in emotional connection. We monitor grades closely, but fail to notice

than what is told. They also need to know who they are, which the school

interaction and bonding.

Yet some of the deepest emotional

children who can withstand p... beyond school walls. Character is not

Uganda's higher education impresses Zimbabweans

By Simon Okitela and Lawrence Mulondo

A visiting team of officials from Zimbabwe has lauded Uganda for implementing good policies that have made it a higher education giant in the region.

The team observed a meeting with the executive director of the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE), Prof. Mary Okwakol, on Thursday, after a week-long benchmarking tour of key tertiary institutions across Uganda.

During the meeting at NCHE offices on Thursday, Zimbabwe's higher education ministry permanent secretary Prof. Fanuel Tagwira hailed Uganda for implementing policies such as the Higher Education Access Certificate (HEAC) Programme, which enables under-served students to do bridging courses before enrolling for main programmes.

PHOTO BY FAUTINE ODEKE



Prof. Tagwira (left) receives a gift from the Busitema University team led by Prof. Waako (wearing purple neck-tie) at the main campus in Busia district last week

"My delegation is amazed by the findings and once we return to Zimbabwe, we shall immediately consider deploying the HEAC programme. We are sure that through its implementation, we shall support the under-deserved students to attain higher education access," Prof. Tagwira, who led the delegation, said.

The visiting team included officials from the Zimbabwe education ministry, the Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education (ZCHE), Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) and representatives from private universities.

The team visited Busitema University, the Islamic University in Uganda and Ernst Cook University.

Prof. Tagwira said beneficiaries of HEAC shared insightful experiences of how they benefited from the programme. He described Uganda's model as practical, scalable, and relevant to Zimbabwe's needs.

Speaking to the delegation at Busitema University, Dr Martha Muhwezi, the executive director of FAWE Africa, said HEAC is a partnership between FAWE Uganda and the MasterCard Foundation.

It was developed under the Higher Education Access Program (HEAP). She said the programme targets academically able young people from economically disadvantaged backgrounds who did not meet the minimum entry requirements for direct university admission.

The delegation later paid a courtesy call to Uganda's education ministry head office in Kampala.

Rev Dr Cyrus Ssebugenyi, the head of audit, monitoring and compliance at NCHE, said since its accreditation, HEAC has been adopted by over 50 tertiary institutions across Uganda.

ZCHE chief executive officer Prof. Kuzvinetsa Peter Dzvimbo stressed the importance of inclusive pathways that enable learners from diverse backgrounds to transition into university education.

HEAP is currently in its second phase, launched in April 2024, with a target of supporting 2,000 young people from 65 districts across Uganda.

CHALLENGES

Despite its success, the programme faces several challenges with some HEAC students experiencing stigma from peers who entered university through direct admission.

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