

# TUTORS WHO PERFORM BELOW 95% TO GET HALF OF MONTHLY SALARY

## ATTACK ON VICE

With upgrades to the Teacher Effectiveness and Learner Achievement system, the education ministry has instituted new parameters to curb teacher absenteeism in government-aided schools. Ibrahim Ruhweza and Martin Kitubi bring you the improvements made and the implications on educationists.

While the Government has severally pleaded with teachers to attend to learners as prescribed in their appointment letters, many continue to stay away from duty, while drawing salaries.

This has not only robbed the country of resources, but also denied children the chance to access quality education due to teacher absenteeism.

However, in a radical shift, the Government will start paying teachers according to attendance.

A government reform on the payment of teachers, whose implementation starts July 1, indicates that only teachers whose attendance is at least 95% will receive full monthly pay.

However, these too must have a genuine explanation detailing why their attendance is not at 100%.

On the other hand, a teacher whose attendance is below 95% will take home half pay and risk being scrapped off the government payroll on grounds of absenteeism.

Such teachers will immediately be replaced in the subsequent recruitment exercise by the Government.

While speaking during the Education Service Commission (ESC) annual performance review recently, Raymond Pedo, a principal human resource officer at the education ministry, confirmed the development.

"It is coming. It is one of the reforms that will cure absenteeism. Your attendance is key and you should be on duty from 8:00am to 5:00pm.

"Before any payment is made, the attendance report is initiated by the supervisor; headteachers will play a critical role in validating records. Also, they will report how many days a teacher has worked before the report is submitted for payment," he said.

The ESC annual performance review was held between March 31 and April 1, at Lake Victoria Serena Golf Resort and Spa, Wakiso district, and graced by several officials, including headteachers of seed secondary schools.

### HOW IT WILL WORK

*New Vision* has learnt that the Government is already integrating the Teacher

# 1,524

The number of government-aided secondary schools.

Effectiveness and Learner Achievement (TELA) system, which captures attendance in school, with the Human Capital Management system, used to manage payroll.

Once the integration is concluded, for every hour that the teacher clocks in, it will immediately be captured on to the payroll system for consideration.

TELA is a time-on-task performance management system that uses a smartphone with Global Positioning System and biometric features designed to monitor real-time teacher attendance and timetable implementation.

The Government has since procured and distributed gadgets for its primary and secondary schools to implement the system.

There are 12,549 government-aided primary schools and 1,524 secondary schools across the country. This implies that the Government has bought at least 14,073 gadgets for schools to roll out the TELA system.

### HOW TELA WORKS

The education ministry rolled out the TELA system immediately after the COVID-19 pandemic.

TELA is a biometric system used to monitor teacher attendance as well as time on task, where teachers will now use their faces, other than thumbprints, to clock in and clock out.

The system was upgraded last year. As part of the upgrade, teachers whose faces have been scanned and verified are confirmed to have reported on duty that day.

In addition, the upgraded system requires that teachers scan their faces at exactly 8:00am, and will have up to 6:00pm to clock out. For those who clock in and fail to clock out, the system automatically marks them absent on that day.

# ABSENTEEISM: TEACHERS TO BE PAID ACCORDING TO ATTENDANCE

PHOTO BY DAVID LUKIIZA



Headteachers of government-aided schools attending the ESC annual performance review on March 31 at Lake Victoria Serena Golf Resort and Spa in Wakiso district

## REPORT FINDINGS

A 2021 report by the Inspectorate of Government (IG) revealed that the country is losing billions of shillings annually to teacher absenteeism in education.

According to the Cost of Corruption in Education Sector report, the IG estimated the cost of absenteeism in public education at sh180b in 2019 alone.

As part of the report, the IG indicated that evidence suggests that the loss of instructional time negatively affects academic outcomes and social development.

Even short-term teachers' absence, the report says, can lead to losses of 3.3% of standard deviation in math grade achievement.

