

Editorial

Mental health should not be relegated to just another issue

For sometime now, many observers have had a lot to say about the state of mental health among teenagers in school. Following various incidents in which learners lost their lives in suspected suicides to cases of absenteeism and depression that have caused quite some concern.

However, the blame for these situations has been laid at the feet of parents and teachers who are frequently asked to support learners by shielding them from situations that could lead to depression or eventually suicide.

The support of parents and teachers is deemed to be critical to the welfare of the learners.

Indeed some of the situations that push learners into depression include sexual harassment from peers and sometimes teachers, academic performance, unpaid tuition fees, wealth disparities as well as outright bullying by peers in school.

However, as it is now turning out, many of those who are supposed to provide the shield that protects learners from mental health challenges are also not entirely free from the

troubles afflicting students.

Quite a number of teachers have confessed that they are not immune from the mental health situations that are afflicting their students.

A surprisingly high number of teachers privately complain that they are sexually afflicted by other teachers, students and superiors.

These same teachers also say they struggle with poor pay, as well as pressure from their superiors to ensure good academic results; and the complicated spectre of absenteeism that in itself is a symptom of the problems that they face.

In addition, the parents are equally under pressure, looking to education as an opportunity to improve the futures of learners.

As it turns out those hopes come with unforeseen pressures; including the high cost of learning in schools; as well as the attendant inability to pay tuition fees on time; the volatile performances, academic or social, of their children; the wealth disparities among learners that cause uncomfortable and often unpleasant interactions between children and

parents.

So, those looking to deal with the challenge of having good mental health among learners need to address the entire ecosystem that produces the problem.

Parents and teachers need to be aware of the challenges and work to resolve the troubles facing the learners.

Teachers and parents can rightfully look at the final graduate as their product, as the success generated reflects properly on them.

When the depressed student ends up as a troubled adult or fails, as sometimes happens, when a suicide happens, it is also a reflection on the entire ecosystem that they grew up in. So mental health can not be relegated to other issues that just happen. Mental health matters for all.

The NIE welcomes comments and suggestions from readers, especially secondary school students. If you would like your suggestions, complements published, send them to our regular email address - niecontent@ug.nationmedia.com

NIE MAGAZINE

Managing Director: Susan Nsibirwa

General Manager Editorial: Daniel Kalinga

Managing Editor: Allan Chekwech

Education Editor: Moses Talemwa

Editor: Harriet R. Ayebare

Contributors: Shabibah Nakirigya, Patrick Kihunde, Joan Salmon, Jane Nafula, Susan Samilu, Patricia Nataka, Stephen Otaga



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niecontent@ug.nationmedia.com