

On Unam's Financial Quagmire

EFFECTIVE management of an economy is the obligation of every government and getting the benefit therefrom is the right of citizens. Unam as an institution of higher learning is an essential arm of the nation which indubitably shares the same obligation as the Government in the proper management of taxpayers' resources under its jurisdiction.

As issues are unfolding now there is a convincing ground to believe that Unam should re-examine in earnest its entire system of resource management and academic excellence in the interest of saving the reputation of the only University in the country, failing which a lasting damage will continue to tarnish the image of its future products in the job market.

The financial crisis in which Unam finds itself has been public knowledge for quite a while and should have found administrative solution in good time. Attributing the financial quagmire to students' failure to pay University fees is an unconvincing argument which only accentuates the deep-seated inadequacy in the system's capacity to manage. Failure to collect funds from the students is itself a telling example of administrative incompetence.

It is a time-tested rule that the survival of any organization depends on the effective planning and management as well as institution of a functioning internal control of available resources. Uncontrolled misuse of resources by staff for personal gain can result in skyrocketing expenses for the institution without any returns accruing to it; this, I believe, is one of the cases with this institution of learning right now. I would like to specifically refer to University staff members engaging in a diversity of consulting work for pure personal benefit.

They utilize the institution's facilities, blow up telephone and Internet bills looking for information around

the world for projects they would like to work on as consultants.

Let me leave the academic and overall administrative facets for open discussion in later times and only focus on providing a hint on the handling of a component issue, namely the conduct of assigned researches for the ultimate good of all institutions partnering with the University and in the interest of the University's own name. The following procedures may need to be heedfully observed:

a. Projects or research topics coming from sources within and without the country ought to be directed to a Central Unit possibly a Research Centre in the University.

b. The Central Unit should be charged with the responsibility of identifying researchers to constitute a team and organising needed material resources to undertake the study. Once the study is underway, the next stage of the Centre's responsibility is to co-ordinate the conduct of the research and ensure that the outputs meet the satisfactions of client institutions. The Centre and by implication the University should completely assume the challenges of producing usable research outcomes.

c. Pecuniary gains derived from the research exercise ought to be shared between the University as provider of facilities and the researchers as the brains behind the outputs in an internally agreed upon system of apportioning.

d. Institutions looking up to the University for the conduct of purposeful studies should go through the Central Unit of the University or the University itself to ensure that the assignments are associated with authentic responsibility.

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