cause you are a primary school teacher. For me, I am superior because I am a nursery teacher? So, I think Parliament was spot on. It is not necessary," he said.

diploma, whereas a secondary teacher is registered with a degree-level quali-

ers must undertake before renewing their licences. Baguma argued that con-

guilty of teaching without authorisation.

What early childhood policy is bringing to the table

BY JANE NAFULA

KAMPALA. The government, through the Ministry of Education and Sports, is expected to officially launch the long-awaited Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Policy this week.

The objectives of the ECCD policy include increasing equitable access to quality, inclusive and sustainable services.

The policy is also expected to strengthen structures and systems for effective standardisation and management of service delivery.

The Commissioner of Policy, Education and Research at the Ministry of Education, Mr Brighton Barugahare, said the first-ever standalone policy will address the concerns of children aged between 0 to six years, while recommending several interventions.

These include increased government participation in the provision of early childhood care and education to strengthen children's learning, care, development and well-being in Uganda.

Government involvement

Currently, the provision of ECCE is a preserve of the private sector, which has seen children of poor parents missing out on this vital part of academic foundation.

"This policy is expanding the role of government in early childhood care and education. The government has only played two of the four roles - training providers and regulating institutions. The new policy makes it possible to provide ECCE services in underserved areas," he said.

He also explained that the government would channel targeted subsidies to non-state providers who are willing to go in areas where there is a critical shortage.

However, the policy prohibits boarding facilities for children under ECCE.

Mr Barugahare also added that the new policy would introduce a mandatory national licensing regime to ensure that the operators meet the standards and conform to the basic requirements to run an ECCE centre.

"The policy is introducing uniform child safety and protection standards, applied equally to both formal and non-formal centres with centre management committees, introduced as a standard governance structure," he said.

Mr Barugahare also added that the government aims to professionalise both the caregivers and the teachers, as key primary support mechanisms.

Other areas of focus in the policy include dedicated financing mobilised through medium-term expenditure framework supplemented by development, and enhancing the budget going towards ECCE mainstream aspects of gender, disability, and inclusion and ICT, among others

"Critical investment"

Dr Joyce Kaducu, the State ministry for Primary Education, said the ECCD policy aims to address the long-standing fragmentation of the pre-primary sub-sector, providing a stronger basis for coordinated action.

She said the ministry considers ECCD a critical investment in Uganda's human capital, noting that the early years lay the foundation for children's learning, for their health, behaviour, and overall development.

"Quality ECCD helps children develop cognitive, psychomotor and affective domains at the stage when these are formed most rapidly as a prerequisite for schooling and lifelong learning," Kaducu said.

The theme for the national launch is Strong Beginnings, Bright Futures serves both as a celebration and a call to action.

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