

“We acknowledge, however, on a more political level, the PPP that government has had in Uganda. Private schools have continued to charge a lot of money. Government already pays them money. So now we have a private school at least in each sub-county.”

FROM THE EDITOR



Who will protect our students?

A friend told me that during the exam period most universities are “littered” with posters advertising jobs. And these are very tempting because the posters only have a phone number. Human beings are known to always like shortcuts. Therefore, a job advert that does not require one to carry papers around or send numerous emails would definitely receive many applicants. It is because of this, coupled with the need for quick money and the hopelessness that comes with massive unemployment that has led to many university students falling prey to unscrupulous people. Because these common know that most students would rather have a job than run home after exams, they use the exam period as fodder for their vice. Many students, after calling the given phone numbers, ended up conned. A chat with a senior officer of the Makerere University police station revealed that students never report these cases yet there is a policy against them, which is sadly ignored. We cannot keep watching as innocent students get ripped off. It is time to wake up. Have a good week.

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POLICY/PRACTICE

ESSENTIALS AND ALTERNATIVE IDEAS

Partnerships can better education in public schools

Results of students from public schools continue to deteriorate as their private counterparts soar. A partnership could help solve some of the hitches in the public education system, writes **Desire Mbabaali**.

Over the years, results have continued to reveal glaring drawbacks in Uganda's education system, a system meant to eradicate illiteracy in Uganda's population. Last month, for example, World Bank's development report on education indicated that at least 80 per cent of pupils in Primary Two in Uganda cannot perform a two-digit subtraction, whereas 61 per cent cannot read a single word in a short sentence.

However, Uganda is not oblivious to these hitches in its education system. Speaking at the 24 Annual Education and Sports Sector Review workshop early this month, Education minister Janet Museveni highlighted the sector's non-performance in implementing government projects.

“This is a trend that ought to worry us as leaders of this sector because these are heavily-funded projects, but funds remain in accounts – a concept that has been labelled in government – as low absorption capacity,” the minister said.

She mentioned some of the government projects that have stalled as the emergency construction and rehabilitation of primary schools (phase two) which achieved only 31 per cent with one out of 18 schools being rehabilitated; the project at Uganda Management Institute, and the Akii Bua Olympic Stadium.

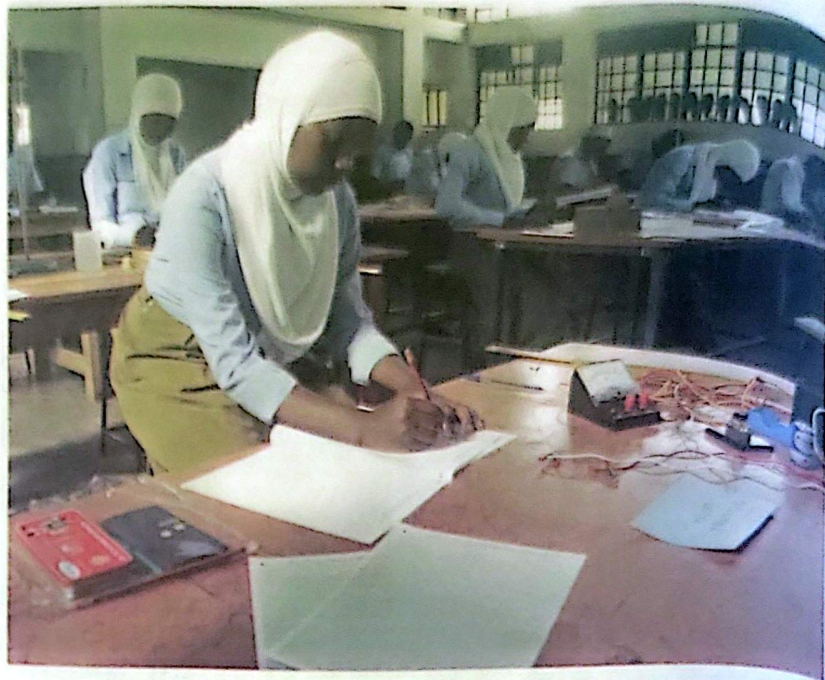
Despite this, the minister expressed gratitude about the partnerships between government and the private sector.

“I acknowledge with gratitude the various forms of contributions by our partners and the very good working relationship with the private sector,” the minister said, expressing great admiration for other countries that have been in similar circumstances such as Uganda, but changed their implementation to better their education.

Partnerships for the better

One such country is Liberia; where only 38 per cent of children attaining elementary education, 46 per cent of young people illiterate and 68 per cent of children likely to drop out of school before finishing primary, according to the Centre for Global Development.

To combat these realities, the Liberian



Students write exams recently. Public private partnerships have been seen to improve performance in schools enrolled on the programme. PHOTO BY ABUBAKAR LISOWA

LESSONS FROM LIBERIA

In Liberia where the government started public private partnerships 93 public schools were opened up to be run by eight private education service providers, and after one year, the results were rewarding. According to a report by Centre for Global Development released on September 7, literacy and numeracy levels increased to 60 per cent across all schools in the programme, teachers were 50 per cent likely to be in class compared to the 40 per cent in public schools.

Education Ministry designed a three-year pilot Public Private Partnership (PPP) programme called; Partnership Schools for Liberia (PSL) to lengthen the school day, reduce class size, hold teachers accountable for attendance, and tackle the issue of teacher literacy.

In this control programme, 93 public schools were opened up to be run by eight private education service providers, and after one year according to a September 7, report by Centre for Global Development, literacy and numeracy levels increased to 60 per cent across all PSL schools, and teachers were 50 per cent likely to be in class.

Uganda can borrow a leaf

It should be recalled that in 2007, the Ministry of Education and Sports adopted the Public Private Partnerships as a policy solution for Universal Secondary

Education. However, the system has not registered significant results. The question therefore is, can the Liberian PSL model, if adopted, be a possible solution to bettering Uganda's education?

Christine Apiot, director of Academics at Bridge Uganda, says, “These learning gains from Liberia are outstanding and show what is possible from a PPP. We hope that the Ugandan government will look at these results and think about what such a partnership could do for Ugandan children.”

Bronney Samanya, the headteacher of Kijabijo Primary School, a Universal Primary Education school, notes that the report is promising. However, “It should offer job security to teachers, because private education services hire and fire, at any time and it should be able to offer reasonable benefits to teachers' salaries,” Samanya says.

“Uganda's PPP in USE has not been effective because there has not been close supervision. Even where there is inspection, the inspectors are overwhelmed with the number of schools they have to inspect. In addition, people are not well motivated. Unless there are structures of supervision and monitoring, any kind of PPP cannot be effective.”

MARGARET RWABUSHAJJA, CHAIRPERSON UGANDA NATIONAL TEACHERS UNION

