

SOCIAL MEDIA

Being on social media and talking on phone while in class is unacceptable and should be fought

By Henry Nsubuga and John Aqaba

The state minister for higher education, Dr John Chrysostom Muyingo, has said it is "unprofessional, unethical," and tantamounts to indiscipline for a teacher to carry a phone into the classroom when it is not part of teaching aids and is not listed in the lesson plan.

Speaking to *New Vision* yesterday, Muyingo said teachers are not allowed to carry mobile phones into the classroom.

Muyingo first talked about the matter while addressing teachers, parents and students of Mpoma Girls School in Nama sub-county, Mukono last week. The school was hosting a thanksgiving for good performance in last year's O'level exams.

There has been concern that a significant number of teachers spend time 'WhatsApping' and responding to texts than attending to learners, thus leading to a deterioration in performance.

Muyingo said: "All teachers are expected to behave according to the code of conduct. Being on WhatsApp, Facebook or any form of social media and talking on phone while in the classroom is unacceptable and should be fought."

Muyingo said 'misuse' of the mobile phone disrupts lessons and unsettles learners.

"You are in class, but every time the phone vibrates, you rush to see who it is, you are wasting the time of your learners," he said.

"Anything that is not a teaching aid should be left outside," Muyingo said, adding: "If a lesson is 40 minutes, a teacher has got to plan for every second. If they start reading and answering text messages, they are cheating the learners."

However, the minister said there



Muyingo addressing Mpoma Girls School community during the thanksgiving ceremony at the school in Mukono. Photo by Henry Nsubuga

Teachers told to keep phones out of class

is no specific policy which stops teachers from carrying phones into the classroom and the teachers' code of conduct does not mention phones. But the code of conduct prohibits taking items, which are not part of the teaching aid and can distract learners to a class.

He said if the situation gets out of hand, the ministry might have to come up with specific policy guidelines on mobile phones.

The state minister for primary education, Rosemary Seninde, expressed a similar view, saying taking mobile phones to a class is "disruptive behaviour."

"You are not going to start receiving your calls in the middle of class and

CODE OF CONDUCT

The code of conduct prohibits taking items which are not part of the teaching aid to a class

assume you are efficient.... because you are not.... what you are doing is distracting your learners and they will not look at you as someone who values their time and loves what they do," she said.

She compared it to being at a

place of worship: "Surely you are not going to start reading your messages and replying texts when the reverend is delivering a sermon."

Seninde said it is "common sense" for teachers to not attend to their cell phones while conducting a lesson.

Dan Kunya, the head of primary headteachers in Mukono municipality, said they had recorded a case recently where a teacher punished a pupil because she stepped out of class for a 'short call' without asking for permission.

"But the teacher had been on phone when the girl went out," he said. "We have also emphasised the issue in our headteachers' meetings and directed teachers to stop wasting

OBJECTION

It is not right for teachers to leave phones behind. They might have an emergency

time on phones during class time."

The chairperson for the Mukono District Primary School Headteachers' Association, Mary Josephine Nabuyungo, said the teachers' code of conduct illustrated that teachers' attention must be on pupils throughout the lesson.

"No one, not even the school headteacher, should interrupt a lesson," she said.

Charles Wamala, a teacher at Buddo SS, said they had a meeting at their school over the issue and had agreed that teachers leave their phones in the staffroom during class time.

"You might be principled, but calls distract. You will be tempted to pull the phone out of your pocket to see who it is. Some calls you can ignore, but others you cannot. The best thing is to leave the phone in the staffroom. You will find a missed call after the lesson," Wamala said.

However, Julius Musinguzi, a mathematics teacher at Nsangi SS in Wakiso district, disagreed. He said teachers can go with their phones to class as long as they act professionally.

He said carrying phones to class is not bad, it is what the teachers do with the phones that is.

"Every professional teacher knows that their learners are their priority. So, they will not waste time on Facebook or chat during class time. It is not right for teachers to leave phones behind. They might have an emergency," Musinguzi said.

Kellen Tukamuhabwa, a teacher at Kitante High School, said: "It is not good to receive a call or reply to a text in middle of a class, but it is improper to ask instructors to leave their phones behind."

"You might want to read something over the Internet and need your phone. I think the problem is what you do with the phone."