

“ROSE BEDS, THORNS AND A RESOURCE FOR THE NATION”

**A COLLECTION OF STORIES ABOUT LIFE
AS A TEACHER EDUCATOR IN UGANDA.**





KYAMBOGO UNIVERSITY
Knowledge and Skills for Service



Rose beds, thorns and a resource for the nation

**Stories from the Teacher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa
(TESSA) Primary Teacher College Storytelling Research
Project**

2018-2019

Contents

Foreword.....	1
Acknowledgements.....	2
Introduction.....	3
The stories.....	4
Activities to support story-work.....	46
Selected bibliography.....	49

Foreword

College tutors are a strong component of teacher training. While much is heard about the student teachers, the curriculum, methodologies and general structures of the Primary Teacher Colleges, little has been focused on the tutors themselves.

This study from The Open University, UK in partnership with the TESSA team at Kyambogo University, set out to research the life of tutors. They used a storytelling approach, which is a way of researching that I am convinced can support new possibilities for learning, development, sharing and change.

Participating Primary Teacher Colleges (PTC) were selected from central and eastern Uganda to represent the college fraternity across Uganda.

The exercise started with inducting tutors on the purpose of the study which was to get the picture of contexts in which tutors work, and what matters to them in their work. Also understanding more about the professional lives and identities of tutors.

In each day's activities at a college, tutors reflected on their professional experiences and shared them with fellow tutors. This gave them more courage to share with a wider audience especially tutor fraternity across the country once the stories are published. The exercise gave tutors an insight of working collaboratively and how to involve their own learners in studying the curriculum because they were now in real application of the strategy.

It was a learning experience for the tutors as they sought guidance on how to facilitate these activities when teaching their students.

When reading the stories in the book, one gets the insight of the person behind the story and the kind of tutor we interact with in a college classroom. We follow the journey moved by this person before choosing the profession, the hurdles one faces to reach the set goal, and the success achieved. More interesting is the commitment put in in relation to professionalism - the student at the forefront of all that the tutor gets involved in.

It is very incumbent therefore to appreciate The Open University and Kyambogo team for carrying out this research in Uganda. The tutors have been given an opening to express their life experiences.

I hope that this story book will be accessible to all tutors and education institutions for inspiration on the professional journey.

Thank you tutors for this sharing.

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Introduction

Tutors working at colleges of education are a vital part of the education landscape in Sub-Saharan Africa. They are responsible for teaching, supporting and inspiring the hundreds of thousands of teachers who start working in schools each year. Yet they are also a group of professionals about which very little is known.

This book is a collection of stories written by tutors working at colleges of education across Uganda. The stories were written as part of a research study and, while narratively constructed, are authentic, 'true' stories about tutors' professional lives and experiences.

The Teacher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa (TESSA) Programme

TESSA works with teacher educators across Africa to develop and support the use of open educational resources (OER) to enhance teacher education. TESSA supported Kyambogo University in the organisation of a TESSA Uganda Forum, and designed a free online course (known as a Massive Open Online Course or MOOC) for Teacher Educators. The focus of the MOOC is active teaching approaches and how to support pre-service and in-service teachers in developing active pedagogies.

TESSA is also collaborating on a research partnership between The Open University and Kyambogo University which is trying to understand how tutors can be encouraged to use OER to support more inclusive, active and interrogative teaching approaches.

A key strand of this research is understanding more about the professional lives and identities of tutors. The stories presented in this book were written by tutors from across Uganda as part of this research strand. It focused, in particular, on understanding the contexts in which tutors work, and what matters to them in their work. A series of storytelling research workshops were held in eight primary teacher colleges (PTCs) in July 2018. In total, 39 tutors attended the workshops.

This book of tutors' stories is one outcome of this research partnership.

Why storytelling?

The use of storytelling in research is increasingly recognised as an approach that can generate new and collective possibilities for change. It doesn't just extract knowledge from people, but supports them to think about and share their experiences in new ways. 'Stories' are often associated with fiction, or entertainment. But the focus of the TESSA storytelling workshops was on real-life stories. The process of generating stories through research aims to be just as rigorous as other qualitative approaches such as interviewing and focus groups (in fact, storytelling approaches often include these methods to help build the narrative of the story).

In this project, each story workshop took one day and was attended by a small group of tutors. A range of activities supported the tutors to reflect on their professional

experiences and share an experience of their work that they felt was important. It was made clear that the stories (if they gave their permission for them to be used) would be shared with other tutors across Uganda, and also a wider audience of people interested in education in Sub-Saharan Africa. So, tutors were encouraged to share stories that they felt would give previously untold insight into their profession. From the every-day, to the once-in-a-lifetime, the event or experience at the heart of each story was up to the tutor developing it. With their colleagues and the facilitators, tutors worked collaboratively to write these experiences into short stories of approximately 500 words.

Our approach was influenced by the work of Joanna Wheeler, Michael Jackson and the iBali storytelling network, as well as socio-cultural thinkers like Jerome Bruner. We have included a list of recommended readings and resources at the end of the book.

Structure and purpose of the book

This book – a collection of all 39 stories - has been developed as an open access resource. It is for anyone interested in the role and experiences of teacher educators, or in education in Uganda more generally.

The research team are currently in the process of analysing the stories alongside other data generated by the study. The findings of the research will be published in an open access academic journal. However, in this book we wanted to present the stories as they were written by the tutors – unencumbered by codes or lenses, or the research team's sorting or interpretation of them.

As they were hand-written in the workshops, some light editing took place as they were typed up by the research team, but this was limited to proof-reading, protection of supporting characters' identities, and minor edits for clarity. Tutors were sent the typed versions of their stories prior to publication. Where tutors indicated on their consent forms that they were happy to have their names in the book, we have included them. A small number are presented anonymously, as requested.

Storytelling – as we interpret it - is not an 'off the shelf' methodology. Each workshop agenda is carefully curated to reflect the research goals, the backgrounds, interests and capabilities of the participants, the time-frame and physical space of the workshop, and the epistemological underpinnings of this kind of storywork. A wide range of activities can support this kind of work. In the Uganda TESSA workshops three activities in particular were popular with the tutors. In the reflection phase of the research several tutors asked for guidance on how to facilitate these activities because they thought they would be useful in their teaching. We present some guidelines at the end of this book (these have also been shared directly with participating tutors). We also recommend the website www.transformativestory.org for further ideas and techniques to support story research.

You can find out more about TESSA here www.tessafrica.net

We hope you enjoy the stories!

The stories

Going digital

Makwasi Susan, Busubizi PTC

I have been a tutor for Physical Education for over ten years. My college is located in a rural area, and the students we admit are local. So nearly all of them grew up in a rural area and attended rural schools.

In 2014, a new curriculum was introduced in the PTC. The new Physical Education curriculum had so many new games and sports in it. Games like basketball, handball, rounders and swimming - to name but a few.

But the problem was that many of these games were new to our students. They had never heard of, let alone played, these games, but the curriculum dictates that they should not only know how to play them, but know how to teach children to play them in the primary schools.

I started out doing as I was supposed to: teaching these games both theoretically and practically. But the reasons that they had never played them before were precisely the reasons that this task was so much of a challenge. You see, just as the schools they had come from had no sports facilities or equipment, neither did I at the college.

Can you imagine how hard it is for someone to conceptualise a game of handball, and the skills required to win one, without having ever seen a handball, or a handball court? Can you imagine how hard it is to teach someone who has never been swimming to teach a child to swim, without a swimming pool?

Early in 2016 I bought a smart phone. For the first time I was able to access the internet, play games, chat to people, learn new skills and so on. One day an idea occurred to me. Maybe I could use this method of online learning and interaction to teach my students. Could I convince them to 'go digital'?

Our college has some computers, a T.V. set, a projector and a white screen. It also has free internet access. But it was mainly used to teach IT skills, not other subjects.

I asked the computer instructor to help me connect the gadgets so I could use them for teaching and learning. Through this, I was able to show the students videos online of all of the different games and skills. I can now teach using the computer, and the students use the computers to go further and learn on their own too. Since then, the performance of Physical Education students has really improved at my college. And I continue to use the internet to help me be a better tutor.

Making the difference

Bananwa Stephen, Iganga Bishop Willis Core PTC

John was a man I met on a bus, who at first appeared to be a stranger to me. I was on a journey from Jinja to Iganga when this man greeted me happily. I thought to myself 'who is this?'

John reminded me that he had been a student of mine many years before at Bishop Willis College. He had grown to be a pleasant man and provided good company for me on the journey. We discussed all sorts of issues related to academic development and other social affairs. John then laughed and reminded me that I was responsible for his interest in social affairs. I remembered then, John's difficult journey to passing his social studies exam. He had failed it previously and came to me with a real apathy for the subject, but I sensed too that he feared it and found it difficult. I was keen to share my passion with my students and so I committed to helping him pass. I encouraged him not to lose hope and suggested that I give him extra support. I tried to pique his interest in the different aspects of social studies, and finally he gathered his courage and agreed to re-register for the subject.

