



The pioneer medical students of Busitema University take the Hippocratic oath during their graduation

BY JACKY ACHAN

Since its establishment in 2007, Busitema University has become a significant player in the socio-economic transformation of Uganda.

The university carved its niche in agricultural sciences, agriculture mechanisation and agribusiness, but also offers bachelor's degrees, master's degrees, diplomas and certificates in various science professions.

The teaching of agriculture-based programmes and production of highly skilled graduates is fast improving the farming sector in the country, the senior assistant academic registrar for admissions, Ivan Mugabi Mugabi, says.

"Our graduates have done exceedingly well. Most districts have hired them as agricultural engineers," Mugabi says.

Some of the graduates are also working in the banking sector as agriculture loan officers.

In Uganda, agriculture employs about 69% of the population and contributed about 26% to the national GDP in 2015/16.

However, the sector is grappling with unpredictable weather, Mugabi says. To offset that challenge, Busitema University is producing irrigation engineers.

"Our graduate irrigation engineers are helping agricultural communities and this is boosting production as farmers do not have to wait for the rainy season to be productive," he says.

ESTABLISHMENT

Initially, it was the National College of Agricultural Mechanisation Busitema, but that changed when the National Resistance Movement (NRM) government came to power.

In the drive to expand the reach of higher education, Busitema was transformed into a public university and it is among the nine public universities spread across the country.

Busitema was established by Statutory Instrument No. 22 of 2007 and on February 26, 2007

Busitema carves niche in agriculture, technology, science



President Museveni engages with students of Busitema simulating how to extract oil from underground

after which it was approved as a public university by the National Council for Higher Education (NHCE).

"Our bachelor of science education programme was the first to produce qualified computer teachers in Uganda. In the past, schools would use anyone with some knowledge of information technology (IT), but that gap has been filled by our graduates," Mugabi says.

Currently, the university

programmes have expanded to include engineering, as well as medicine and surgery.

"We graduated our second cohort of doctors who are highly skilled. Our teaching is problem-based and our graduates are extremely good. Our students are always in hospitals studying and handling complicated cases," Mugabi says.

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The university has five campuses located in Busitema, Nagongera, Namasagali, Arapai and Mbale.

INNOVATION EXCELLENCE

In 2019, Busitema University light board tool scooped an award at the African Union Innovating Education Expo 2019. Dr Samson Rwahwire, a senior lecturer of mechanical and materials engineering at the university, came up with the light board tool to promote e-learning.

QUICK FACT BOX

■ Today, Busitema University has five campuses across eastern Uganda. The three new campuses are; Namasagali, Arapai and Mbale. Busitema University has a special focus on science and technology.

■ Initially, there were just two campuses — the Busitema University main campus in Busia district that took over premises of the National College of Agricultural Mechanisation Busitema and the Nagongera campus in Tororo district.

■ Since opening to date, 7,544 students have graduated from the university.

■ This year, the university will mark 13 years since it was established.

The innovation comes at a time when there is an increasing number of student admissions, coupled with a growing number of working people wanting to upgrade their education through online learning.

The light board tool enables lecturers to record lectures for online learners and enable lecturers have eye-to-eye contact with learners online.

"Over time, I wanted something I could use, especially for learners whereby I can face them and at the same time be able to solve equations for courses such as engineering mechanics," Rwahwire said in a recent documentary. His light board tool is one of the examples of excellent innovations from Busitema University.

AWARD WINNING UNIVERSITY

Busitema University is renowned for offering practical skills, relevant technology, productive education and innovation for sustainable development.

In 2019, the university was declared the best public university, winning the 2019 Visionaries of Uganda Award. The award ceremony was organised by the National Planning Authority and the Visionaries' advisory board.

Visionaries of Uganda consortium was launched in 2013 as an association of both government and non-government entities which recognises outstanding individuals and organisations' contributions towards the socio-economic transformation of Uganda.

Universities were analysed on various sectors including health, business, banking, education, science and innovation.

The Vice-President, Edward Ssekandi, commended Busitema University for contributing towards the transformation of Uganda to a middle-income country and urged it to continue supporting the country's effort towards achieving Vision 2040.