

# MAKERERE LECTURERS PROTEST SCRAPPING OF EVENING PROGRAMMES

BY JOHN MASABA

Makerere University lecturers have protested the decision by the university's management to scrap evening classes, saying it could affect the lecturers' incomes and dampen their working spirit.

Deus Muhwezi, the chairperson of the Makerere University Academic Staff Association, told *Sunday Vision* they are strongly against the decision and want the university to rescind it.

The decision to scrap the programme was reached during the meeting held on March 14. The university council resolved that new students, starting with the 2018/2019 academic year would be admitted to study either from 8:00am to 5:00pm or on the afternoon programme from 2:00pm to 6:00pm.

Muhwezi, however, said the decision was arbitrary.

"As a university, we should have a shared vision. It should not be only council calling the shots," he said.

A female lecturer in the department of journalism and communication told *Sunday Vision* that scrapping the programme will not heal the university's problems, and, according to her, accountability for the collected funds was the problem that should have been sorted out first.

"Evening students have been paying fees and, we have been putting in double shifts (to teach). So, I wonder what they have been doing with the money," said the lecturer, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

She added that there is high demand for Makerere University graduate programmes because of its proximity and fame, and scrapping evening classes will only disadvantage the innocent working class people who have been trekking to the university every year, to further their studies.

Brian Semujju of the same department, however, was in support of the council's decision, saying: "I think it is the only way the university will provide better services for the rest of the university. Many lecturers have been threatening to lay down tools over unpaid allowances. So, by scrapping the evening programmes, the university is responding to the situation. And that is a good thing."

Since the early 1990s, Makerere University has drifted from crisis to crisis, reportedly



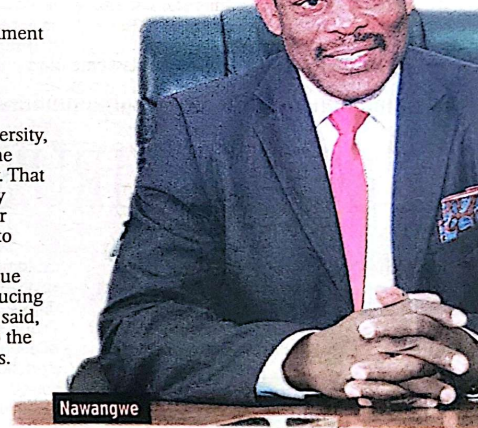
Makerere University's main building

resulting from the decision by the Government to cut its budget on the advice of the International Monetary Fund.

For example, in the academic year 1991/1992, according to Lutalo Bbosa, a former deputy vice-chancellor of the university, the Government granted only 51.3% of the required funds for running the university. That was sh3.28b of the sh6.24b the university needed to run that year. By academic year 1998/1999, the percentage had declined to 45.3%.

"We had to think of a solution to continue without compromising quality. So, introducing evening classes was one of them," Bbosa said, adding that they also decided to open up the university to privately sponsored students.

"Has the financial situation improved now (to warrant doing away with the programme)? I don't think so," he said.



Nawangwe

## What they say

**BARNABAS NAWANGWE,  
VICE-CHANCELLOR,  
MAKERERE UNIVERSITY:**  
Defended the council's decision, saying they had 'consulted widely'.

He added that despite their decision, the university has left a window open for colleges and they can still admit students on evening programme next year.

"However, they have to first prove in writing that they have the resources to manage. It is actually a good thing for some colleges," he said, adding that what they are doing is freeing the university of responsibility to plough the little resources they have into the evening programmes as they are costly.

He said the resources will instead be channelled into an effort of making the university a research-led institution.

"We want to train more graduates, rather than undergraduates. That is where our niche is," he said.

**J. C. MUYINGO,  
HIGHER EDUCATION MINISTER:**  
I have been unhappy with the (big) numbers. For you to be able to pass out quality, the lecturers must be able to cope with the enrolment. Makerere has not been able to sustain it, unfortunately.

**PATRICK MUINDA,  
SPOKESPERSON OF  
THE EDUCATION MINISTRY**  
There is nothing irregular about Makerere dropping some of its programmes as the Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act gives universities a right to determine programmes they wish to offer for as long as they are accredited by National Council of Higher Education.