I took on the role of John's social studies tutor, but also his mentor, guide and coach. I offered him remedial classes every single day. I gave him sample exam questions to help him develop his exam skills. I gave him really detailed feedback on all of his assignments and helped him to see where he could improve.

When the results came back, John had passed very well and I remember being overjoyed at his performance. He was so grateful to me he raced to find me when he got his results, he hugged me, and invited me to be the guest of honour at his graduation party.

On the bus that day, John repeated the testimony he had made at his graduation party, that I had seen something in him that he couldn't see. I reflected on the fact that I had changed his life, and yet not recognised him. This is what it is to be a good tutor, the effect of your hard work keeps going on and on beyond the college.

Struggle

Anonymous

I had just been posted to a new college, in an acting position as Deputy Principal. This meant I had acquired many more responsibilities in addition to tutoring. Being new, I had not learned the procedures of handling complex cases of sickness of students.

One Monday morning, some students came to the office to report to me about a student who was ill. The nurse had not yet arrived at the college and the tutor on duty was not around. As there was no one to delegate to, I took it on myself to deal with the situation and I asked the students to lead me to the patient in their dormitory.

On the way the students told me that this young woman had been attacked by demons and was in a state in which she could neither talk nor hear. When I arrived, the patient was being held down by some of her fellow students and I was very concerned that they would hurt her, or get hurt themselves, as she was straining to get free and they were using considerable force. I asked them to set her free, and gently I approached her. I wanted to assess whether or not it was true that she had indeed been attacked by demons, or if it was another matter.

I asked the students to stand back and I carefully spoke to the young woman. I kept a keen eye on her, and I saw her slowly relax. I too felt myself relax, it was apparent that she had just developed hysteria for some reason, or maybe it was all a pretence. So we all breathed some sighs of relief as we observed her in her relaxed position.

But all of a sudden she tensed up and jumped up. She pushed some students aside and boxed me. The calm situation had suddenly flipped and now there was shouting and chaos and she was trying to fight with me! She was strong in her rage and in my surprise I was knocked sideways.

This to me was a huge embarrassment. The scenario made me struggle in decision making, as a tutor, as an administrator and as a person. I was humiliated and I wanted to win the battle – not physically of course, but through my position of being in charge. I still suspected that the students' apparent madness might be a pretence, so instinctively I thought that this was a disciplinary issue. However, I found the insight deep inside me to see that this was a moment in my career in which I could develop a new life skill that would help me be a better tutor. So I forced myself to overcome the embarrassment and the challenge to my control and authority, and instead focus on calm-headedness, perseverance, tolerance and love.

I did not discipline this student. I called her parents and asked them to come and collect her for treatment. And I was right to do so because she was later diagnosed. It was a struggle for me to come out of this trauma, I still think of it to this day. But I also think of how it taught me to take a breath and not act on instinct, but insight. And that is a skill I use as a tutor to this day.

Kange, the special needs student?

Nandera Grace, Kaliro PTC

Every February at Kaliro Primary Teachers' College we have what we call 'recruitment' where we interview prospective students. This year I was on a panel and we were interviewing so many young men and women, one after the other. Then, a young woman called Kange walked in. She looked up and we could see that her eyes were orange. I thought to myself, is this a special needs case?

Last year I attended a workshop about special needs and inclusive education. I felt prepared and ready to teach a student with special needs, so I was interested in giving her a chance and supporting her right from the word go. But my colleague said to me 'Nandera, how on earth are you going to teach this student alongside your "normal" students?' I think if I had not been in the room she would have been rejected. But I knew from my course that her eyes were likely to not be completely blind and that we should see how we could support her. I insisted we recruit her if she passed her exams. In the end Kange got 58 marks which was far above the 42 students needed to be recruited, so she was awarded a place!

But the battle was not over. Kange had no problems among her peers, but I regularly heard comments from my colleagues. One day someone said 'Senior woman, where did you get this orange-eyed girl from?!' I calmly replied that I was on her interview panel, that she performed well at interview and her marks were good. He laughed and asked 'were there no other "normal" candidates you could select?'. I was so angered and no longer calm. I replied crossly that Kange was a "normal" candidate, just like all of the others.

I can't believe that in this day and age people have such negative views towards special needs. But I think the solution is more training and more opportunities to work with students with special needs. Because now Kange is settled here the staff have no problem with her and they are positive towards her. Mind you, she is performing better than most of the "normal" students! She is also popular and liked by everyone. We should all remember that disability does not have to mean inability. And what is "normal" anyway?

“A great teacher inspires”

Birungi Aminah, Kibuli Core PTC

One day my students organized a gathering for me to appreciate my contribution towards their success in life as competent kindergarten teachers.

Mystified and full of wonders, I walked into the class and found all my students who were remaining with a month to complete their Early Childhood teacher education course making chants and applauds as a way of welcoming me. Little did I know that there were more surprises. They had prepared a gift and gave lovely commendations of how much they had learnt about individualised learning. One student in the name of Shafique emotionally expounded on his future plans in regard to teaching learners with special needs. He got different offers in schools as a teacher and he was to start immediately after exams. During his final school placement the school administrators noticed his outstanding competence and were overwhelmed. This was so, because he followed the demonstrations and examples I used while I supported them.

As a teacher educator I had learnt that teaching is about being dynamic, creative, innovative, great mentor and a good coach. This was the case throughout my life of studying as teachers, tutors and lecturers supported me. Likewise while teaching I made sure and still integrate theory with real life experiences while handling all learners regardless of their unique abilities, interests and level of understanding through excursions and using resource persons. This is exactly what some of my former students are doing just like Shafique. Education is not filling a pail but the lighting of fire - just like what Shafique has done by establishing a WhatsApp and Facebook platform where I was included as a member to share more with them and learn as well.

William A Ward once said, *“the mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains, the superior teacher demonstrates... but a great teacher inspires”*. And that is exactly what I will do, for surprises like this, are few and far between and should be taken as a lesson. This will continue to give me the most hope every day that *what a teacher is*, is more important than *what he teaches*. So I plan to keep the candle burning as I continue to mentor and support my students: I submit.

(Almost) Caught in the Act

William Opit, Kaliro PTC

One day I was travelling from my village to my working place which is Kaliro Primary Teachers' College. To my surprise, on the bus was one of my previous students, Brian. He greeted me warmly and insisted he pay for my bus fare, and some refreshment too. I was flattered because he told me that I had changed his life.

As we caught up with one another, I was taken back to the time when he was a student. Brian was young and slender, and proud, cheeky and stubborn. But I liked him. He used to move with his friends Patrick and Andrew. Andrew was tall and slender while Patrick was fat and well-built. But both were arrogant and from well-off families and thought that money would get them far, so why bother learning? Brian was not from a well-off family at all, and I was concerned that they were leading him astray because he was previously a good student. They would often stay in their dormitories while others were in class studying.

On one fateful day, the three boys were avoiding class as usual, but the college decided to have a crack-down and there was a roll-call to see if everyone was in class. I knew the three boys were not in class, but they were nowhere to be seen. Coincidentally the Principal was moving around the college with some stakeholders of the government to check the conditions of the dormitories. I moved quickly to the dormitory to warn them but I did not get there in time. After the Principal had left I rushed in to see that they were hiding. Patrick, the fat one, had hidden in a drawer, under a pile of clothes. Andrew, the long one, had hidden under a bed, although because of his height, his legs were out in the open. Brian, who was medium in size, had hidden behind the door. How they had not been seen by the Principal I will never know!

Their fellow students told them that I had known they were hiding and that surely I was going to report them and send them away from the college, since missing classes is a big offence.

The three boys came to me by themselves and requested a punishment from me – any punishment – rather than report them to the Principal. They knew the Principal was harsh and would send them home in no time.

I gave the issue some thought and then decided to oblige to their request. I made them promise never to dodge class again, and I asked them to sign a statement which said that if they did dodge class, I would send them straight to the Principal. They accepted my conditions and they never did dodge class again. And they went from failing students to passing all their exams without a single re-take.

Back on the bus, Brian thanked me again for giving him a second chance and for trusting him to work hard. He said my decision had genuinely changed his life for the better and he regularly thought about this occasion when he was dealing with his own students now. He said I had helped him not to give up on people when they let him down.

The Salt Miracle!

Mahono Terah, Kaliro PTC

The best lesson I ever taught was a Science lesson for the year two students here at Kaliro. The lesson was about how one could recover the salt if it had been poured out of a container and mixed with sand. The students were so surprised at my suggestion that this was the case and they started debating it among themselves asking 'is it really possible?!' I tried to convince them theoretically, but they were still in a state of disbelief.

So we collected all of the apparatus that we would need: beakers, Bunsen burners, filter paper, spatula, sand, salt, a tripod stand and funnels. We got the water to boiling point, and my students were still saying they could not believe that the salt, which was now dissolved in the solution, would become solid and white again.

As the experiment was progressing at the different stations around the class, I reflected on my time at secondary school when I was taught about this experiment, but my school did not have the equipment to carry it out practically. I reminded myself being told is one thing and seeing it for real is quite another. Suddenly I heard a student shout with a lot of excitement in his voice! Odurman was a group leader and he beckoned me over. 'Tutor! Tutor! My salt is starting to form!' I drew closer to them and encouraged them to keep going and continue evaporating. Soon another group shouted with excitement that their salt too was forming.

