

# Fighting the deceitful use of academic titles

**T**HERE seems to be an epidemic among some of our privileged elite to take on the academic title of doctor. They love to be called Doc! It really makes them feel very good about themselves.

It is as if some of our non-academic non-medical movers-and-shakers of society have an emptiness within them that is crying to be filled no matter what. Or, it could also be that they do not appreciate what their maker had done for them so cry for more and more and more.

After acquiring financial success and/or national fame, they have an insatiable need to fill by adding titles to their names. For some strange reasons, some of our elite have zoomed in on academic titles as the one thing they could add to complete them in the eyes of society.

The adoption of fake academic titles comes from a deceitful heart. If you know that you are not in academia or a medical doctor; and you also know that you lobbied to be gifted an honorary doctorate, why use the title Doc?

Without a doubt, the intent is borne out of deceitfulness; to elevate one's self before people. It is to say, "See, I am Doc! I am important! Acknowledge me!"

This practice suggests a character flaw. Anyone who can lie about personal identity can lie about anything with or without substance. Under no circumstances should such persons be trusted.

A lie is a lie. Being called a Doc when you have not gone through the mill to acquire it is a lie. This too is a form of corruption; it is fraudulent. Mostly, men are the offenders, but a few highly-placed women in society have joined this party of deceit.

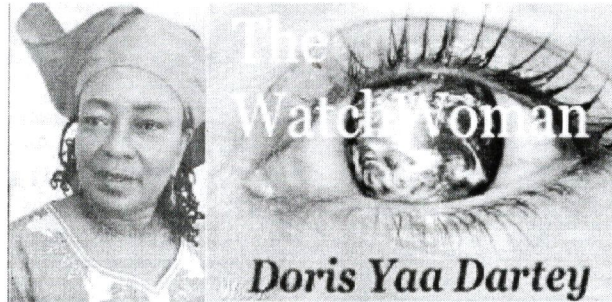
## NUMEROUS CASES ABOUND OF FAKE DOCS IN GHANA

Next time you come across folks who have nothing to do with academic institutions or medical establishments but go about with the title Doc, do not be fooled. Pause to ponder; and ask questions. What is the institutional source of the doctorate? How long did it take to acquire the title? What did the person do to earn it?

Imagine this. A guy I know (let's just call him Dr Obedeka), who is the president of a professional association, suddenly took on the title doctor. The way he handled it was so sneaky, and slipped the title onto everyone around him and into the national space.

As if by a carefully orchestrated scheme, on one ordinary day, he added the Doc title to his name on an event programme. My brother/friend (let's call him Kofi Naade) noticed the very first public appearance of the title and asked Obedeka about it. He denied knowing anything about its mention on the programme.

But weeks later, it became obvious that



he was determined to use the title Doc. He started actually writing his name as Dr Obedeka in official documents. People around him swallowed up the lie and were addressing him as Doc, to which he gleefully accepted without any objection.

So he quickly morphed from Mr to Doc in a short period of about three months. With that, one more Doc arrived in the very centre of Ghana's media space.

He believed it fully that he was Doc. He became the butt of jokes but without shame, he held on to his fake Doc. In the past year, it appears that he could no longer take the jokes so he has dropped the title Doc from official correspondence.

What made it even more worrying and scandalous was that it was a so-called church institution located in Nii Boi Town in Accra, the Pan African Clergy Council and Bible College/Seminary, which crowned him Doc. It was conferred as an honorary doctorate; yet he went to town to use

the title.

What right does any church have to confer doctorate degrees? Is the church of Jesus the Christ now in the business of academia to be conferring what on the surface, looks and sounds like academic titles?

Another guy in the centre of Ghana's political space went for an honorary doctorate title in a small college in USA a few months before launching his presidential campaign.

After he lost, he found his way into the bosom of academia and with that, the deceitfulness was regularised. In effect, he used the backdoor of honorary doctorate to enter a university as a high-profile academic, with full academic recognition. Since around here, we swallow a lot without question, such fraud can be perpetrated easily.

## ACCREDITATION BOARD'S DIRECTIVE

Recently, the National Accreditation Board warned non-Ph.D. holders

to stop using the doctor title. The Board declared its resolve "to name and shame such individuals to engender sanity and avoid the abuse of such titles".

The grapevine has it that some of these 'awam' doctorate degree holders are refusing to abandon their titles. Their reason? They earned it, even if they just paid for the title! We are waiting for the NAB to crack the whip and bare its teeth to cure the abusive use of academic titles in Ghana.

You see, after being called Doc for a couple of years, it is very difficult to recall the title from common usage. What happens with the usage of titles in our part of the world is that the individuals become knotted to the titles.

Their entire identities become tied to the titles to the point that they themselves do self-introductions with titles. Even when it is a fake doctorate, over time, their personalities become entwined with the Doc title.

Journalists entrench this unfortunate practice. Often, I have listened to radio interviews in which the interviewer's real name is rarely mentioned. The journalist only says Doc, Doc, Doc. It is as if because the person is Doc, therefore his own name had been cancelled out. This practice smacks off hero worshiping.

## TRICKY EXIT STRATEGY FROM DOC

If this NAB directive is to take hold and the offenders decide to be decent and quietly walk away from their deceitful "awam" doctorates, they will need to put together an exit strategy.

They could take newspaper advertisements to announce: "I, formerly known as Dr. Obedeka, henceforth wish to revert to the usage of my previous name as Mr Obedeka." Of course this will be ridiculous. So they will have to skip placing such an advert.

Rather, they should handle this tricky matter by ceasing to write their names with the title Dr. Also, they should marshal the courage to nicely raise objections when they are addressed as Doc.

Doing this will be good for their souls and cure them of the fraud they have committed against society.

It appears that doctorate degrees com-

mand unnecessary respect, what is so wrong with being Mr and Miss so-so-and-so?

Must everyone have a title? Do such fake titles pave the way into heaven?

Surely, such titles make their way to the bushy unkempt graveyards across the country, but to what effect?

Why would we take a lie into the cemetery? So just call me Yaa Doris.



• University of Ghana's Great Hall where academic titles are conferred on deserving students

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