

THURSDAY, 13TH DECEMBER, 2018

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

ON THE

DOWNGRADING OF UNIVERSITIES IN ZAMBIA TO A COLLEGE STATUS BY
OXFORD UNIVERSITY

BY THE

HON. MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION, PROF. LUO, MP

Mr Speaker, I wish to thank you most sincerely for according me this rare privilege and honour to deliver a ministerial statement on the alleged downgrading of universities in Zambia to a college status.

Sir, before I address the subject at hand, I want to preface my ministerial statement by calling on all Zambians to start promoting a culture of reading and appreciating the importance of the culture of analysis of literature in the most aggressive manner. Most importantly, I wish to implore all Zambians to appreciate the benefits of the social media and utilise it in a positive manner to promote the wellbeing of our country. As Zambians, we should realise that the social media, as beneficial as it is, can destroy our beloved country in the eyes of outsiders if not harnessed and used to promote positivity.

Mr Speaker, through this ministerial statement, I wish to clarify the statement which have been circulating in the various media that universities in Zambia have been downgraded to college statues by Oxford University. These publications have not only attracted comments from the public, but have also contributed to the formulation and propagation of opinions that are likely to have a negative impact on our education system in Zambia. The assertions are not correct and one only system. The assertions are not correct, but needs all us to ask a very pertinent question: 'How can a single university in the United Kingdom (UK) down grade all universities in Zambia?' Is that possible? The answer is no.

Sir, let me inform the nation through this august House that there is no single university in Zambia that has been downgraded to a college status by Oxford University. As the House is aware, Zambia has for a long time benefited from scholarships offered by many philanthropies,

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United Nations (UN) agencies and development partners. One of such scholarships is the Rhodes University Scholarship which is offered by the Rhodes Foundation for study at the Oxford University.

Mr Speaker, all scholarships of similar nature come with their own laid down procedures to access such scholarships. Therefore, applicants of any scholarships are expected to meet the laid down criteria before they can awarded the scholarship and supported at their university of choice. In this case, the Rhodes Scholarship Selection Committee to go to Oxford University was looking for candidates to be supported at the University Oxford upon meeting the following eligibility criteria:

- (a) the candidate must be citizen of Zambia;
- (b) the candidate must have been resident in Zambia for at least five years of the last ten years;
- (c) candidate must have reached your 9th year and to have passed your 27th Birthday on 1st October , 2019, which means you must have been born after 30th September, 1992 or on or before 1st October, 2000;
- (d) the candidate must have completed or who have completed secondary education by June/July, 2019. An undergraduate degree from a college or university (Normally a Bachelor's Degree) with merit or distinction or equivalent elsewhere; and
- (e) given the very intense international competition for places at the Oxford University, candidates with the exception of those studying medicine will have a greater chance of successfulness being admitted to Oxford University if they have an Honours Degree or have taken an honours years from a university outside Zambia if they have studied for the masters within Zambia.

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Mr Speaker, the requirements for a candidate to obtain a Rhodes Scholarship did not refer to the downgrading of universities in Zambia. Let me hasten to say that advertisements of scholarships all over the world are announced based on basic requirements for consideration. The requirements by Rhodes University for a Zambian scholar to get additional qualifications in the neighbouring countries were necessitated by the difference in the grading of qualifications between Zambia and the UK with regard to honors degree.

Mr Speaker, it is therefore, important for this august House to note that additional requirement additional requirement of an additional year to obtain honours qualifications outside Zambia does not mean downgrading of the Zambian universities, but is necessitated by the structure of our education system.

Sir, as a country and as hon. Minister of Higher Education, the lessons I draw from such an advertisement is that:

- (a) we should ensure that we introduce honours degrees in or education system; and
- (b) we should change our marking and grading system in order to align ourselves international to other practices with a view to standardise internationally and thus, be able to meet the different demands and requirements of the various scholarships being offered.

Mr Speaker, as I conclude my statement, I did not see and read from page one to the last page of the advertisement where they talked about the downgrading universities in Zambia to college status. Therefore, allow me to take this opportunity to urge the nation at large to desist from being bearer of negative sentiments and energies. We have only one country and if we destroy it, posterity will judge us harshly. Let us not go down in the annals of history of people that were part to Zambia's failure to achieve its vision. Let us be among those people who are patriotic, proud to be Zambians and ones that are promoters of positive messages that build our beloved country Zambia. It is my sincere hope that clarifies what has been circulating on the media that our universities have been downgraded to college status and I hope this will put the matter to rest

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I thank you, Mr Speaker.