

Findings. NCHE says some universities and tertiary institutions are running programmes that were not accredited.

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Universities are teaching expired courses - report

A report released yesterday by the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) says more than 1,000 academic programmes being taught in universities and other tertiary institutions across the country are illegal.

The 2018 NCHE report on the state of higher education and training in Uganda indicated that during the 2017/2018 academic year, a total of 1,474 academic programmes were presented to the council for accreditation but only 471 were accredited, meaning 1,003 courses which were not accredited are illegal.

Out of those that were accredited, six programmes were at PhD level, accounting for 3.4 per cent, 10 at Master's level (5.6 per cent) while at Bachelor's level had 67 (37.6 per cent).

At the level of postgraduate diploma only four (2.3 per cent) programmes were accredited, 88 (49.4 per cent) at diploma level and only three (1.7 per cent) were accredited at certificate level.

The NCHE executive director, Prof Mary Okwakol, said most tertiary institutions are running the programmes which were not accredited.

"We declined to accredit some programmes that were submitted because they did not meet the minimum standards. However, some institutions are still teaching them illegally. They should re-submit those courses for review and accreditation," Prof Okwakol said.

She also revealed that most universities are running expired curriculums and this has led to poor quality of graduates.

"Each institution of higher learning in this country is required to review its curriculum after every five years, but most institutions have not brought their curriculum for accreditation," she said.

Shortage of Lecturers

Prof Okwakol reported shortage of the teaching staff in most universities and other institutions of higher learning. The report indicated that there are only 12,838 academic staff who are slated to teach a total of

26,107 students in 250 accredited institutions. This has put the lecturer-student ratio at 1:35 contrary to the recommended 1:20 by NCHE.

"Most institutions lack adequate lecturers and this has led to sharing of the available staff from one institution to another. This impacts on performance," Prof Okwakol said.

"We advise all institutions of higher learning to work hard and ensure they at least have a minimum number of permanent staff in their institutions if we are to improve the

quality of graduates," she added.

Foreign students reduce

The report further shows that the number of foreign students in the country has reduced.

According to the report, foreign students who studied in Uganda in 2015/2017 academic year were 18,941 and the number dropped to 18,478 in 2016/2017 academic year but slightly increased again to 18,903 last year.

Prof Okwakol attributed the drop to the rampant university strikes

that has scared away parents from sending their children to Uganda. She also blamed the decline to the fact that neighbouring countries are constructing their own universities.

"Most of our foreign students came from Kenya and Rwanda, but since 2015, the number has been dropping. The country will lose the foreign earnings," Prof Okwakol said.

Other findings

Regarding infrastructure in the institutions, the report noted that there is a slight increase in lecture room space. There was an increase in total number of institutions from 236 in 2016/2017 to 241 in 2017/2018.

Public universities remained nine, private universities increased by three to 44 while other Degree awarding institutions remained 10 and other tertiary institutions increased by two from 176 to 178.

There has also been a slight increase in higher education students' enrolment. Statistics show that 26,107 students got recruited during the period under review.

State Minister for Higher Education John Chrysostom Musingo tasked institutions of higher learning to improve on research and put more funds in recruiting human resource.



Courtesy. The executive director for National Council for Higher Education, Prof Mary Okwakol (left), shares a light moment with the State Minister For Higher Education, Dr John Chrysostom Musingo (centre), after presentation of a report in Kampala yesterday. PHOTO BY DAVID LUBOWA

RESEARCH CHALLENGE

Loophole. The NCHE report indicated that universities have continued to neglect research yet it is the element that distinguishes a university from other institutions of learning.

The report reveals that a few universities that are involved in different research projects have failed to avail information that could be shared about the projects.

Records

Figures indicate that government universities are

only carrying out 2.5 per cent of research while private universities are carrying out 6.2 per cent.

"We request government to establish a national research and innovation fund, because low research and innovation output will delay this country from achieving its 2040 goals," Prof Okwakol warned.

Minimum requirement

She said research in institutions of higher learning should be at 40 per cent.