

**Second Annual Prof. William Senteza Kajubi  
Memorial Lecture**

**Thursday, 14<sup>th</sup> November 2019  
CTF 2 Auditorium**

**“FOSTERING THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN UGANDA”**

**Presented by**

**Rev. Canon Dr. John Senyonyi**

**Vice Chancellor**

**Uganda Christian University**

**[jsenyonyi@ucu.ac.ug](mailto:jsenyonyi@ucu.ac.ug)**

**Abstract**

The contribution of Prof. William Senteza Kajubi to the advancement of education in Uganda can never go unnoticed. From his humble beginning as a high school Geography teacher at Kings College Budo, Kajubi rose through various ranks to become a respected university Professor and administrator. He also served on numerous education boards and commissions, which profoundly formed the education sector in Uganda. Today as we memorised him, it is befitting for us to reflect: first, on the present status of education in Uganda; second, on where we want our education to be; and finally, on the quality of education in the country. Specifically, in the paper, I have made an attempt to define what quality education is. I have pointed out that quality education must not be viewed as a dead end, but as a dynamic target achieved through responsiveness to the changing needs, facilities, and both the national and international environments. I have also indicated that quality must be responsive to the broad spectrum spanning nursery, primary, secondary, high school, and higher education, as each of these has peculiar demands. In the paper, I have also reflected on the origin of western education in Uganda. I have pointed out that as we talk about 'education', we should not be neglectful of the 'traditional education' that preceded foreign actors, in particular Christian Missionaries whom we all agree brought *literacy and formal schooling* in Uganda. I have also highlighted in the paper some of the challenges that the education system in Uganda is grappling with; including: scarcity of well trained teachers, inadequate funding, and shortage of scholastic facilities, weak evaluation and monitoring mechanisms, among others. Finally, I have also proposed a possible credible way forward for improving the quality of education in Uganda.

**Keywords:** Fostering, Quality of Education, Challenges, Uganda

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## Introduction

### **The Purpose of this Presentation**

The Purpose of this Presentation is:

- i. To draw our attention to some of the challenges that the Education System in Uganda is grappling with; and,
- ii. To propose a possible credible way forward.

### **Prof. William Senteza Kajubi the Educationist**

I am truly honoured to be giving the Second Prof. William Senteza Kajubi Memorial Lecture. I thank you for your kind invitation and your patience of three years since the first invitation.

I confess that I first knew or heard of Prof. William Senteza Kajubi, as a student in Senior 5, at King's College Budo - that was in 1973. I remember his three sons at Budo then. Little did I know that our paths would intersect in later years in several places, including at his home. I came to know his wife Nalongo Kajubi, as we called her, well, and that was the family side. I also came up close to him at Makerere University through the turbulent 1979 war times, and when he was Vice Chancellor at Nkumba University.

But in particular, I cannot forget that he led the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) Vetting Committee to Uganda Christian University in 2003 that approved the very first Charter for any private university in Uganda. Given that he was a church member of the Church of Uganda, I found him to be exceptionally professional, incisive and committed to the task. Thank you for honouring this worthy man.

In the Daily Monitor<sup>1</sup>, Prof Kajubi was described,

*“a bus driver’s son, a geography teacher, a professor, a three-time Vice Chancellor and a father of three sets of twins.”*,

In our discussion this afternoon I wish to speak briefly about his life as a scholar and his work toward the furtherance of quality education in Uganda. However, we must not forget that he also had his footprint in politics from the pre-Independence days of Uganda, as a member of the Democratic Party, and eventually as a Member of the historical Constituent Assembly (1994-95).

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<sup>1</sup> Daily Monitor, Wednesday May 2 2012, “Prof Senteza Kajubi passes on at 86

Prof. William Senteza Kajubi was a Budonian and to his credit, became the first African Fulbright Scholar to the United States in 1952.

He was a dedicated educationist whose remarkable contribution to the advancement of Education in Uganda can never go unnoticed. He started out as a high school Geography teacher at Kings College Budo before ascending through various ranks to become a respected Professor and university administrator. He served on numerous education boards and commissions in Uganda, which profoundly formed the education sector in Uganda.

Prof. Senteza Kajubi was Vice Chancellor of Makerere University from 1977 to 1979, during the final days of Idi Amin, and from 1990 to 1993. I was a staff member in the Department of Mathematics, Makerere University, during his first Vice Chancellorship.

