

Parliament backs ministry on closing substandard schools

Report. Some of the closed schools operated in makeshift structures, lacked classrooms and sanitary facilities.

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KAMPALA. A parliamentary committee has backed the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) decision to close substandard private schools across the country.

The backing is contained in a report presented to the House on Wednesday by the Parliament Committee on Education and Sports, which probed the closure of some private schools at the start of the academic calendar.

Sunday Monitor has seen a copy of the report by the committee chaired by Mbale Woman MP, Connie Nakayenza.

The committee reported that many of the affected private schools did not meet the minimum standards provide by the Education Act 2003.

"The committee finds that the decision of the ministry to close the affected schools was justified. During the committee's review of the action of the Ministry of Education, it was revealed that all the closed schools that were visited by the committee did not have a licence, and most of them lacked qualified teachers. The ministry had to invoke its statutory powers provided for under the (education) Act to have schools closed," the report reads in part.

The committee reported that there is documentary evidence that the ministry followed a lawful procedure to close the schools because a notice had been issued out to all districts in November 2016 asking unlicensed schools to



Unfortunate. Pupils of Bikokola Primary School, a government-aided school in Mpumudde Sub-county, Lyantonde District, during a lesson conducted by their fellow pupil. MPs have backed the Ministry of Education for closing private schools that operated below set standards. PHOTO BY CLEOPHAS TUKAMARWA

comply before the start of 2017 academic year.

On January 16, the MoES Permanent Secretary, Mr Alex Kakooza, issued a circular to Kampala Capital City Authority, districts, municipalities and town councils not to allow any unlicensed private schools to open for the First Term in February.

Hundreds of private schools, including more than 60 branches of Bridge International, were closed early in the First Term for what the ministry said were lack of minimum standards. Bridge International Schools, however, resumed operations following innervations by courts of law.

The MPs, however, faulted government for failing to guide parents of children affected by the closure to find space in nearest government aided schools so as not to studies.

The committee has tasked government to implement its policy of constructing a public primary school in every parish and a secondary school in every sub-county to avoid children or students moving long distances.

"The committee finds that the decision of the ministry to close the affected schools was justified," REPORT

While debating the report, Busiro East MP Medard Ssegona Lubega said the government should make sure that the education standards in private schools are improved instead of closing them.

"We have teachers who are not employed or deployed; government wants to improve science education but there is no science teacher in a

vocational school in the entire central region," Mr Lubega said.

Kilak North MP Anthony Akol reasoned that government should not close down private schools on the premise that they are not in sync with the government standards when the public schools have failed to perform.

"Government cannot say they are closing private schools because they do not meet the education standards yet the same private schools outperform the public ones, what kind of standards are these?" Mr Akol asked.

Ms Rosemary Sseninde, the State minister for Primary Education, told Parliament that the Education Act 2003 clearly spells out requirements for a school to operate and if it does not meet them it should be closed.