

'Dodgy' diploma leaves graduate jobless

Msindisi Fengu

2019-03-14 02:21



A Jeppe College graduate lost out on an opportunity to get a permanent job because her information technology (IT) diploma could not be verified.

Keitumetse Tsimane (30) thought she would get her dream job at the department of social development in Gauteng two years ago, but her joy was short-lived because the authenticity of her PC Engineering Level 2 international vocational qualification diploma in IT systems support, which she obtained at Jeppe College of Commerce and Computer Studies in Johannesburg in 2015, was not “valid”.

Documents seen by City Press show that she studied for the diploma for two years between 2013 and 2015, and spent R32 740 on fees.

After her studies, she was issued with two valid certificates – IT Technical Support Level 4 and System Support Level 5 – which opened doors for her to be an IT intern in the department from June 2017 until May last year.

She said that, while she was an intern, the department internally advertised an IT post, which she applied for, but she did not make the cut because of her “questionable diploma”.

Only her IT-related certificates were found to be valid and, because they met the minimum requirements for the position, she was accepted for the internship.

How a student can claim for refunds

-  ▶ Inform the department of higher education and training (DHET) and get written confirmation from the DHET that the programme or college is not registered and the nature of the contravention;
-  ▶ Request the college principal for a refund, failing which you have to approach the courts;
-  ▶ For amounts up to R15 000, approach the Small Claims Court with the letter of confirmation from the DHET; and
-  ▶ For amounts above R15 000, engage an attorney;
-  LEGAL AID ▶ A student who cannot afford legal fees may approach the Legal Aid South Africa at 0800 110 110;
-  ▶ For disputes on a contractual agreement, a student must contact the Office of Consumer Affairs in the nearest region or the office of the National Consumer Commission at 012 761 3000 or complaints@thencc.org.za;
-  POLICE ▶ Inform the nearest police station, sign an affidavit, and open a case, if the student wish noting that the DHET will open a case on the student's behalf; and
-  ▶ Any dispute arising out of a contractual agreement must be settled in a court

Source: DHET Graphics24

Tsimane said the department's human resources staff advised her to go to the South African Qualifications Authority in Pretoria so that it could evaluate the diploma.

When she got there, she was allegedly told by one of the officials that her diploma didn't have an Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) logo.

Ofqual is a regulator of qualifications, examinations and assessments in England, and of vocational qualifications in Northern Ireland.

The official, Tsimane said, advised her to report the matter to Jeppe College. Tsimane said she approached the college on June 5 2017 for help, but, to date, she has not been assisted.

"The response I always get from the directors of the college when I enquire about progress in resolving the matter is that the matter is no longer in their hands but with their lawyers and City & Guilds, and I must be patient."

The City & Guilds of London Institute is a UK-based body with branches in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, India, the Middle East, South Asia and the Pacific.

Its website states that the institute was founded in 1878 by the City of London Corporation and 16 livery (trade and crafts) companies (the guilds) to protect and promote the standard of technical education.

Tsimane feels she has been robbed and is now without a job due to her "dodgy" diploma.

The college, responding through a Johannesburg law firm that declined to be named, told City Press that the matter was the subject of a dispute between it and City & Guilds.

"The college does not issue the certificates – City & Guilds does that. I cannot comment on who is to blame for the lack of the Ofqual logo, save to state that it is one of the issues we are trying to resolve," said the college.

"The diplomas are accredited as the college is a City & Guilds accredited college. We are trying to get to the bottom of this whole debacle to assist the students in obtaining their diplomas."

The college said it had also approached Tsimane to assist it, but she refused.

This was confirmed by Tsimane, who said she had been waiting since 2017 for the matter to be resolved, and all she wanted now was to be refunded.

City & Guilds spokesperson Adriana Neves confirmed that Jeppe College's diploma was accredited by it.

"It [the diploma] is a professional qualification designed for candidates who want to learn, develop and practise the skills required for employment and career progression in the IT sector, and is unregulated by Ofqual."

She said the organisation advised the college to migrate to 7540-12 Level 2 diploma in ICT systems support so students could obtain a qualification that met South African regulatory requirements, and said that this diploma had an Ofqual logo.

She declined to comment on when such an advice was given to Jeppe College, but the college said this communication was received in May last year – after Tsimane was awarded her diploma.