

TRUTH EVERYDAY

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REVIEWS & PROFILES

Prof Senteza Kajubi passes on at 86



Prof Senteza Kajubi, in his time has been responsible for several milestones in Uganda's education system, most notably, providing the blue print of education for all. Photo by Edgar R. Batte

IN SUMMARY

As Vice Chancellor at Makerere University, he turned around university education by opening the way for privately-sponsored students to study at the university.

Standing right outside the School of Education at Makerere University, is a piece of art, a mixed bronze-green-coloured bust of a bespectacled man with wide cheekbones and a receding forehead, looking down at Makerere College School with a benevolent eye.

That bust is a familiarisation of a bus driver's son, a geography teacher, a professor, a three-time vice chancellor and a father of three sets of twins. It is the present that Makerere University gave a man who though now deceased, leaves his prints on Uganda's education system.

That bust is of William Senteza Kajubi. He died yesterday, while at his home in Bugolobi. He was 86. He has passed on just over three weeks after Prof George Wilberforce Kakoma, the man he turned to, to compose the national anthem 50 years ago, died.

Kajubi Commission

If there ever were such a feat as having one's DNA stamped across the Uganda's education system, Prof Kajubi would convincingly fit that mould. He has had his fingers tinkering in all the boxes across the scale of Uganda's education system.

He has been at the blackboard, as a High School Geography teacher, through university (ties) as a professor and later vice chancellor, and, at policymaking levels, having been largely responsible for the education policies that the government has been trying to implement in the past two decades.

The findings from the Education Policy Review Commission, of which Prof Kajubi was chairperson, will probably go down as one of his more subtle and yet most acclaimed contributions to the country. Makerere University's dean of the School of Education, Dr Fred Masagazi says Uganda's education policy is now informed by the findings of that commission, which has now become known as the Kajubi commission.

Policies like education for all, which manifested themselves later as Universal Primary Education (UPE), and then Universal Secondary Education (USE), are attributed to him. The commission's report, and indeed Prof Kajubi through numerous public speeches and dialogues, called for turning Uganda's education to a more vocational direction.

"He has died while agitating for hands-on and practical education system and that is what we have been calling on people to do," Dr Masagazi says. The other was emphasising the importance of cultures and of teaching local languages in schools, which Dr Masagazi says has proved to be very positive.

Revolutionised university system

Prof Kajubi is probably the only Ugandan who has been two-time vice chancellor (VC) at Makerere University (MUK), and, vice chancellor at another university in his lifetime. He served as MUK's VC from 1977 to 1979, and then, from 1990 to 1993. He left MUK to take up another VC post at Nkumba University, from 1994 to 2008.

Before he made it possible for privately-sponsored students to join Makerere University, this had only been a privilege for government-sponsored students, locking many S.6 leavers out of the loop. But the change he proposed has allowed more students to attend public universities, a highly positive contribution, Dr Masagazi says.

"We've seen many people who have messed up institution, say universities, but you can't say that of Kajubi, during his time. He hasn't had any scandal as an education administrator," says Prof Phares Mutibwa, a former student to the deceased.

Great Geography teacher

But before all the decorated policy highlights came about, Prof Kajubi had always been a teacher. While at school, he liked and performed well in Geography. And when he returned to Kings College Budo as a teacher, he simply picked up where he had left. Prof Mutibwa, who was taught by the deceased at Budo, said of him, "He was a very good teacher; so good that our class passed Geography well."

But Prof Kajubi's roles went way beyond the walls of classrooms and pages of syllabi. He had a stint in politics, and has especially kept a long lasting relationship with the Democratic Party (DP). He and Benedicto Kiwanuka were close. His attempts and interests in politics were never far reaching but he became the first Anglican to rise to a high post in the Roman-Catholic-dominated DP. He has been on the advisory council of the Kabaka for long and a renowned advocator of a federal system of governance for Buganda. His political views are also reported to have led to his dismissal as MUK VC in 1979.

Fifty years back, Prof Kajubi was on the committee that selected what would turn out to be Uganda's national symbols, the National Anthem, Emblem and Flag. For the anthem in particular, Prof Kajubi was forced to turn to his friend Prof Kakoma after he was unsatisfied with submitted compositions. His (Prof Kakoma's) would turn to be the national anthem.

Prof Kajubi was a laid back calm old man. His voice was mild, not deep and bellowing and yet not so light. As a man, he had the blessing of becoming a Ssalongo (father of twins) on three separate occasions. Tales from his schools days tell of a boy who was teased for, but busked in the fact that his father was a bus driver. He loved to debate and had logical arguments to back up the debates.

Many of Prof Kajubi's ambitions have not been fully realised. Hands-on education is still a far cry, and, universal primary and secondary education are yet to achieve anything close to what they were intended. But the bust at MUK's School of Education will for now stand and watch over the preparation of a new generation of educationists, reminding us of a man, who spent his life trying to better Uganda's education.

Prof Kajubi as I knew him – Francis Drake Gureme

We met at Kings College Budo, in 1944. We came together in S.4 and went to Makerere University together. Every class that was leaving Budo had a name and ours was called Stalwarts. Last week, Prof Kajubi, Prof Nsibambi and Mayanja Nkangi were seated on the same table (at the function of Mzee Ssebugwawo). I had not seen him for some time. One thing that worried me was that when he stood up, he seemed to lean so much on his walking stick.

Every time we met, we referred to each other as stalwarts. In a class of between 15 and 20 boys and girls, by Friday when we sat together at Sebugwawo's place, only three were remaining, a man called Peter Mpigi Bakaluba, Prof Kajubi, now dead, and I. Now we are only two. The father of his wife, was the chaplain of the church where my in-laws used to worship.

He was quite calm and he wasn't the kind of person who got easily excited. He was very logical in his arguments, even in school, and I liked him for that. Students used to tease him because his father was a bus driver but he was proud of it. Some of us used to smoke at school. But I never knew Prof Kajubi to be a smoker. He specialised in Geography and he was very good at it.

He remained academic all his life. It was no wonder that he became a professor because he pursued his studies religiously. He used to tell me that I have a retentive memory because I passed Geography after reading an entire Geography book.

editorial@ug.nationmedia.com