

in the War, the Japanese Emperor an- the representative of the Government of the People's Repub- tions. This resolution settled, politically, legally, and procedurally, the question of government representing - China. The African side also firmly sup- the representative of Uganda.

Let children come home: Holidays are not failed school time

BY SAMUEL ANDEMA

DES SALAAM. Every school holiday in Uganda revives a familiar argument: should children be left to spend time with their families, or should schools recall them for extra lessons? Those who support holiday teaching often speak from genuine concern. They worry about unfinished syllabi, weak performance, national examinations, school rankings, and the fear that children may become idle and disorderly at home.

These concerns are legitimate. Education remains one of the few pathways through which many Ugandan families hope to secure a better future for their children. But the debate should not be settled by examination anxiety alone. We must ask a deeper question: what do children lose when every holiday is turned into another school term?

The first loss is our understanding of education itself. Holiday teaching encourages the mistaken belief that mean-

ingful learning only happens when a child is seated in a classroom, facing a teacher, following a timetable, and preparing for a test. Yet children do not stop learning when schools close. They continue to learn from parents, grandparents, siblings, neighbours, religious communities, cultural practices, household responsibilities, play, work, and the ordinary rhythm of family life.

Schools are important, but they cannot educate the whole child alone. They can teach reading, writing, mathematics, science, and examination skills. But children also need love, discipline, empathy, humility, cultural memory, practical wisdom, emotional balance, and a sense of belonging. These are not decorative extras. They are the moral foundation on which academic success should stand for society to grow.

One common defence of holiday teaching is that it protects children from idleness and bad peer influence. That concern is real, but it presents a false choice. The alternative to holiday teach-

ing is not idleness. The alternative is a better organised holiday life. Children can read storybooks, engage in sports, learn practical skills, participate in mentorship, help at home, engage in community service, visit relatives, learn family history, and enjoy supervised play.

Holiday teaching also exposes a deeper weakness in our education system. If official school time is never enough, then we should ask why. Is the curriculum overloaded? Are classes too large? Are teaching methods ineffective? Do schools manage time well during the

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- Dr Samuel Andema, the writer

term? Simply adding more school hours may hide these problems without solving them.

There is also an uncomfortable economic side to this practice. In some cases, holiday teaching becomes a source of extra income, a marketing tool for schools, or a response to pressure from anxious parents. None of these motives is automatically evil. Teachers have economic needs, schools operate competitively, and parents want the best for their children. But when these pressures combine, the child easily becomes the carrier of adult fear and institutional ambition.

We should not confuse pressure with seriousness. A tired child is not necessarily a better learner. An anxious child is not necessarily more committed. A child who is constantly drilled may pass tests, but may also lose curiosity, confidence, innovation, creativity, and joy.

Some learners genuinely need remedial help, especially those struggling with literacy, numeracy, disability-relat-

ed learning needs, or recovery from absence. But such support should be targeted, limited, humane, and clearly justified. It should not become a blanket excuse for turning every holiday into another school term.

The Ministry of Education and Sports is right to insist that schools respect the official calendar. But enforcement alone is not enough. Parents, religious institutions, cultural leaders, local governments, civil society groups, and old students' associations must also recover their role in forming children. Holiday mentorship, reading clubs, sports, storytelling, cultural learning, community service, and life-skills activities can keep children meaningfully engaged without turning holidays into classrooms.

Let children come home. Holidays are not a failed school time. Holidays are different kinds of classrooms, where children learn memory, belonging, responsibility, and life.

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