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The Observer (Kampala)

Uganda: Law Exams Offer Food for Thought

BY OBSERVER MEDIA LTD, 24 MAY 2012

Out of the 1,600 candidates who sat the Makerere University pre-entry law exams, only 549 - just 34% ? scored 50% and above, while 1,051 failed. The results provide food for thought for our education sector stakeholders. First of all, the mere fact that Makerere University has found it necessary to follow in the footsteps of Uganda Christian University Mukono and introduce pre-entry examinations is an eye-opener.

The school of Law at Makerere University takes the cream of the A-level Arts candidates every academic year. Yet over the years, this same crop of students has performed poorly at the Uganda Law Development Centre where they pursue a diploma in legal practice after the law degree.

In fact, the eye-catching failure rates at the LDC are part of the reason why universities are introducing pre-entry exams. So, what explains this phenomenon? We think the answer lies in the entire education system.

Besides law, there have been complaints from many end-users that the universities are not producing adequately trained individuals. It has been said before that our education system is too much oriented towards students passing exams.

To that end, students are taught to reproduce cram work during examinations. They may excel with the help of cram work, but in reality these students will not have learnt to use their brain to think and understand phenomena, to empower them to harness what they were taught and earn a decent living.

Uganda National Examinations Board, ministry of Education, National Curriculum Development Centre, National Council for Higher Education and universities need to work together towards the formulation of a curriculum that is good for our children and will satisfy all parties concerned.

Such a system must be responsive to the needs of today's economy. The system must also give a special place to career guidance. Helped by their teachers and parents, students ought to understand and appreciate where their special interests lie.

At the moment, students apply for courses simply because they have the grades needed or find such courses prestigious. This is the kind of student that will excel in A-level exams but fail the university's pre-entry examination for a given course.

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