



POLICY/PRACTICE

ESSENTIALS AND ALTERNATIVE IDEAS

Teacher degree policy: Will the big transition bring quality in teaching?



Pupils of St Williams's Primary School, Atira attend a lesson. The new policy requires that every teacher must have a degree but some are wondering whether that comes with improved salaries. FILE PHOTO

The recent policy calling for all teachers to have a degree as a minimum qualification has raised several questions among which is the relationship between degrees and quality teaching.

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Alex Kakooza, the permanent secretary ministry of Education, recently told a section of teachers, educationists and the public at the Office of the Prime Minister that the implementation of the new National Teachers Policy would be a success. This was during the launch of a report on Comprehensive Evalu-

ation of the Universal Primary Education by the National Planning Authority recently.

"Before a policy is taken to Cabinet, it goes to Ministry of Finance for a certificate of financial implications. So Cabinet is aware that the policy will require a lot of money. Next year, we need about Shs6.7 billion to begin on the implementation," he assured teachers and educationists.

But the National Teacher Policy approved in April by Cabinet has raised debate among a section of teachers and the public across the country on whether it is sustainable.

Teacher absenteeism, ineffective teaching, low qualifications and standards, weak institutional leadership, unethical behaviour, lack of teacher regulation, and limited professional development remain some of the big challenges affecting the quality of the teaching profession. This is mainly attributed to the under professional-

sation of the teaching profession, the policy states in part.

Thus the new policy aims at improving the quality of teachers in Uganda's education system demanding that they all must have degrees.

A sneak peek into the new policy also indicates that all Grade III Certificates and Grade V Diploma training courses for teachers are phased out. However, those who are already undertaking these courses shall complete their academic programmes within a period of 10 years.

"All teachers shall be university graduates with a Bachelor of Education but specialising in either; pre-primary; primary education, lower secondary or higher secondary education and tertiary education."

"The 10-year period is provided to ensure that the current students admitted in National Teacher Colleges and Primary Teacher Colleges have adequate time to adjust to the require-

ments of the National Teacher Policy standards and also ensure that they are not disadvantaged by the policy," the policy reads in part.

Meanwhile admissions for students after UCE to PTCs is suspended effective 2021. In the same way, all PTCs and NTCs shall be attached to Uganda National Institute of Teacher Education as a degree awarding institution to offer only Bachelor of Education programmes.

Serving and prospective education managers at institutional, local government and national levels have not been spared either as they shall have a maximum grace period of three years within which to acquire a post graduate training in Educational Leadership and Management.

A big transition

However, the question remains, are teachers ready for the big transition? Job Matua, a teacher at Pope John

CURRENT SALARY SCALES

The education sector received Shs3.28 trillion this Financial Year, an increment of Shs504b up from Shs2.781 trillion in the 2018/2019 Financial Year. However, half of the budget is meant for the wage bill of Shs1.84 trillion at 56 per cent. Currently, the salary entry point for a Grade III teacher at primary level stands at Shs490,000 while that of the head teachers stands at Shs930,000. For secondary school, an arts teacher with a diploma earns Shs745,000 while the counterpart in science earns Shs795,000. Degree holders for arts earn Shs960,000 while science teachers with degrees earn Shs1.2 million.