

Cuban applicants fail to meet Kyambogo Uni standards

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Prof Eli Katunguka

The proposal by Kyambogo University to recruit Cuban lecturers has hit a snag after all the ten applicants failed to meet the set minimum requirements.

Vice chancellor Prof Eli Katunguka says while their plan was to recruit 10-15 Cuban lecturers, none of the applicants had a PhD, the minimum requirement for teaching professors. Each of the Cuban professors would earn Shs 7 million each month just like the local professors.

Earlier this year, Kyambogo University council entered into agreement with the Cuban government seeking the importation of science experts to lecture in the engineering department.

This was in a bid to improve the academic mobility and the quality of human resource at the university. It was also in line with a requirement by the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) for the university to be able to run graduate programs.

It is this desire to meet NCHE requirements, according to Prof Katunguka, that pushed the university to recruit PhD holders. He says they sent out calls in attempt to recruit PhD holders locally but didn't receive sufficient response - prompting council to advise management to try outside the country.

"One of the areas we looked at was Nigeria and Cuba. So we made a visit to Cuba around February and we came to a conclusion that Cubans were highly trained and competent and we could recruit some especially in areas of science," Prof Katunguka said.

Following the visit, Kyambogo entered into memorandum of understanding with the ministry of Higher Education in Cuba. Under this arrangement, it was agreed that Kyambogo receives curriculum vitae (CVs) of interested professors and both governments agreed on the terms offered to Cubans, an equivalent of what a Ugandan professor gets.

However, Katunguka says the university appointments board rejected 10 candidates that expressed interest due to lack of PhDs.

"We got about 10 people expressing interest, but we were largely not satisfied with a number of these candidates. Many of them did not have PhDs [yet] it's a requirement that if you're going to be recruited in the university in the position higher than lecturer, you should have PhDs. So we cannot recruit. There was one we could think of because of his expertise in engineering, but he also did not have a PhDs. So that would mean going back to our establishment committee and lowering the requirements for these Cuban professors which council may not accept." said Katunguka.

As per NCHE standards, a university should have at least 60% of its staff as PhD holders while a ratio of less than 10% is unacceptable. Statistics from Kyambogo show that the university has two full professors and 16 associate professors.

According to NCHE guidelines, each department in the university should have two full professors and two associate professors. Kyambogo establishment has close to 40 departments meaning that close to 80 professors are required if the university is to be fully equipped with human resource necessary for the masters and PhD programs.

Despite the streamlining of promotional criteria for professors, Prof Katunguka contends the institution has not managed to attract them. He has appealed to government to establish a scheme to support students up to PhD level.

"We advertised for these positions for the last four years, and there are even adverts running now, but we don't get people applying to come. It is not that our terms of service are not good, it is just that the professors are not there. It takes a long time to train somebody to a professorial

level. We're grossly under-staffed in the area of professors. Even in Makerere [university] they are not enough. The professors we have are not enough in this country to man our higher education system...Government should start a scheme to sponsor students to PhD levels." Katunguka added.

In November last year, government vouched for hiring of Cuban medical specialists as an alternative to striking local doctors. The medical workers during their three-week' strike made a number of demands including improved salaries, provision of housing and transport allowances.