

# Pre-entry exams for teachers are welcome

Teachers play a vital role in enhancing the students' quality of education given their impact on learning in line with the four pillars of education as outlined by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). They include learning to know; learning to do; learning to be and learning to live together.

For that matter, the Government aims to attract, retain, develop and motivate great teachers because they are the main school-based predictor of students' achievements.

A common adage is that the quality of an education system depends on the quality of its teachers.

However, the quality of the teachers cannot exceed that of the policies that shape their work environment in school and that guides their selection, recruitment as well as development. This is why pre-entry exams, as prescribed by the recently approved National Teacher Policy are welcome.

The exams were introduced for students intending to pursue law courses in 2010, after several complaints about the high failure rates at the Law Development Centre over the years. The exams were meant to help students not to



*Opinion*  
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waste four years and money doing a course from which they will not benefit.

Uganda was the first country in Africa to moot pre-entry exams for medical graduates to be enrolled as interns, in 2016.

## TOP TIP ✓

**Pre-entry exams are an acceptable regulation of the quality of entrants to professional courses in many countries. For example, India conducts entrance and pre-qualification exams for both under and post-graduate programmes.**

Although about 500 medical students graduated each year from 11 universities, majority were under-skilled.

Makerere University School of Medicine drafted the proposal which is still before the University Council, the topmost decision-making organ of the university.

The College of Engineering, Design, Art and Technology is

also toying with a similar idea.

Education should, therefore, be no exception. For the first time in the last 142 years of formal education in Uganda, the Government is due to start pre-entry exams for all students intending to join any certificate, diploma or degree-awarding teacher training college or university. Stakeholders believe this will contribute to the ultimate goal of achieving a quality education.

Pre-entry exams are an acceptable regulation of the quality of entrants to professional courses in many countries. India conducts entrance and pre-qualification examinations for undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. These include the Advanced Joint Entrance Examination for the Bachelor of Technology programme and the Graduate

Aptitude Test in Engineering for the Masters of Technology and doctoral programmes. Others are the Common Entrance Exam for Design for Masters in Design and doctoral programmes, Undergraduate Common Entrance Exam in Design for Bachelor of Design programme and the Joint Admission Test for Masters of Science.

The Advanced Placement programme is increasingly recognised as a university entrance qualification in Europe and other parts of the world. Students, who have undertaken it, fulfil requirements for numerous selective universities in Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Sweden and the United Kingdom. British universities such as Oxford, Imperial College, Brunel and King's College. Other institutions include Danish

universities such as Maastricht University and Delft University of Technology, as well as some Swiss universities such as the University of Fribourg, University of Lausanne, University of St Gallen, and the University of Zurich. Teacher training providers in the United Kingdom also check that all prospective teacher-trainees meet the entry requirements for skills tests before they start their teaching courses.

This is to ensure that they are competent in numeracy and literacy.

In Singapore, applicants for teaching courses are required to sit and meet the minimum requirements of the relevant Entrance Proficiency Tests.

Uganda is, therefore, justified to introduce pre-entry exams for teacher-trainees. Currently, teachers are required to have qualifications that are lower than those of other professions, which may make teaching unattractive to talented candidates. Standardising them at Senior Six level with attracting the much-needed prestigious status for the teaching profession.

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