



HIGHER LEARNING

ADAPTING TO SOCIETY'S CHANGING NEEDS



It is possible with short courses

Dr Mary Wanda Mubisa, the academic registrar at Makerere University, notes that co-current programmes may be suitable if one of the courses has a longer period of study than the other. "For example, one may enroll for a Bachelor of Business Administration alongside a short accounting course that may only require one month of study," she says.

The other option would be to enroll for a particular degree programme for example law, and if one gets interested in a particular course, one may transfer from another programme such as Mass Communication. They can attend the respective lectures. In case in point, a law student may want to attend lessons of a public speaking class, which are taught in a mass communication programme. They are given permission to do so after informing the university and paying the required attendance fee.

Today's competitive job market is forcing some individuals to apply for co-current programmes in order to kill two birds with one stone by acquiring the required skills in the same period of study.

# Studying two courses becoming unavoidable

BY ESTHER OLUKA  
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Leticia Nankya wanted to go back to school to further her studies. She wanted to study two programs at the same time, one probably during weekdays and the other during weekend.

She moved to different universities making inquiries of whether they offered co-current existing courses (programmes running at the same time with others within the same institute).

"I wanted to study a Bachelor of Arts in Mass Communication and probably a Diploma in Education. But most of the universities did not have the study option. Some of the administrators mentioned that even if there was a possibility of studying two programmes in the same academic year, the timetables would clash," Nankya says.

The 30-year-old is still figuring out her next step.

**Why some universities offer co-current programmes**

In learning institutions such as Islamic University in Uganda (IUIU), co-current programmes are offered, although they are very few.

Dr Umar Mwebesa, the deputy academic registrar in charge of admissions and registration at IUIU, says it is possible to study courses co-currently but only particular ones. He says it is possible for a student wants to pursue a Bachelor of Arts in Islamic Studies and Diploma in Edu-

**HECTIC VENTURE**

At Uganda Management Institute (UMI), there are students who juggle two programmes by studying one daily during evening hours and another at the weekend. "The problem with this is that it is expensive and intellectually taxing," notes Peter Kibazo, head of communication at UMI. "It is quite inconveniencing for the student, which is why we have not made such programmes official yet," he adds. Other than that, Kibazo notes that the institute does allow students to take on two courses which are taught at the same period of time, for example, both programmes should not be having evening lessons.

cation majoring in Arabic. "The advantage of doing these two together is that in the end, one is accredited as a teacher because they would have acquired techniques of teaching," Dr Mwebesa says.

Regarding the advantages of co-current programmes, Dr Mwebesa says they are helpful in equipping students with diverse skills that can enable them compete favourably for jobs. "For example, if a teaching job has been advertised and it is stated that knowing any foreign language is an added advantage, then a graduate in Islamic studies with a diploma in Education majoring in Arabic has an upper hand at attaining the job," he says.

Co-current courses also save a lot of time. "You kill two birds with one stone. Instead of pursuing another programme after a particular period of time, you have the option of juggling both of them," says Dr Mwebesa.

**Overwhelming**

At Uganda Christian University (UCU), though,

students are restrained from studying two programmes co-currently. For example, one cannot pursue a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration alongside Law.

Ivan Najjuka, the assistant spokesperson at UCU, notes that the institution does not allow it because juggling two programmes would overwhelm the student and in the end lead to poor grades.

"The university wants students to concentrate and put their energies into studying one programme in an academic year so that they can attain excellent grades," Najjuka says.

Besides, the university limits the number of course units a student studies in a semester. Students are expected to attend 70 per cent of the lectures of a particular programme, minus which they do not qualify to sit for the examinations.

Despite the disadvantages that come with taking on two courses, it may be one of the ways to get more qualifications in a short period of time.

**Not common here**

"I am aware that studying co-current programmes is a common aspect in learning institutions abroad (overseas). Unlike in those institutions, ours do not have enough resources in terms of logistics and human resource including lecturers. Besides, the load would be too heavy on the students and would ruin their chances of passing examinations. For this reason, the practice is not common in Uganda's learning institutions."

PROF. JOHN OPUDA ASIBO, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, UGANDA NATIONAL COUNCIL OF HIGHER EDUCATION



**SHOULD IT BE IMPLEMENTED?**



**Shouldn't be mandatory**

"Studying co-current programmes should be okay for anyone who can handle. However, it should not be mandatory. I would recommend it for students who would like to shorten their time in school."

MARTIN LUBWAMA, INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY CONSULTANT



**Not all about books**

"The implementation of co-current programmes would burden students who work and study at the same time. Life does not rotate around books only."

TIMOTHY KAYONDO, GRADUATE