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# The truth and the lies in the Makerere University issue

**T**he ongoing strike at Makerere University is not a novel thing. It is hypocritical for politicians to, therefore, comment on it with very disapproving adjectives fit for a civil war or genocide towards the administration.

Of course, the violence against the students is uncalled for and I join the President in condemning it.

However, instead of throwing blasphemies on the state and gathering all insults towards the government, wisdom should lead us to seeking a solution to what lies beneath what we now very often see. Otherwise, reacting to a Makerere University strike like the first of its kind in a decade is reflective of other motives, save the well-being of the university.

Now, for the mere fact that on the past 10 years, Makerere University has seen more than five very aggressive student strikes and also almost numerically similar staff strikes, it is logically inconsistent to bundle up the facts and use them to crucify the President (and lately, his family). Rather, it should tell us that there is a bigger picture, which requires a composed head to perceive and not a clueless clique of power-thirsty youngsters to substantiate.

In my high ranked opinion, it would have been better for the opposition to discuss with the education and sports minister instead of throwing the blame on Museveni's political success, where an institutional failure could be sending a message.

Thankfully, Mama Janet Museveni, the Minister of Education said something about this and while others found her offensive, saying they neither call her "mama" nor allow her to be mama to us who call her mama, I realised that that's all they had to say.

Fortunately, in a democracy like ours, there is freedom of association and disassociation, freedom of worship and liberty to identify with one's God.

However, the Honorable First Lady was, in a motherly way, trying to light up public understanding of the bigger picture of public education in Uganda. All of us notice without asking many questions that most public schools perform worse than private schools countrywide. This is not just in Uganda. It is an economic principle as old as philosophy. Economic liberty encourages competition and classification of society according to economic

might. Private schools, therefore, are bound to perform better as a matter of logic because it is profit and competition at the centre of their focus. Public schools that cannot invest more will not get as much returns. Therefore, with disparity in input between the private and public schools, coupled with different motives, it would be illogical to expect equally good grades. Juxtaposed to the Makerere University issue, the comparison that Mrs. Museveni made was to mildly let us know the obvious fact that the effort of government in financing public university education should not be undermined by people who find a 15% increase an act of Satan.

Increasing tuition by 15% is not so that the president's salary may be increased, but it is because education has progressively become expensive.

The First Lady provided that evidence with the statistics of UCU fees structure. In a high ranking university like Makerere, best of all in East Africa and fourth in Africa, it is purely unreasonable to react to a tuition increase by violence and political blame game. So long as the standard of education there has to be maintained, such monetary necessities shall continue to exist.

The real question then should not be the strikes at Makerere University or whether Nawangwe should go or remain; it is what should be done to save the standard of education at Makerere University, without ignoring the economic status of most Ugandans who cannot afford high tuition fees.

Suggestions have been made to relieve Makerere University of some courses and leave it with a few sciences and post graduate courses so that the input of government in financing the university covers a not-so-wide range of students and goes mainly towards research. The other public universities would be empowered to take up more students and other courses.

These have been met with uncensored opposition from those with corrupt heads who cannot bare dialogue. Instead of providing solutions, they jump at these problems as opportunities to criticise and sabotage government plans. It is unpatriotic and corrupt.

Therefore, leaving the excitement aside, it is the duty of every well-meaning Ugandan to divest themselves of what Mrs Museveni rightly called corruption, beware of those spreading it and then objectively seek a solution to the financial impasse (and yes it is financial and moral, not administrative) affecting the Ivory Tower.