Thereafter he served as the Vice Chancellor of Nkumba University from 1994 to 2008. His long and colourful experience in the education sector played an important role in growing the young Private University. Toward the end of his time at Nkumba, I remember going with him and Prof. Stephen Noll, then Vice Chancellor of Uganda Christian University, to the Social Services Committee of Parliament, to argue the case for tax relief for non-profit private universities. That battle still rages on, unanswered.

Finally, Prof. William Senteza Kajubi is widely remembered for the famous Kajubi Commission 1989. As we now know, we owe Universal Primary Education, and its sequel, the Universal Secondary Education, to the resultant Kajubi Report, appropriately named after this great man.

I am therefore most honoured to give the Prof. William Senteza Kajubi 2019 Memorial Lecture. I thank the College of Education for inviting me and for the opportunity of giving this Lecture.

## **Quality: Understanding what it is**

I will attempt to speak to the present status of education in Uganda and also to reflect on where we want to be. My second comment is to the effect that quality education must not be viewed as a dead end, but it is a dynamic target achieved through responsiveness to the changing needs, facilities and both the national and international environment. Quality must also be responsive to the broad spectrum spanning Nursery, Primary, Secondary, High School and finally Higher Education, as each of these has peculiar demands.

Quality itself must be defined. The measure of quality is usually judged at the end of the education journey for the learner. Needless to say, quality education as a whole '*opens up*' the mind to search, see various options, ask questions and seek answers.

I confess right from the beginning that I view quality holistically. It is more than impartation of skills to do a job or research abilities. Genuine quality education should change the whole person, as a person, and his or her entire outlook and output. The problems that have bedevilled and crippled Uganda (and Africa generally) politically or economically have come from the educated class whose education is cerebral and constricted.

Those of us who remember the pre-Independence and immediate post-Independence years must ask the question:

***What changed from the educated people then who worked selflessly and earned an honest cut to the new breed whose work is often substandard and almost invariably self-serving? Or for that matter, where is the student of yesteryear who came to School passionately and dutifully desirous of learning as opposed to today's student who views education as an entitlement?***

I believe that the former's work was a vocation while the latter's work is a job! The student of yesterday had more accountability to the tax payer who funded his or her education.

I hear outcries along these lines, and there are doubtless many more:

- a. **From employers:** Graduates are unusable. They need to be retrained to fit the work they trained for!
- b. **From Government:** There is a paucity of skilled personnel that can serve the strategic direction envisaged for national development.
- c. **From Secondary Schools:** Students who get a higher grade in their Primary Leaving Examinations are unable to keep their good grades in secondary and high school.
- d. **From Universities and higher education institutions** (who are the 'consumers' of students from high schools): Students can neither express themselves nor spell correctly! The basic knowledge requisite for a university student is lacking, not to mention that they appear to be rudderless. Many arrive at university without adequate preparation for the complexity of adult life!

What do we mean by 'Quality'? What are the components of a Quality Education? Does it suffice to engage the intellect to the optimal? Have we defined education too narrowly? The presumption about Quality is something that exudes excellence suitably befits an expectation. Therefore:

- a. What is the *purpose* of the education we dispense? Surely 'Quality' must correlate well with the intended purpose.

- b. How does quality relate with our national or regional context vis-à-vis the transferable models from foreign exemplars? Other education models need to be heeded but must be evaluated against our social-economic context.
- c. Does 'Quality' have anything to do with cultural and social contextual relevance? Lest we become purveyors of Western decadent thought forms.
- d. What is the role of competition in enhancing Quality? Some education players compromise on Quality as they compete for students. At the level of higher education, especially in private institutions, it is commonplace to charge low fees and to promise what is beyond the institution's ability as we hanker for higher registrations. Yet quality is never cheap, and cheap things are not quality! As the Chinese say, "*Cheap things are not good, and good things are not cheap.*" For others, education as business drives the institution's mandate.
- e. What do we make of the highly educated and very skilled people whose access to public resources is crippling the nation through their pilfering?
- f. A 'Quality Education' must show serviceability and utilitarian value in the workplace. How does Quality relate to the longevity of this service? For a nation benefits from the enduring value added at the workplace. That is why nations care about the health of their citizens.
- g. What does Quality of education have to do with the problems that challenge our society, such as political intolerance, political populism, tribalism, moral turpitude, etc.? It is often casually assumed that education qualifications will automatically improve social intercourse and ethical conduct.

