

**OFFICE OF THE
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION**



Clerk
Pse include in the
Order Paper of 7/12/21
E/12/21

**STATEMENT BY THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION ON THE
CURRENT STATE OF THE EDUCATION SECTOR**

Moved Under Rule 53 (1) of the Rules of Procedure

DECEMBER 2021

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Rt. Honourable Speaker and Members of Parliament, I am proceeding under Rule 53 (1) of our rules of procedure to make a statement on the state of our education sector under COVID-19 containment related lockdown.

Education is a key component for social growth, Economic development, and transformation. However, the COVID-19 pandemic poses serious threats to the access of Education in Uganda and innovative solutions are needed to support this sector. The lockdowns that were instituted to contain the spread of the pandemic disrupted learning across all levels of education. Pre-primary institutions were completely closed while phased learning was undertaken in primary, secondary, vocational and tertiary institutions between the 1st and 2nd wave of coronavirus infections.

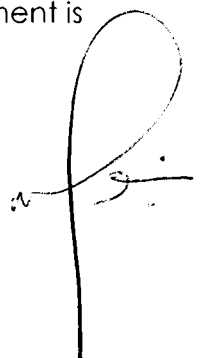
- **Stalled Cohorts**

This has adversely affected learning goals and progress of students. While some learners progressed and eventually sat for their national examinations, others have stalled in the same classes for two years. Consequently, many students are uncertain on whether they are to remain in the same class when classes resume or will be promoted without completing the curriculum of their respective pre-lockdown classes. This has been a cause of anxiety amongst students and parents. Unfortunately, the Ministry of Education and Sports is silent on how the situation will be addressed and has failed to offer leadership on the same.

- **Learning materials**

Using funding from the Global Partnership for Education, the Ministry developed a preparedness and response plan. A facilitation fund equivalent to USD 14.7 Million (approximately UGX 52 billion) was given to facilitate the continuity of the learning framework. With this fund, learners in government schools received free study materials, unlike those in private schools. This raised issues of discrimination.

A supplementary budget of Shs. 48 billion for procurement and supply of a second set of study materials for learners during lockdown was passed on 18th November, 2021. The Ministry of Education intends to use the new set of learning materials to complete the syllabus for each class. This procurement is coming just less than 6 weeks before learners report back to school.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large loop at the top and a vertical line extending downwards, with some smaller scribbles to the left.

- **Financial Support to Private Schools proprietors**

The Ministry of Education, before the Committee on Education presented a paper and among the highlighted issues was that government has established a Small Business Recovery Fund equivalent to Shs. 200 billion, to be administered by participating financial institutions across the country to provide concessional credit to businesses affected by COVID-19. He informed the Committee that the education sector may also benefit from this intervention. It should be noted that given the number of schools requiring financial support, the facility is too insufficient to accommodate the respective loan requests.

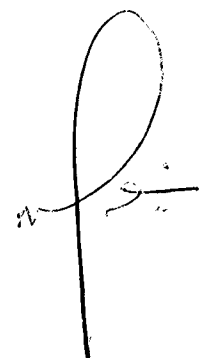
2.0 CONFUSING STATUS OF LEARNERS UNDER LOCKDOWN

Due to delayed school opening, there is stagnancy in the system. Cohorts of learners who had just begun term one of primary 1, 2 and 3 in 2020 are still stuck at home, 20 months later. These pupils who are estimated at 4 million in total, have not interfaced with a teacher for 84 weeks.

Cohorts of pupils whose ages made them qualify for admission into primary one in 2021, estimated at 1.3 million kids are also in waiting for their 1st day in class. Another cohort is expected of approximately 1.3 million kids whose ages will be qualifying them for enrolment into Primary one in 2022. In total, an estimated 6 million children are of age, ready to go to Primary 1, 2 and 3 as compared to preCOVID-19 lockdown capacity of 4 million learners in the 3 lower primary class intake.

The combined total of real and potential primary 1, 2 and 3 learners is estimated at 6 million compared to the pre-lockdown capacity of an estimated 4 million learners in all schools. This alone should make us worried of how schools will cope with additional classroom space, teachers and other related requirements.

The same challenge facing Primary 1, 2, and 3 of 2020 is also prevailing with Senior 1 and 2 of the same year. These two classes had only commenced studies for a few weeks when the second lockdown was announced. This also affects the tertiary institutions, where all non-finalists of 2020 had just been a few weeks in their special terms/semesters of study when 2nd lockdown was instituted.



- **Increased teenage pregnancies and uncouth behavior**

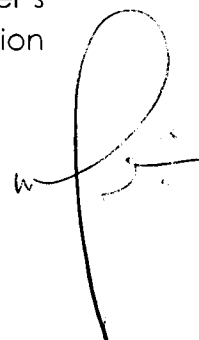
The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted all aspects of life in Uganda, resulting in loss of jobs, disruptions in access to health and social services, but no group has felt the effects of the pandemic more than adolescent girls. According to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) October 2021 statistics, a total of 354,736 teenage pregnancies were registered in 2020, and 196,499 in the first six months of 2021 in Uganda. This poses a vast threat to learning continuity as most of these young mothers may not find it convenient to go back to school once schools re-open.

