



THE NATION

COMMENT

Loans board loan recovery commendable

It is worth commending the progress the Higher Education Students' Loans and Grants Board is making to recover loans from former students of two of the country's public universities—the University of Malawi and Mzuzu University.

These are the loans disbursed by the Malawi Government between 1985 and 2012 to eligible needy students. The scheme started when the Government of Malawi and the Bretton Woods institutions—the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF)—introduced cost-sharing mechanism in public universities to allow parents and guardians take responsibility for paying tuition for their wards so that they complete their education.

As per the figures given by the board, K562 million has, so far, been collected out of K1.2 billion. This is from 6 543 former beneficiaries out of 15 745, giving a 47 percent recovery rate.

From the onset, we want to commend the loans board for ensuring that the former beneficiaries pay back the money. The recovered money should help the board provide loans to eligible needy students in public universities.

By Malawi standards, fees in public as well as private universities are beyond the reach of many. For instance, in public universities, a student has to part with at least K350 000 per year, a figure very few can afford to raise.

No brilliant student should drop out of university because of lack of tuition. This is uncalled for and should not happen at all cost.

This is the reason we appeal to former students of public universities who are yet to repay the K638 million to do the needful as a matter of urgency. They benefited from the loan scheme and completed their university education; hence, they need to ensure that their colleagues also benefit. We also urge the loans board to strengthen the system and devise other means so that former beneficiaries of the loans are enticed to repay.

They can, for instance, consider using the national identity system to trace the former beneficiaries. We also want to call upon former students to repay the loans out of their own volition without being pushed. Let us develop the culture of repaying the loans! ■