

# About scrapping diploma, certificate courses at Kyambogo University

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## In Summary

Late last year, Kyambogo University announced that they would phase out a number of certificate and diploma courses. The decision was welcomed by many but is it a good move?

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By Oscar Olaro

I read with interest the different positive reviews and support for Kyambogo University's decision to move away from certificate and diploma courses in favour of degree and

masters programmes.

There was not as much opposition to this that I came across unless the opposers were too faint to be heard and the editorial in Daily Monitor of December 18, 2019 is the straw that broke the inaudible dissenting voices.

### **Societal expectations**

In December 2018, I was privileged to attend a conference in Abuja, Nigeria for African scientists organised by the African Union Network of Scientists. There was a unison cry about the conversion of polytechnic colleges to universities and the negative connotations that pursuing a diploma or skilled-based course attracted from a society that glorifies and craves degrees at the expense of skills.

Never mind the same society demonises the bachelor's graduates for being skills deficient, meanwhile institutions are being tasked to generate their own resources as a quick solution to cut cost in the more capital intensive skills courses in favour of theoretical ones.

For the student he will develop a software or app and avoid developing a prototype that actually solves the problem; a win-win solution for the university and student but loss for society development.

### **Teamwork**

As we talk about linkages in our development, we need to be thinking about working in teams especially scientists or engineers to be precise.

There is always a lead investigator or engineer at the top of the pyramid who works with huge support with equally important roles of lower cadres of artisans, craftsmen and technicians in ascending order.

With universities not having diploma courses in engineering or an institution in its close proximity, the development of a research team is hindered.

I know we shall say we have ICT and can work on line, granted. But how much collaboration are we having now? Let us face it, we are still very much in the hardware world and most of our problems are hardware issues not software, whereas we want to leapfrog in to the world of ICT as the future but we are here now. We need to sort out our hardware issues or else we shall not even survive the ICT world without creating more complex challenges to our development.

### **Diplomas in engineering**

Kyambogo University should at least maintain diploma for engineering disciplines in a bid to develop the pathway. A fourth year bachelors' student should be able to do his final year project in collaboration with a Diploma student, where the degree and diploma graduates get their respective qualifications.

Together, they will achieve a practical solutions backed with scientific research in a preferred bottom up approach and sustainable results.

The partnership will bring engineering to life and I'm sure there will be innovations as well as patents developed along the way and Intellectual property development enhanced.

Imagine the companies formed by these teams that will be developed, imagine the academic projects that could be made practical or commercialised, imagine the level of engagement the diploma lecturers and degree lecturers will have with both sets of students.

I, therefore, propose that at least for the sake of engineering disciplines, the linkages

should be supported in all universities, this will probably encourage linkages between this set of professionals.

KYU, an institution that is famous for producing highly skilled technicians will lose out on its legacy and add to an already problematic inverted pyramid for engineering development.

Dr Isaac Mutenyo's 2017 report "Manpower Planning for Attainment of Middle Income Status", recommends emphasis and investment in skills at the base of the pyramid so that our NDP goals are achieved.

Mr Olaro is a mechanical engineer.

## **Background**

Daily Monitor of December 17, 2019 reported that authorities at Kyambogo University resolved to scrap at least 47 certificate and diploma courses as part of the wider reforms being undertaken at the institution.

The university Vice Chancellor, Prof Eli Katunguka, confirmed the proposal, saying the certificate and diploma programmes were inherited from Uganda Polytechnic Kyambogo and Institute for Teacher Education.

He added that the idea is to expedite reforms needed to create knowledge through research and innovation because the courses are also run in other vocational training institutions.

## **AFFECTED DIPLOMA COURSES**

1. Accounting and finance
2. Interior design
3. Hotel and institutional catering

4.Ceramics

5.Fashion and apparel

6. Education secondary (Home economics)

7.Education secondary (Art and design)

8.Deaf studies 9. Science technology-Physics

10.Science and technology-chemistry

11. Science technology-biology

12. Diploma Food processing technology

13. Material and ceramic science technology

14. Sports and management

15. Textile design and technology

16.Computer science

17.Electrical engineering

18. Civil and building engineering

19. Civil building and engineering

20. Mechanical engineering

21. Computer engineering

22. Water engineering

23. Architecture

24. Automobile engineering

25. Refrigeration and air condition

26. Telecommunication engineering

27. Biomedical engineering 28. Automobile engineering

29. Education secondary (Technological studies)

30. Education (Early childhood development)

31. Instructor and technical teacher education.

32. Education primary external

33. Special needs education

34. Library and information

35. Education secondary (French)

36. Microfinance 37. Music and theatre arts

38. Accounting finance

39. Sign language interpreting

40. Community based rehabilitation.

41. Guidance and cancelling

42. Education planning and management

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