Later the students were also amazed that the salt that had formed was of the same nature, colour and taste that they had dissolved in their water earlier on. They began to shout 'Wooh! This science is truly a miracle!' and 'A miracle has happened!'.

I realised how different their excitement was from the times when they were just quiet after a lesson. Their reaction just made me feel it was my best lesson as a tutor!

A resource to the nation

Nabakooza Janati, Kibuli Core PTC

The moment I knew I was doing a good job as a teacher educator was when I was invited by my former student as a chief guest on a class day.

One of my former students was the head teacher of Mengo Noor Primary school. At this school they organized class days for lower primary section and upper primary section.

They displayed various materials that were made by their pupils, pupils could explain how materials were made and used. Some of these materials were candles, charcoal, liquid soap, class library materials like, reading books/cards picture books/card, number cards from banana fibres and others.

I realized this came from my good training of students. During the training especially in Early Childhood Development (ECD) displaying of various materials is part of the course and our students' display is supervised and moderated by our lecturers from Kyambogo University (KYU).

Having observed my student excel after college, this has encouraged me to continue supporting and mentor students as well as expand on my professional expertise as a resource to the nation and the world at large.

Circles

Wanzala Richard, Shimoni Core PTC

In 2007 I was a Mathematics tutor at Ndegeya Core PTC. One day I entered a class of second year students to teach Geometry. I asked the students what they knew about circle properties. I was surprised by their answers: 'it is difficult!', 'it is for mathematicians only!', 'it is a challenging topic!'.

I don't know why, but I had a quick realisation that if they feared the topic, the plan I had made for the lesson would not do anything to help them feel less afraid. I abandoned the lecture notes I had planned on using. Even though my plan was to start with an introductory lecture and then move onto group work, I decided to try something more hands-on. I just got the students to draw circles and we talked about them together.

Each student was fully engaged and worked hard to construct the circles, lines and angles as I showed them. I remember one female student called Ziporah suddenly called out in Luganda 'wasoma!' which means 'you really studied!'. Other students laughed and clapped their hands. I almost lost my breath when she called out wasoma. I felt it was a wonderful praise for me. At the end I had said it was time to finish, and they chorused 'we want to continue!'. As they left I asked them how the lesson had been. Zacharia said 'it was clear, easy and well-understood'. Sofia said in Luganda 'kati tubite gedde' which means 'now we have understood the concepts!'

Later on I reflected on Ziporah's exclamation, and I realised the joy students must feel when they really understood a concept. I also reflected on how active and excited the students were throughout the whole lesson. I felt overjoyed to see the students fully engaged and seemingly enjoying a topic they had feared as being too difficult.

From that day, I changed my methods of teaching Mathematics. I always thought that it was the kind of subject that you couldn't use hands-on approaches for, but I was proved wrong. I am just glad I realised soon enough. I shared my feelings about the lesson with my colleague and we worked together to make all of the Mathematics lessons as active as we could. At the end of the year, every single student passed the final Mathematics exam paper, and the college administration rewarded our efforts with gifts.

Helping students to develop a positive attitude

Zirimenya Richard, Kabulasoke Core PTC

I have realised for some time that to improve professionally, one must always go for upgrading and attend workshops or continuous professional development courses. However, it is also possible to learn and improve by engaging with different challenges.

Before I graduated as a teacher educator and joined Kabulasoke Core PTC in 2013, I had thirteen years of experience teaching in a primary school. During that time, God blessed me with an opportunity to teach in a nearby early childhood training institution. But I was not a trained teacher educator at that point. Nevertheless, I embraced the challenge and tried my hardest to balance both jobs – to ensure that my primary pupils passed their exams, and also that the student teachers learned how to handle young children. So I didn't realise that I could be a good teacher educator without being trained to be one, but I tried my best and I believe I was.

When I joined Kabulasoke I was allocated to teach Social Studies Education. This was one of the challenging subjects by then. The students were not performing well, as evidenced by the results of the previous year when 43 of the students had registered re-takes. Every student was giving negative comments about the subject which they believed was the hardest to pass of all the subjects. I was very much disturbed by the comments – even the tutors were saying that this subject is the hardest.

When I carried out my research I found that this negative attitude was actually holding people back. I started to devise means to help the students to develop positive attitudes by using learner-centred methods. Much emphasis was put on group discussion, problem-solving and library research, supported by the use of ICT materials like video clips with relevant content. I engaged students in project work to develop instructional materials for use in the classroom, made from local materials.

As time went on my students developed a positive attitude towards the subject. They often approached me to show their appreciation after realising their grades were improving. Since then, the subject has one of the highest pass-rates in the college.

Learning as two-way traffic

Waako Henry, Jinja PTC

I have long believed that learning is continuous. Every class a teacher teaches gives them new experiences which they can learn from, build into their ideas for skills and methods, and make themselves a better teacher.

I used to deliver Mathematics lessons using lecture method, mainly. One time I handled a lesson about operations on fractions. When lecture method was applied, I discovered that students only listened. At the end of it they did some exercises themselves, but when I was marking their books I realised that they had not understood at all.

When I reflected on the performance, I started thinking about how maybe it was my method that had been the problem. But at that point I did not really know how to teach it differently.

When CTEP (Certificate in Teacher Education Proficiency) was introduced, I was one of the participants in the workshops. Among the areas covered were learner-centred methods such as group work, brainstorming, think-pair-share, and so on.

After the workshop I started applying the method of group work. The students were put into groups and assigned tasks. They carried out the research and later made presentations. I came to learn that in using group work, the students became more actively involved in the learning process and my role as a tutor was to facilitate the process. But more than that I learned that through teaching like this I was also learning from the students. Learning, I realised, was two-way traffic.

As a result the performance of the students rose to 90% pass in Mathematics compared to the 60% pass the previous year. Group work has shown me that I can learn through teaching.

Science in action

Okoboi William, Kaliro PTC

I have been a Science tutor for some time, but until two years ago, little did I know how exciting Science could be for the students when handled practically. I used to use the lecture method – just as I had been taught. I would prepare my notes from the textbooks and I would stand at the front and deliver my lecture. After the lecture the class was usually somewhat quiet. I never really knew if they had taken the knowledge in, or not.

Then, I was invited to a workshop on different methods of teaching Science. My eyes were opened up! I quickly developed an urge to try practical methods! Only a week after I attended the workshop, the opportunity arose. I was to teach breathing in mammals. A topic I had delivered many times before as a lecture. I had to majorly improvise with the materials! Really improvise! But I looked around me and I collected the items I needed. I collected four large plastic bottles, straws, balloons, thread and polythene paper. From these I built a model of the breathing system, where the bottle was the chest cavity and the balloons were the lungs. I made four models and put one on each of the tables. When the students came in to the room they were so surprised! What was going on?!

I talked through the experiment and then they performed it on the bottle: when they blew into the straws the balloons inflated, and then deflated as the air escaped. What truly amazed me was how excited they were and how curious, and how this excitement and curiosity was making them participate – even those who I knew didn't really like science, they were also saying 'it is my turn!'. One student was so excited that she mobilised the whole class to thank me for the effort I had put in, and for giving them such an interesting lesson. They all stood up and gave me the 'calabanda hand clap'! She even volunteered to demonstrate the lesson next time.

Unlike before when I never really knew if the students had taken in the knowledge, this lesson showed me that when you teach practically, it is much easier to see who is taking it in. I was so happy and since then I have tried to teach practically whenever I can.

Teacher educators as a community resource

Nakabiri Waliya, Kibuli Core PTC

The experience I want to write about is when my two students who were head teachers in two primary schools invited me as a facilitator. The areas they requested me to present were: teachers' code of conduct and the use of instructional materials in the teaching of lower primary pupils.

I was excited and took time preparing on that day; I woke up early and reached the first school ahead of time. Teachers found me on station, wondered why, but organized themselves quickly and the workshop began. I used group work, had hands on activities with a variety of materials. The same was done to the second school. After it all, evaluation forms were given out and filled in. the comments written by teachers of the two schools made me excited because I never knew I could do a good job. When back at college, I used the same way to teach my students who become very active and excited. At the end of my teaching, some questions were given to them, but I was surprised that all questions were answered with other unexpected answers. That's when I realized that I have not been getting active students because of the way I was teaching them.

Since then I changed my way of teaching and became a resource in the community because I am getting invitations from other head teachers who were not my former students. At college, I feel I want to be in class with my students all the time because of the interest I have.

Teaching beyond the test

Otionomo Ivo, Busubizi PTC

In my college, back in 2012, there was a bad record of poor performance in my subject area of Social Studies Education. Many students would fail and have to re-sit for this paper.

This issue caused me quite considerable concern. I used to think, ‘what is the cause of this?’. I observed for a while, and I realised that the way this subject was taught was through the old exam papers. They would simply be taken through old questions and some summarised old notes relating to these questions. I think the idea was that they were learning to pass the exam, only it wasn’t working, because they weren’t passing the exam.

