

Ministry wants varsities to renew course approvals every six years

▶ But leaders protest the move over high fees charged by agencies.

▶ They also claim the charges will add tremendous stress to finances.

LEWIS NYAUNDI, NAIROBI

Universities could soon be required to renew approval to teach academic programmes after every six years, if a proposal by the Ministry of Education is adopted.

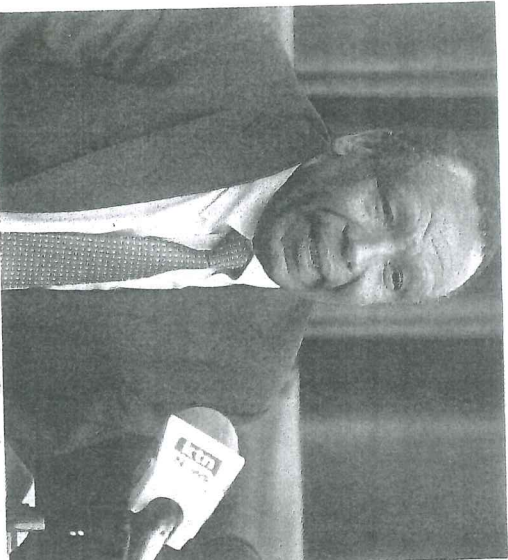
However, this proposal has sparked controversy, with university leaders protesting the high fees charged by agencies for approval. According to the Vice Chancellors' Committee, there are at least 30 different agencies demanding fees for approval of academic programmes.

The vice chancellors now want Commission for University Education (CUE) to be the sole body responsible for quality control after university senates have approved their respective curricula.

Currently, accreditation of university courses is done by CUE and various professional bodies but the process is only done once. The VCS argue the accreditation by professional bodies is duplication of roles.

"Entrench in law that the only accrediting and quality control body of academic programmes should only be CUE after the university senates have passed the curricula," the committee Chairman Daniel Mugendi said.

Prof Mugendi spoke during a meeting with stakeholders to deliberate on review of laws governing the sector.



Chair of Vice Chancellors Committee Daniel Mugendi. [File, Standard]

He termed the fees demanded by regulatory agencies as "tremendous stress" on university finances.

"The regulating bodies/agencies are charging multiple and exorbitant



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Daniel Mugendi, vice chancellor

fees to do the traditional role of university senate in curriculum development and delivery," Mugendi said. Currently, universities pay Sh320,000 for accreditation of each programme to CUE and Sh1,000 for quality assurance per student.

The universities further pay Sh1900,000 for quality audit to CUE. The Standard established that universities fork out up to Sh1.6 million to the Council of Legal Education (CLE) for approval of law programmes.

To teach a nursing course, the Nursing Officers Council of Kenya (NOCK) charges Sh500,000 for accreditation while Clinical Officers Council (COC) charges Sh420,000.

Board of Architecture and Quantity Surveyors charges Sh1.2 million while the Engineers Board of Kenya

charges Sh300,000 for programme accreditation.

Mugendi revealed that the high fees has seen many universities shun Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics academic programmes. He explained that the programmes are the most expensive to run with respect to space, equipment and faculty ratio requirement thus extra charges make them untenable.

The impact of the charges, he said, has led to duplication of academic programmes in universities largely in humanities because they are cheaper. "In the prevailing circumstances, it is becoming more difficult for universities to align their core mandate of training, research and innovation to the national agenda," reads the presentation by the Vice Chancellors Committee.

In the past, some professional bodies refused to recognise the degrees of students from some institutions that had not complied with their standards.

In 2020 for example, the Engineering Board of Kenya released a list of universities it recognises as training schools for engineering.

This excluded Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology, Meno University, South Eastern Kenya University, Technical University of Kenya and the University of Eldoret, despite the institutions having engineering programmes.

In 2011, the Engineers Registration Board declined to recognise engineering degrees from Egerton, Kenya and Masinde Muliro universities. A similar fate has befallen law graduates from some public and private universities after the Council of Legal Education rejected their papers.

