

SUBMISSION DEADLINE

NCHE says the requirements, which must be submitted by June 30, will enable the institution to assess the quality of certificate programmes

By David Lumu

The Government has stopped the issuance of one-year certificate courses in the country, calling upon training institutions conducting post-O'level certificate training to seek fresh accreditation from the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE).

According to Prof. Opuda-Asibo, the executive director of NCHE, the new accreditation process for training institutions offering post-O'level certificate courses require the proprietors to submit lists of all students admitted and details of the certificate programmes offered.

The move, which actors in the education sector say could affect over 2,000 certificate holders in the country and also complicate the academic future of O'level leavers, has caused quite a stir within the proprietors of the institutions, with some questioning the legal mandate of NCHE.

However, NCHE says the requirements, which must be submitted by June 30, will enable the institution to assess the quality of certificate programmes that institutions are offering to students.

Coming up with a uniform syllabus on certificate training and guidelines on particular certificate courses are some of the issues that the review is expected to achieve.

Post-O'level certificate courses are majorly pursued by students who complete Senior Four, but cannot afford or did not qualify for A' level admission.

"Each licensed and accredited higher education training institution must declare the following to NCHE by June 30; all the post-O'level certificate programmes it has run from January 2012 to date; the list of all students admitted to the said post-O'level certificate programmes, indicating the criteria for admissibility with copies of supporting documents," Opuda-Asibo said in a May 24 letter to academic registrars of universities, other degree-awarding institutions and other tertiary institutions.

"...all post-O'level certificate programmes must be of a two-year duration to be equivalent to A'level of Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB)," he added.

Mixed reaction

To Rosemary Seninde, the state minister for primary education, the move by NCHE is not only meant to close the glaring gaps in the quality of education in the country, but it is also geared towards controlling what is taught to students in the various certificate-



NCHE'S Opuda-Asibo (second left) at a function recently

Govt stops one-year certificate courses

POLICY TO CLOSE GLARING GAPS

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training institutions in the country.

"Our agenda, purpose and efforts are on how to improve the quality of education in the country. Improving standards is not wrong, and everyone should support NCHE as it endeavours to close the gaps in the education system, especially at certificate level," she said.

According to Nathan Twesigye, the principal of Makerere Business Institute (MBI),

working on a common syllabus will cure the unco-ordinated training of post-O'level certificate education in the country.

"Currently, there is no common curriculum. We strongly believe that before stopping the one-year certificate courses, the Government needs to come up with guidelines on which courses should be taught at certificate level and the syllabus," he said.

Twesigye, however, notes that not every

INSTITUTIONS TO UPGRADE

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course at certificate level can be taught for two years as NCHE is proposing.

"For instance, if a student wants to learn a computer package of excel, do you really need to teach such a person for two years? Therefore, this proposal needs to be critically assessed," he said.

Patrick Kaboyo, an educationist and chief executive officer of the Coalition of Uganda Private School Teachers Association, said the elephant in the room is the presumption that NCHE has the mandate to control the work of institutions rather than settling for its role of issuing guidelines.

Kaboyo says the mandate of accrediting post-O'level certificate programmes lies elsewhere and not with the NCHE.

The mayor of Kawempe division, Emmanuel Sserunjogi, who is also a proprietor of over two certificate and diploma-training institutions in Kampala, said the NCHE move would have come when there is already a syllabus on certificate teaching rather than putting a ban before developing the guidelines for certificate training in the country.

In his letter, Asibo emphasises that the move to stop one-year certificate programmes is not only rooted in the Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act, but it is also backed by the Solicitor General.

"The NCHE has sought the opinion of the Solicitor General whose view is that as it stands, NCHE is the most suitable body to accredit the post-O'level certificates programmes from licensed and accredited higher education training institutions," Opuda-Asibo said.

According to Opuda-Asibo, the cost of fresh accreditation will be borne by the institutions.

He argues that for any post-O'level certificate to be dubbed A'level equivalent, it must be conducted for two years, contrary to the previous situation where certificate courses range from one month to at least nine months.

Asibo's new directive comes a week after his recent directive that all the 122 private tertiary institutions with provisional licences should upgrade to the recommended classifications or face closure.

Some of the short certificate courses offered by various institutions in the country include certificate in computer applications, office studies, beauty and design, marketing, journalism, catering, accounting, stores management, business administration, office management and business administration, among others.