

## Diploma Mills

### Diploma Fabrikaları

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Dear Editor,

**W**ith respect to the previous publications in your journal on predatory publishers and congresses [1,2], I write this letter to also call your attention, as well as the attention of the readers, about the rising frequency of 'diploma mills' in the global community.

By way of definition, a diploma mill is a company or organization that claims to be a tertiary academic institution but awards fake academic qualifications, such as degrees, diploma, and certificates to people [3]. According to the World Education Services Inc, in 2017, a total of 2,615 diploma mills are in the world, of which 38.5% of them were from the USA. In fact, at least 400 PhD degree-awarding diploma mills had been identified in the USA [4].

Without mincing words, diploma mills are fake tertiary academic institutions. The diploma mills are highly proficient in using strategic methods to win the interests of tertiary school education seekers towards enrolling for their so-called

academic programs. Some of these strategies includes the: use of scholarship scams [3]; use of academic internet address (i.e. ".edu") [3]; obtaining accreditation from fake accrediting agencies [3]; and use on online social media platforms, e-mails and short message service (SMS) to advertise their academic programs. [5].

Pertinently, the need for acquisition of post-secondary school academic qualifications is an important issue that cannot be overemphasized; as such qualifications are needed to be a competitive candidate in the job market. Hence, every tertiary school education seeker must be meticulous when it comes to enrolment in tertiary institutions, so that they do not fall a prey of diploma mills.

However, every problem has its solution. In order to avoid falling a prey of a diploma mill, a tertiary school education seeker must ensure that he/she: checks for the details (such as name, address, and ownership) of their intending institution in the master list of the national/regional accrediting agency of the country where the institution is situated; make in-depth enquiries about the

institution in question from the current students and alumni of such institution and compare the information obtained with other well-known traditional governmental institutions; research on the comments made by people on social media and news media about the institution in question; and physically visit the institution for further enquiries and observations.

Ideally, a diploma mill cannot be included in the master list of an authentic national/regional accrediting agency. Also, comments made by students and alumni of a diploma mill as well as the general public are usually controversial, questionable and not in line with other traditional tertiary academic institutions. In fact, some of them use fake addresses, with locations that are not befitting.

If the above-recommended discerning strategies are adopted in verifying the authenticity and credibility of an academic institution, I strongly believe that a tertiary school education seeker will not fall a prey of a diploma mill

Finally, like the way predatory journals, publishers and congresses exist, so also fake academic tertiary institutions exist. Hence, we need to be very cautious whenever we want to: publish our scientific works; participate in scientific conference; or acquire additional educational qualifications.

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