Doctor asks court to stop new fees for passports, ID cards

NAIROBI

A Nakuru-based surgeon Magare Gikenyi has asked the court to stop implementation of new charges for various government documents.

Dr Gikenyi filed a suit at the High Court in Nairobi yesterday and named the Interior Cabinet Secretary, the National Treasury Cabinet Secretary, Director Citizen Services Samuel Lukumu, the Attorney General, the National Assembly, and the Senate as respondents.

The Law Society of Kenya, Operation Linda Jami, Kituo cha Sheria, Katiba Institute, and Tunza Moyo Coalition are listed as interested parties. On February 29, 2024, the Interior CS and Director of Citizen Services in a circular to regional coordinators, National Registry, county coordinators and sub-county registrars, notified them to implement new charges on various government documents like Identity cards, passports, and visas.

The CS noted that the effective date for implementation of the new charges was January 1, 2024. However, the said charges were to be subjected to public participation before taking effect.

The circular indicated that the State Department conducted a comprehensive public participation from November 14 to December 5, 2023. Dr Gikenyi, however, argues that public participation was a sham.

He says the government is not allowed to have an illegal policy of changing the citizens for services rendered through service-user charges, even as the same is financed through taxation. He adds that there was no gazette notice notifying the effective date of new charges. [Julius Chepkwony]



REFORMS

Nadco report: MPs have 45 days to approve or reject anchor Bills

Parliament has 45 days to reject or approve nine Bills meant to enforce the report of the National Dialogue Committee (Nadco).

National Assembly Speaker Moses Wetang'ula, yesterday, committed the report to the Departmental Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs and the Senate Standing Committee on Justice, Legal Affairs and Human Rights that will actualise the report that among other things seeks to alter the structure of government.

The National Assembly will introduce and consider several legislative proposals including Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (Amendment) Bill, 2024, Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (Amendment) Bill, 2024, Leader of Opposition Bill, 2024, and National Government Coordination (Amendment) Bill, 2024.

The Senate on its part will introduce and consider the Elections Offences (Amendment) Bill, 2024, Elections (Amendment) Bill, 2024, Statutory Instruments (Amendment) Bill, 2024 and Political Parties (Amendment) Bill, 2024.

Clerks of Parliament were also directed to communicate to other entities recommendations in the report that require their action.

In the communication, before the House on Tuesday, Speaker Wetang'ula directed the two committees to conduct joint sittings so as to effectively implement the recommendations within the specified period.

"Direct the Departmental Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs of the National Assembly to hold joint sittings with the Senate Standing Committee on Justice, Legal Affairs and Human Rights, in accordance with the Standing Orders," Wetang'ula said.

"The two committees are required to expeditiously consider the proposals to amend the Constitution and recommend to the Houses the manner of actualising the recommendations of the Nadco."

The Speaker further said that he had met with Senate Speaker Amason Kingi to deliberate on ways to address the report recommendations that touched on matters that were of concern to both Houses.

This, he observed, was in line with Article 256 of the Constitution that requires that any proposed amendments to the Constitution should be considered by both Houses.

"At meetings held on Tuesday, February 27, 2024 and Thursday, February 29, 2024, the Speakers of the Houses of Parliament and the Leaders of the Majority and Minority Parties in both the National Assembly and the Senate

deliberated on modalities for implementing the recommendations contained in the report," Speaker Wetang'ula said.

The report was unveiled last year following lengthy deliberations of the bipartisan team led by National Assembly Majority Leader Kimani Ichungwa for Kenya Kwanza and Wiper party leader Kalonzo Musyoka for Azimio.

The committee was formed to facilitate dialogue and consensus building and recommend appropriate constitutional, legal and policy reforms on issues of concern to Kenyans.

Nadco report recommended creation of the office of Leader of the Opposition and the entrenchment of the Prime Cabinet Secretary's office in the Constitution among other changes. It also proposed that the salaries and remuneration Commission reduce the bloated wage bill by 30 per cent. [Josephat Thiong'o]