school are still struggling with the idea.

“We are trying to stagger around. Although the teachers themselves and the learners have not yet got the full gist of the matter. But the emphasis we normally make is that they should always start simple to avoid projects that are expensive. So, they are trying to do simple projects,” he says.

Mr Ewo Moi explains that at the teachers at the school normally expose learners to what they have to do and the learners are left to carry out the work by themselves but in consultation with the teachers.

The school administration also seeks opinions from experts in the private sector where somebody is invited to

come over and guide learners and the school provides lunch and transport in appreciation of the service offered.

Mr Ewo Moi also reveals that through the Secondary Science and Mathematics Teachers’ (Sesemat) Programme, teachers in Lango Sub-region have been trained on how to go about with school project based learning.

According to him, the success of project work is dependent on the support from parents, participation of learners, guidance from teachers, as well as availing the required resources.

“We pray that as we progress, we shall ask the government to support schools here in terms of finances, so that we are able to make these projects really more pronounced because what we are doing right now are the prototypes, but we may have to build it to a really fully grounded. Going forward, it’s a very, wonderful curriculum,” he says.

Mr Walusimbi Kato, the head teacher of Kansanga Seed School in Makindye Division, Kampala, describes the Competence Based Curriculum as a very good curriculum if well implemented, noting that it unveils the potential of a learner in real life situation.

He suggests that schools should be boosted financially, saying sometimes, they forced to spend part of the capitation grant which is also not enough for its intended purpose in addition to helping students develop the best innovations to another level that can be marketed.

However, Dr Mugimba says the ministry currently has no resources for that purpose, but is encouraging schools to always involve the private sector.

“They can look at some of those projects and be interested and decide to take on some projects or link up with Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation. Our scope is not diving into innovation and product development. But remember at that level, they are not highly development projects. That is why it is important to bring in the private sector to help nurture them. Partnerships are encouraged,” he explains.