

Feed children to reduce school drop-outs

EDITOR: I write this in response to the headline that appeared in the *New Vision* of Wednesday, November 1, on page 5: "Government to consult parents on school feeding."

The article indicated that the education ministry is coming up with a scheme dubbed: "Parent/guardian-led school feeding in Uganda." The issue of feeding has over years created a lot of controversy.

Some proponents say the parents of learners in universal primary education (UPE) schools should contribute some money so that the schools can provide lunch to the pupils, while some people argue that the parents should pack food for their children.

It is disappointing that an issue as easy as this can create controversy. Principles of common sense are

sufficient to sort this issue out. However, whenever, politicians poke their noses into any issue, it takes a different dimension. Let us go back to the basics.

Having introduced UPE with more political inclinations in 1996, most parents thought the Government had divorced them from their parental responsibility of taking care of their children. As a result, the parents left almost everything concerning their children to the Government. As a result, the quality of education, especially in UPE schools, has worryingly gone down, high rates of pupil drop-out and high level of teacher absenteeism, among others.

In all sincerity, there is no need whatsoever to ask parents which way they would want to feed their

children. Parents packing food for their children is both taxing and tasking. Yet, contributing money, say, sh50,000 per term is cheaper.

At school level, it is a conspicuous assurance that the child will get meals than thinking parents can pack food daily. Ironically, those who argue against parents contributing money to the schools, make sure their children go to private schools.

Parents who take their children to UPE schools should step up and play their roles. Whereas some parents may fail to pack food, the school cannot fail to procure food. The issue of packing food creates an inferiority complex between those children whose parents pack food and those who do not.

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