State House to crack down on govt schools levying illegal fees

The State House Education Desk says the crackdown is meant to ensure that children from poor families benefit from universal education.

BY FRED WAMBEDDE

Officials from the State House Education Desk and Anti-Corruption Unit have clarified that the ongoing crackdown on illegal fees in government schools will cover the entire country.

This comes after leaders in Bugisu decried the crackdown, saying the government officials are only targeting schools in the sub-region for selfish reasons.

Mr Jimmy Nambiro, the head of the Education Desk in State House, who also serves as President Museveni's private secretary-in-charge of education and skilling, said at the weekend that the crackdown is meant to ensure that children from poor families benefit from universal education.

"Free education is a right to every Ugandan. But it is being sabotaged by unpatriotic head teachers in connivance with Parent-Teachers Associations (PTA)," he said.

Mr Nambiro, a primary teacher, said preliminary investigations indicate that head teachers across the country collect extra fees from parents in different forms including development, Uneb registration, feeding, weekend coaching and reams of papers.

"The schools force pupils and students out of class, something which is illegal. A child under universal education is not supposed to be sent out of class for any charge. The government makes sure that every pupil or student is paid for," he said.

Under the universal education programme, government-aided schools benefit from government support, in terms of human resource (teaching and non-teaching staff), infrastructure development, and quarterly releases of capitation grants, where the government pays schools Shs20,000 per learner per year.

Mr Nambiro said their investigations also indicate that some head teachers have also inflated the number of pupils and students at their respective schools.



Mr Jimmy Nambiro, the head of the Education desk in State House, interacts with children at Bunghaji Primary School in Butaleja District. PHOTO BY FRED WAMBEDE

BACKGROUND

President Museveni has on several occasions blamed the high dropout of learners in government-aided schools in the country on extra charges being imposed by the head teachers in connivance with PTAs.

He added that feeding children under universal education is voluntary, but some schools have made it compulsory.

However, during a consultative meeting last week at the Mbale City headquarters, the Industrial Division Mayor, Mr Muhamood Masaaba, criticised the arrests of head teachers in the State House crackdown, arguing that school managers are being victimised for trying to fill the massive funding gaps left by the government.

This followed the arrest and interdictement of Samuel Wamimbi, the head teacher at Bumageni Army Barracks Primary School in Mbale District on allegations of collecting illegal fees in a government school.

"This initiative is aimed at failing education in our region," Mr Masaaba, who is also the MP-elect for Bunghokho Central in Mbale District, said.

Mr Stephen Masiga, the speaker of Bugisu Cultural Institution, said, "For us as a cultural institution, we condemn everybody who enforces the government policies with police or the military to intimidate the head teachers."

Mr Hason Kirunda, the Mbale City education officer, said his investigations in the matter indicate that there is no school in the city which is charging illegal fees. He said all the fees being levied have been agreed on by the board of governors and PTAs.

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