I started to introduce some participatory approaches. I tried many different things that year, like group work, individual research, demonstrations, peer-teaching and so on. I also tried hard to involve students in assessing their own work and identifying where they needed extra knowledge or support. This helped them get immediate feedback on what they were learning, from me, from their peers, and from themselves. I also introduced a remedial class for those who were struggling.

I am very pleased to say that since I started teaching in this way, the performance in this subject has drastically improved. Students are now involved in activities that are relevant for their effective learning – but importantly for their own teaching too. They are better at being able to interpret the primary school curriculum and the Social Studies syllabus, see how they link to each other, and assess which approaches will work for in the classroom. So this way of teaching them has not only enabled them to perform better in their exams, which was my original goal, but it has also helped them to perform better in their school practice exercises.

I am proud to report that there are no more failures in this subject area. In fact, last year 98% of my students passed it with credit or distinction. What makes me most proud is that many of my students have enrolled for Diploma upgrading, with Social Studies as their teaching subject. It is things like this that make you motivated in your job, and make you not want to rest, but to carry on doing more to improve the teaching profession in Uganda.

When change changes you

Muyania Josphephine, Iganga Bishop Willis Core PTC

One bright morning, as lessons began, I told my students that the environment children learn in can have a huge impact on what and how they learn, and as teachers we are expected to make a conducive learning environment. They were amazed, and eager to know how they could make the environment more conducive to support learning in their own classrooms. So I began to tell them the story of Nalule.

Nalule was a fellow teacher who taught a primary three class. She always told her children 'I love you', and they always replied 'we love you teacher'. She then always said 'good children' and they replied 'good teacher'. But one child, Mafaabi, never joined in with this chorus.

The students were so quiet you could hear a pin drop. All eyes and attention were on me. I knew they were keen to know more about the story and I felt motivated to continue telling them.

Nalule was so happy that her class loved her, she didn't really acknowledge that Mafaabi did not respond. Mafaabi had untamed hair, uncut nails and his clothes were shabby and dirty. It was just natural that just looking at him could annoy you. And his work was bad. Whenever Mafaabi brought his book for marking, everything was wrong. Madam Nalule would just put a big red cross through the whole page, and Mafaabi would return to his seat, his book full of red ink.

On the last day of term, all of the children brought Christmas gifts for Nalule. Most of them had brought gifts wrapped in beautiful shop-bought wrapping paper, colourful and wrapped with joyful ribbons. As each child carried their extravagantly wrapped gifts to the front, the others gasped and clapped with delight at their beauty and the generosity of each other's parents. Finally Mafaabi stood up and carried his gift to the front. His classmates broke out into laughter, for Mafaabi's present was wrapped in brown sugar paper. Nalule opened it, as she had the others, and found it contained an almost empty bottle of perfume and a bracelet with several of the rhinestones missing. She looked at Mafaabi with new eyes. She silenced the children, put the bracelet on her wrist and dabbed the perfume to her neck. She exclaimed, 'Mafaabi, what a beautiful present, thank you!'. The children squirmed with embarrassment, guilt and confusion.

At the end of the day, the children were sent home, and Nalule attended a staff meeting until 5pm. When she came out she was surprised to see Mafaabi still at school. He ran to her and hugged her and said 'Teacher Nalule, I never said I loved you before but today I loved you'. Nalule teared a little in her eyes and replied 'Mafaabi, of course I love you too'. She sent him home and returned to the office and retrieved his file.

At the end of his first year at school, his teacher had written: 'Mafaabi is such a nice boy to teach. He has an ever-ready smile and is always eager to learn'. Nalule was confused, this was not the Mafaabi she knew. His primary two teacher had written: 'Mafaabi has been withdrawn and distracted this year due to the illness of his mother'. His primary

three teacher had written: 'Following his mother's death, Mafaabi has completely withdrawn from the class. He shows little interest in learning and has indicated that life at home is hard due to the mistreatment from his stepmother. He needs more support from the school'.

I looked up at my class. Several of them were wiping their eyes with their hankies. I continued.

Teacher Nalule felt a lot of guilt and shame engulf her. She went home confused, but over the Christmas holidays it became clear what she must do. She visited Mafaabi's father and persuaded him to let Mafaabi come and live with her. The father saw how Mafaabi was coming between him and his new bride, so he agreed. Then Nalule convinced the head teacher to let Mafaabi repeat the class. Nalule taught him, and all her other pupils in an invigorated way, keen not to repeat previous mistakes.

Mafaabi's brightness returned and he proved to be an excellent academic, studying all the way to university and became a medical researcher with a PhD. He and Nalule stayed close and when Mafaabi graduated, he invited Nalule to sit at the head table, in place of his parents. Of course, Nalule wore the tattered bracelet, and the same perfume he had given her years earlier. As Nalule and Mafaabi hugged, he gestured around him and said 'Madam Nalule, look at me. I would not be a doctor without you'. And she said 'No my dear, you have it wrong, I would not be a teacher without you'.

I took a deep breath and surveyed the room. The mood was sombre and some students' tears were flowing freely. I asked them what they thought the moral lesson was and they gave several responses like 'you never know the person you are mistreating' and 'we should try to understand all of the children in our classrooms' and 'children need to be respected' among others. We agreed on the need to be sensitive to the learners when they went out on their teaching practice and then later when they qualified as teachers. Then one student said 'but Madam, I thought this lesson was about how to make the classroom conducive to learning'. I said, 'but it was'. A conducive environment doesn't start with wall charts or bright posters or the way in which you arrange the desks, a conducive environment starts with you, and the care, love and empathy you demonstrate for the children you teach.

The importance of ICT in teacher education

Rev. Katsigazi Alex, Kabulasoke Core PTC

A short while ago I was visiting a school. The head teacher told me about one teacher in particular who was very successful, who was seen by all to be professionally upright, who used active learning methods, and who was known to be technologically innovative in his work like using video clips and getting ideas from the internet, which made him really popular with his learners. I was delighted to realise that this teacher was a former student of mine!

There are many challenges of being a tutor, for example our salary is very low, but we persist and we continue because we have passion for teaching and learning. I go above and beyond the content, for example I ensure I equip teachers with professionalism, like telling them that a good teacher does not drink alcohol and always dresses well. And I do also equip them with active learning methods like storytelling and group work, and the use of songs and video clips, and the use of ICT for presentations, and encouraging them to go above and beyond the syllabus and use their phones to find more content on the internet.

So, this day when I realised that my hard work had paid off, and that this teacher was indeed going above and beyond and using the internet in his teaching, and that his learners were really happy with him, I really realised that I was a good teacher educator.

Rose beds and thorns in the life of an Agriculture tutor

Gad Kwizera, Kabulasoke Core PTC

There was one particular moment when I knew I was a good teacher educator. I am a tutor of Agriculture, and when I joined the college there was a history of retakes in this subject. This story is about how I helped shift the reality to a number of distinctions, and how I realised the teaching is my passion.

I joined the college in the third term of 2015. I was armed with content knowledge and teaching skills. Imbibed in the energy of a young tutor of 29 years of age, I felt I was going to bring heaven on earth to Kabulasoke! But I was so demotivated by the high number of re-takes. I thought to myself 'this does not please me. What I thought was a bed of roses could actually be a pitch of thorns!' The retakes communicated one message to me: students, you have to be serious. But I had little idea of these students' backgrounds and I wondered how I could generate this seriousness from nowhere.

I walked into my first lesson as a tutor with my message at the forefront of my mind, and some ideas how I could creatively bring it to execution. I soon realised that the students were cooperative, but there was evidence of the lack of the required requisite knowledge about the subject matter. And in addition, while I was young and energetic and committed, I soon realised that teaching teacher trainees was not as easy as teaching primary or secondary school learners: the latter need the knowledge and skills which I was equipped to communicate, but teacher trainees need the knowledge and skills about the subject, but also the knowledge and skills to effectively communicate these to primary age children and making a positive reaction and impact on their lives. Not only this, I also realised that they had no record of the provisions of the syllabus. So I had to be quick and creative and cover the entire content of the third term in just two months. I accompanied every step of the syllabus with a number of thought-provoking questions to guide their reading, and I used as many practical examples as I possibly could and engaged them in group projects. I also found video clips online, for example on farm management, castration, artificial insemination, grafting, and so on. This really helped the learners to understand concepts where tools and equipment at the college were severely limited. I encouraged learners to ask me questions, to discuss issues in groups, and guided them to discover answers on their own. My intention was to majorly help the students to apply the theory into real-life hands on activities. Soon students were loving the subject so much they were even studying it on Saturdays!

The students' performance became superb, that year there was not one re-take, and distinctions were realised. But the benefits did not end at the scores, but we also saw the enrolment of students studying Agriculture shoot up from below 100 students in 2015 to over 140 students in 2016. And something else happened too. A good teacher educator with passion was discovered. It was me.

