

Seninde halts MAK-Jinja school deal

By Jackie Nambogga

Primary education state minister Rosemary Seninde has protested the move by Makerere University (MAK) to set up a centre at premises belonging to a primary school in Jinja.

She said it was wrong for Makerere to secure the two blocks comprising 10 classrooms at Spire Road Primary School in Jinja municipal council without the input of the education ministry.

Seninde said she was concerned about incidents of defilement as a result of letting adults share premises with pupils.

The minister, who was together with lands state minister Persis Namuganza, said they were unaware of a decision by Jinja municipal authorities to rent out the classroom blocks to the university without the consent of the education ministry.

"If anything went wrong between the two institutions," she said, "my ministry would be answerable."

"We have to know some of these things because if anything goes wrong between the university students and pupils, we are responsible," Seninde said.

Fact-finding mission

Seninde was on a fact-finding visit to the school that has been hit by land wrangles. The school's land is under threat from encroachers.

She observed that all educational institutions, including universities, were being directly monitored by the education ministry and, therefore, the ministry was entitled to be involved in decision making regarding the allocation of the premises.

Whereas primary schools are governed by local governments, Seninde said they were also under the direct supervision of the ministry. Seninde, who was also accompanied



Seninde (left) showing to Namuganza (centre) the land around Spire Primary School in Jinja on Friday. Seninde stopped Makerere from occupying the school's classrooms. Photo by Jackie Nambogga

by George Mutekanga, the assistant commissioner in charge of primary schools, said Spire was risking its structures in case the enrolment exceeded 600.

Prof. Jockey Baker Nyakaana, the director of Makerere University's Jinja branch, said they were given the go-ahead in writing by the town clerk to occupy the structures provided they were unutilised.

Nyakaana said they signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the school management committee and the headteacher, Mike

Mutove Mwoya, while the university was represented by its secretary and legal officer.

The payments

According to the MOU, Nyakaana said they agreed to pay a monthly rent of sh6m for the 10 classrooms for five years but renewable by mutual agreement although the renovations were at their cost.

Since they started operations in August last year, he said they had so far advanced the school sh54m out of the sh72m for the year 2018/2019.

He said they were waiting for the headteacher to issue a demand notice.

However, Namuganza said the university had to apply afresh because they needed a well-streamlined system since there was no boundary between the two institutions.

"These institutions are ours but if you produce children, it doesn't mean that the girls and boys should sleep in the same room. This is what you are doing," she said.

Namuganza reminded Nyakaana that the education ministry remains supreme and should have been

informed about the development before occupying the premises.

She said the university acted like a girl who elopes with a man without her parents' blessings.

"You know very well as a professor that the ministry has an overall supervisory role. What you did was similar to a girl who abandons a jerrycan at the borehole and goes to marry. Since you never introduced yourself, you will apply afresh," Namuganza said.

"It was abnormal for Jinja municipal council to okay the establishment of a university at a primary school,"

Rosemary Sseninde

The ministers told Police to summon the university officials and record a statement regarding the acquisition of the structures and explain what they were doing at a primary school.

Meanwhile at the same event, Seninde halted the transfer of 10 teachers after parents cited a witch-hunt for allegedly tipping them of the wrongdoings that were happening at their school.

She said they would within one month come up with recommendations after examining all the anomalies surrounding the school. She said they would also investigate the school account to see if the sh54m was deposited on it.