

RECENTLY, INSTITUTIONS WERE ASKED TO STOP OFFERING ONE-YEAR POST-O'LEVEL CERTIFICATE PROGRAMMES

By Martin Kitubi

Govt to stop varsities from examining diploma courses

The education ministry has revealed plans aimed at stopping universities from examining undergraduate diploma programmes.

Alex Kakooza, the permanent secretary at the education ministry, said all undergraduate diploma courses would be examined by the Uganda Business and Technical Examinations Board (UBTEB).

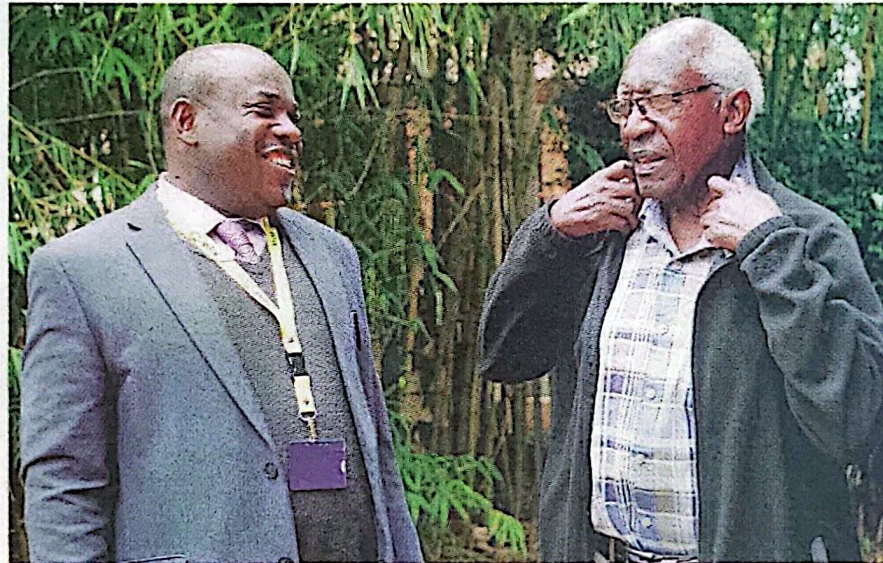
He said the move was intended to standardise skills training, assessment and certification of diploma awards.

"We want to streamline assessment," he said.

Kakooza said the Government had partnered with international education accreditation and certification bodies to harmonise awards.

"We are working with, among others, City and Guilds from the UK and OPITO (the global agency setting standards for training providers and courses in oil and gas safety, skills and competence). Our objective is to have quality," Kakooza said.

Speaking during a meeting at the Vice-Chancellors Forum Secretariat in Kisugu, a Kampala suburb, UBTEB executive secretary Onesmus Oyesigye said universities in the country had different ways of training and assessment, yet diploma and certificate courses were practical courses which need standardisation.



UBTEB's Oyesigye (left) interacting with Prof. Mugambi at the Virtual University of Uganda in Muyenga, Kampala on Tuesday. Photo by Lawrence Mulondo

Oyesigye said UBTEB would assess all diploma courses in business, technical, vocational education and training.

"Universities offering post-O'level certificates, post-A'level diploma programmes will be

required to set up vocational departments," he said.

"Universities in the future will be asked to admit students with diplomas that were nationally assessed," he said in the meeting on Tuesday.

The new move comes months after the ministry directed all training institutions to stop offering one-year post-O'level certificate programmes and instead change course duration to two years.

Mandate of UBTEB

UBTEB was established by the Business, Technical, Vocational Education and Training (BTJET) Act, 2008.

It is mandated with streamlining, regulating, coordinating and conducting credible national examinations and awarding certificates and diplomas in business, technical, and vocational/specialised education or training.

The education ministry is reviewing both the Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act and the BTJET Act with a view of amending it to include national assessment of diploma courses by UBTEB, among other factors.

Prof. John Opuda-Asibo, the executive director of the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE), said the current BTJET Act was not clear on what courses should be assessed by UBTEB.

He also said the Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act also allows universities to train and assess certificate and diploma courses, which has

Prof. Elly Katunguka, the vice-chancellor of Kyambogo University, welcomed the idea.

"Some universities are assessing courses which are offered by technical institutions. Universities should put emphasis on graduate and post-graduate programmes," Katunguka said.

However, Dr Benon Musinguzi, the deputy vice-chancellor for academics at Uganda Christian University, said emphasis should be put on quality.

"I think the issue should be about quality other than harmonisation."

Prof. Paul Edwrad Mugambi, the Uganda Vice-Chancellors' Forum executive director, said: "We should not be in a rush to roll out the policy. Universities must be consulted."

UNIVERSITIES REACT

caused confusion.

"We need standards as a country. However, we must consult universities on what courses can be left to be assessed nationally," Asibo said.