

Ask your question

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What are you doing to curb the problem of fake academic certificates?

This week, **Commission for University Education CEO, Prof Mwenda Ntarangwi**, answers your questions.

1 One of the biggest problems facing the education sector today is the scourge of fake degrees and diplomas. What is CUE doing to curb this menace?

Julianne N. Wasilwa, Nairobi

The problem of fake certificates is a global phenomenon propelled by deteriorating values and morals but also by the high premium placed on academic qualifications in society. As part of its mandate, CUE provides services that help reduce the number of fake certificates through recognition and equation of qualifications and accreditation of institutions offering academic qualifications.

Further, through regular institutional and programme accreditation and quality audits, universities are held accountable for the quality of the courses they offer. The commission has enhanced the capacity of universities to inculcate a quality culture and it is mandatory for universities to have internal quality assurance mechanisms in line with the Universities Regulations, 2014.

2 Over the past 10 years, public universities were misguided by a focus on teaching fees revenue and geographic growth by opening campuses countrywide. For most of them, fee income accounted for over 90 per cent of their revenue, which is unsustainable. What is CUE doing to support them as they transform to adopt a more diversified revenue approach from sources such as research and innovation?

Sam Watene, Nairobi

The commission understands that funding universities is in the hands of the government through the Ministry of Education and the National Treasury for public universities and their respective sponsors in the case of private universities. Further, universities depend on fees paid by students. As a regulator interested in quality university education, the commission understands the role played by adequate financing in supporting quality education.

Recently, the commission co-hosted meetings between universities, the Education ministry and Members of Parliament to candidly talk about financing university education. Part of that conversation included noting that with the number of eligible students that are seeking university education declining and government support going down, universities have to seek alternative methods of sustaining themselves.

The commission would like to see universities move towards building centres of excellence by focusing more on academic

areas where they are strong and competitive, minimising duplication of programmes, strengthening their research and innovation, and enhancing partnerships with industry.

3 University administrators are calling for an upward adjustment of fees, claiming it has remained at the same level for many years despite change of economic conditions. What is your stand on this issue?

Komen Moris, Eldoret

Our constitution has laid bare the opportunity for every Kenyan to have access to quality education at all levels and university education is no exception. Such provision of education comes at a cost. Any upward adjustment to university education fees, however, should be done after adequate consultation with stakeholders, including students and parents.

4 Universities have many problems. Currently, the closure of some campuses has left many part-time lecturers in distress as they are owed a lot of money. What is your commission doing to ensure that tutors' rights are not violated?

Evans Gitau, Nyahururu

The issue of part-time lecturers is a matter of concern to all of us. The commission is aware of it and has on several occasions raised the matter with universities. The commission has proposed to universities to utilise visiting and adjunct academic staff to complement full-time teaching staff and part-time lecturers and pay for services rendered.

Many universities are trying to the best of their ability to settle the payment backlog of the part-time lecturers but it still remains a heavy burden.

Overall, the engagement of part-time lecturers is an employment relationship governed by the Employment Act and universities are required to abide by the requirement of the law when engaging the services of part-time lecturers. Such an engagement can only be entered into with a clear understanding as to where the funds are going to be sourced and paid promptly.

5 CUE's directive that all assistant lecturers must acquire a PhD degree by October 2019 for them to qualify to teach has caused a lot of anxiety and the Universities Academic Staff Union (UASU) has challenged this directive in court. Do you still see the October deadline being met? What is the rationale for the PhD-only lecturers' policy?

Ken Mwasio

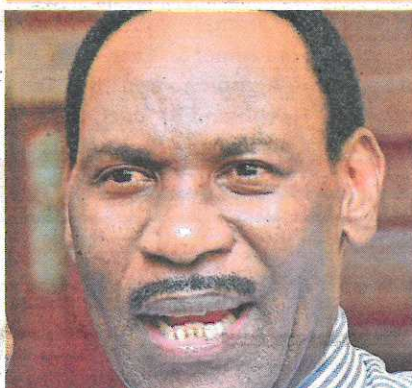
This matter is in court and therefore I cannot comment on it.

