



Seriously address the issue of teacher-student love affairs

MUCH as it is a silent vice, hundreds of schools across the country are struggling with a serious problem of teacher-student sexual relations. It is a reality, which is rarely exposed but quick and tougher measures need to be enforced to tame the vice.

A nation-wide assessment of child protection and security reveals that teachers are responsible for 24% of the teenage pregnancies, early marriages and defilement among the youth. Such teachers are disgracing the much revered teaching profession.

These sexual relationships are partly to blame for the high school drop-out rate, especially among the girls.

Government, schools and communities need to come up with tougher and strict sanctions against teachers caught in such acts. Schools must have policies, rules and proper compound demarcations;

to protect their students from being sexually harassed by their teachers.

Teachers, found to have engaged in sexual relationships with students should have their appointments and operating licences revoked and blocked from holding any public office.

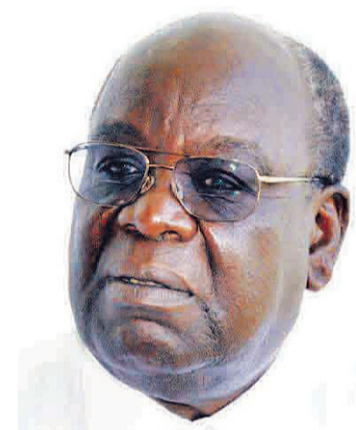
In cases of defilement, such teachers should also be arrested and tried as prescribed by laws.

There is also need to seriously do background checks on all teachers being recruited in private and secondary schools. Teachers, especially with tainted behavioral records, should never be hired; unless there is proof that they have reformed.

This vice can be ended. But it calls for a collective effort.

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Regulatory agencies should accommodate growing varsities

The agencies should gradually reduce their demands as universities' capacities improve

By Prof. A. B. Kasozi

Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania have higher education regulatory agencies that have supervised the development of a vibrant university sub-sector in East Africa. In 1960 there was one university for all East African countries. However, there are now 40 institutions in Tanzania, about the same numbers in Kenya and 35 in Uganda. Student population growth in East Africa has exceeded the half million mark and has an average of 15% a year since 2000 in each of the countries.

In all the three countries, these regulatory agencies; the Kenya Commission for Higher Education, the Tanzania Universities Commission and Uganda's National Council for Higher Education have put in place a number of regulations to assure quality. Minimum benchmarks for admissions and courses of study have been put in place as well as benchmarks for awards of certificates, diplomas, degrees, quality assurance frameworks and strong structures for processes of accreditation of programmes and institutions.

Many African countries have established higher education regulatory agencies to first of all help governments in the establishment, management and supervision of higher education institutions.

These agencies also ensure that their citizens receive quality higher education and also make sure their institutions of higher learning devise ways to generate new knowledge for the improvement of higher education, innovation systems and ultimately, economic development through research and innovation.

In most of Sub-Saharan Africa, the establishment and management

of universities has been devolved to higher education regulatory agencies. By accrediting universities and programmes, supervising the delivery of quality higher education and the general management of institutions, these agencies have, and are performing the necessary function that was previously the mandate of education ministries.

To do their work, however, these agencies need capable and independent boards or councils. In Kenya and Tanzania, these agencies have operated without external pressure or influence. The National Councils for Higher Education in Uganda and Rwanda have operated relatively freely. Between 1980 and 2010, over 100 universities have been established in East Africa by these agencies.

Regulatory agencies have helped governments in the process of establishing universities. They have done this through a process known as institutional accreditation. Institutional accreditation or the permitting of institutions to exist and deliver higher education is a tool of quality assurance and it is therefore relevant to higher education supply. It is a feed back process against which institutions are assessed before they are licensed at various stages. Accrediting institutions is a rigorous exercise, but necessary and covers all aspects of institutions ranging from land, staffing, educational facilities, governance, infrastructures and the financial aspects of institutions. In East Africa, this function is done by the regulatory agencies.

Regulatory agencies in Africa also accredit programmes taught in universities to make sure that they meet the minimum requirements are written in acceptable formats and

students get value for their time and money. In some countries like Uganda, the accreditation is limited to "the papers" presented to the regulatory agency but in others like Nigeria, the facilities under which the programmes are delivered must meet the required standards and are inspected by the regulatory agency before programmes are accredited.

However, most university heads, especially old and established ones, feel that accreditation of programmes by an outside institution is an intrusion into the institutional and academic freedom of universities.

Loosen the rope

The agencies should gradually reduce their demands as universities' capacities improve. The way out of this dilemma is for the agencies to reduce their demands as universities improve their capacities to perform what they were established to do.

If the public can be assured that a given university has developed the capacity to deliver quality education, there will be no need for a policeman to regularly visit that institution.

However, many of the newly established university institutions in Africa lack academic traditions,

staff, infrastructure, research traditions and what it takes to be called "universal" institutions.

Many are teaching institutions, their infrastructure meagre and financial bases very poor. They still need guidance of their founders and the State which regulatory agencies represent to mature.

When they become world-class institutions, regulation will probably be relaxed. However, from what I know about our institutions in Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda and Tanzania, the period when our new universities will mature

is decades away. But it should come sooner for strong ones like the Kigali Institute of Science and Technology. When this period comes, regulatory agencies will not be as needed as they are today.

The writer is the former executive director of National Council for Higher Education

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