

*By Francis Byaruhanga,*

The Ministry of Education in Rwanda has introduced an International Student Assessment program aimed at driving the country's educational policy reforms and aligning them with global standards. This initiative is designed to enhance the quality of education across the country.

The new Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) will focus on evaluating 15-year-old students from selected schools. The results will assess their proficiency in reading, mathematics, and science literacy, providing valuable insights into the current state of education in Rwanda.

This initiative comes at a crucial time, following a noticeable decline in student performance in key subjects—Mathematics, English, and Sciences—as reflected in the recent Primary Leaving Examination (PLE) results.

A preliminary field trial for PISA was conducted between May 27 and June 6, 2024, involving 1,440 students from 45 schools. This trial served as a test for the assessment tools and procedures. The main survey is scheduled to take place from April 27 to June 7, 2025.

Minister of Education Gaspard Twagirayezu emphasized the significance of PISA, which is coordinated by countries in the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) region. He highlighted that the program will not only bolster the quality of education but also help refine teaching and learning policy frameworks.

"We recently completed a field trial, and the main survey will commence in June next year," Twagirayezu stated. "We will engage in dialogue with various stakeholders to enhance our policies and strategies. Rwanda's participation in these assessments underscores our commitment to leading educational transformation. It is a critical step towards benchmarking our education policies and practices against global standards."

Twagirayezu further underscored the program's importance as a diagnostic tool for shaping Rwanda's education policies through 2050.



At the program's launch, Andreas Schleicher, Director for Education and Skills and

Special Advisor on Education Policy to the OECD Secretary-General, praised Rwanda's rapid technological advancements and its readiness to adopt world-class educational systems. Schleicher noted that Rwanda's involvement in PISA demonstrates a strong commitment to educational excellence.

"Rwanda is not just assessing the current state of education; it is laying the groundwork for a brighter future for its young people," Schleicher remarked. He commended Rwanda as one of the pioneering countries in Africa to participate in the program and expressed confidence that it will yield positive results.

"PISA is not a competition but an opportunity for countries to learn from one another on how to make education more relevant," he added.

The PISA program has already benefited approximately 690,000 students aged 15 from 81 countries. Rwanda's adoption of PISA complements other existing assessments, such as the Early Grade Mathematics Assessment (EGMA), the Local Early Grade Reading Assessment (LEGRA), and the Learning Achievement in Rwandan Schools (LARS).