6 Kindly explain why it takes so long for students to complete their PhD programmes in Kenyan universities. What measures have you put in place to curb this crisis?

Okulo Andrew Guya, University of Nairobi

There are a number of factors that are in play here including the fact that the majority of PhD candidates

NEXT WEEK



Next week, **Dr Ezekiel Mutua**, the chief executive of the Kenya Film Classification Board, responds to your questions.

pay for their own fees, a number of students are working and find it a challenge to juggle work and their doctoral requirements, delays in getting back feedback from supervisors and delays in completing and analysing research for various reasons. It is the role of the university senates to ensure timely completion of academic studies at all levels.

7 Kenya struggles with an acute shortage of surgeons, hindering Universal Health Care delivery. Currently, the university model (MMed) of training surgeons seems insufficient to bridge the deficit. As a result, the collegiate system under the College of Surgeons of East Central and Southern Africa (COSECSA) that trains surgeons based in various regional (mostly rural-based) approved hospitals is emerging as a promising mitigation. What is the commission's view on this model? How does the commission plan to support this process?

Stanley Aruyaru, Nyeri

The commission supports the government agenda of universal health care for Kenyan citizens as part of the Big Four Agenda. CUE works closely with professional bodies, in this case the Kenya Medical Board, in addressing training in the health sciences. CUE will support the model, based on approval of the Medical Board and University Senate among other quality assurance requirements.

8 Medical training in Kenya is often challenged by the prevailing arrangements where a university doesn't own any teaching hospital but has to depend on a public hospital or parastatal. This takes away control of the hospital from the management of the university, with its attendant challenges in fiscal space and legislative inertia. Does the commission have a plan in place to

require all medical schools to have their own teaching hospitals?

Stanley Aruyaru, Nyeri

Universities, both public and private, generally offer training and service for the common good. Thus it is good practice that these universities utilise public facilities in training their students and in the process provide service to the wider public as a common good.

They are also allowed to invest in their own teaching facilities as a way of complementing public hospitals as teaching labs. These are global best practices in training and research in health sciences.

9 If indeed CUE approves courses for our local universities, why is it that there is a standoff between some universities and professional regulatory bodies? A good example is the Technical University of Kenya where there has been a never-ending standoff between the faculty of Electrical Engineering and the Engineers Board of Kenya (EBK). Can CUE get in touch with EBK and expedite the process of course approval for this university?

Ongeri Abuga Dominic, former student TUK

The commission is established under an Act of Parliament and the Engineers Board of Kenya is also established by an Act of Parliament and given their respective mandates. Where there are overlaps, the government is supposed to guide on the way forward. Professional programmes such as engineering undergo dual accreditation—fulfilling the requirements of CUE and EBK. Where possible CUE will work with EBK to resolve such challenges.

10 There has been talk that some universities or colleges were to be closed. Are our current number of universities — both public and private — enough for the country's educational needs?

Francis Njuguna, Kibicho

The number of universities needed in a country primarily depends on the universities' ability to meet demand without compromising quality.

Some of the key issues in university education that the commission has focused on include access, equity and quality. We have done well in increasing access and we are continually working on equity and quality. Over time, these will all pan out for the good of our nation and graduates.

11 What is the economic sense of having universities and campuses all over the country yet many of them are not viable and do not attract enough students? Why not determine viability of campuses before they are opened?

Reuben Komen, Nakuru

The commission has inspected all university campuses to ascertain their viability. Those that do not meet the standards have been closed and students relocated to the university's main campuses.

This is a process that has been ongoing over a period of time and has seen the number of such campuses reduce drastically.

12 What is CUE doing about the proliferation of jobless graduates writing postgraduate essays for Masters and PhD students?

Viola Wairimu Opondo, Nairobi

Ethical considerations in university training and integrity is important for the registered student/candidate pursuing postgraduate training. This is a personal matter guided by what is socially acceptable or encouraged.

Engaging the services of others to complete one's academic qualification is cheating and unacceptable. It points to a deeper need for a culture of earning from our work and avoiding shortcuts.