

Teaching practice vital for quality in education system

EDITOR: It is true no educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers. The role of teachers in sustainable development cannot be quantified.

Whatever affects a teacher trainee during college training impacts on the quality of their prospective learners; future doctors, lawyers, politicians, etc. A teacher cannot produce beyond his quality.

Invariably, being the heart and key source of knowledge, skills, wisdom, appropriate orientations and inspiration for students, a teacher is central in facilitating the process to meaningful education and pupils' learning outcomes; hence, education means a teacher.

Teachers' effectiveness is dependent on teacher training activities in terms of personality, pedagogical, inter-cultural and psychological competencies.

Historically, ever since William Byngam

organised teaching practice (TP) in 1439, the exercise was qualified by teacher training colleges around the world as a catalyst to professional preparation of neophyte teachers in a bid to ameliorate the quality of teaching.

Africa's education systems also incorporated TP in the professional teaching curriculum in their bid to produce the best of teacher quality.

Unlike Zimbabwe, many countries including Uganda grade TP albeit the duration and period for the exercise vary. For example, Nigeria, South Africa, Zambia, Tanzania and Uganda conduct the exercise twice and for 6-12 weeks each session. For Rwanda, it is a block TP of eight months done only once. Ghana and Kenya, a whole academic school term conducted twice – I find this to be more desirable for the professional training.

Personal experience in assessment of the exercise across Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya and Rwanda, shows that Rwanda is at the helm in actualising the apprentice model of TP assessment compared to neighbouring countries.

In Rwanda, host school contributes 60% of TP total grade. If properly managed, this approach is more appropriately meaningful to teacher trainees. This model is worth standardising for teacher training institutions in EAC.

We need to revisit our TP assessment tools to capture candidate's sociability, responsiveness, constancy, adaptability, resourcefulness, innovativeness and other epistemological skills beyond classroom instruction.

TP trainees should run well supervised parallel administration supported by school administrators to expose trainees

to practical problem solving skills and let candidates be assessed even during test invigilation.

The best performing education systems in the world such as Singapore and Finland, gigantically invest in teacher education. TP in Finland has weight of 33% of the teacher education curriculum and changed from block TP to internship.

In the region, the highest weighs approximately 6.6% which means the training is predominantly done theoretically.

The best place to learn to swim is in the swimming pool; you have to do it again and again not to be told how to do it again and again, so should be teacher training.

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