

MUBS to lose over sh800m in staff advances

By Nicholas Wassajja

Makerere University Business School (MUBS) is to lose over sh800m to teachers and staff that have refused to pay back money advanced to them to pursue further studies.

In the last financial year, six lecturers and a religious chaplain sought financial support to pursue Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) studies outside the country, but since completion, they have failed to honour their bonding agreements with the institution.

Appearing before Parliament's Public Accounts Committee (PAC) yesterday, MUBS Principal, Prof. Waswa Balunywa, said their policy of encouraging staff to go for further studies by granting them permission while continuing to receive full salary, has been abused by some beneficiaries.

"Our attempt to get them to refund the money has never been successful, while others become hostile to individuals who write them letters, asking them to meet obligations," Balunywa said.

MUBS said it advanced \$2,250 (over sh8m) for one of the items at the Anglia Ruskin University PhD scholarship, for the Rev. Kenneth Karyaiija as chaplain of St. James Chapel, but, upon return, the Church of Uganda transferred him without refunding the money.

Moses Bukenya was given sh25m as PhD facilitation funds at Makerere University, which he did not pay back when he resigned from his teaching job at MUBS.

Other staff members who skipped the bonding agreement are Dr Pamela Tusingwire, who completed her PhD at the University of Arizona in May 2017, but has since refused to repay \$10,000 (about sh37m), contributed to her studies by MUBS and over sh119m paid to her as salary when on study leave and Dr Sarah Eya, who got sh18m for studies and sh190m as salary, while she was at the University of Newcastle, Sydney, Australia.

MUBS also paid sh74m and sh867,5000 for Dr Ronald Wakyereza as PhD facilitation and school books at the Victoria University, Melbourne, Australia, but he is said to have instead asked for early retirement without paying back the money and sh171m said to have been advanced to Dr Patrick Kakwezi, to study at the University of Newcastle, but letters for him to repay have not been responded to.

For Dr Friday Derek, he reportedly got sh170m to study at the University of Newcastle, but records indicate his case is still pending due to his request for MUBS to permit him to complete a two-year post-doctoral programme.

Balunywa said MUBS is now rethinking the policy to retain at least 20% of staff salaries when they travel for further studies, as a fallback position, in case the beneficiaries do not return to serve at the institution, as a way of compensating money spent on them.

Describing the conduct as intellectual dishonesty, Masaka Municipality MP Mathias Mpuuga said it is absurd that an institution that is still grappling with understaffing of especially teaching staff, loses money while training and skilling individuals, who never return the favour.

The committee chaired by Nandala Mafabi, said perhaps government should consider enhancing remuneration for teaching staff to attract retention of staff whose training has been facilitated by taxpayers.

Balunywa said whereas government made a reasonable salary enhancement, MUBS is still suffering a 60% staffing gap, which is worsened by the haemorrhage of those supported to pursue further studies, but look for greener pastures elsewhere.