

Let's build an integrity-and-merit-based society
By Miguna Miguna, April 14, 2017

The recent confessions by Ali Hassan Joho that he obtained a D-Minus in his 1993 KCSE exams before miraculously acquiring two successive university degrees and mysteriously amassing huge amounts of wealth has raised numerous important issues that require serious interrogation.

First, can any credible university admit a person with a D-Minus grade from high school? Second, since a D-Minus in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) is not a bridgeable grade, did the University of Nairobi that admitted Joho for its Bachelor of Commerce (B.Com) degree program before Joho “transferred his credits” to the discredited Kampala International University (KIU) in Uganda commit an indictable offence?

Third, bearing in mind that Joho obtained an E grade in Commerce in his KCSE, did the University of Nairobi waive its admission requirements in order to allow him to study the much sought after B.Com?

Fourth, is there any credible explanation why a prominent MP (which is what Joho was when he allegedly joined the KIU) would “transfer” from the most prestigious Kenyan university to a private lacklustre third-rate foreign institution?

Fifth, how was Joho physically and logistically able to serve as a full-time MP for Kisauni Constituency while at the same time complying with academic requirements for a full-time undergraduate program including mandatory sessional residency and class attendance in a foreign country?

Sixth, why should an exception be made for Joho to continue serving as Mombasa Governor, a position which constitutionally requires the holder to have a legitimate degree from a university recognised in Kenya, when it's self-evident that whatever degrees he claims to have could not have been genuinely obtained?

Eric Kiraithe, the Government Spokesman, published an erudite article in the *Daily Nation* of April 14, 2017, in which he argued, cogently, that Mr. Joho “can close this matter very easily” by explaining how he was able to obtain legitimate degrees from universities with a D-Minus.

I agree with Kiraithe's arguments. However, I'm not persuaded that the onus is on Mr. Joho to self-incriminate. As Mr. Kiraithe correctly argues, there is absolutely “no [genuine] route to university with a D-Minus” Joho could have taken anywhere else in the world.

The duty is on the relevant institutions of State such as the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission, Kenya Police Service, Directorate of Public Prosecutions, EACC, KNEC, University of Nairobi, Ministry of Education and Judiciary to bring Mr. Joho and his accomplices including the University of Nairobi and Greta University to account for what is clearly an open and shut case of conspiracy to defeat justice, academic fraud, forgery and numerous violations of the integrity provisions in Chapter Six of the Constitution.

I've read an assortment of lame excuses of Joho by otherwise respected public intellectuals who have tried to diminish the importance of hard work, academic excellence and the centrality of intellectual competence and personal integrity in policy conceptualisation, formulation, application and governance by invoking the late Professor Ali Mazrui's name and claiming, falsely, that Mazrui had "failed in his "O-Levels" before becoming a world renowned scholar.

Some have also argued that "Joho is being unfairly targeted by President Uhuru Kenyatta" in a vicious "witch-hunt" following their recent public spats.

I eschew profiling, discrimination and selective application of law. However, it's disingenuous for anyone to term Mazrui's "Third Division" in his O-Levels a "failure" and try to compare Mazrui's *proven* history of hard work, diligence and scholastic excellence with Joho's incomprehensible mediocrity. Mazrui was a man of integrity who was never involved in forgery and academic fraud. Mazrui repeated his O-Levels, passed and joined Oxford University in England where he excelled.

In 1975, the world's wealthiest inventor and creator, Bill Gates, dropped out of Harvard University where he was studying law. He didn't drop out due to intellectual mediocrity, failure or an obsessive love for money. He did so because he was a true genius who opted to spend most of his time inventing and creating.

Similarly, Steve Jobs who gave us *Apple* and its dynamic technology and gargets, dropped out of Reed College where he was studying Physics, Literature, and Poetry. Like Gates, Jobs was a straight A student who dropped out of university to pursue his creativity and innovation.

Mazrui, Gates, Jobs and millions of other creators, inventors and intellectual giants didn't pursue shortcuts to glory through deception, fraud and forgery. They worked hard, studied extensively, earned honest livelihoods and prospered through their talents.

A few years ago, Gates was asked to speak about his famous flunking from Harvard. He was precise: "Don't drop out like me."

We are not arguing that Joho should not be employed. All we are saying is that he does not meet the minimum constitutional and legal requirements for the position of Governor. Additionally, we are arguing that intellectual mediocrity and failure should not be glorified and that forgery and cheating must be punished severely.

Let's build an integrity-and-merit-based society; not one suffocated by academic fraudsters, forgers and scoundrels.

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