In addition, the IG indicated that organised absenteeism, when teachers co-ordinate absence and cover up for missing colleagues, is also harmful for students' achievements – substitute teachers perform worse in facilitating learning compared to regular teachers.

"Moreover, teachers' absence and low engagement in their duties enhances students' absenteeism in Uganda, further hindering learning outcomes. The average truancy rate in Ugandan public schools is nearly 20%," the report reads.

With the expected average teaching time of seven hours per day, the IG indicated that 1.9 hours of classroom time is lost due to absenteeism per day, equivalent to 478 hours per year for one student.

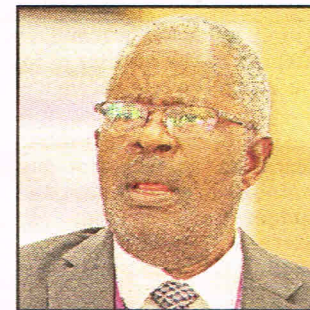
"Multiplying this figure by the number of students in secondary and primary schools, and by the average cost of teaching hour per student, results in annual costs equal to nearly sh1.5 trillion," the report says.

If the days accumulate without clock-outs, the person in question is declared a perennial absentee and will face consequences, including being scraped from the payroll.

As part of the system, only teachers who register between 95% and 100% clock-ins and clock-outs are deemed excellent, while those who

score between 75% and 94% are average.

On the other hand, a teacher who scores between 0% and 74% is considered a perennial absentee. Such a teacher will appear before the rewards and sanctions committee and risks being dismissed from service for failing to meet the contractual obligations.



ESC chairperson Luboga

### EXPERT, TEACHERS SPEAK OUT

Mohammed Kamulegeya, the headteacher of Kitebi Secondary School in Kampala, welcomed the move.

"This is the best idea. It has taken too long, and it will bring full accountability and help address absenteeism in our schools," he said.

However, the Rev. Prof. Dr. Samuel Luboga, the chairperson of the ESC, cautioned against viewing teaching purely through the lens of attendance.

He said performance management in education is inherently complex, as much of a teacher's work happens outside the visible classroom environment.

"The reason a teacher is not in class from morning to evening is that they need time to prepare lessons. They also need time to set and mark exams," he said.

Luboga said these responsibilities are essential to the learning process, even though attendance tracking systems may not capture them.

He added that it is not possible to treat teaching like

piecemeal, but suggested that reducing the profession to measurable hours alone risks overlooking critical aspects of the job.

Luboga acknowledged the difficult reality that not all teachers use their time outside the classroom effectively. He said in some cases, teachers lack commitment and it is directly reflected in poor learning outcomes among students.

Vincent Elong, the national chairperson of the Uganda Professional Science Teachers' Union, said for the system to work, the Government must ensure that the TELA system is functioning well across the entire education service.

"As science teachers, we support every effort by the Government to improve performance. But if teachers are to be paid per attendance, all teachers must be trained on how the system works and how to use it. Some teachers, especially those in the rural areas, struggle to use the current system," he said.

### ATTENDANCE PERFORMANCE

Frances Atima, the chief education inspector of schools at the ministry, who oversees the TELA system, explained that they regularly conduct TELA training for education officers at the local government level and headteachers.

Because of this, she said, the ministry has recorded an improvement in teacher attendance countrywide.

For instance, according to the November 2025 TELA report shared by the ministry, Teso sub-region ranked best in teacher attendance under TELA.

The sub-region had at least 93.4% of the teachers regarded present in the second term compared to 78% in the first term.

Teso was followed by Bunyoro, with 90.6%, up from 76% in the first term. Karamoja came in third with 89.4% from 47%. The fourth was Bukedi with 80.3%, down from 83%; while Buganda was fifth with 78%, down from 79%.

The worst-performing sub-regions are Toro with just 56.3% of its teachers regarded as present in second term, followed by Elgon with 64.5%, Lango at 70.5%, and Busoga at 70.6%.