

The Illusion of “Best Professions”: Rethinking Career Choices Among Ugandan Students

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Abstract

Across Uganda and much of Africa, students widely believe that science-based careers such as medicine and engineering guarantee success, while arts and humanities are inferior. This paper challenges that assumption, arguing that career success is not determined by subject category but by personal strengths, skills, and adaptability. Drawing on existing research and regional realities, the paper highlights the dangers of career misalignment and calls for a shift toward self-awareness and informed decision-making in education (World Bank, 2020; OECD, 2019).

Introduction

In many Ugandan schools, students are subtly—and sometimes directly—told that their future depends on choosing science subjects. As a result, combinations like PCM and PCB are seen as gateways to success, while arts combinations are often dismissed as a last resort. This mindset has created a generation of learners chasing prestige rather than purpose. Yet, many of these students struggle academically, lose confidence, or end up in careers they never truly desired.

Is there really a “best profession,” or are we misunderstanding success itself?

The Reality Behind Career Choices

Career success is strongly linked to interest, personality, and environment, not just academic discipline (Holland, 1997). When students choose careers based on pressure rather than passion, the result is often poor performance and long-term dissatisfaction.

Across Africa, rising graduate unemployment is increasingly linked to a skills mismatch, where individuals are trained in fields that do not align with their abilities or labor market needs (World Bank, 2020).

Where the Confusion Begins

Career confusion among students is driven by:

- Parental expectations favoring traditional professions

- Societal belief that science careers are superior

- Fear of unemployment and poverty

Limited access to structured career guidance

These pressures often force students away from their natural abilities, creating academic and emotional strain.

The Cost of the “Science is Best” Mentality

The consequences are evident:

Poor academic performance among misaligned students

Undervaluation of arts and humanities talents

Graduates lacking practical and relevant skills

Many successful individuals today thrive not because they followed “prestigious” paths, but because they developed mastery in fields aligned with their strengths.

Rethinking Success

There is no universally “best profession”—only a best-fit career.

Modern economies reward:

Creativity

Critical thinking

Communication

Innovation and entrepreneurship

These skills are not confined to science disciplines (OECD, 2019). Fields such as agriculture, business, and the creative industries are increasingly important, especially in developing economies like Uganda.

A New Way Forward

To reduce career confusion:

Strengthen career guidance programs in schools

Promote equal respect for all disciplines

Encourage early self-discovery among students

Shift focus from subjects to skills and competencies

Conclusion

The idea that some professions are superior to others is a dangerous myth. It limits potential, misguides ambition, and undermines national development.

Success is not found in following popular paths, but in excelling where one’s true abilities lie.

Uganda does not need uniformity in careers—it needs diversity, excellence, and purpose-driven individuals.

References

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