Idleness coupled with growing physical features have led to learners indulging in bad social habits including taking of alcohol, taking banned drugs, sexual relationships, putting their lives in danger and outright criminality.

3.0 DISCREPANCIES IN TEACHERS AND INSTRUCTORS REMUNERATION

Rt. Honourable Speaker and Hon. Colleagues, the COVID-19 pandemic related lockdown has divided teachers (and instructors) into categories that require our effort to intervene.

- Whereas teachers and non-teaching staff in government schools still earn monthly salaries, their counterparts in private institutions are not earning. According to a recent memo supplied to the Committee on Education by the National Private Schools Teacher's Association (NAPSTA), Private institutions employ a total of 350,000 teaching staff. Due to lack of earnings, many are deserting the teaching profession and mainly reverting to informal businesses such as brick laying, selling of chapatis, boda boda, market vending and provision of casual labour at building sites among others. Those that are unable to find alternative sources of income have completely lost livelihood. If each of the 350,000 teachers had 4 dependents, a total of over 1.4 million people are adversely affected by the loss of earning.
- Last year, in his address, the President pledged to provide a revolving fund of UGX 20 billion to help private teachers affected by the COVID-19. This fund was geared at assisting teachers diversify their sources of income through establishing enterprises of their own like retail business, agriculture, boda boda riding, saloon operations etc. However, there has been confusion in the leadership of the various teacher's organisations on who receives this relief fund. The Minister of Education



should come out with a clear plan on how this fund will be disbursed and which teacher's organisation is in charge.

4.0 SORRY STATUS OF SCHOOLS

Unlike government schools that largely rely on public funding, private education institutions depend on revenue collected from fees. Due to closure of schools, proprietors of private education institutions are no longer earning. Many have been chocked by loans, forced to close business or convert their premises to other sources of income such as shops and rentals. This raises a concern of a roaming deficit of education infrastructure. Unfortunately, government has failed to articulate how it will fill the infrastructure gaps and sustain the teaching profession.

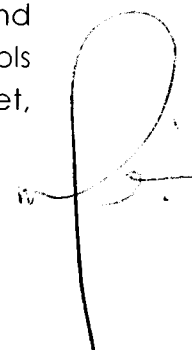
According to Education and Sports Sector Basic statistics 2020-2021, a substantial number of educational institutions in Uganda are privately owned, their collapse will leave a huge gap and dent in the education sector that is bound to last for years. For instance, out of 20,305 primary schools, 8,269 (41%) are privately owned. Out of 2,995 secondary schools, 1,937 (65%) are privately owned. Out of 275 post primary institutions, 143 (52%) are privately owned. Out of the 53 universities, 44 (83%) are privately owned.

For the few private educational institutions shouldering on, these are burdened by overhead costs amidst nil revenues. These include maintenance of building and grounds, gate keepers, security guards, electricity bills, minimum wages for staff such as custodians and matrons, water bills among others.

The Ministry of Education in 2020 directed all preprimary and primary schools resuming operations post-lockdown at the time, that they could only operate either as day or boarding schools eliminating their discretion to offer both. Unfortunately, the guidelines did not restrict schools to their original offering, with the result that learners who attended day schools would shift to boarding schools meaning higher fees in order to remain in school, or transferring to more affordable day schools elsewhere.

5.0 INEQUALITIES IN THE EDUCATION SECTOR

The COVID-19 pandemic has intensified inequalities in the education sector in Uganda. International schools easily adapted to the new normal and continued with studies online. On the other hand, studies in national schools were crippled by lack of training, electronic gadgets, access to internet,



capacity and students from deprived households. As a consequence, students in international schools are progressing normal into higher classes while those in national schools are stalled at home. Unfortunately, little effort has been undertaken by government to address this inequality.

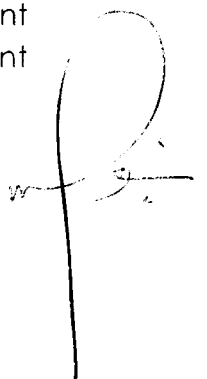
The Ministry has not addressed the discrepancy in the school fees charged by public schools, which raises questions about government's regulation of public school fees. In November 2020, a study conducted by Initiative for Social Economic rights, It was found that shortly before lockdown, Lweru SS in Buikwe District charged UGX 50,000 as school fees, far lower than other government schools in rural districts such as Kumi where Ongino SS in Ongino Sub County, Kumi District, charged UGX 210,000 which is considerably high for a day school.