The moment I knew I was a good teacher educator

Balazewa Henry Gabula, Kabulasoke Core PTC

Little did I know that I could cause an impact on the education system in my country. That is, until I was posted to Kabulasoke Core Primary Teachers' College. It was a normal posting, which happened to be in the middle of the year 2004. In the orientation the Principal and Deputy Principal raised the issue of the college's poor performance in Mathematics, which had resulted in 209 failures in the recent Kyambogo examinations. This inspired me to embark on a mission to find out the causes of this poor performance. I discovered that the teaching of mathematics at the college was shrouded in negative attitudes towards the subject, poor methodology from the tutors, a feeling of gendered inferiority in relation to Maths, whereby most people thought that the female students could not perform well. There was also very individualistic practices among those who were perceived to be good at the subject, they did not support their peers at all.

The task ahead of me was enormous, but I knew that I had to tackle it wholesomely. Mathematics is one of those subjects where unless the language is demystified by the tutors, it can cause great uncertainty among learners. So I set about changing the narrative around the subject in the first instance. Second I organised diagnostic tests which could lead me to identify individual challenges across the student body, and tackle these one by one. Finally I worked with the tutors to encourage them to use more learner-centred methods such trying to make the subject functional rather than abstract as group discussions – yes, group discussions are important even in Mathematics, especially when there are individualistic tendencies of the capable ones. By doing these things, many students started loving the subject. For example, two students Juliet and Margaret, who had originally failed their promotional examinations, are now graduates of this very subject!

Today, Mathematics is one of the subjects that performs very well, and the creation of a Maths club has produced many mathematicians who compete in a National Mathematics Competition. My students are in demand as Mathematics teachers even before they graduate!

Looking to a P.E. tutor for mentorship

Nakitto Norah, Jinja PTC

My story is one about not being afraid to ask for help. I was trained as a secondary school teacher, not as a tutor. Therefore, when I began this tutor job, my knowledge of primary supervision was minimal. It was not too hard in normal classes, I knew what to look for. But I got so many challenges when trying to support students who were teaching P.E. lessons. As a tutor it was my role to help the teacher trainees to improve on their teaching by highlighting areas that are weak. But this involves the tutor being strong in her knowledge and understanding of the teaching procedures. This I was not.

I remember the day it all became too much. I was supervising a P.E. lesson and all I could see was a group of children playing, shouting, running around in the bright sunshine. I simply did not know what I was looking for, and I felt incompetent because I could not help my student as she needed me to. It was such a challenge for me, it was really bad. I felt so frustrated and stressed that from that point I did everything I could not to supervise P.E. Even when one day I was at a school for supervision and a student asked me to come and watch her P.E. lesson. I felt panicked and I declined. But I felt so bad that I resolved to do something to change this situation.

When I went back to college I consulted a P.E tutor, Mr Balonde. He was knowledgeable, had had thorough P.E. training, handled his P.E. lessons well at college, and he was approachable. He was very nice about my nervousness and clearly highlighted key points to look out for when supervising a P.E. lesson, for example, nice dressing, safety, demarcation of play area, but also less obvious things like making sure the children were standing with their backs to the sun when the student was giving instructions. I thought back to the bright sunshine on the day I had panicked and wondered if the children had been staring at the sunshine. I would never know.

Since that day, I have not looked back. I am now very comfortable supervising the lessons. I was unsure and scared, but by seeking help I became equipped, skilled and enlightened. Now, years later, I actively try and share my skills with other tutors who are new. Therefore I encourage other tutors to feel free to consult each other. As tutors we should always share, consult and discuss amongst ourselves, to become better teacher educators and learn new strategies to overcome our challenges.

A better life in teacher education

Karunga Haruna, Kaliro PTC

I started teaching in 1996 as a primary teacher at Kaliro primary school. I remember during that period many pupils came to school without a book or a pen for writing in. It was normal for the teacher to send these pupils home for the book. One day I sent a pupil home to fetch his book, and I didn't think much more of it until all of a sudden his father came marching into the school. He was coming from the fields and his trousers were rolled up, he was carrying a panga and a long stick and he was stamping with anger so that dirt flew everywhere. He stamped around the school shouting 'which teacher sent my child home?' It was alarming! But this was the way teachers were treated by the community – there was no respect.

But, after training as a tutor I started teaching at Kaliro Primary Teachers' College, and from this point I really saw my life change. Now people in the community respect me, as do other people in the teaching profession. The other day I walked into a school to support the student teachers in their teaching practice, and the head teacher leaped out of his chair to greet me!

Of course I don't tell the student teachers that they won't be respected, we have to tell them that it is an honourable profession. But they do already know how other people view teachers, and students often come to me and ask 'once I am a teacher, what does it take to become a tutor? When does one become a tutor?'

So there has been a great change in how people see me and I appreciate being greatly respected. But the greatest change has been in myself. As a tutor I have greater knowledge and I am always learning. I am proud, I feel confident, and I feel really valuable now.

Becoming what you did not dream you could be (or, more accurately, becoming what you did not train in)

Samuel Batambuze, Jinja PTC

I have come to realise as a tutor that learning does not stop. At any time in life you can learn new knowledge and skills. I did just this, and this is my story.

I trained as a secondary school teacher to teach agriculture. But in 2004 I was posted to a primary teachers' college and was appointed to teach agriculture education. When I started working at the college, I will admit myself that I had inadequate experience in teacher education practices, which were very different to what I had learned at college. For example, supporting student teachers in their preparation of schemes of work and supporting students in their teaching practice – I would always feel challenged in such activities, because these students were me not so long ago! But I thought that I would try and learn on the job and got on with it.

But then, in 2005, the primary curriculum was reviewed and changed from subject-based to thematic curriculum. I happened to be one of the ones who was trained in how to interpret and use the thematic curriculum. Through the training I gained knowledge and skills in the methodology of instructing lower primary children. From that point as well as teaching agriculture studies, I was also assigned a duty of training the teachers in lower primary classes and to support them on how to teach reading, writing and how to prepare schemes of work. I took on this task with a lot of commitment and intent because I saw this as my opportunity to gain my own experience in the basic practices that I felt I lacked. I am now asked by the administration to always support student teachers, and I do so professionally. I have gained a lot, although it was hard for me. While I had serious doubts in my ability to do the work well, I now feel confident, and I enjoy the profession that I did not train in, and which came as somewhat of a surprise.

I therefore say that learning does not end. Expertise is not a single pursuit – we think we must become an expert in one thing, to stick to the thing we were trained in. I don't believe this is true. I encourage colleagues to take on new learning opportunities whenever they can. You should be open to many paths in life. You never know where they will lead you.

The challenge of teaching local languages

Basoga Jackson, Jinja PTC

I remember how I felt when my boss at Jinja PTC asked me to teach local language education. I thought to myself 'this is going to be a big challenge'. I did not even know where to begin. You see, the fact was that I had never taught this subject, even for a second, in my life. I did not know what it entailed in the slightest. I pulled myself together and said 'ok the subject is Lusoga, I am a Masoga, it can't be that difficult'. And I imagine this is what my boss thought too, because I was the only Masoga and the only person he had asked. But it was more than difficult, it was like writing on water. It was really a nightmare, and the one who was teaching it before had disappeared, never to be seen again. I was left in space. Sincerely it was a challenge and a major trouble in my life, but as the saying goes, 'something with an origin, must have an end'.

As a humble beginning, I started small. Like a small stream, near its source, I was a trickle, but I came from rich background and I tried to imagine my potential as a mighty river. I tried to learn as much as I could about the subject. I visited resource persons, I went to resource centres and I scoured the college library. There I picked a book from Isabirye Viana, one of the best students in the local language. I studied this book so much. I read the syllabus, re-read the curriculum, and I came up with a new plan. I also had a particular way of teaching which was not common among my peers: all this planning, but also regular consultations with students, regular assessments, and regular follow-up with them. I did not just mark their work and hand it back, I always made sure to discuss the marks with them – each and every one. Of course this takes a lot of time, but that year, all that preparation and hard work really helped me to light the candle. That year I had nine students in second year, and all of them acquired distinction.

So, I started slowly and in fear, but with persistence. I strive to continue learning, to continue this follow-up with my students, I attend workshops and apply this to improve how I teach. This year I have registered over forty students in year two. I am now so resourceful in local language teaching that others come to me for advice and guidance. What was a challenge has turned into a blessing. I am now a mighty river.

A commitment

Namusisi Theopista, Busubizi PTC

Some time ago, the college I was working in organised to train the students in patriotism. The training was done every day, as early as 5am, and again after classes, often running late into the evening. The military trainers and the students were to do this training every day for a period of two weeks.

Hearing of the training immediately piqued my interest. I asked if I could join in – as a learner myself – and train with them for the whole programme.

Certificate day was a great celebration. Very many government officials in charge of patriotism were invited. It was a colourful day. Everyone was dressed up, there were marching parades, and people were assembling guns.

When the guest of honour gave the speech, he mentioned my name. In fact, I was even given a certificate. It was announced to everyone that I was a dedicated and responsible tutor. They talked about how much I liked my job and said my commitment to my students and to the college was a true sign of patriotism.

