



## 2014, a year of great academic achievements

**T**HE New Year is here at last. It is now 2014, a year in which we should spring the country's education sector to a greater level.

Hopefully, the Christmas holiday has provided each of you an opportunity to rest and relax before we embark on what is likely to be one of the greatest years in attainment of quality education in our country.

Each of you is an important partner in the effort to build an enhanced culture of excellence, innovation and equity in our education system; for academic excellence.

Change can only take place if each of us makes a contribution in strengthening the country's education system. We should ensure that our children receive the knowledge and skills that will enable them build their future. This is not a Government responsibility alone. It requires you and I to

make our contributions, to the country's education.

We should support our children in their journey to attain their fullest potential so that they will be competitive in the workforce. Our focus is to ensure that all learners receive high quality education in healthy and inclusive learning environments throughout the country.

To all students, teachers and parents, we extend our best wishes for a great new year. We have a great year ahead as we embark on a journey of transformation of the country's education. Be part of the journey.

Conan Businge

cbusinge@newvision.co.ug

# Academic corruption: A silent plague in universities



Prof. A B Kasozi

By Prof. A.B Kasozi

Although it hard to prove, there is a perception that academic corruption in our education institutions is on the rise. For a long time, the public expected fairness, honesty and impartiality from our higher education institutions. Although rarely investigated, professors were revered for their honesty in teaching, examining and awarding of grades and certificates.

The word of a professor in academic matters was final. However, a small number of people did not believe that these university folks were as pure as they were thought to be. Increasingly, however, this perception by the public seems to be fading. Professors, lecturers and other instructors in higher education systems are being uncovered for what they have actually been: ordinary human beings who make the same mistakes like every one else.

Perceived and revealed cases of academic corruption are unmasking an underlying monster of dishonesty in the academy that could destroy the very fabric of society. Though part of our social fabric, academic corruption is more dangerous than many other forms of corruption, it should not be tolerated.

### Perceived cases of academic corruption

There is reason to be concerned that academic corruption exists and its impact could be disastrous. While I was still at NCHE, I got several fake qualifications of Ugandans and non-Ugandans given to undeserving individuals by prestigious and rogue institutions of higher learning. I intervened in a number of institutions to halt the award of dubious qualifications.

I got several verbal reports from complainants that students were being asked to offer sex in exchange for marks, good grades for money, lecturers favouring their own in teaching and examinations, adulterations of grades by academic registrars, resistance of instructors to being assessed by students and the deliberate withholding of transcripts by staff for financial reasons.

**2013**  
Revealed cases of academic corruption are unmasking an underlying monster of academic dishonesty in higher institutions of learning

## Academic corruption is not only difficult to detect, but also to prove its existence

A member of the academic staff in a faculty of arts at one of our flagship universities was dismissed for doctoring transcripts, while an academic registrar in another Ugandan university was dismissed for admitting unqualified students.

I recently read in a newspaper about a Ugandan university that is being accused of selling a degree to a prominent person in a neighbouring country. I stopped reading a number of dissertations from our universities because few of them were original.

I was later informed that there are specialised writers of exam papers and dissertations in Katanga slum, a Kampala suburb as well as on Nasser and Nkrumah roads in Kampala.

### What is academic corruption?

While in the public domain corruption is the use of public resources for private or personal gain, academic corruption includes all selfish acts that are contrary to the just and equitable delivery of higher

education. Like other forms of the same evil, academic corruption arises from the moral impurity of the individual who deviates from the expected behaviour ideal and, instead, behaves in a selfish and repugnant way.

Academic corruption includes; plagiarism, fabrication, deception, cheating, bribery, sabotage, professional misconduct on the part of tutors, impersonification on the part of students or professors, the use of institutional authority or name for personal gain in the process of higher education delivery and reception. Accordingly, academic corruption is not only difficult to detect, but also to prove its existence in a given institution.

### Why academic corruption persists

There are some major reasons why academic corruption persists, and may be on the rise. First the increased demand for higher education increases the struggle to get admissions. In most of Africa, the demand has been increasing steadily to fill an

education vacuum created by earlier neglect of access at all levels of education.

As a result, the rate of higher education registration in Uganda, and all Sub-Saharan Africa, has been over 15% per year since 2000. The cutthroat competition to access higher education institutions empowers owners of higher education facilities with demanded products that can be sold corruptly by unethical sellers.

Secondly, higher education is vital for accessing good jobs. Most sought for jobs demand higher education qualifications, especially the terminal degrees of masters and doctorates.

Thirdly, there are many unethical entrepreneurs who set up degree mills, fake accreditation agencies, fly-by-night institutions and offices to sell fake degrees to satisfy demand.

Lastly, social cleavages of nations are always reflected, or represented, in most of a country's institutions. It is naïve for us to expect our universities to be clean when our society is perceived to be corrupt.

### Academic corruption is worst corruption

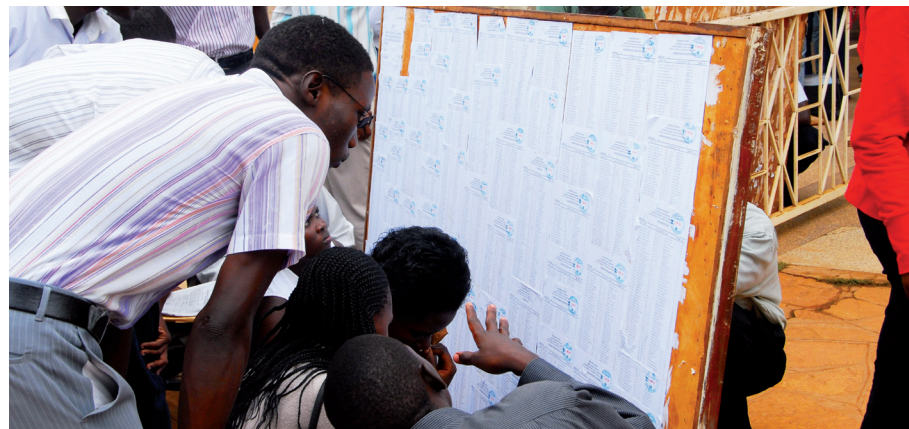
Academic corruption is not only deadly in the short run, but also in the long term. Badly trained - or untrained- professionals like doctors, architects, engineers, financial analysts; economic managers and teachers can have adverse impact on society the day they start to work.

The long-term impact of badly trained higher education graduates is catastrophic. Long term planning needs critical minds, who can see through national challenges and advise society accordingly.

But with our institutions of learning churning out semi-educated professionals and thinkers, only God can save our nation.

It is every body's business to detect academic corruption and report it to relevant authorities and make sure that corrective actions are taken. One person's example of moral purity can make a difference. Assessing of professors, lecturers and other instructors by their students at the end of each training package is one of the best ways to check the behaviour of those who teach. However, the students and administrative staff can also be corrupt.

The writer is the former executive director National Council for Higher Education



Students check the admission lists at Makerere University. With revelations of massive exam cheating in educational institutions, strict regulations should be put in place to bar culprits from continuing with their education