

Implementation. The move is expected to start when the school term opens next month.

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KAMPALA. The Ministry of Education is considering to stop funding to 792 private secondary schools which have been implementing the Universal Secondary Education programme beginning next month when first term opens.

Sources, who declined to be named because they are not authorised to speak to the media, yesterday told *Daily Monitor* that the ministry's top management has been in discussion to drop private schools from the government's free education programme.

According to the sources, management yesterday agreed not to enroll any student in Senior One in private schools under this Public Private Partnership (PPP) starting February 5 when this year's academic year begins.

"We are phasing out USE in all PPP schools beginning first term of 2018. All PPP schools will stop receiving grants from government in 2020 when those in Senior Two now sit Uganda Certificate of Education," the source said.

Awaits approval

"Even if management passes it, it has to be approved in Cabinet. Wait for us to approve it at another level because it is a policy issue," Ms Rosemary Seninde, the State Minister for Primary Education, said yesterday.

The ministry's Undersecretary, Mr Aggrey Kibenge, yesterday confirmed that the matter was under discussion but they had not come out with a conclusive position to guide either parties.

However, he added that this will be communicated before the term begins.

"Yes, we discussed on PPP schools. The details on how it will work in future will be out before we go into the new school year. We will be issuing guidance on how we want it to work before schools open in February," Mr Kibenge said in a telephone interview yesterday.

The move leaves close to more than 200,000 students who were expected to benefit under the programme in Senior One stranded.

A total of 646,190 pupils sat last year's Primary Leaving Examinations.

The ministry officials argue that the government has built capacity

over the years in areas where they did not have any government-aided schools and are now ready to absorb those students in these institutions, adding that this, however, will be done in phases.

Started in 2007, the government has been paying Shs47,000 per student per term for students accessing free education in these schools against their counterparts in government-aided schools implementing USE and Business Technical and Vocational Education Training institutions which receive Shs41, 000 and Shs150, 000 per student, respectively.

At least Shs52 billion is budgeted for annually to meet this need in private schools which the government is now planning to save and use to construct their own institutions.

Parents have been providing their children with school uniform,

stationery and meals but very few meet their obligation.

Only students who score between Aggregate Four and 28 in Primary Leaving Examinations are qualify for the USE scholarship.

Mr Patrick Kaboyo, the

Federation of Non-State Education Institutions' secretary, yesterday said: "The withdrawal of support is a presidential directive. As players in the sector, it has enabled us to think aloud for an alternative partnership."

PRESIDENTIAL DIRECTIVE

In 2014, President Museveni directed the Education ministry to stop supporting PPP schools. The letter addressed to the then Education minister, Ms Jessica Alupo, indicated that the money which was being spent on the schools could be used to construct 88 government schools annually in 243 sub-counties. "A lot of government money is

squandered in supporting private secondary schools under USE. What a waste all these years," President Museveni wrote on December 24, 2013.

"The best way is not supporting the new admissions in Senior One next year until, in four years, when this donation to private secondary schools stops completely," the President added.



Phased out: Students in an exam. Schools under the public-private partnership will stop receiving grants from government by 2020.
FILE PHOTO

Govt to stop funding to 800 private USE schools

200,000

Miss out. Estimated number of students who were expected to benefit from the Public Private Partnership in Senior One.

President Museveni directed the Education ministry in 2014 to stop supporting PPP schools.

Following the directive, the ministry set up a committee to investigate the implications of implementing the decision.

The report showed that phasing out of PPP schools will not result in significant savings to build the then required schools (6,588 classrooms) to accommodate all USE enrollment at the current levels.

"If all students who would have enrolled in PPP schools enroll in government schools, Shs6,000 would be saved on each student per term, resulting in Shs19 billion over the four years, enough for only 3 schools at a rate of Shs660 million each," reads the report in part.

The report recommended a partial case by case phase-out of PPP schools as government gradually builds more schools.