FEBRUARY 2009: African National Congress (ANC) spokesperson Carl Niehaus resigns after it is revealed he did not obtain a doctorate in theology summa cum laude at the University of Utrecht in the Netherlands in 1999 as he had claimed. "I can confirm Mr Carl Niehaus had not obtained a doctorate in theology in the period you mentioned," according to the university.

Earlier, Mr Niehaus had been asked whether he should be called "Mr" or "Dr" to which he replied: "It really doesn’t matter, but it’s doctor." A litany of other claims made by Mr Niehaus are later exposed as false.

December 2009: President Jacob Zuma is awarded an honorary doctorate of law from the University of Zambia. On receiving it Mr Zuma said it was the first such honour bestowed on him outside SA. "It is important to me that it is bestowed by Zambia, which was responsible for part of my people’s education."

At home, Mr Zuma has already been awarded several other honorary degrees, including an honorary doctorate of literature from the University of Fort Hare (2001), an honorary doctorate of administration from the University of Zululand (2001), and an honorary doctorate of philosophy from the Medical University of Southern Africa (2001)

May 2010: The Mail & Guardian newspaper reveals late minister of local government Sicelo Shiceka did not have a master’s degree in political economy, as claimed on his official curriculum vitae. According to the University of the Free State: "He was registered here from 2004 to 2005 but he never completed the degree."

The department later re-edits the online entry where Shiceka’s degree was listed to read "current studies".

March 2010: Mr Zuma is made an honorary knight grand cross of the Order of the Bath. He is knighted by Queen Elizabeth at a state banquet in Buckingham Palace in London, the UK.

"You felt you were in the royal palace. You are quite careful about what you do... You couldn't just leave as if you were somewhere in Kwa-Mashu, you had to walk within the parameters," Mr Zuma told reporters later.

July 2011: It emerges the doctorate claimed by Tshwane University of Technology acting vice-chancellor Prof Johnny Molefe is not recognised by the South African Qualifications Authority (Saqa). It is from St George University International, an online university based in the Caribbean. Molefe claims he was never told by Saqa. He is later appointed vice-chancellor regardless. According to the Mail & Guardian,
Technikon North West funded Molefe’s doctoral study. It quotes him as saying the two-year online degree cost "about R7,000 in total, I think".

September 2011: President Zuma is awarded an honorary doctorate of humane letters from Texas Southern University in Houston, the US. Then spokesperson for the Presidency Mac Maharaj describes Zuma as "humbled" by the gesture. He says, "He was awarded the degree for his leadership, as well as his passion for education in government and community through the Jacob Zuma RDP Education Trust."

December 2011: President Zuma is awarded an honorary doctorate in philosophy from the American University of Nigeria, in Yola, Adamawa, for his contribution to education and human development. "I am aware that the honour I am receiving today is the highest that a university can bestow on an individual and I heartily thank you for that," Mr Zuma says at the ceremony.

December 2011: The University of Abomey-Calavi in Cotonou, Benin, awards President Zuma an honorary doctorate. The doctorate is awarded for his commitment to education, peace, stability and sustainable development in Africa. In his acceptance speech, Mr Zuma says, "I thank you for this honour, which I regard as recognition not only of the achievements of an individual, but of the Republic of SA and its people."

April 2012: Ms Mohau Pheko is appointed South African ambassador to Japan, after she is moved from a parallel position in Canada. It is revealed in 2015 by the Financial Mail she does not have a PhD in international relations from LaSalle University in Louisiana, the US, as she has claimed. The FBI shut down La Salle in 1996 after it emerged the university was selling degrees online. She later said she regretted the deception. Ms Pheko was fired from the Sunday Times as a columnist in 2008 after it is found she plagiarised several columns.

July 2012: Zuma is awarded the title of honorary professor of International Relations by the Peking University in Beijing, China. "Let me also express my personal thanks to this institution and the broader leadership of the People’s Republic of China for deeming me worthy of this honour," he said at the time. "This is the ninth honorary academic award that the president has received over the years in recognition of his work worldwide."