I was so happy and surprised to be given this gift. It still makes me feel good about myself - that I was acknowledged as being someone who was prepared to make a difference.

Confiscation

Anonymous

One day I was here at the college and I decided to take a walk around the grounds. As I moved to the dining hall, unfortunately, I found a student with a mobile phone. As the college rules state, I picked the phone from her.

I continued my walk and stopped at the ladies' halls of residence to chat with some students who were doing some sanctioned activities.

In the midst of this fairly calm and normal situation, I suddenly became aware of some noise and commotion. Some students were running towards us carrying the girl whose phone I had confiscated. I tried to ask them what was the matter, but none of them would answer me. I persisted and insisted they tell me what was the matter. Finally they lay the girl down on the ground and told me that she had died.

It is hard to describe how much I struggled in that moment. My eyes turned red and I felt dizzy, as if I had taken alcohol. Was it because I had picked the phone from her?

What comforted me was that all I had been doing was enforcing the college rules, but I knew I still needed to help this student. I tried to call the college nurse, but there was no airtime where we were standing. I ran to the canteen, but there was no airtime. I ran to the office, but there was no airtime. I did not know where else to try. I ran back to the students but thankfully by this time the student was normalising, she was not dead after all, she had just fainted with the shock and anger of it I think.

Eventually the nurse came and the student recovered. But it was my worst day as a tutor and I will never forget the mental struggle I went through as I tried to reconcile my role as a tutor obeying the rules, and the outcome that took place.

The tutoring journey

Peter Maina, Iganga Bishop Willis Core PTC

Tutoring, to me, is an amazing and interesting journey which winds up in so many outputs and impacts. A tutor's students are like arrows which shoot up in various directions, and every arrow has a catch, which is a successful career. I have trained students who have gone on to become classroom teachers, of course, but also politicians, head teachers, mentors and counsellors.

The roles of tutors are specific in terms of teaching academic subjects, carrying out tutorials and supervising them on school practice, but we also provide guidance and counselling, we nurture and mentor our students.

I like to think of this: each year about 500 students pass through my hands. These students go on to become teachers and will, on average, teach 100 children. Many of these children will be inspired by the teachers I taught, and they too will join the college after they have finished senior four... and they too will become teachers and teach 100 children, and the journey continues.

The ingredients of this tutoring journey are important. I must be prepared, knowledgeable, interesting (with the instructional methods I use) and exemplary as a person. Indeed, these ingredients form a product from which the nation shops to staff the primary schools.

The tutoring journey brings with it extended, life-long friendships with colleagues who become people to learn from, and learn with. The students too teach me so much and I have grown professionally over the years through learning from others in this way. It is exciting to find an old student who has progressed, for example as a head teacher – or more! I feel proud when they introduce me as their tutor. I have earned respect and I enjoy appreciations and applause from those I have taught and from the community I have served.

The tutors' journey is guided like a river by the Teachers' Code of Conduct, which helps us move in an informed way towards our shared desired educational goal.

The tutoring journey therefore touches many people's lives, both directly and indirectly for good living, and should be upheld. So I think that it is good that I joined the teacher education profession. I find myself with more sheep than a good shepherd, and more impact than a church priest when you think of the numbers of lives I touch through my work! I encourage all students in my college to read hard and become tutors.

Unique duty as a tutor

Bukose Augustine, Iganga Bishop Willis Core PTC

A time I made a difference as a tutor was when one time I conducted a lesson which was very interesting because it was planned in such a way that it involved both minds on and hands on. We had been learning about electricity and the Van de Graaff – but only theoretically. But today, theory, was to become reality.

Most of the students were in a mood of excitement as I had anticipated, but I noticed three students – John, Juma and Nabriye - who looked disturbed. I vowed to understand why. I had assumed that everyone would be fascinated by the lesson. I was especially surprised because I knew that John and Juma had come from poor families and had attended secondary schools where practical lessons were rare. The lesson progressed, but afterwards I followed up with the three to discover what was making them restless. I learned some interesting things!

First, it transpired that at the college there was a habit for tutors to come to class, set the lesson, and then leave. So students were often free to do the same, to come and go at any time. They were alarmed at my bringing some practical materials as they knew this meant that I would be around for the whole lesson! Juma, a bright, but cheeky and stubborn student had influenced John to return to the dormitory with him during the session. I also found that while Nabiyre was talkative with her friends, she was unusually quiet. I discovered that she was disturbed by the behaviour of her friends, but was too shy to speak out. I was touched by my understanding of these behaviours and an idea sparkled in my mind that teaching was not enough – however practical and engaging the methods, these young people needed mentors to talk to and guide them through their studies.

To conclude, I think that the support that students get through guidance and counselling can greatly improve their academic career. It reminded me that understanding students as individuals, understanding their backgrounds is important, but also the things that are going on in their lives as they study. Knowing these things helps me plan my lessons – and helps me to build students' knowledge, skills and values for better life and performance.

Yes, I can

Katusiime Caroline, Ndegeya PTC

When I was at school, it was my Kiswahili teachers that I loved the most. The way they explained, demonstrated and advised us was wonderful for me. Their professional conduct was overflowing with goodness. Right from back then, in only primary five, I knew I wanted to be a teacher and I used to ask them all the time how I could grow up to be just like them! They all helped me to focus my goals, and I remember that especially Mr Mwalhi told me to be disciplined and to work very hard. I never forgot his advice and every day of primary and secondary school I did something to ground my conviction and determination to be a teacher. My personal motto was 'yes, I can!'

To fulfil my dreams, I had to join a teacher training institution. I joined Kyambogo. Here I encountered lecturers who were so professional and inspired me all the more. I had to work hard, but I stuck to my motto and just as I sought advice from my teachers when I was a girl, I now continued to seek advice from all those around me, especially the teachers who I could see really loved their job of teaching. I never tire of advice that helps me grow as a teacher. I fulfilled my motto – 'yes, I could', and I know now that I am a good teacher. However, I realise that to be happy, I need to keep learning.

How to be a good science teacher educator

Mukama David, Ndegeya Core PTC

The moment I knew I was a good teacher educator was in my first year in the teachers' college. I was appointed to be a science teacher educator. I was the only science teacher educator in the college. I groomed my students for becoming good science teachers by practicing what is required of a good science teacher educator.

A good science teacher educator is required to prepare adequately before conducting a lesson. The preparation involves making a scheme of work. In a scheme of work the competencies, methods and activities determine the quality of a lesson, if well-followed and understood. The competences are emphasised to cater for three main levels. The three main levels are remembering, understanding and applying.

The levels are mastered by the students, and in my procedures I emphasised that to achieve the levels well you have to make instructional materials as is my practice. The instructional materials aid the learners to acquire the concepts and levels. This further determines the methods and activities to be used. Students practise this through micro-teaching lessons.

The moderators met students with these experiences and the moderators were happy. In their feedback conference they asked 'who is this science teacher educator?' I was exposed to them and they said to me 'you are a good science teacher educator'.

Getting serious

Abdallah Ally Rufungura

On the 1st of September, 2016, I came back to the college as a full-time tutor after my studies.

This was the time for me to get serious with my job and concentrate and practice what I had learnt in the university.

When the students saw me they were all excited to see me again. I helped them to pass their promotional exams to the second year, and this jolly welcome encourages me and deep inside my heart I knew I had killed the negative attitude they had previously had towards studying Kiswahili, and this could help me lead them to great heights.

While I was studying I equipped myself with the different teaching methods and as most of these were learner-centred, I really felt I could deal with the students better.

Teaching a 21st century teacher can be challenging if you don't understand them and teach them in the way they want to be taught and you have to listen to them to be able to respond to their specific needs. For example, a student called Scondina was interested in the different meanings of insults and could bring them forward for me to help her interpret them to Kiswahili. If you understand the kinds of people you are dealing with, you will enjoy your job as a teacher trainer.

Till now I still enjoy seeing the trainees admitted when they are raw and making the teachers' college ripe with pedagogy skills and language skills so that they become professionally mature.

Second chances

Ndagire Sarah, Shimoni Core PTC

When I was working as a tutor in a previous college, I taught two students by the names of Mutawe and Isa. They were great friends and used to dodge class often. I didn't know why they dodged class, they had only just joined as year one students. From early conversations with them I could see that they did have a passion for teaching and seemed to be well behaved otherwise. My response was to punish them by making them sweep the playground. But this had no effect. They continued to dodge class.

So I laid out a strategy to myself of trying to become their friends so I could find out what the problem was and try and motivate them to be more regular with their lessons.

This became even more difficult, because no matter how hard I tried to get close to them and understand any problems they had, they continued to miss classes. By now they were also sneaking off campus at night and falling asleep in lessons and they were at risk of failing the course.

One day during a 'spot check' – which is done without warning – I came across the two boys, Mutawe and Isa in the same bed. I got worried and started my investigations as to why they had been in a compromising position – acting as lovers. Surrounding them were leaves and empty sachets and indeed, they were not sober. My colleague identified the substances as cocaine and waragi. How did they get the substances? I did not know. I later found out that they had been escaping every night and the toughest askari had not noticed.

