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Department:
Economy & Enterprise Development
North West Provincial Government
Republic of South Africa



BEWARE OF UNREGISTERED EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS, SAYS NORTH WEST CONSUMER AFFAIRS

Department of Economy and Enterprise Development through its Consumer Affairs Directorate advise students and parents to take precautionary measures before registering with Private Institutions of Higher Education. There is an increasing number of unregistered private institutions that are attracting young people through their marketing strategies especially during the month of December and January.

The Department have observed over the years that some of these institutions are not accredited with the Department of Higher Education and Training, despite their claims to the contrary. Aspirant young people are acting out of ignorance and register with these institutions without doing quality assurance.

“Not all private institutions are legal and operate in good faith. Some are cunning and scrupulous. They are only interested in making profit and issues out unworthy and useless certificates and qualifications, because they are not duly registered and authorised,” said Adv Ruth Dzanibe Deputy Director: Consumer Investigation and Enforcement.

Dzanibe urged students to first check the accreditation of institutions with the Department of Higher Education and Training before enrolling, and further verify whether the courses they want to enroll are accredited and registered with South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA).

According to Dzanibe, the Consumer Affairs office has noted with great concern that most parents and learners fall prey to unregistered education institutions and they even borrow tuition fees from unregistered micro lenders. They buy books and stationery without comparing prices and they act impulsively because they did not save for January.

These bogus institutions use a range of enticing advertising methods to mislead the public. Dzanibe says that there are those that are not registered at all and those registered act out of greed and include in their curriculum unaccredited courses.

It is therefore advisable for prospective students to verify whether these institutions are properly accredited and should not only be confined to the institution but as well as the courses offered.



Dzanibe indicated that any claim to the contrary which is not accurate is a direct contravention of the Consumer Protection Act. In terms of Section 41, subsection 3(a) of the Consumer Protection Act, it is false, misleading or a deceptive representation to falsely or imply, or fail to correct an apparent misapprehension on the part of a consumer to the effect that the supplier of any services has any particular status, affiliation, connection or approval that they do not have.

She indicated that it is difficult to determine at face value whether an institution is registered or not as fake institutions will display fake certificates with accreditation number claiming to be legitimate. Some popular courses include nursing, security and ambulance services under the pretence that they guarantee an individual entry into institutions of higher learning.

The Consumer Affairs Office is currently handling complaints where learners who registered for a particular course were provided with certificate for unregistered courses. It transpired during investigation that courses registered were not accredited and the relevant accreditation body could not provide a certificate that is not registered.