According to the ANC: "This acknowledgement goes a long way to underline the primacy of President Zuma’s approach in locating SA on the political and economic world map, and our country’s aggressive stance in advancing the interests of the developing nations."

December 2012: Zuma is awarded a military veteran award by the Department of Defence and Military Veterans, at Air Force Base Waterkloof in Pretoria. He is awarded the Platinum Class 2 medal, second to the Platinum Class 1. "It’s to say we have leaders in our political lives who are not just career politicians, but their origins are as freedom fighters," says Deputy Minister of Defence and Military Veterans Thabang Makwetla in conferring the medal.

December 2012: President Zuma is awarded the King Hintsa Bravery Award, at Nqadu Royal Palace in Willowvale, Eastern Cape. Mr Zuma says it "cannot be equated to this award, as this award talks directly
to our experience as Africans.... It talks to the leaders who sacrificed everything for the African people. It talks to their heroism as well as their greatness in thinking and putting their people and their country above everything else."

Prince Xhanti Sigcawu, the Xhosa Royal Council spokesperson to the king, says, "When you look at President Zuma, you can see that he represents what King Hintsa fought for."

August 2013: President Zuma is awarded an honorary doctorate of leadership from Limkokwing University in Malaysia. In conferring the award, Limkokwing University founder and president Dr Lim Kok Wing says, "Zuma has risen to become the most influential leader in Africa, and one of the most powerful voices in the world."

January 2014: The local organising committee of the Africa Cup of Nations awards Zuma the silver plate in recognition of his support for the tournament.

February 2014: The public protector finds in a report that acting SABC chief operations officer Hlaudi Motsoeneng never obtained a matric despite claiming he had. "By his own admission, Mr Motsoeneng stated in his application form that he had passed matric, filled in made-up symbols in the same application form, and promised to supply a matric certificate to confirm his qualifications when he knew he did not have the promised certificate." Later, Mr Motsoeneng is quoted as saying, "I qualified myself."

July 2014: Reports say SABC board chairman Ellen Tshabalala did not receive a BCom degree or a postgraduate degree in labour relations from the University of SA (Unisa), as she had claimed. Unisa states that while she had registered for a BCom degree in 1988 and 1996, she had failed to obtain it or the diploma. After a protracted battle, including a parliamentary inquiry that found her guilty of misconduct, Ms Tshabalala resigned in December 2014.

"President Jacob Zuma has received and accepted the resignation of Ms Ellen Tshabalala as a board member and chairperson of the board of the South African Broadcasting Corporation, with immediate effect," spokesman for the Presidency Mac Maharaj says in a statement.

August 2014: It is revealed that ANC MP and former minister Mr Pallo Jordan holds no doctorate or academic degree, despite claiming in his official curriculum vitae he had a postgraduate degree from the London School of Economics (LSE). The LSE states, "We can find no record of Zweledinga Pallo Jordan having been awarded a PhD from the school."

Jordan resigns his position. He later says the claim he had a doctorate "developed a momentum of its own" and that "I didn’t dispute it".

October 2014: President Zuma, along with other former South African presidents, is honoured by the South African Football Association (Safa). Safa states of the awards, "As Safa we felt it necessary that we should honour our statesmen for the sterling role they have played in the advancement of South African football. Furthermore, these are people who led the way and played crucial roles in bringing the first
ever World Cup to the African continent, and we would like to honour them as this was not just an achievement for SA, but one for Africa as a whole."

January 2015: President Zuma is bestowed the Order of Saint Mark, the highest honour the Greek Orthodox Church of Alexandria and All Africa can award a foreign national. The church’s pope and patriarch, Theodoris II, says, "With this I give you great blessing."

Mr Zuma says on accepting the honour, "Thank you very much for this honour. I thought it was just a visit. I did not know that there was a surprise."

July 2015: The Passenger Rail Authority of SA (Prasa) suspends its chief engineer, Daniel Mthimkhulu, following an investigation into his qualifications. Prasa spokesperson Sipho Sithole states, "I can confirm that he has been suspended after an investigation surrounding his actual qualifications."

Mthimkhulu had claimed he had a technical degree from the University of the Witwatersrand and a doctorate from a German university.

Source: Business Day Live