

Bad week



Sugar price

Trade minister has refuted claims that there are plans to fix the price of sugar as well as reduce taxes imposed on imported sugar



Kikonyogo eulogy

Chief Justice Bart Katurendwe has lamented government's failure to pay deceased Justice Laetitia Kikonyogo's retirement benefits.



d grains

Artists have noted that Uganda are at risk of contracting liver cancer over grains. Many cancerous livers.



MORRISON RWAKAKAMBA > EDUCATION

Govt needs to partner with private sector in education

It is widely agreed that education is the greatest equaliser and the most valid inheritance that a parent can give to his/her children. The foregoing is also true for nation states and governments.

Indeed, this is why government of Uganda flags education as a bedrock and critical sector for its economic, political, and social development. It is also one of the enduring routes for Ugandans to steadily escape poverty and participate productively in society as well as in the marketplace no matter their socioeconomic status.

These are just some of the reasons why the government of Uganda continues to vehemently take on the responsibility of providing and financing education, especially basic education. The introduction of Universal Primary Education and Universal Secondary Education is evidence of this commitment.

This responsibility is, however, a large and complex one to be met adequately without participation of diverse partners, which is why it is important for government to explore broader ways of financing and providing educational services to its people.

Uganda government has from the beginning recognised this. It was indeed not until early 1950s that government started to fully

engage in education service provision. Indeed as of today, for example, Church of Uganda has 55 tertiary institutions, 600 secondary schools and 5,118 primary schools across the country. In 1950s, Uganda's population was a paltry 5,158,000. Now the country is a home to more than 42 million people. Uganda now has more heads whose prosperity must begin in the classroom.

In Spite of meaningful economic growth rate (averaging around 6 per cent), there are other competing strategic cost centres (from defence and security, agriculture - to infrastructure, etc).

This has meant that for Uganda's education sector to succeed, other stakeholders including parents, teachers, communities, charities and private sector have to pitch in. It also means that to achieve scale, government's efforts have to be supplemented with models and partners that can aid the system not only to increase access to education, but also better its quality.

While there are many strengths within the Ugandan education system, there are also some existing challenges. UN statistics show that many children in Uganda are enrolled in school, but never attend. While enrolment has gone up to reach the UN sustainable development goals of having 90 per cent

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of children participating in school, about 68 per cent of children enrolled in primary schools are likely to drop out before completing. Teacher absenteeism is at 56 per cent. Only 14 per cent of Ugandan children attend pre-primary school while 10 per cent of boys and 14 per cent of girls between 15 and 25 years are illiterate. Government will, therefore, continue to need partners, all available and valuable pair of hands, to decisively deal with these challenges.

One such partner is Bridge Schools that has taken root in Uganda, Kenya, Liberia, Nigeria and in India. Since it opened its doors in Uganda, Bridge Schools Uganda provides quality education to more than 14,000 children across the 63 campuses scattered in the four corners of the country.

Recently, I visited the Bridge School, Adalafu in Arua District with more than 300 children. These children come from where

money is tight. Interacting with these children and understanding the role education plays in transforming their future further convinced me on the need for strengthening partnerships in education.

Besides the active and participatory learning that captured my attention, the use of technology to enhance learning experience and access proves how technology can transform our country. The teacher computer is a collection of all the lesson plans and lesson guides (instruction materials) derived from the Uganda Curriculum that ensures that the teacher spends enough time interacting with pupils and giving individual feedback.

Relatedly, the teacher computers act as clock-ins once they arrive at school dealing with teacher absenteeism. Use of computers also help teachers to complete lessons and entire syllabi on time.

Uganda's ministry of Education and Sports; and Ministry of ICT have been positive in regard to advancing technology-driven education delivery. Bridge Uganda is a natural partner.

This technology coupled with innovative ways of delivering quality education forms part of the empirical evidence documented in the latest report by the Centre for Global Development on a study they conducted in Liberia.

The research showed that students at Bridge run Partnership Schools for Liberia public schools; learned significantly more than students at traditional public schools, nearly twice as much in reading and more than twice as much in maths.

Mr Rwakakamba the country director, Bridge Schools Uganda.