6.0 CHANGES IN TEACHER EDUCATION POLICY

In March 2021, The Ministry of Education and Sports reportedly, according to its spokesperson phased out recruitment of Certificate and Diploma holder teachers. It is reported that 23 out of 46 Primary Teachers colleges (PTCs) in Uganda are immediately being phased out, leaving only Core PTCs. The remaining 22 Core PTCs are being converted into constituent colleges of Shimon University of Education and are to be referred to as Uganda National Institute of Teacher Education (UNITE). All new student teachers will be admitted on degree programs ONLY¹.

Diploma and Certificate holder teachers together, form the single largest formal employee category in Uganda. The National Budget Framework Paper for FY 2021/22 puts the total Wage Bill for Government Employees is UGX 5.1 trillion of which UGX 1.45 trillion is for Primary and Secondary School Teachers in various Local Governments. Changing employment terms to the largest employment category goes to the core of economy particularly adversely affecting tax revenue.

The current in-post teachers employed in both private and public schools deserve fairness and equity in terms of minimum requirements for teaching, promotions and remuneration. Specifically, private school teachers who have spent almost 2 years of no formal earnings, now being required to acquire graduate qualifications is a very unfair policy shift. The Education Authorities including the Minister of Education and Sports are conspicuously silent regarding post lockdown education policy to guide parents, teachers, student



teachers in teacher training colleges and other learners for adequate planning.

Rt. Hon. Speaker, requiring primary and secondary teachers to possess a degree comes with a responsibility for Government to technically and financially support both private and public school in-post teachers to undertake graduate training.

Rt. Hon. Speaker, remuneration of teachers according to the type of subject taught and ability of such teachers to finance their own undergraduate education is an unfair policy to teachers of humanities. Teachers of Arts subjects with a significantly lower pay compared to science teacher colleagues have no incentive and means of meeting the costs of upgrading their professional training to acquire degrees.

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Rt. Hon. Speaker, in a bid to resuscitate the education sector, the following ought to be undertaken:

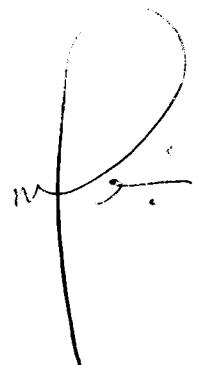
1. Public schools should be permitted immediate access to a defined percentage of the releases of capitation grant ahead of time to take care of the much-needed renovations so that the school environment is prepared for teaching and learning. This is premised on the fact that whereas quarterly release of capitation grants has been ongoing during lockdown but withheld pending school reopening.

Disbursement of these withheld funds will help school administrators to pay for outstanding bills and also make procurements required to make schools ready to operate. During this lockdown, schools have faced many cases of vandalism due to lack of security personnel, dilapidation because of lack of maintenance, and general run down of the school structures. This same capitation grant should be used to procure hand temperature guns, hand washing soap and other sanitary facilities like water tanks, which will be used in the adherence of the COVID SOPs.

2. A comprehensive resurgence plan for the education sector should immediately be presented to Parliament, indicating the actual dates when schools will be re-opened, for scrutiny and appropriation of required funds undertaken. The school inspection program at Local Government level should also be revamped, adequately funded to ensure responsive and continued human capital development.

3. The comprehensive resurgence plan presented to Parliament should include clear policy guidelines on teacher qualification upgrade and how current in-post teachers in private and public schools will be supported to attain the now set minimum academic qualifications of a degree.
4. With the IMF loan equivalent to 1 billion dollars of which the first tranche of 258M dollars has already been disbursed, and with the expected allocation by end of December, a credit line through UDB should be established to support some of the struggling private schools. For example, all nursery schools are completely private, and yet of great value addition to the education structure.
5. Review the taxation policy to offer tax relief to private educational institutions for at least a year. This would free resources of indebted institutions towards fulfilling loan obligations, facilitate reinvestment or attract new investors into the education sector.
6. On 23rd September 2020, the Minister responsible for Education issued a special directive in a circular to all private schools and institutions of learning, barring them from hiking schools fees. A maximum threshold of school fees and relevant requirements to enable parents who are just beginning to find some bit of stabilization after a lockdown, was set. A clear plan on how schools are going to ensure compliance of the same, should be provided.
7. The Ministry of Education and Sports should officially clarify on the proposed selective increment of salaries for some categories of teachers. This follows the announcement that Cabinet had on 23rd August 2021 approved UGX 4 million as the wage for a science teacher, UGX 2 million above the salary of a head teacher, causing a rift between science teachers on one part and teachers of humanities on another. This was further emphasised by the President in his address to teachers on the World Teacher's day celebrations on 12th October 2021 at Kololo. This proposal of selective salary increment is now threatening to breakdown school administrations as lower rank employees are paid significantly better than their supervisors. We support that there is equal remuneration of workers of the same qualification and experience. For example, graduate science teachers and those of humanities of the same experience should receive the same pay.

I beg to move.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized letter 'P' with a horizontal stroke across the middle and a vertical line extending downwards from the bottom of the 'P'.