

Tibarimbasa's passion for education triumphs

Publication date: Sunday, 16th January, 2011

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Tibarimbasa's name resounds in the corridors of education

Many did not believe that a man who had spent his career interacting with the needy and helping them would be the same person making such remarks.

"I knew it was not true, this is someone who had looked after and paid fees for many children I know from my village. He supported many charity groups. He could not say such," says Moses Mugarura, a resident of Ndoorwa.

Six years later, you would agree if you spent a day with Tibarimbasa or interacted with him. Stepping into his residence, one can notice a humble homely abode.

At the entrance, a smiling lady in a kitenge tunic ushers us in. The living room is decked with photos of children and grandchildren.

The lady, who then serves us a drink, is Candy Tibarimbasa, his wife. At the far end of the living room, a big man of medium height emerges. He moves with care and speaks calmly, taking a seat next to me. Although he is advanced in age and has undergone a life-threatening operation on his ribs, he still looks energetic.

Tibarimbasa is a man whose name resounds in the corridors of Uganda's education. He loves education with a passion. Little wonder he has persevered at an advanced age to reach the pinnacle of the education field. He is graduating with a PhD in educational management from Makerere University this week. He is one of the only two students graduating from his class.

To those who know him, doing a PhD at an advanced age only re-emphasises his true character. Professor Lutalo Bbosa, who worked with him at the then Institute of Teacher Education, Kyambogo, now Kyambogo University, speaks of him as a courageously ambitious man.

"If he is convinced about something, he will definitely go for it whatever the case may be," says Bbosa. From being an institute secretary, then university secretary to being locked up on treason charges and then to becoming a member of parliament, Tibarimbasa has weathered a lot in life.

To scholars, he is a man who has made an indelible mark in Uganda's education sector and the civil service. To colleagues he is a man worth working with. To former students of Kyambogo and Makerere, he is remembered as a man whose office was open for whoever knocked at his door.

Dorothy Hyuha, the deputy secretary general of NRM, who once worked with him in Parliament at the social services committee, describes him as a very determined and committed man.

"He has such passion for education. While working with him at the social services in Parliament, he was a key player when it came to issues regarding university education," says Hyuha.

"Getting a PhD is a remarkable achievement especially for a man his age," adds Hyuha.

Prof. Augustus Nuwagaba of Makerere University who worked with Tibarimbasa while he was the university secretary describes him as steadfast.

"He has always been consistent with regards to educational management. There is no doubt he is one of the leading people in that field. As a university secretary, he had a clear understanding of what he wanted to achieve. Getting where he is today just shows his undeniable determination and consistency," Nuwagaba says.

Tibarimbasa was born to Andrew Kaburubuka, a catechist turned Mutongole chief turned shop attendant, and Christine Makyere, in Kabale district during the colonial era in 1946. Tibarimbasa attended Kyanamira Primary School and is an old boy of Kigezi College and Busoga College Mwiri where he served as school timekeeper and house prefect respectively.

Tibarimbasa’s dream was to become a chemist and his first qualification after university was a chemist. In 1973, he got his first job in ministry of information. He later joined the Institute of Public Health at Makerere University as a senior administrative assistant for fourteen years.

He later furthered his education for a couple of years overseas and returned to become the senior assistant registrar at Makerere University under the higher degrees Section. He was shortly appointed the institute secretary, at the Institute of Teacher Education, Kyambogo.

“As institute secretary, my colleagues and I worked hard to organise the institution which had been in total chaos previously,” says Tibarimbasa who worked there for four years before heading to Makerere University.

As the university secretary at Makerere, he pushed for the implementation of the private students’ scheme. At that time, only the faculty of Law and Commerce had private students.

In 2001, Tibarimbasa joined active politics, representing Ndoorwa East constituency in Kabale district. He was in Parliament for one term and while serving as a member of the Social Service Committee, pushed for Kyambogo to be made a University. He was also the secretary general of the NRM caucus, a capacity he served under for two years.

He also became the vice-chairman of the social service committee where he tabled five bills, among them the labour laws, disabled, and the amendment bill on universities and other institutions.

At that time, he also registered for a Phd at Makerere University’s Institute of higher education at the School of Education, to study management planning and development.

Tibarimbasa’s experience in the academic field has enabled him to be part of the establishment of two private universities: one is Nkozi University, where he went on to become a member of the university’s first governing Council. He has also chaired a committee in Kabale which culminated into Kabale University.

A brush with death

But all has not been an easy ride for Tibarimbasa. He has encountered several near-death experiences during political upheavals in Uganda.

In 1978, Amin’s agents nearly shot him dead in Kabale. In 1982, during Obote II, he was rounded up and locked in Mbuya Military Cell for six months, accused him of being a rebel supporter of the bush war.

“That is the worst and most traumatic period in his life.”

Tibarimbasa has ten children who include a statistician, four lawyers, a human resource manager and a banker. One of his children has just finished a degree at Liverpool University while his last born is still at university.

Tibarimbasa’s wife, Candy, is a retired banker who has lately ventured into business. He plans to write books.

Born: The fourth in a family of seven, in Katukuru village, Mbarara district

Qualification:

- Phd in Educational Management
- M.Ed in Educational Management and Administration, University of Manchester, UK
- BSc. Chemistry and Biochemistry, Makerere University
- Dip. Management International Labor Organisation, Turin, Italy
- Dip. Education, Makerere University

Record of service:

- Chairman, Kabale district Service Commission (2007 to date)
- Member of Parliament (2001-2006)
- University Secretary, Makerere University (1994- 2001)
- Institute Secretary, Institute of Teacher Education, Kyambogo (1990- 1994)
- Worked with the Institute of Public Health, Makerere University(1977- 1990)
- Ministry of Education, Uganda (1975- 1976)
- Ministry of Information, Uganda (1973- 1976)

