

## OPINION

## Tampering with school fees will do more harm

Uganda National Students Association (UNSA) has called on the Government to regulate school fees as a way to make it affordable for all. They said the fees being charged by private schools were high, discriminative and affecting the quality of education in the country.

Their logic was tenuous at best. The explosion in investment in education and subsequently enrollment, is largely due to government policy to allow private owners provide the service. In effect help it, the government, provide a service. A service which while expensive to provide is critical for the improvement in standards of living of the general population and critical to the economic and social health of the nation.

Private players are motivated by profit, which is the difference between the money they earn and the costs of providing the service. This equation can vary from time to time depending on market conditions and not solely the appetite of individual proprietors.

Government through its policies has leveraged this desire for individual gain to facilitate the growth in the education sector.

If UNSA really want to be helpful, they should insist on all private schools living up to the pre-set standards of what is required of a school, in terms of student-teacher ratios, facilities and adherence to the curriculum.

Even more importantly their recommendation or suggestion should be that government improves the standard of its own schools. This will have the double effect of raising the standards in private schools as well.

Our education system needs all the help it can get. Frustrating the private sector by implementing fees caps will have the unintended effect of reducing investment in the sector with the accompanying reduction in standards. Actually make an already bad situation worse.

UNSA as direct consumers of our education system are within their rights to be concerned. But their proposal for restricting school fees while populist would only serve to reverse decades of growth in the sector, that government alone would not have managed and lead to a deterioration of school conditions.

### New Vision

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