

UGANDA PEOPLES CONGRESS

PRESS STATEMENT ON WEDNESDAY 9TH NOVEMBER 2011

The Uganda Peoples Congress would like applaud efforts by the Ministry of Education to grade private schools in the country. It is our long held view that no matter who owns a school, government ought to know the quality of education the children are being exposed to. This was indeed long overdue.

UPC however feels that this grading should have started with government aided schools and with primary schools taking precedent. The standards set for private schools should exactly be the ones used on government aided schools. Primary schools are the foundation of our education and so government cannot afford to close its eyes over their standards and welfare. From 1962 to 1971 the UPC government managed to build 1400 primary schools, 156 secondary schools covering every county and also expanded former missionary schools to provide more classrooms, laboratories and dormitories. In its second administration of 1980-85, the UPC government built 326 secondary schools. This was in addition to free A'level and university education. We are still wondering why to-date Mr. Museveni's government has not afforded to build any other school apart from Kanyaryeru ss more over in a period of rosy economic growth figures and an era he claims government revenue collection to have risen 10 times (i.e. from 500bn to 5000bn per annum).

Whereas Universal primary education (UPE) was a very good policy, it has since 1996 been used merely to fetch votes from unsuspecting rural peasants. Emphasis has been put on quantity (number of children going o school) rather than quality of education obtained. To date government spends an embarrassing shs 450 on each UPE child per month. The average amount spent on a child per term is 1350; this is quite affordable to a parent. A university student paying shs 1,400,000 would therefore pay for an average of 1037 pupils a term. This UPE is thus a mockery of the highest order. Unfortunately the people who plan for it have their children in expensive private schools. Indeed the education system in Uganda no longer the social equalizer it used to be.

The automatic promotion of pupils from one class to another; the refusal by government to allow schools raise extra funds from parents and the persistent failure by government to provide funds to schools in time, have all worked to undermine UPE. It is no wonder that right from inception of this policy hundreds of rural based government aided primary schools have not had any P.7 candidate come in grade one.

Recommendations to the ministry of education;

a) Private schools

- I. All private schools should be tax exempted because they are doing a job that government itself ought to have done

- II. Any investor with a plan to build a school that can accommodate a minimum of 3000 pupils/students should be given free land

b) Government aided schools

- I. Build at least one more school per parish in Uganda to check the population of pupils per school and reduce distance the children have to travel daily.
- II. Cost sharing should be re-introduced in schools to enable parents fix financial gaps left by government
- III. Automatic promotion of pupils should be banned with immediate effect in order to emphasize quality of education
- IV. Provide lunch for all children.

Teacher training and retention

- I. There are 12,169 primary schools in Uganda yet only 158,110 trained teachers exist. The pupil teacher ratio is so low. Government should build new PTC s and renovate and expand the existing ones to ensure at least 100% increase in intake per year.
- II. Increase teachers' salaries by at least 50%.

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