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## Opinion

### Makerere should justify the rationale for its new admission policy Publish Date: Jun 12, 2012

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By Patrick Ajuna

The newly introduced admission policy by [Makerere University](#) where students intending to do Bachelor of Laws course are subjected to entrance examination regardless of how well they have performed in Uganda Advance Certificate of Education (UACE) examinations, has revealed the following facts.

Unlike in the previous years where female students have been dominating admissions on both government and private sponsorship for this course (Bachelor of Laws), normally enjoying over 85percent admissions, for example, in 2010/2011 academic year, all the 70 students admitted on government sponsorship were females, in 2009/2010, out of 74 students admitted on government sponsorship, females were 66 (89percent) compared to 08 (11percent) their male counterparts, thanks to the 1.5 Bonus Points Policy which has been giving them an added advantage, this new policy has provided a relatively favourable competition that has seen more male students being admitted on government sponsorship for the first time in as many years with 36 students (54percent) compared to 31(46percent) their female counterparts.

Secondly, scoring maximum points in UACE examinations in arts combinations is no longer sufficient to guarantee a candidate to automatic admission to Bachelor of Laws course on government and private sponsorship.

Thirdly, the introduction of this policy (entrance examination) means the validity and reliability UNEB in determining the placement of candidates for law course is not only questionable but also challenged by the Admissions Board of [Makerere University](#).

Fourthly, the minimum requirement for candidates to sit for this exam is 14 and 15 points for females and males respectively. This implies that that someone with as low as 14 points can qualify for merit admission on government sponsorship as long as they excel in entrance examination.

This new policy is justified on grounds that for a person to effectively practice laws, it requires one to possess a combination of good reasoning (logic), evaluation and analytical skills, ability to apply knowledge and good command of English language. A well prepared aptitude test would help to identify students with such requisite skills.

Also, many secondary schools these days concentrate only on teaching UNEB syllabus where they teach students mainly to cram and pass exams and ignore the teaching syllabus that emphasise general understanding and application of knowledge. This is due to competition among schools to get good rankings and publicity in the media which is normally done whenever UNEB releases the results. No wonder many of the students who have been excelling in UNEB examinations end up performing poorly at higher levels.

However, this policy, like the Mature Age Entry Scheme and Female Scholarship Initiative (FSI) policies is not well insulated from being manipulated and abused by some university officials who are involved in administering and selection of candidates.

For example, who administers this exam? How special are they from those that mismanaged the Mature Entry Scheme policy from 2001 to 2006? Were all the potential candidates given the necessary information about the procedures and date of this exam? These and other questions have to be answered by the concerned authorities if the public is to have confidence in them.

For instance, the Mature Entry Examination was temporarily suspended in 2007 because some university officials were manipulating it by admitting students fraudulently. Also, the FSI scholarship by Carnegie Corporation Network which was being managed by Makerere from 2000/2001 to 2006/2007 academic years that was intended for the poor female students qualified to join the university on private scheme but unable to pay tuition, from third world schools and districts rated as poor (by Human Development Index), ended up benefitting girls mostly from giant schools like Nabisunsa, Mary Hill, Trinity College Nabbingo, Wanyange Girls, Tororo Girls among other schools.

The onus is on Makerere to ensure transparency and integrity in the whole examination process. It is through this way that the university's motive for this new admission policy will be justified.

***The writer is an educational policy analyst***



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Dawasp2001

George Kwesi, are you sure university admission based on UNEB grades is 'government policy'? If so, please share your reference. Whilst UACE scores may provide an objective selection criteria to degree programmes, alternative objective selection criteria may equally work, the law school entrance exam being an example. You posed a relevant question why other degree programs continue to use UNEB scores exclusively. I suspect the answer may be lying in the detail. Unlike law where any subject goes (these days), other programs have continued to demand that applicants have studied the 'hard' subjects relevant to the rigours of the course eg PCB for medicine. In short, the 'easy' high scoring subjects chosen by some aspirants to law school, may not be robust enough to test their aptitude for law studies. Many reputable universities abroad (eg Oxford), use A'level scores for shortlisting to , but provide additional tests and interviews to students for selection. Some courses eg Medicine in UK, also conduct aptitude tests and

interviews for applicants. Ofcourse, it is important that the law entrance exam is fair to all.

Tomk

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