Wotakyala ushers in new era at Kitante

Positive results. Eight months after becoming head teacher of Kitante Hill School, he is being credited for demonstrating strong leadership and transparency focus.

CORRUPTION FIGHT

BY PHILIP WAFULA

Mr Samuel Balwana Wotakyala was last June transferred from St Paul SS, Kamuli to Kitante Hill School in Kampala, replacing Ms Elizabeth Emejeit Onen, who retired upon attaining the mandatory 60-year age.

Mr Wotakyala's ascension and transition was smooth, with no strike or rumblings from teachers, parents or community, a rarity for many schools undergoing a transition in leadership.

Eight months later, he is being credited for demonstrating strong leadership and transparency focus.

"He shared his vision with the school, which was bought by the students, teachers and parents," Ms Sandra Mlay, the deputy head teacher-in-charge of administration and finance, said last week.

She added: "He is great at mobilising, and has mobilised different stakeholders, right from our voices in the ministry to the community. Also, there's a lot of infrastructure uplifting and cleanliness."

The Parents Teachers Association (PTA) chairman, Mr Daniel Magala, said Mr Wotakyala has upgraded the discipline among the students.

Kitante Hill and Kololo Secondary School have traditionally been rivals, often fighting for supremacy over the Kamwokya and Mulago turfs. But this has ended.

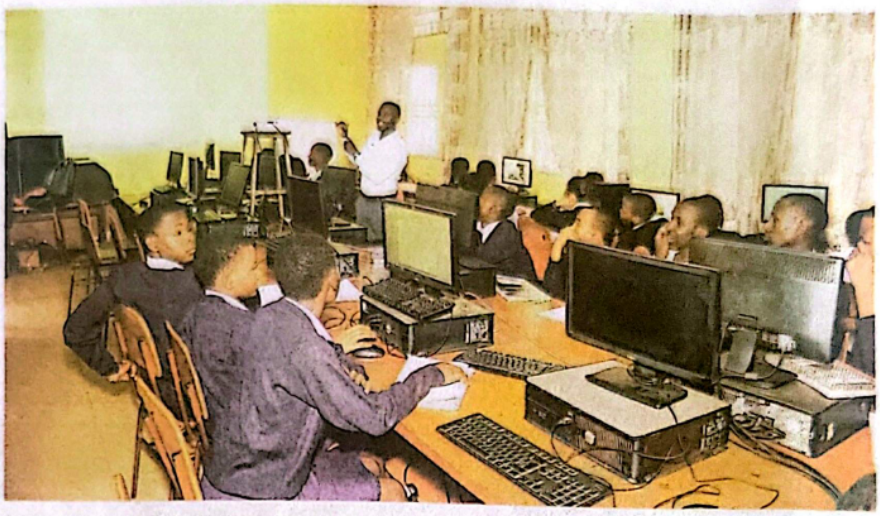
Mr Magala said when a school's administration is weak, parents find it difficult to work with it.

He added that parents also contribute ideas and support to the school's development since they are key stakeholders and a major source of its revenue.

However, Mr Wotakyala said it all comes down to the fully-fledged management committees, Board of Governors and PTA, which sit and deliberate for the school.

In the recently-released Uganda Certificate of Examinations (UCE) results, Kitante Hill School posted a 30 percent pass improvement compared to last year, making their students eligible to join Advanced Level for their preferred subject combinations.

Mr Wotakyala attributed the improvement to teamwork, hardwork, and support from the Board, [illegible]



Students of Kitante Hill School in their Computer Laboratory on February 26. PHOTO/PHILIP WAFULA

cilities, and are staffed with qualified and experienced teachers.

"Public schools are purely managed by the government. If you want to see policies implemented, these are implemented in public schools. It is through public schools that the government can test policies, because they are their own establishments; so, they tend to access facilitation directly from the government," he said.

He added that public schools attract learners from all walks of life.

"Public schools also matter because they can't collapse easily. You have seen several private schools starting and dying the following day. For example, you remember the Covid time when several schools closed, but public schools have got a very good foundation of government and the local governments," he said.

"Public schools have assets, for example, land that is well-guarded, and registered, giving it continuity, unlike private schools, where they mortgage land titles in banks and after failure to repay, they are taken up by other people, and end up being mismanaged," Mr Wotakyala added.

Despite the advantages, Mr Wotakyala said administrators of public schools endure challenges, including mandatory compliance to policies. He said the expectation from the public is too high, while decision making is "cumbersome".



Commenting on the lower secondary curriculum which is now under implementation, he said it is giving a chance for the students to have hands-on academic activities.

"Students have got chance to get that knowledge, and develop that experience of what kind of projects they can do in advanced stages, which gives them a chance to get the concept, so that if given a chance to develop that concept. It can lead them to a bigger concept that can become a serious project, that can become a source of income to a child," Mr Wotakyala said.

However, he noted that the equipment is expensive, and calls for one to have resources around to ably manage, which parents can't afford.

Mr Magala said most parents earn little and yet they want the product from the school.

"Most parents find it hard because of the extended schools that are around; you will find parents comparing themselves to those at Mengo, Makerere College, and don't feel satisfied sometimes with the product they have," he said.

Challenges

Ms Mlay said some of the challenges parents face today include catching up new trends children follow.

"It is always hard to catch up with them, and the new forms of indiscipline that are coming because of those influences are challenging parents. They (parents) sometimes don't know how to catch up with

SAMUEL WOTAKYALA PROFILE

The 47-year-old educationist has served as a head teacher for the past 20 years, overseeing secondary schools and working closely with teachers, parents and other key stakeholders.

After graduating from Makerere University, he began his teaching career at Kiira College Butiki. He later served at Namasagali College, Bulopa SS, St Andrews SS, Kitayunjwa SS and St Paul SS, Kamuli, before joining Kitante Hill School.

He has managed both the old and new curricula and undertaken several professional trainings. He holds a Master's degree in Higher Education Administration and Management from Uganda Management Institute (UMI), a Master's degree in Education Planning and Management from Makerere University, as well as certificates in Accounting and Education Leadership. He also has wide experience working with Boards of Governors in secondary schools.

On his part, Mr Magala said the school is in Kamwokya, which he described as a politically active area. He noted that this environment sometimes exposes students to politics at an early age, which can be a concern for parents.

"When you look at the areas of Kamwokya and Mulago, these are areas associated with the National Unity Platform (NUP) and the party president Kyagulanyi, alias Bobi Wine, and this is the area where the students move while going home and coming to school.

"And these are the celebrities they are watching on the digital platforms who they wish to be So, they will move with anything the celebrities are doing," he said.

The head teacher said another challenge is that students walk long distances up very early and to reach the school.

He added that although parents value the school, many live far away, exposing children to possible attacks on their way. To address this, the school established a hostel to reduce the risk.

Mr Wotakyala highlighted the development of a School Improvement Plan (SIP), which has been approved by the school's board.

He said the plan aims to increase student enrolment, improve infrastructure and introduce vocational training, a proposal they have sub[illegible]