

Happiness. Co-curricular activities only allow university students to enjoy life in a normal acceptable manner but they also expand on their areas of happiness.

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The ideal environment for university learning



Makerere University students attend a lecture recently. Universities should create good learning environments for their students.
PHOTO BY ALEX ESAGALA

Higher education is expanding rapidly in Uganda. A number of universities have been established and they are shaping Uganda's job market.

However, due to a number of factors, many universities are set up in environments that do not offer the adequate learning environment for students and lecturers.

According to Prof. Chrysostom Maviiri, the Vice-Chancellor of Uganda Martyrs University (UMU), Nkozi, the quality of the environment is a key facilitator of university education.

Prof. Maviiri says by the environment, he means the resources that facilitate learning such as libraries, computer laboratories, free internet and enough compound space among others. He says for universities like UMU that are based in the countryside, their physical environment such as compound space and green vegetation is relaxing to the students and gives them a sense of comfort.

Prof. Maviiri adds that the environment also touches the lecturers who assist in conveying knowledge to students. He says although students come from different backgrounds, an ideal university environment creates a family-like community.

"These students live in harmony in that they take responsibility for each other's welfare. Whoever joins the campus does not feel alienated as they make contribution to each other's company," he says.

"...University is an academic haven; this is what makes it different. It is a community of scholars. At UMU, we have more than 70,000

books in hard copies and more than 4,000 online resources which abundance of literature for a student's better performance," Prof. Maviiri says.

Prof. John Opuda-Asibo, the

executive director of the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE), says the university environment is often shaped with the guidance of the Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act of

2001 (amended in 2003 and 2006). Prof. Opuda says NCHE regulates the functions of universities, sets minimum standards as well as ensuring that universities and higher institutions conform to the regula-

tions of the Act. "Periodically we inspect institutions, review curriculum but also ensure that institution are reminded of the need to have internal quality assurance mechanisms.

This ensures continuity of functioning systems that are in consonance with set principles and guidelines," he says. Prof. Opuda adds that NCHE has a mandate of registering all higher institutions of learning, receive and investigate complaints relating to institutions of higher education, take appropriate action to monitor, to evaluate regulate institutions of higher learning.

He says the NCHE, in executing its duties, faces a number of challenges, among them compliance challenges due to gaps on our existing laws.

"Whereas we may recommend the revoking of an institution's license, effecting the closure is very difficult to implement as universities may run to courts of law and get court injunctions and remain operational using court orders."

He adds that funding from government is inadequate compared to the roles and functions to be executed.

"Currently we are allocated Shs2b by government which can hardly support the activities and staffing needs of NCHE. The other sources of the money, is the Shs20,000 paid by a student per year," he says.

