

Government wants all TEACHERS to have degrees

With effect from 2021, the Government will only hire teachers who hold bachelor's degrees. This will apply to all teachers at primary and secondary levels, writes Martin Kitubi

In the next two years, a bachelor's degree will be the minimum qualification to teach in a primary and secondary school in Uganda. State minister for higher education Dr John Chrysostom Muyingo says the new guidelines have already been approved by Cabinet and signed by the education minister and First Lady Mrs Janet Museveni.

With the new guidelines now given effect, Muyingo disclosed that the ministry will next financial year ask for more money to implement the policy that also pays teachers' pay to their qualifications.

"All primary and secondary school teachers who obtained degrees and were being paid less will now be paid more, should the funds be available in the next financial year. We are going to table our request to the finance ministry. We request that all those who wish teachers' work stand with us and make it happen," Muyingo said.

Currently, all primary school teachers in public schools have minimum starting salary of sh499,684 irrespective of qualifications. Grade V diploma teachers in secondary schools earn sh745,000 and sh796,000 for arts and science teachers respectively. Their university graduate counterparts in secondary schools have sh960,285 and sh1,102,561 for arts and sciences respectively. After upgrading, it is not clear what the starting salary for all teachers will be.

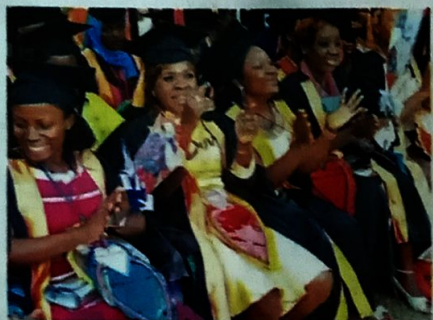
Dr Jane Egan, the education ministry commissioner for teacher instruction, education and training, says the career group of Grade III and Grade V teacher salaries is the last to be classified at primary teachers' and national teachers colleges.

Stark reality
If implemented, over 200,000 teachers in government schools have just two years to upgrade their qualifications to meet level or level at their current salary scales without any hope of promotion.

Muyingo warns that under the new policy, teachers not interested in upgrading will not be promoted and will remain within their salary scale with no increments. The new system comes three years after the education ministry resolved to have only degree holders as headteachers of primary schools in the country. This directive saw many primary school headteachers' death throats to upgrade.

Up to 95.4% (788,927) of the 207,000 primary school teachers in the country do not have a university degree. Also, of the 64,966 secondary school teachers, only 46.2% (30,103) are degree holders.

Until this year, when Kyambogo University started a bachelor's degree in primary education, no university offered the programme in Uganda.



Teachers jubilate after their commissioning at Buloba Primary Teachers' College. Grade III and V teacher training will soon be phased out



Education minister Janet Museveni

Education minister Janet Museveni says NTCs. Kyambogo's move was a response to the 2015 Teachers Initiative in Sub-Saharan Africa (TISSA) study which recommended that primary teachers upgrade, to improve their teaching ability.

While welcoming the move, Kyambogo University vice-chancellor Prof. Ely Karugaba says the university is too overwhelmed and staff overstretched. He disclosed that the university has only 340 staff against the ideal 1,200.

Karugaba says: "There is a need for enough staff to manage these teacher institutions and staff to continuously review their curriculum."

Why the new policy
The policy stems from the 2013 study by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), which established that teacher promotion and professional development remain the main factors to adjust to the changes. This is why we are phasing them out," Egan explains.

"Upward mobility within sub-sectors, the study observed, is particularly stark, especially the primary school teachers because of their low academic qualifications and low wage



Pupils pay attention as their teacher instructs them in a school in Kampala. Most of the teachers in Ugandan primary schools are grade III and V, which the Government wants to phase out

ministry is currently discussing whether to transform one of the teacher training colleges into the institute or just build a new institution. Kyambogo would be ideal but that it is not under consideration since it became a university in 2003 after the merger of three technical and vocational institutes - the Uganda Polytechnic, Kyambogo (UPK), the Institute of Teacher Education-Kyambogo (ITEK) and the Uganda National Institute of Special Education (UNISE).

But like universities, teacher training colleges will henceforth be open to only Senior Six leavers. As part of the requirements, two principal passes will be mandatory for any applicant.

Five years ago, the ministry also tightened entry to PTCs from just six passes to six credits, including in English and mathematics at O'level. The revised requirements oblige a student to have attained credits in both English language and mathematics and two science subjects in three categories.

The categories include agriculture (agriculture and practices, biology, physics or chemistry).

"People had the wrong perception that education training is for failures. We have now lifted entry requirements to ensure that we admit only candidates who are capable of teaching," Egan explains. "Once we have better teachers, we will continue to produce better students," she said.

At the moment, she said, a tutor with the lowest academic qualification has a bachelor's degree and that senior have acquired master's degree in education. "About 10 years have been upgrading annually from Aga Khan University through the education ministry scholarship programme. Several tutors have upgraded over the years on their own. We can assure you, we are handling it," she said.

According to education ministry statistics, there are 227 tutors at NTCs and 130 at PTCs. However, Egan explained that additional 77 tutors at NTCs and 500 at PTCs will be required.

New Curriculum, more tutors
Egan said they have embarked on the development of a new curriculum to deal with the changes. She also said more tutors will be hired to handle the new curriculum.

