

MAK REPORT WANTS HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR RELOCATED TO SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY MINISTRY

By Cecilia Oloth

Report suggests radical changes in education ministry

If the new report by the Visitation Committee on Makerere University gets implemented, the higher education sector, currently under the Ministry of Education and Sports, will be relocated to the Ministry of Science and Technology.

The Ministry of Science and Technology was created last year, primarily to create an enabling policy environment for science and technological innovations to spur economic development. Dr Elioda Tumwesigye is the Minister for Science and Technology.

The higher education sector comprises universities, other degree-awarding institutions, such as Uganda Management Institute and tertiary institutions, most of which offer diplomas and post-secondary school certificates.

Once the recommendation is effected, the committee expressed optimism that the science ministry would help to improve the higher education sector.

"The Ministry of Science should be restructured so as to extend its mandate to include higher education. The Government should subsequently put in place a sustainable funding strategy for the higher education sub-sector and National Council for Higher Education (NCHE)," the committee notes.

The recommendations are contained in the committee's report presented to President Yoweri Museveni last week.

The committee, in its findings, realised that the higher education sector was riddled with a number of challenges, among them: the deficient national higher education strategy, structures and systems, inadequate governance/management, weak structures for stakeholder engagement and inadequate deployment of information technology.

Others are unsustainable

"The science and technology ministry should be restructured so as to extend its mandate to include higher education," Report

funding models; inadequate management accountability; deteriorating quality of teaching and learning as well as poor work and study environment.

The higher education department at the education ministry currently supervises, co-ordinates and guides the admissions, study, training and teaching and research at all institutions of higher learning.

The committee, for example, notes one of the challenges creating gaps in the effective supervision of the higher education sector being the expiry of the Higher Education Strategic Plan 2003-2015 that has neither been reviewed nor replaced.

It also highlights the Education Sector Investment Plan that expired and has not been reviewed, an implication that public universities are not



Kyambogo University students jubilate after graduation last month. The report says students from the higher education sub-sector should be moved to the Ministry of Science and Technology to allow effective supervision

collectively co-ordinated to deliver complementary value to the nation.

"This could partly be due to the fact that the education ministry has a very wide mandate covering pre-primary, special needs education, primary education, secondary education, teacher training, business, technical and vocational education and training plus higher education

that may limit capacity for effective supervision and oversight of higher education," the report notes.

In addition, it points out that the composition, structure and funding of the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) limits its capacity to regulate higher education.

"The UOTIA (Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act) 2001 as amended,

provides for constituency-based membership of the NCHE, where members nominate the chairperson and elect the vice-chairperson," the report notes.

"This system inevitably creates conflict of interest. It has been observed, for instance, that some members of the council, including the chairperson, are drawn from the same universities they regulate. Furthermore, there is no open and transparent criteria for selecting representatives of the public on the council of NCHE."


Also affecting the higher education sector, the committee notes, are the vague lines of authority, for instance the

vice-chancellor not being the accounting officer of a public university, the relationship between the deputy chancellor academic and the academic registrar among others.


According to the report, provision for the lines of authority of the key public university executives results in conflicting discharge of powers.

"Once changes are effected, this will lead to the achievement of a level of quality that stands the test of international comparison with relevance and excellence, improve governance and management accountability and diversify sources of funding."


EXPERT VIEWS



■ Dr Elioda Tumwesigye
He said the recommendation by the committee was similar to what had been recommended previously by the Omaswa report.
"The whole idea was that for the country to be competitive, there was need to revise the innovations system, which is moving ideas to the market. However, the roadblock has been that most of researches carried out in universities have been for academic purposes," Tumwesigye stated.
Irrespective of who handles the docket, Tumwesigye said for the country to




■ Alex Kakooza, permanent secretary, Ministry of Education
Without divulging further details on the committee's proposal, Alex Kakooza, the Permanent Secretary in the education ministry, said they would create a team that will come up with a White Paper



■ Prof. Tickodri Togboa
Prof Sandy Stevens Tickodri Togboa, a former Minister for Higher Education and technology, expressed happiness regarding the recommendation. He said the higher education sector and, particularly, universities, would fit well in the Ministry of Science and Technology, adding that universities should focus more on innovations.
"Universities in the 21st century should be seen through the products that come out of them and this

WANTED



ENANGU JOHNSON
in Picture is wanted on charges of Crime (theft) VIDE GEF. NO.1190/2017 CID POLICE HEADQUARTERS, KIBULI.
A reward of 1 Million