



Editorial

## Teachers' confirmation issue should be resolved

Thousands of teachers have worked, some for over two decades, without being confirmed in service. Under normal circumstances, a teacher is supposed to be confirmed in service after six months of probation, subject to their performance. Unfortunately today, even the most hardworking teachers spend years without getting confirmed. There are many reasons for this unfortunate trend, but the major factor is systemic.

This trend must be addressed because a disgruntled teacher cannot effectively execute his duties. Delaying the confirmation process is also unfair to the teachers as it means losing pensions for all the years worked before they are confirmed. Such teachers can also not access bank loans and are not eligible for any form of promotion since

confirmation in service is a prerequisite. While the Education Service Commission should be commended for clearing the massive backlog of unconfirmed teachers in the recent past, it is only fair that teachers whose confirmations were delayed by reasons not of their own making should get all their pensions.

Apart from confirmation, promotions of teachers in schools also need to be systematic and consistent. When teachers realise that their effort is being rewarded, they will work hard to improve the country's education system.

Conan Businge

cbusinge@newvision.co.ug

# It was wrong to kill technical schools for Universities

By Prof. A.B Kasozi

The country's technical or non-university sub-sector has not performed well enough to produce the technicians we need. Instead, the country has focused on university education at the expense of middle level training that is needed to produce technicians, who build and repair the nation. Since the 1980s, the structure of the tertiary education has remained inverted. The National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) failed to develop a quality assurance framework for the other tertiary institutions, accredit their programmes or publish a full catalogue of these institutions. Although NCHE may be blamed, there were other actors on the road to perfection that obstructed the popularisation of technical and other middle level hands-on education.

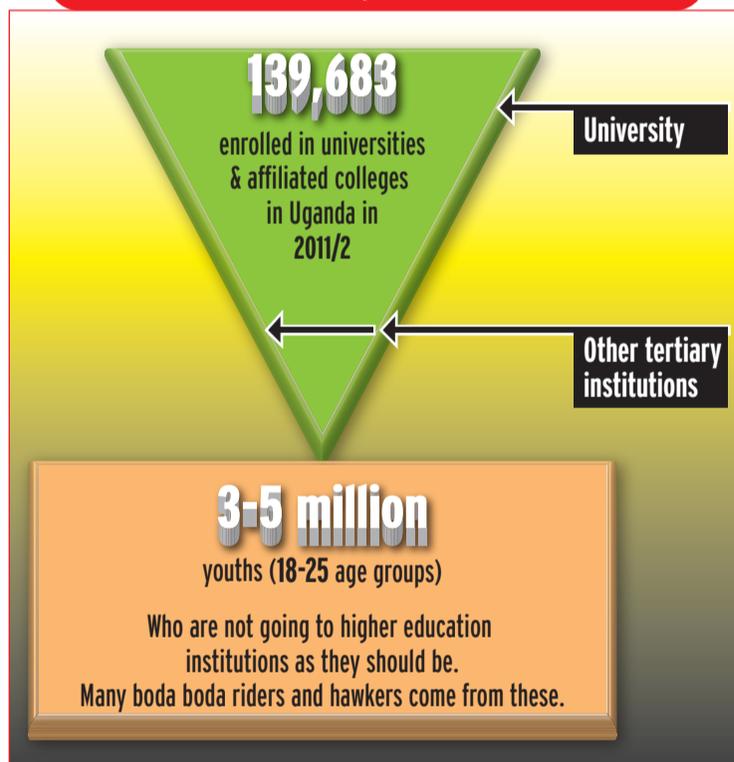
### Uganda's higher education in inverted pyramid

Higher education systems should be in a normal pyramid, with more students in the technical sectors (what we call other tertiary institutions) and fewer students in the universities.

In Kenya, for example, the tertiary sector had 350,000 students of whom 100,000 are in universities and affiliated colleges and 250,000 in the technical sector in 2012. Those numbers should give one graduate to two-and-half technicians; for example in health and engineering, one doctor to 2.5 nurses, one engineer to 2.5 technicians, respectively. Most developed or fast-developing nations have a pyramid-like higher education system.