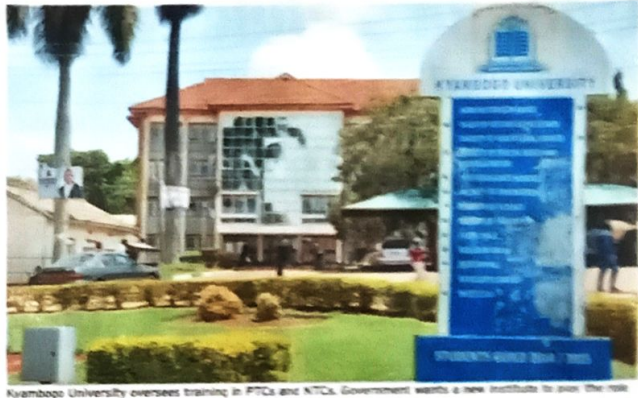
She revealed that over the years, tutors at both PTCs and NTCs have undertaken graduate and other higher education training programmes.

Change of legal framework
Brighton Bwagumba, the assistant commissioner in charge of policy within at the education ministry, said the ministry is reviewing laws that will do the proper implementation of the teacher's policy.

"We are implementing the policy step by step. We have provisions on our handling in the short run and those

PTCS IN UGANDA

- Arua Core PTC
- Bikungu PTC
- Bishop Stuart Core PTC Kibingo
- Busibooyo PTC
- Bushembi Core PTC
- Busikho PTC
- Bulere Core PTC
- Busingiro PTC
- Bwera PTC
- Bishop Willis Core PTC Iganga
- Canon Apollo Core PTC
- Canon Lawrence PTC Boroboro
- Christ the King PTC Gulu
- Ereepe PTC Moyo
- Gulu PTC
- Kabwanga PTC
- Kabonjoke Core PTC
- Jinja PTC
- Kabale-Bukinda Core PTC
- Kalliro PTC
- Kabukunge PTC
- Kamurasi PTC
- Kibuli Core PTC
- Kapchorwa PTC
- Kisoro PTC
- Kiyoga PTC
- Kitgum Core PTC
- Kotido PTC
- Loro Core PTC
- Moroto Core PTC
- Mukama Core PTC
- Nakasike Core PTC
- Ndegeya Core PTC
- Paida PTC
- Rakai Bikira Maria PTC
- Rukungiri PTC
- Shimonoi Core PTC
- Soroti Core PTC
- St Augustine's PTC Butti
- St John Bosco Core PTC Nyundo
- St John Bosco Core PTC Lodongo
- St. Aliphan's Core PTC Ngara
- Sancta Maria PTC Nkokonjeru
- St. Mary's PTC Bukedea
- St. Noa Mawagali Core PTC Busubuzi
- St. George's Core PTC Ibanda



Kyambogo University oversees training in PTCs and NTCs. Government wants a new institute to join the list

in the long run. However, what we can see, is that implementation has started," Bwagumba said.

Qualifications not enough
While weakening higher qualifications for teachers at a step at the right direction, education experts make a call of other recommendations to achieve quality education.

Rose Aga, the secretary general for the National Commission for UNESCO, says the degree requirements will surely improve the profile of the teaching profession and the learners' competencies.

"The teachers will be more respected, motivated and their ability to teach children to excel will go up," Aga said. "However, qualifications per se will not improve the children's performance."

"There is a need for more textbooks, teacher houses, recruitment of enough teachers and more classrooms," she added.

At the moment, she said, a tutor with the lowest academic qualification has a bachelor's degree and that senior have acquired master's degree in education. "About 10 years have been upgrading annually from Aga Khan University through the education ministry scholarship programme. Several tutors have upgraded over the years on their own. We can assure you, we are handling it," she said.

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In this regard, Muyingo says, a number of other issues are tackled in the new policy guidelines.

"Teachers' welfare, funding of schools, infrastructure development, training of teachers and inspection and monitoring, are some of the other issues we are set to tackle."

Patrick Kabone, the executive director of the Coalition of Uganda Private Schools Teachers' Association, says besides qualifications, attention must also be given to other issues like the high dropout rate and the hidden costs of education.

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the being done, the quality of education will remain wanting.

"The Ministry of Education, in partnership with the private sector, is currently commissioning a study on government's role in ensuring the quality of education, but also covering the quality of training."

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Dissenting voice

It's a wrong decision, says Fagil Mandy

Educator and columnist Fagil Mandy says the Government should equip PTCs and NTCs to produce better quality teachers rather than concentrating the degree requirement.

"I suggest that Government reviews what is taught at these colleges rather than making them degree-awarding."

"Skills are lacking, (how institutions should be helped to address this). PTCs and NTCs are producing better teachers than universities. PTCs and NTCs produce a competent teacher because of dissemination schools," observed the writer.

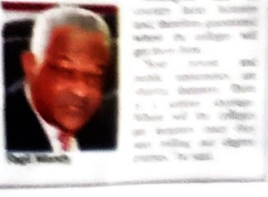
Lower secondary school curriculum. This according to Mandy, implies the Government will require more funds to implement both at the same time.

"We have the best teachers at neighbouring countries, we cannot increase standards now," he said.

Prof. Mwangura, the executive director of the Forum for Education NCCA in Uganda, says the move will dilute the education system.

"Having PTCs and NTCs degree awarding institutions would reduce their status," he notes.

"These colleges are over-inflated institutions which will dilute the quality of education," he said.



Fagil Mandy

Additional reporting by Owen Bwagumba