Speech by Professor Kazhila Chinsembu, Director-General of the Higher Education Authority. Speech delivered at the official opening of the first Summer School on Media Training, Neelkanth Sarovar Hotel, Lusaka, 10 February 2026.

[salutations]

The Higher Education Authority (HEA) has noted the presence of a number of bogus and fake professors in Zambia. These individuals have neither conducted credible research nor published a single peer-reviewed journal article.

We have also observed the proliferation of fake professors whose publications are limited to predatory journals.

Predatory journals are deceptive academic publications that masquerade as legitimate scholarly outlets but exist primarily to extract money from authors rather than advance genuine research.

Fake professors qualify as academic scams because they deliberately impersonate legitimate academics or fabricate credentials to deceive students and exploit institutions.

Bogus professors undermine the credibility and reputation of higher education institutions, eroding public trust and compromising academic standards.

The presence of fake professors directly contributes to graduate incompetency, as students are taught and supervised by unqualified instructors who cannot provide rigorous training, critical thinking skills, or proper research guidance.

The unchecked proliferation of fake professors poses a serious threat to the legitimacy of our academic qualifications and diminishes the real skills and competencies that graduates are expected to acquire. It trashes the integrity of our system of higher education.

The presence of bogus and fake professors underscores the urgent need for regulatory intervention and oversight over academic promotions in order to ensure that only qualified academics are recognised as professors.

By linking professorial promotion to HEA-approved guidelines and verified research outputs, Zambia can safeguard the quality of its higher education system, enhance graduate competence, and restore public confidence in our academic programming.

We have also come across a number of dodgy and phoney professors with an h-index of zero. Globally, the h-indices of Associate Professors typically range from 10 to 20. Full Professors frequently range from 20 to 40+ depending on discipline.

An h-index in the range of 20 to 40 is often typical of established Full Professors in many research-intensive fields.

My h-index of 23 reflects a solid and credible level of sustained scholarly productivity and citation impact. It indicates a strong and respectable scholarly profile.

The h-index is more than just a number. It is a practical way to measure both productivity and impact of a scholar.

The h-index serves as a key metric of academic impact, demonstrating the sustained influence of a scholar's work.

A high h-index suggests that a scholar's publications are both numerous and widely cited, indicating substantial relevance and recognition within their field.

Bogus and fake professors undermine the integrity and quality of higher education. Fake professors lack the training, experience, and academic integrity required to teach at university level. They directly contribute to graduate incompetency and graduate unemployability.

The presence of fake professors erodes teaching quality and academic standards. It leads to graduates of low calibre who fail to acquire the critical knowledge, practical skills, and professional competencies expected from legitimate higher education programming.

The unchecked proliferation of fake professors undermines regulatory oversight, threatens the legitimacy of awarded degrees, and erodes the quality of skills and competencies that graduates are expected to acquire from higher education.

To curb the proliferation of fake professors and safeguard the quality of higher education, we intend to propose amendments to strengthen the Higher Education Act in order to introduce a mandatory recognition system for professors. The idea is to establish a national register of HEA accredited professors.

We have invited you to this Summer School because investigative journalism on academic credentials is important. The media can play a powerful role in promoting genuine professorship, deepening scholarship, erudition and academic rigour, and strengthening higher education standards in Zambia.

Journalists can investigate and expose fake professors, bogus titles, and unverified credentials. Journalists should verify claims of professorship against HEA-approved promotion criteria.

Journalists can highlight cases of dubious professors that lack peer-reviewed publications or credible research records. This can dissuade academic fraud by increasing the risk of public exposure.

The media can help the public understand what qualifies someone as a legitimate professor. The media should host expert discussions with credible and genuine professors.

Professorship is earned through research, peer-reviewed publications, and impact. It is not granted on compassionate grounds.

Journalists can help the public to understand the difference between peer-reviewed journals and predatory journals. The media can help the public to understand that metrics such as publication records, citations, and h-index do matter in professorial promotions.

Journalists should examine how institutional loopholes allow fake professors to thrive. The media can therefore help to strengthen regulatory legitimacy and public trust.

An informed public is less likely to be deceived by fake academics. An enlightened media can push higher education institutions to self-correct.

By investigating academic fraud, educating the public, and amplifying regulatory standards, the media can act as a critical partner in safeguarding genuine professorship and scholarship. The media can therefore restore confidence in Zambia's higher education system.

If Zambia is to protect the legitimacy of its degrees and restore confidence in its universities, the fight against fake professorship must be swift and collective.

Thank you.