

# Fees: Private schools reject govt orders

**Opposed.** Private schools argue that they were not consulted.

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**P**private school owners have rejected a government directive not to increase fees next year, saying the decision was arrived at without consulting them as key stakeholders.

Mr Patrick Kaboyo, the general secretary of Federation of Non-State Education Institutions, yesterday said the decision should not have been blanket at the expense of contribution of other players.

"You [government] cannot suffocate the private players, but need to supplement their effort. We reject the directive because it lacked a consultative angle from the stakeholders. If the federation has not contributed [its views], I wonder who was consulted," he said.

"Issues of quality gap prevalent in private schools also exist in public schools. There are also a number of public schools that charge more than private schools. The government should look at the environment the private schools work in. We've to buy teaching materials, do capital development like construct-

ing laboratories and pay teachers. These guidelines should have been issued after an agreed discussion," Mr Kaboyo said.

Last year, Initiative for Social and Economic Rights (ISER) petitioned the Speaker, Ms Rebecca Kadaga, asking that school fees be regulated. Subsequently, the Ministry of Education permanent secretary, Mr Alex Kakooza, wrote to schools directing them not to increase any fees next year, which the proprietors in private schools now say is inconsiderate as they were not consulted.

But Ms Saphina Nakulima, the ISER programme manager, welcomed the directive by government, but asked the ministry to ensure the guidelines are enforced.

"We commend government for taking this stand. However, we hope these guidelines don't remain on paper," Ms Nakulima said yesterday.

But Dr Stephen Muzinge Wako, a director at Kaliro College, has appealed to government to reconsider their position and dialogue with them to find an amicable solution. He said prohibiting them from increasing fees would negatively affect the quality of education since they use fees to meet their daily expenses to run a school.

He said with nearly 900 students at his school, he buys one and half sack (150kgs) of rice to feed them ev-

## WHAT ACTORS SAY..

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MANAGER

ery time rice is on the menu, with a 100 kilogramme sack of rice costing Shs350,000.

Dr Wako said he buys a sack of beans at Shs240, 000 which they use per day, and a sack of maize flour at Shs150,000 while spending Shs400,000 on a truckload of firewood per week.

Kaliro College employs 45 people with 12 of them working as support staff.

The starting salary for a teacher with a diploma is Shs300,000 while a graduate is paid Shs500,000 per month. The teachers are also given

incentives such as break tea and housing allowances.

Dr Wako said these expenses are met by fees collected from O-Level students, who are charged Shs300,000 each and Shs400,000 from each A-Level student per term, notwithstanding the fact that some of the students default on payment.

But he also acknowledged that some private schools as well as some government schools overcharge and make access to quality education to children from low income families very difficult.

"The charges are abnormal in government schools. Government schools are more expensive than private schools when you add government subventions because the government pays their teachers, constructs libraries and laboratories. The private schools pay their teachers, build staff houses and buy teaching materials. The government should reconsider their position and meet us and feel our concern," Dr Wako said yesterday.

He proposed that private schools in urban areas with boarding schools charge not more than Shs1 million per term while those in rural settings should ask for at least Shs800,000.

Dr Wako said day schools can charge at least Shs500,000 if they are in towns and Shs400,000 if they are located in rural settings.

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