Our intellectual laziness is creating irritation and nausea

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Irritation and nausea are two different sensations, medically speaking, and both are generally unwelcome.

Sadly for me, I recently paid too much (where 'any' tips the scale) attention to one 'news' story that kicked off as irritating, then moved into a field of nausea that widened as I slid along a mentally slimy path gathering more information.

This involved someone who calls himself 'NUP commander 101' and has been referred to by all media houses as 'Eng. Stephen Kaweesa'.

The way things work in Uganda these days, I allowed the 'Engineer' title to hold for a bit. Then I noticed people commenting about how odd it was for a person educated in such a logic-driven field to be scammed to the extent of his claims.

He alleged that his political party made him pay sh600m to receive a political party endorsement for the Nansana Municipality parliamentary seat, but got none.

What caught my interest was the title Uganda seemed to agree he deserved. His political party leader, meanwhile, also goes around being called 'president'.

But surely not by the media? In general, our media houses tend to fall for that trap when it applies to people who only have shady honorary doctorates and yet affix the title 'Dr' on their names.

In the case of 'Engineer' Kaweesa, even regular television stations and otherwise respectable publications carry the joke.

But what if it is not a joke? (I thought to myself.)

See, I have always thought that people can only use the prefix 'Engineer' in Uganda if they follow some official rules backed by law.

Not being a lawyer or researcher of note, I thought it wise to go to the authorities on this matter – the Uganda Institute of Professional Engineers (UIPE).

Online, of course, since I am not invested enough to hop into a taxi or burn fuel just to confirm such small matters.

After downloading the Engineers Registration Act (Chapter 271) of 1969, I found, in section 29 ('Restrictions on use of title and false claims to qualifications'): "Any person who, not being a registered engineer – (a) falsely pretends to be such; (b) uses the style or title "Registered Engineer" or any other name, style, title or description implying, whether in itself or in the circumstances in which it is used, that the person is a registered engineer; or (c) holds himself or herself out, whether directly or by implication, to be a professionally qualified engineer, commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding ten thousand shillings."

It is even in their Code of Professional Ethics in section 2. (i): "Only members of the institution whose names appear on the current register of the Uganda Engineers' Registration Board may use the title 'Engineer' or 'Eng.' before their names."

It stood to reason that their website *https://uipe.co.ug/* would surely have a list of registered engineers for the general public to consult, so we do not get duped into hiring quacks for serious jobs.

This would also make it easier for the more intellectually lazy media houses to do quick checks so they do not look silly after captioning titles on screen and losing credibility.

That only stands for media houses that are inclined to be serious about their profession.

My disappointment was not at failing to find the list on the UIPE website – *https://uipe.co.ug/* – after a few minutes there. I was hit by a wave of dismay on noticing their physical address, as I checked to see how to get there, was on "Gloucester Avenue".

We have an avenue in Uganda called Gloucester? That is such a British name that it should not be surprising – the surprise is that this is 2026 Uganda and the UIPE has not asked the Kampala Capital City Authority people, who include (or should do so) their members, to fix all such 'funny' things.

Anyway, on the website under 'Membership' there are three options: 'Manual Membership Application Form', which obviously leads to nowhere because of the word "Manual" there.

Unless, come to think of it, when you click on it they dispatch someone to your location to hand you a piece of paper. I might have to go back to where I was when I was clicking about that website in case someone is standing there with my 'Manual Application Form'.

The other two are 'Online Application', which requires a username and password, and 'Online Application Guide', which takes you through an eight-step process to set up those credentials.

Eight steps. At the end of which you will have created online credentials and can now decide what category of membership you want to apply for – so there are more steps to take before you actually become a member.

Three days later, the UIPE public relations officer had not responded to my messages about the list of registered engineers. By strange coincidence, however, when the week opened, an advertisement in *New Vision* popped up from the Engineers' Registration Board (ERB) with a QR code that took readers to the actual register online.

And, as I expected, on the ERB register I did a quick search and found three Kaweesas: Reg. No. 897 Eng. Paul Kaweesa; Reg. No. 950 Eng. Jimmy Kaweesa; and Reg. No. 1205 Eng. Wilfred Kaweesa.

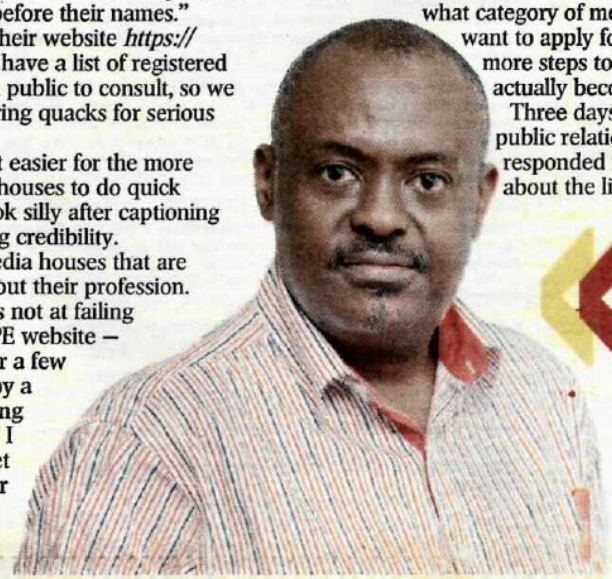
There are many people called 'Stephen' but none with a surname similar to Kaweesa and there is no 'Kawesa'.

Could any journalist out there have done this? Yes. But like most of society, they do not like to be serious about everything we should take seriously.

Instead, they coast along and allow people like NUP Commander Engineer to stand out in society as serious characters, creating vast amounts of irritation and nausea for innocent bystanders like myself.

And we all know the results when one suffers too much irritation and nausea.

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