In Uganda and other African countries, the higher education system is an inverted pyramid. In 2010 Uganda's total enrolment in higher education institutions was 198,066. Of these, 71% were in universities and 29% were in other

### Structure of the higher education sector



tertiary institutions. A review of the enrolments in the other tertiary institutions shows that 90% of the students in the non-university sector are in commerce, business and other related fields. Those who are in technical colleges were less than 2% in 2010/2011. That is why, we have so many non-Ugandans working as technicians, road workers, hotel managers and various middle level professionals.

Massive well-funded and organised intervention is needed to fill this gap. But most of this growth in this sector is in commerce and business areas rather than science and technology.

### Who to blame for the slow growth of tertiary education?

At an international conference, a high official of the Ministry of

other tertiary institutions that was appropriate to the sub-sector. What I designed for them was copied from the one of universities. This copy was eventually made official, but the officer responsible did not give us an alternative one.

The Council was also supposed to develop a tool for accrediting programmes for tertiary institutions. By the time I left, we had not accredited many of the programmes for this sub-sector.

It should also assemble all lists of these institutions in one catalogue. While NCHE gazetted a list of its own, the relevant departments in the Ministry seemed to have their own lists.

More so, there is need to fully map and publish a catalogue of these institutions. An officer was hired to clean up that sub-sector, but was unable to deliver acceptable products.

But blaming the NCHE cannot build these crucial institutions. If anything, the Ministry of Education, the politicians and general public share the blame. First, the NCHE has been in business for only ten-and-half-years (2002-2013). The social impact of the absence of technicians Uganda is facing has been consolidating for over 40 years.

Secondly, the Government has participated in the closure of some of these key institutions to make way for universities. Those closed include, UPK (Uganda Polytechnic), ITEK (Institute of Teacher Education) and UNISE (Uganda National Institute for Special Education) to constitute the failing Kyambogo University. There was also closure of Busitema Agricultural College of Mechanisation, Nagongera and other institutions in the east to create Busitema University. Attempts were made to turn Lira Technical College into a constituent of Gulu University, but NCHE put up a spirited appeal to find an alternative candidate. The decision to kill Lira Technical College was stayed – hopefully forever.

Thirdly, the Universities and Other

Tertiary Institutions Act has areas of conflict with the BTJET law that need harmonisation.

It was with much joy that we received news that a new university in the West Nile region, Muni would be built without “killing” an existing tertiary institution. I was happy when I visited the site of the future Muni University that was starting from scratch.

But it is not only the Government that destroyed other tertiary institutions. Officers from Mengo destroyed the only Uganda technical college in the Buganda region, Masaka! I discussed the issue of the closure with two high level representatives from Mengo over the issue of closing the technical college. They refused, opened a university that is teaching arts and humanities. Their action was a disservice to the region and Uganda as a whole.

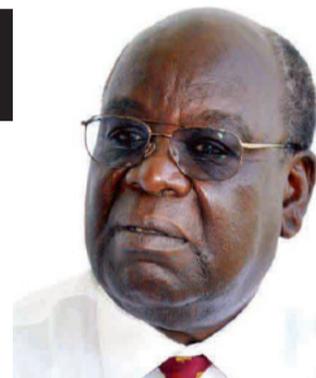
### Way forward

Uganda should separate the administration of the two sub-sectors of higher education by having a separate Act for universities and improve the BTJET Act to serve the other tertiary institutions as law.

There is also need to develop a credit system for both sub-sectors to ease mobility between the two sub-sectors. NCHE had started working on a credit system for universities and needs state support to complete the project. We should also turn the NCHE into a Commission for Universities – just as Kenya and Tanzania have done.

To widen the pool of science students, Uganda should change the lower secondary sector curriculum to the 8-4-4 system. Early specialisation after Senior Four robs the country of potential scientists. Uganda and Tanzania are still sleeping on this.

The writer is a former Executive Director National Council for Higher Education



Prof. A B Kasozi

## Acts

The Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act has areas of conflict with the BTJET law that need harmonisation

Education and Sports voiced concern that NCHE was not, focusing on the “other tertiary institutions”. I felt the criticism was incomplete as all the blame cannot be put on the NCHE. It is true that NCHE under my directorship failed in a number of ways to do what it could in this area.

The NCHE failed to design a quality assurance framework for