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Uganda: Katende Has Touched Lives in Five Schools

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BY CHARLES KAKAMWA, 25 APRIL 2012

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At 34, David Katende has taught in five different secondary schools, the same number of schools he attended for his primary education. But one thing is synonymous with him, he strives to leave an indelible mark in all the schools he is associated with.

Armed with an arts in arts degree from Makerere University from where he graduated in 2002, Katende returned to Kiira High School in Jinja, a school he attended for his A'level, this time not as a student but a teacher of history and divinity.

Even when his dream of earning a reasonable salary and other benefits that a fresh university graduate would expect upon employment, was not forthcoming, Katende did not lose hope and served the school until 2005.

"When he came in, he was young and some students were his age mates, but he proved his worth by improving grades in his subjects," remembers Rachael Mutekanga, who was in A' Level at the school.

Mutekanga, who is now a teacher at Seeta High School in Mukono, says Katende managed to connect well with his students because he was a gifted orator and counsellor.

Earlier, while still at university, Katende taught at St. Noa Mawagali SS in Njeru town council in Buikwe district and most of his students scored As in history and economics, the subjects he taught.

One such former student is Richard Tandrupasi, who now holds a PhD in theology from Makerere University.

Dr. Tandrupasi, currently a teacher at St. Noa Mawagali SS and lecturer at Victory Bible Institute in Mukono district says Katende shaped his life.

"He mentored me, especially in the line of positive mental attitude. From him I learnt how to tackle life with determination. He was exemplary and I am glad to have interacted with him," says Dr. Tandrupasi.

Oblivious to him, his works were being monitored by some admirers. In 2005, Katende was offered a teaching position at Holy Cross Lake View SS in Wanyange, Jinja.

In his second week at the school, he got another offer from Jinja College, which he too took up. At Jinja College, Katende was appointed head of the Christian Religious Education (CRE) department.

He helped put in place schemes of work and a syllabus for both O'level and A'level. "Teaching without a syllabus is like building without a plan. A syllabus helps streamline teaching," he stresses.

Later in 2009, he handed over the CRE department to a colleague after he was appointed head of the history department. He restructured this department too.

"The school has registered a remarkable change in the two subjects since then. Out of 34 candidates that did history in 2010, 20 passed with As, 11 got Bs while the rest scored C.

"That record has never been broken," he says emphatically. Katende served as head of history department, patron of scripture union and class teacher Senior Six, but for all his five year stay, he never accessed the payroll. So when he did interviews at Mother Kevin SS in Walukuba division and was appointed on payroll in

2010, he shifted.

At Mother Kevin, he was appointed the assistant director of studies in addition to teaching CRE and history. That very year he enrolled for a master's degree in education policy and planning at Makerere University and is currently doing his research.

Katende believes teachers must be role models to their students. "It is bad for a teacher to enter a class and start lecturing to students without giving them an opportunity to participate in the process.

Such kind of teaching makes the learners think what you are teaching is hard," he says. Specioza Atim, a Senior Six student at Mother Kevin says Katende doubles as a teacher and parent.

"When he teaches history paper 1 and divinity paper 1, he leaves you thinking he was there and witnessed those events," Atim says Grace Kabale, another S.6 student, adds that Katende sources for reading material, including past papers from other schools as well as his personal literature, and gives it to his learners freely.

One person that benefited from Katende's big heart is his elder brother George William Katende. George developed some health complications that affected his education. He dropped out for a number of years, but when Katende finished university, he encouraged him to resume studies.

He later joined Kiira High School, where Katende was teaching and part of his (Katende's) salary would cater for payment of George's fees until he completed A Level.

Even when George joined Makerere University Katende continued supporting him financially. George is now a teacher of English/literature at Kennedy Academy in Wakiso district.

When he started a private school called Millennium College in Njeru town council, Katende used to give bursaries to needy children, but unfortunately the school collapsed due to mismanagement.

Challenges

Katende is one person with a strong conviction that the world can never develop without research. He is, therefore, deeply involved in research work.

He is also concerned that the noble profession of teaching seems not to give priority to the acquisition of more knowledge by those serving it.

"Unlike in other professions where people are supported to pursue higher education, in teaching if you decide to do so you either resign or apply for unpaid leave," he regrets.

Katende dreams of setting up a consultancy firm, whose major focus will be on education policy and implementation.

Way forward

Katende thinks a number of policies in the education sector are ill-conceived and need to be revisited. He cites the policy by the Government to promote science subjects as one that is hitting a snag because it was not properly analysed.

He argues that should the Government insist on promoting sciences at the expense of humanities, the result will be creation of many scientists and a vacuum in the field of humanities yet the two fields complement each other.

Katende also warns that politics should be detached from policy making and that a cost-benefit analysis should be done before policies are implemented.

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