So, I had a choice. I could discard these boys, or I could help them. I genuinely believed that they had the potential to be teachers and to be good teachers at that. So I decided to help them.

I made more of an effort to get to know them as people, and I encouraged other tutors to do the same, so they would feel that they had support all over campus and that there would always be a supportive mentor to turn to if they were feeling low or desperate. We all discussed more about what it meant to produce upright teachers, and how we – as tutors – could encourage positive behaviours. I avoided punishments and instead asked them what they wanted to do with their life, what they needed to do to achieve this, and how the college could support them. Indeed this strategy helped a lot because both Mutawe and Isa attended much more regularly from then on and were able to complete the course.

Recently I visited Isa and I was amazed to see that he had constructed his own house. He was a respected man and was an upright teacher aiming to become a tutor. I thought 'wow, these are my efforts' and I realised my help had not been in vain.

But he told me that Mutawe had resorted back to his old, poor habits.

Seven measures of success

Mugerwa Ally, Kibuli Core PTC

The day I realized I was doing a good job was when I was invited to attend a science fair at a school where the school headmaster was requested to make me the guest speaker on the instructional materials day.

The purpose was to provide the invited people – teachers, stake holders and parents in the schools – with information about how we used of instructional materials in classes.

It was my surprise to see that in the seven schools involved the best teacher in each school was my former student.

When they were asked the secret behind the performance they said it was my way I trained them and even some of those who know me gave a testimony. They provided reasons for the performance as interaction, positive attitude, methods and process as well as life skills provide that fashioned their expertise as individuals.

The appreciation and presents that were given to me and the applications the community gave me to be a zone supervisor to improve on the quality teachers gave me satisfaction of the role of a tutor.

A breath of good hope

Kyakuwa Ibrahim, Kibuli Core PTC

One day, my head of department took me in the principal's office. She asked the principal if he could co-opt me as her teaching assistant in the department of physical education and sports

Because of the trailing failures of student in the discipline I was seen to be a 'breath of good hope' for creating a change.

Most important was two special categories of student - one physically challenged and the other HIV positive. These two students approached me to help them take a decision about whether or not to take the subject. I guided them to see that they were welcome and I would help them as much as I could to pass even though they had additional challenges. So, they both took the subject and passed.

Above it all was when the students started passing the subject – especially people who thought was difficult - I knew I was doing a good job. Indeed they are because I am.

I cannot stop the pen without recognizing my tutors Mr. Wandindi now retired among others who took long hours in the office promising to make a difference in my life. Indeed I am because they are.

Learning from me is resilience, being accommodative, accepting challenges and responding to constructive criticism. These have been the force behind my success.

Indeed my career, my conviction, my ordained mission.

Love not fear

Anonymous

At school I had a best friend and we would always work together in terms of academic struggles. She decided to train to become a teacher, and this piqued my interest. I was inspired by my tutors – especially my English tutor. She had a particular style of teaching, she loved the students and she had an impressive social life! I worked hard during the training and with the help of the tutors I passed. I was immediately appointed to be a teacher in the demonstration school of the college I trained at.

However, despite working hard, I had also been somewhat distracted at college, and when I began to teach I realised that the influences of my friend had led to gaps. I was especially aware of it in the way I treated the learners during the lessons. I tried hard, but I always felt that there could be a way they could learn better. I caned them and they were scared of me, but this did not help them learn better.

So after only one year of feeling like this I went for further studies and I studied for a Diploma in Special Needs Education. And this was the real turning point in my life. It was here that I learned how to include *all* learners in the lesson, and that they would benefit from a range of activities and instructional materials. I also learned here that the stick I had been carrying was scaring the learners, and that love, a positive attitude and kind language were the keys to motivating learning, and not fear. From that point I started to enjoy teaching and have a constant aspiration to learn and perform better.

Going beyond

Buyinza Nuhu, Kabulasoke Core PTC

Right from the very first time I taught my students, I saw that they were interested in the lesson and very attentive. At the end of the lesson they clapped their hands and thanked me.

When I gave them an exercise to do, they all did it very well, and when I marked it later, I realised that all of the competencies were well-achieved.

The moment I interacted with the community I saw that even those I did not teach were saying that I was a good teacher educator, simply because I didn't just teach students to pass their exams, but I also gave them insight into the world of schools.

Many students across Uganda complete the teachers' course without knowing what to expect in the world of work. Many go on to realise this only when they are right in the world of work, and because they are not prepared, develop habits that are misguided or petty because they are struggling, and this can abuse the profession.

We as teacher educators should not only give our students skills to pass, but should go a long way in giving them an insight about what to expect in the field, how to relate to the community to ensure good school-community relations, and a way of executing their duties that brings respect to the profession.

All in all, a good teacher educator should be one that engages their students positively and talks about negative effects that might hamper the teachers' career in the process of their duty to educate the masses.

Working with what you have got

Ayubu Anna Atwoil, Shimoni Core PTC

One day I was nominated by my principal to go and attend a workshop organised by Feed the Future, India, in collaboration with USAID. It was for ten days – a residential programme – and the participants were from all parts of Uganda.

The facilitators were two ladies and four gentlemen from India. It was a really interactive and participatory workshop, and everyone joined in enthusiastically.

After five days working in St Augustine, participants were taken to Kalengala. We were welcomed there, and they took us through different farming practices such as organic farming, back yard farming where you use polythene bags, tins and jerry cans to plant vegetables.

I was really inspired by these ideas. At Shimoni we don't have land, so no one farmed and it was hard to teach agriculture. But I was exposed to these new solutions.

When I got back to Shimoni I explained to the principal and the tutors how cheaply we could produce vegetables like sikuma, wiiki, cabbages and so on on the small land that we have. She agreed to the idea and I set about working with the students to produce a vegetable garden. I also advised the students to go and apply the techniques in their homes.

I realised that for one to grow vegetables, one does not need a big piece of land. The growing of crops in polythene has become one of our instructional strategies and teaching resources. Also, the community around the college are benefitting because we can share the vegetables, and the ideas about growing them, with those who live nearby.

The moment I knew I wanted to be a teacher educator

Wafula Michael, Ndegeya PTC

I knew I wanted to be a teacher educator right from when I was studying to become a teacher. I was inspired by my tutors, and especially the Science of Mathematics tutors. They were friendly, time-conscious, and could immediately and articulately answer questions thanks to their expertise. They hardly ever dodged lessons, and when, if for any reason, they would not appear for the lesson, they would send an apology with a reason and a class assignment and promise that they would follow up afterwards. These tutors used practical methods and we regularly used the Science labs for experiments which simplified hard concepts for us. They handled us professionally, and if there were any disciplinary issues, they identified the students and peacefully discussed things with them without public harassment or embarrassment.

So it was from right back then that I picked an interest not only in becoming a tutor, but a tutor in Science. At O'Level my performance in Science was nothing to sing about, but at college I grabbed intrinsic motivation from these inspiring tutors. And right from qualifying from grade three I was making preparations to not only excel in teaching but to upgrade, regardless of the discouragement from my supervisors. I was awarded my Diploma in Teacher Education, and from there I upgraded for a B.Ed. And now I am a teacher educator and I emulate the behaviours of the tutors who inspired me, and in turn my own students tell me that I inspire them to become tutors.

ICT pedagogy making a difference for tutors

Musana Henry, Iganga Bishop Willis Core PTC

For decades learning and teaching in Uganda was limited to one geographic location. Tutors had no exposure to other education systems across the world. This created many obstacles.

In the year 2000 Uganda had a numbers of experts excelling in research. They discovered that Uganda's education system was failing because there had been a failure to adopt new methods of teaching, and a failure to embrace the opportunities afforded by ICT. Embedding ICT in education had the potential to impact on all areas of life – and teachers could make that difference.

I remember taking my first computer back to my village and people asked 'ah! What is this small God?!' People wondered if computers were dangerous, if they affected human reproduction and if they would result in the loss of jobs because one computer could do the work of one thousand people. Therefore the uptake of ICT was hampered by African beliefs.

In 2008 Uganda adopted the findings of the research and teachers were encouraged to use ICT. It was said that even if the teacher wasn't there, learning could still take place. But there was poor uptake by teachers who had a poor attitude to ICT. Also there was a lack of ICT technical staff and equipment. Partnerships with organisations such as UNESCO and UNICEF meant that more equipment was placed in schools and colleges as a mechanism of improving the performance of teachers.

As an ICT tutor, technology is of great importance to me. With the donated equipment, my job was made very simple and comfortable. The ICT curriculum was somewhat limited, but when comparison was made on the internet, it was possible to learn a lot. When my students realised how much more content was available on the internet such as Koha, their learning was made easy.

However, as much as ICT skills have the potential to make changes to education by helping tutors to be change agents preparing students for the twenty first century, there are still some gaps. For example tutors lack the attitude to adopt the trend. Tutors face challenges such as lack of computers and internet connectivity. Truly ICT skills and pedagogy will be determined by the attitudes of many Ugandans who believe we will forever be a low developed country.

