

MPs protest education budget cuts

By Henry Sekanjako

The parliamentary committee on education has expressed worry over a sh7b budget cut for the education ministry.

Appearing before the committee yesterday to discuss the ministerial policy statement for the financial year 2018/19, John Chrysostom Muyingo, the higher education state minister, told MPs that the education budget would suffer a sh7.8b cut in the next financial year.

Muyingo said the budget cuts would mainly affect public universities as well as the general monitoring and support supervision sectors.

"The budget cuts will affect public universities including critical items such as meals for students who are accommodated in the halls of residence," Muyingo said.

Gulu University's budget has been cut by sh2m, Lira University (sh155m), Busitema University (sh370m), Muni University (sh235m), Mbarara University (sh109m) and Kabale University (sh151m).

Other institutions that have been affected are Uganda Management Institute, whose budget has been cut by sh23m, Education Service Commission sh181m and Soroti University by sh70m



Higher education state minister John Chrysostom Muyingo (right) consults sports state minister Charles Bakkabulindi in Parliament yesterday. Photo by Maria Wamala

The minister said they and finance only reversed (UNEB), whose budget had petitioned the finance ministry the cuts for the Uganda been cut by sh8b. The others to reverse the budget cuts. National Examinations Board are the National Curriculum

The education sector has been allocated Sh2.6trillion in the next financial year 2018/19. According to the ministry, the budget cuts will affect accreditation of technical institutes since the budget for short term consultancy has been reduced by half.

THE BUDGET ALLOCATION

Development Centre, Kyambogo University and Makerere University Business School.

"We wanted all the cuts to be reversed, so we wrote to the permanent secretary and Secretary to the Treasury explaining that the sh8b cut for UNEB would mean that they would not be able to organise exams, so it was reversed," Alex Kakooza, the permanent secretary of the education ministry, said.

Initially, budget cuts for the

ministry were sh18.9b, but the reversal of cuts saw it reduce to sh7b.

However, the MPs want all the cuts reduced as education is a critical sector.

"We are gradually going down as far as the budget for education is concerned. In 2008/2009, the education budget was at 20% of the budget. In 2013, it came to 18% and now it has gone to 11%. We should support our budget to show our development partners that we are committed to promoting education," Margaret Rwabushaija, the Workers MP, said.

The MPs noted that the budget cuts on public universities would further cripple them financially because they were not well-funded.

Bunyaruguru County MP Nathan Itungo Twesigye said: "Makerere University has already suspended its evening programmes because of lack of funds. What will happen if the ministry, which is supposed to support such institutions, is also financially struggling?"

The ministry also noted that the directorate of education standards would have its operations affected, with a budget cut of sh240m.