Throwing the book at qualification fraud

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Considered a scourge in the job market, the act of CV fraud is the attempt of a job applicant to submit false information as fact. Qualification fraud, in particular, has featured significantly in media reports in the last few years as high-ranking individuals from the corporate and public sectors were found to have doctored their CVs to secure positions which they may not have been eligible for.

Until now, qualification fraud has not been punishable by law. However, this is set to change with the introduction of the National Qualifications Amendment Bill, which will become law once signed by the president. The bill, recently passed by the National Council of Provinces, aims to create grounds for punishment for individuals who fabricate their qualifications, with up to five years of jail time. The bill will also hold institutes accountable if found misrepresenting qualifications or issuing unregistered qualifications.

As a provider of a screening tool called Lexis ® RefCheck, which promotes job application transparency, LexisNexis Data Solutions' General Manager, Rudi Kruger said the organisation welcomed the introduction of the bill, which he says "will reap positive results for South Africa".

"The foreseeable benefits of this proposed policy are immeasurable as the standardisation of CV verification will ensure accuracy and no room for deviation, in both the public and private sectors," he said. "In a country that is reeling from mismanagement, it is reassuring to know that deterrents are being put in place to prevent inappropriate and unqualified individuals from securing unsuitable positions. Furthermore, genuine qualifications will be treated with respect and our universities will retain their position in the global rankings."

Kruger said that of all CV embellishments uncovered by Lexis ® RefCheck, it is qualification fraud that features most prominently. "We have found that qualification fraud, in the form of non-existent matric certificates, inflated education, unfinished degrees and fake degree certificates, is the most prevalent among job seekers compared with any other kind of misrepresentation found on CVs," he said.

In addition, Kruger said background screening has also assisted employers with confronting fake employment certificates, incorrect past roles and responsibilities, inflated job titles, undisclosed criminal records and inflated salaries, although many of them are not aware of these transgressions.

Being a victim of qualification fraud, or any type of incorrect information can be avoided and with the new law, employers have the responsibility to do more. "Technology is available to assist with the background screening of new/potential hires. Screening is a highly useful pre-employment step that every organisation should employ in its recruitment plan," he said.

LexisNexis Data Services' screening tool, Lexis ® RefCheck is the perfect solution to help sift fact from fiction. As a valuable pre-employment screening workflow solution, its services include verification of tertiary and secondary academic qualifications held by the individual from registered local and international institutions; identity and South African citizenship validation; fraud history checks via the South African Fraud Prevention Services; credit history checks through detailed TransUnion and Experian credit bureau reports; criminal history check via AFISwitch (electronic fingerprint collection and processing); verification of local and international employment history and professional association membership; verification of drivers' licence status; and matching of bank account against an identity number or registration number.

For more information, visit: https://www.lexisnexis.co.za/lexisrefcheck.

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