Lessons in being a tutor

Turyatunga Herbert, Kabulasoke Core PTC

The teaching profession is my passion. When I completed my teacher education course I started teaching and supervising and doing other duties attached to me by my head of department and the college administration.

I am currently in a position to do what my supervisors trained me to do. For example scheming lessons, planning and preparing instructional materials of multiple variety to make teaching 'real', like using ICT, making charts, and using real materials from around me. I teach these applied methods to my students, like encouraging them to create a good learning environment that will make primary school students do better. I am honest when I am assessing my teacher trainees because I am not the only person in charge of them. When I am keeping students' records I take it very seriously.

I have realised that I am a good teacher educator because I use the democratic method of teaching. I group them weak with strong, and I am polite.

Tutors on the national stage

Among Otukol Janet, Iganga Bishop Willis Core PTC

It was way back, around 2004, when a big visit was announced. As a coordinating centre tutor in the Entebbe Municipality I was informed that the Secretary to the Treasury of the United States was expected in the country. The purpose of the visit was to establish the utilisation of some funds that the United States had donated to Uganda. The event was scheduled to take place in Kampala City, closely monitored by Kibuli Core Primary Teachers' College where I was attached.

Out of the four hundred and sixty Coordinating Centre Tutors in the country, I was selected to prepare a welcome speech for the expected guest. In the same mandate I was asked to train some primary school students and teachers to perform a skit and a traditional dance.

The assignment greeted me with a lot of mixed feelings: joy, fear and excitement lingered in my atmosphere. None the less, I took up the challenge. I started to write my speech, but I had so much to say! I handed it to the Chief of Party for editing and she nodded with approval as she read it. We worked to reduce the length and I was encouraged. What had felt like a bombshell begun to take shape.

D-day finally came and the atmosphere was electric. There was dancing and singing and feasting, and people embraced and exchanged happy greetings with the guests. When the function started, very few people were invited to sit near the guests, but guess what?! I was one of the V.I.Ps! It was incredible that my stake in the meeting, and in the education of our teachers was recognised in such a way. My speech was well received and afterwards we all congratulated each other for a very successful event. Each of them took turns in thanking me for a very good representation of the coordinating centre tutors, and of the nation at large. I was delighted! We concluded with a dinner where the Chief of Party showered me with more compliments. She told me that the special guests were very happy and she was optimistic that another project could be approved in her favour.

I feel that it is always good to strive to be outstanding in your performance, every single day, because you never know when people will be watching you and noticing you and when they will come to you with potentially life-changing assignments. The last thing the Chief said to me was 'Janet, I will make sure you are promoted before I leave Uganda!' Do you think the promotion materialised? Well, this is Uganda, so I will leave that up to you to ponder! But the experience and the exposure alone were satisfying and enriching and I will never forget it.

Activities to support story-work

Circle stories

Summary

This activity uses a set of 'story cubes' – each pack that we used in the workshop contained nine dice-like cubes, but instead of numbers, each side had a picture. Using the picture prompts on the story cubes, the group sit in a circle and construct a collective story. Unlike the true stories that were told in the workshop, this activity encourages people to work together to create a fictional narrative.

This game works best in groups of between 5-10 people.

It will take about 10 minutes (but this depends on how elaborate the stories are!)

Equipment

If you can't get hold of pre-made story cubes, you can make your own by making a cube out of cardboard and drawing pictures on it. Or, you can play this game just using images on pieces of paper which participants pick out of a hat. You could draw your own, or cut up pictures from a newspaper, magazine or leaflet.

Objectives

- To introduce the concept of sharing ideas in story-form
- To build confidence in sharing their ideas out-loud
- To work together towards a common goal

Approach

- The group sits or stands in a circle. A facilitator hands everyone a story cube or lets them pick an image from a hat (this works best if the facilitators also participate).
- Each participant looks at the picture they have been given (if they have a cube they can choose a picture, or to make it harder you can ask them to roll the cube and the picture it lands on is the one they have to use).
- A facilitator starts the story by showing their picture, e.g. if the picture is an elephant they could say... 'once upon a time I woke up and I looked out of the window and to my great surprise there stood an enormous elephant! I walked over to the window and I said...' (this leaves the story open for the next person in the circle to continue using their own picture as a prompt).
- Go around the circle until everyone has contributed to the story. The last person has to 'conclude' the story.
- When the story is complete, ask the participants what they thought about the exercise and congratulate them on being 'storytellers'.

Free-writing

Summary

An improvised activity where participants write freely for a set period of time (without paying attention to structure or grammar) following a series of prompts. The idea of free-writing is that it can help to focus the mind on a particular issue or theme.

We used this in the story workshops to help people generate ideas for their story and think – almost sub-consciously – about what is important to them about that story. It can also be used as a tool when people have writers' block.

People are often surprised at what comes out – depending on the prompts it can spark some emotional writing. So you need to be sensitive and don't insist that people share their writing if they don't want to.

It takes about 15 minutes to do this activity using three prompts.

Equipment

Each participant needs either a piece of paper and a pen, or a laptop

Objectives

- Participants begin to see themselves as able to 'write stories'
- To generate ideas, emotions, memories...
- To introduce some core themes of the research
- To build confidence in sharing their own stories
- To build trust among the group (this is even better if one of the facilitators joins in the free-writing) and practice listening to each other

Approach

- Participants at tables with space to write (or type into a laptop if they prefer)
- Explain the exercise (that they will be given a prompt, and then have two minutes to write a response to that prompt).
- Emphasise that they should write whatever comes into their mind, even if that is 'argh I can't think of what to write' – the aim is to write constantly for 2 minutes.
- Emphasise that they should not worry about spelling, grammar, punctuation and they should not try to structure their thoughts, just write.
- Ask if they have any questions.
- When the room is quiet, announce the first prompt. Set the stopwatch.
- After two minutes, ask them to stop writing. Ask if anyone wants to read out what they have written (if they are shy the facilitator can go first). Don't force anyone to read if they don't want to.
- Repeat the exercise with the second and third prompts.
- Ask the group to reflect on the exercise – how did it feel writing under pressure / sharing personal stories etc.
- The three prompts we used in the workshop were: I remember... / I remember when I learned... / I remember when *they* learned...

River of life

Summary

Using the 'river of life' approach, participants work individually to develop a 'picture' of their story.

This activity uses the metaphor of a river to help people set out their thoughts about the timeframe of a particular event. The river can be used to represent their whole lives, or a particular portion of their lives (e.g. the decision to become a teacher, a challenging situation and so on). It helps them to 'zoom out' and see the bigger picture of how the story fits into their life history.

It's good to let people have time to really think about and work on their river, so an hour is a good amount of time for this activity.

Equipment

Blackboard / whiteboard or flip chart and markers for the facilitator

Each participant will need a sheet of paper and whatever art materials you can find. It is nice to have lots of colours, but the exercise can also work with just a pen or pencil.

Objectives

- Gives participants space to reflect on what and who are important in their story
- Helps them to zoom out to see their story in context in order to zoom in on a particular point

Approach

- Start by explaining the idea of the exercise – that they are going to visually represent their story using the metaphor of a river. Emphasise that they don't need to be amazing artists! (check they know what a metaphor is too).
- Ask them to tell you what a river has / does and draw this on the flip chart paper as they tell you (e.g. a source (in the mountains), a mouth, tributaries, rain, rapids, irrigation, farming, animals, trees, islands, a delta, a mouth, the sea, ox bow lakes etc etc and as you are doing this, ask for suggestions as to what each could represent (you may need to prompt / give examples, e.g. rocks could represent obstacles, farming could represent growth, a sudden bend in the river could represent a change in direction of thinking, an ox-bow lake could represent a dead-end, a delta could represent the spread of knowledge and so on)
- Hand out the paper and the felt tips and explain that they have 30 minutes to draw their own river. Let people work in silence, e.g. don't interrupt them, but be present to answer questions if required.
- After 30 minutes see if people have finished (you can give them more time if needed). Ask them to lay their 'rivers' on the table or put them up around the room. Give them a few minutes to walk around and look at each others' rivers.
- Facilitate a discussion about the exercise. For example, ask people if they would like to talk through their river and encourage questions from the group. Ask them if drawing the river helped them to see something new in their story that they hadn't noticed or acknowledged before.

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Also:

Transformative Storytelling for Social Change – a great resource for anyone considering storytelling approaches www.transformativestory.org



“ROSE BEDS, THORNS AND A RESOURCE FOR THE NATION”

A COLLECTION OF STORIES ABOUT LIFE AS A TEACHER EDUCATOR IN UGANDA.

Tutors working at colleges of education are a vital part of the education landscape in Sub-Saharan Africa. They are responsible for teaching, supporting and inspiring the hundreds of thousands of teachers who start working in schools each year. Yet they are also a group of professionals about which very little is known.

This book is a collection of stories written by tutors working at colleges of education across Uganda. The stories were written as part of a research study led by academics from Kyambogo University in Uganda, and The Open University in the UK. The research was funded and supported by the TESSA (Teacher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa) Programme.

From the once in a life-time, to the every-day, these true stories of tutors' professional experiences provide a glimpse into an often unseen world of teaching and learning.



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