



Maintain blended learning – MAK dons

By John Odyek

Makerere University dons have called for the continuation of blended learning techniques during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

The dons, led by Dr John Mutenyo, the principal investigator of a study titled "Provision of alternative learning methods in Uganda's secondary schools in a period of shock", released the findings yesterday, at Makerere University's School of Economics. Mutenyo said their study has 17 recommendations which emphasise a blended approach to learning even after the pandemic.

"The Government should increase the supply of written reading materials, adopt e-learning as well as train and equip teachers on how to teach online. They should provide rural households with radios, put TV sets in community education centres, extend electricity to rural areas and make it affordable. We encourage schools to send schoolwork to parents' WhatsApp accounts for



Scope of study

The study was conducted in 20 districts. Peter Babyenda, an assistant lecturer at the School of Economics, said they interviewed commissioners in the education ministry, headteachers, teachers, parents and guardians. They also inspected schools to ascertain the availability of ICT equipment and electricity. He said, in some schools, solar-powered equipment was not being used and some sold off. He said they focused on secondary schools because this is where the knowledge of ICT was high. He added that the methods ranked highly for distance or alternative learning were teaching via TV and smartphones.

downloading," Mutenyo said. The recommendations also call on the education ministry to set up radio and TV stations that run no advertisements and do not require a monthly subscription for learning. They also said parents should be sensitised to enable students to learn via TV, radio and other e-learning facilities.

They recommended that schools create affordable learning packages and send more handouts to students for self-study. George Mukose, the principal education officer at the education ministry, said the ministry was developing policies on preparedness, emergency learning.



PHOTO BY IVAN KABUYE

University bursar Bukulu Kasirye and Okello appearing before the committee. (Scan the image using the New Vision Digital Experience to watch related video)

KYAMBOGO STUDENTS TO CLEAR SH7.9B FEES ARREARS

By Mary Karugaba

As Kyambogo University continuing students prepare to return, they should also be prepared to clear sh7.9b in fees they owed the university before it closed.

The university secretary, Charles Okello, informed MPs on the public accounts committee that by the time they closed in March last year, sh12b had not been collected from the students.

However, when final-year students reported in November and December 2020, the university collected sh4.1b, leaving an outstanding balance of sh7.9b.

"We plan to collect this money in March and April when continuing students report for studies," Okello said.

He said the university could not collect the fees in time because students usually pay fees at examination time.

"By the time it closed, the university was running the 12th week of the second semester of the academic year 2019/20. We were left with two more weeks of teaching and the last three weeks were set aside for the end of semester examinations," he said.

Following the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic in March last year, the Government closed all schools and educational institutions to curb its spread.

On October 15 last year, schools reopened for candidates as well as tertiary and university finalists.

Later, in February, the Government agreed to reopen schools and higher education institutions, but in a phased manner starting with the semi-candidate classes.

WAY FORWARD

Concerning the payment of undeclared arrears, Okello said the claims came in later when the financial year had ended and the figures were not put on the verified schedule. "Management will encourage academic departments to submit teaching claims early and those that cross into the new year are verified and included on the payable schedule before payment," he said.

On court payments, Okello said most cases involve staff asking for entitlement to termination benefits, non-payment of arrears, decisions of dismissal from the university and breach of contract.

"To avoid future claims of terminal benefits and suits by staff arising from decisions of dismissal, management has adopted inclusiveness of legal advisory before any decision affecting staff is taken.

Okello said due to the closure, the university could not administer the end of semester two examinations, implying that they could not hold the 17th graduation ceremony, which is a major output. The university also could not absorb sh900m that was given for research and innovation. It had to be returned to the Consolidated Fund.

AUDITOR'S REPORT

Okello was briefing the committee on the impact of COVID-19 on the operations of the university and answering queries raised by the Auditor General in a report to Parliament, for the financial

year that ended June 2019.

In the audit report, an analysis of the fees collection ledger for all registered students revealed that 1,642 students, comprising 410 off-campus students and 973 on the main campus, were not billed for tuition fees through the academic information management system, the official fees management system for the university.

The audit indicated that an undercollection of billed revenue cripples the university's ability to meet its financial obligations and impacts negatively on service delivery.

"Failure to bill all students through the system may also lead to misappropriation of revenue collected and some students might study without paying fees," the auditors noted.

The auditors also discovered that during the year under review, the university paid sh463m in arrears, yet they were not disclosed in the prior year's financial statements. They added that there was no evidence of an independent verification done by internal audit.

The auditors expressed concern that despite having court cases from previous years that were likely to have financial implications in terms of court awards, management did not provide any amount for fines, penalties and court awards in the approved budget estimates for the financial years under review, yet paid sh1.5b in court awards.

The information indicates that during the year under review, the university had 27 outstanding court cases with a total of 44 cases running.

MINISTRY OF GENDER, LABOUR AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

FUNERAL ANNOUNCEMENT

HRH. Bp Dr. John C. Wayabire
THE IKUMBANIA OF BUGWERE
25th July 1957 – 7th February 2021

The Government of Uganda and Obwa Ikumbania Bwa Bugwere (Bugwere Royal Kingdom) regret to announce the passing on of the Ikumbania, His Royal Highness Bishop Dr. John Chrisostom Wayabire which occurred on Sunday, February 7, 2021 at Platinum Hospital in Kampala.

HRH Wayabire was in 2012 elected as the Clan head of the Bakatikoko-Banamwera and in the subsequent year elected by the Bugwere Clan Heads as the first Ikumbania of Bugwere. He was gazetted by Government in July 2014. He will be remembered for ushering in unity among the Bagwere and neighbouring communities of Bunyole and Bugisu. He was also an educationist having established five schools (primary, secondary and vocational) for vulnerable children. He was the National Chairman of the Uganda Kings and Cultural Leaders Forum. He hosted the first African Kings and Cultural Leaders Summit in Bugwere and was elected by the Summit as Interim Chairman Africa Kings and Cultural Leaders Forum. He founded the Revival and Salvation Apostolic Churches with over 40 branches in Africa and USA. He will be accorded an Official Funeral to be held on Saturday, February 20, 2021 at Kenkebu village in Kibuku district.

Itinerary of events:

- 17 February 2021 - Requiem Service was held at Miracle Center Cathedral-Lubaga
- 19 February 2021 - Cultural Council Meeting convenes in Kibuku for eulogies at 9:00am
- Family Prayer Service at Budaka Ssaza Grounds at 1:00pm
- Meeting of National and District Organising Committees at 2:00pm
- Overnight vigil at Kenkebu village, Kibuku District
- 20 February 2021 - Interment starts with arrival of guests at 9:00am

Attendance of all events is by invite only in accordance with the Ministry of Health COVID-19 Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).