Therefore I suggest that 'Quality' must be defined holistically so that the education dispensed is also transformative or formative to the object of that education. This does not preclude the need for learners to confidently demonstrate the imparted skills.

Furthermore, a Quality education must not skirt around truth claims or facts. Education must act with integrity about verifiable facts and judge information objectively on its own merits. This is not an idle call, as academics, notably in universities, have been known to twist facts to their prior assumptions.

*William Jeynes, Professor of Education at California State University, Long Beach, decried the modern disregard for truth and facts in education in preference for individual opinions. He says,*

*"To many, truth is only of value if it is convenient and supports one's ideology. Over a decade ago, I coined the term "defactualization" to describe societies in which facts are either habitually denied or ignored due to an emphasis on subjectivity. In my view, defactualization is*

*quickly becoming one of the greatest crises of modern times.”<sup>2</sup>*

## **A Brief Historical Perspective of Education in Uganda**

When we discuss ‘Education’, we need to give context to it. We should not be neglectful of the ‘Traditional Education’ that preceded foreign actors, in particular Christian Missionaries. It is the consensus today that Missionaries brought *literacy and formal schooling*. For the sake of simplicity, I will use the word ‘Education’ advisedly to mean the latter to avoid being verbose.

It is well documented that reading and writing was first introduced in Buganda (Uganda) by Arab traders sometime around 1844. As Tiberondwa writes,

*“The Arabs, who had come into contact with the Africans much earlier, were much more involved in trade than education.”<sup>3</sup>*

The Christian missionaries were more intentional.

*The “Anglican Church Missionary Society from England ..., followed by the Catholic White Fathers’ Society from France ... came with a mission to ‘civilise’, using religion and education. Literacy was therefore initially introduced into Uganda as an integral part of Christian religious practices, making Christianity the first social and institutional framework within which literacy found meaningful use in everyday life in Uganda. By embracing the Christian faith, the local people embraced a literate culture involving the use of the Bible, prayer books, hymn books and other religious texts”<sup>4</sup>.*

Thus for the first converts to Christianity, religion and literacy were intertwined. In fact for the original Christians, church-going in Luganda was called, “okusoma”, literally ‘reading/studying’!

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<sup>2</sup> William Jeynes (2015). *“Defactualization” Is Causing American Schools to Become Bastions of Anti-Intellectualism*. The Witherspoon Institute, USA.

<sup>3</sup> Tiberondwa, Ado K. (1975). Ph. D. Thesis: *The Teaching Profession in Uganda*. University of Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, Pg. 15.

<sup>4</sup> Byakutaga, S. & Musunguzi, R. (2000). *Developing Runyakitara as an area language*. In K. Parry (Ed.), *Language and literacy in Uganda*. (pp 51-65). Kampala: Fountain Publishers.

Onono-Onweng, N., Holmes, P. & Lumumba, P. (2004). *Celebrating 100 years of Christianity in Acholiland*. Gulu: Church of Uganda.

Ssekamwa, J.C. (2000). *History and development of education in Uganda*. (2nd edn). Kampala: Fountain Publishers.



Wandira notes that this emphasis on literacy enabled Christian converts to read and revise the church teachings at home. This was assumed to enhance the believer's faith conviction.<sup>5</sup>

The first form of education established was also vocational. The first missionaries were intent on inculcating faith and practical skills. Literacy came as a necessity if this was to be achieved. After labouring fruitlessly for years in preaching the Gospel, Mackay saw that his only hope for breaking through with the Gospel was Education.

The Phelps-Stokes Commission (1924-25) is worthy of our mention here. The British government "*did not have clearly spelt out policies on education*" in Uganda. So the government gave support to the Phelps-Stokes fund toward a Commission to study and make recommendations on the type of education suitable for the Africans.<sup>6</sup>

The most significant recommendation of the Commission was the centralization of education management in Uganda under the colonial government. The Commission also recognized the important role played by the church in "*moral education, character training and religious life*", and recommended that these be given special emphasis. Time does not allow me to say more about the intervening years to our present dispensation.

## **A Profile of Current Education Trends in Uganda**

### **1. Pre-Primary Education**

The "*Education and Sports Sector Annual Performance Report*"<sup>7</sup> of the Ministry of Education and Sports, Financial year 2015/2016, reported that there were 4,956 Pre-Primary Schools in 2014/15, and 5,763 in 2015/2016, with a total enrolment of 433,258 and 477,123 respectively.

Before the late 1990's, there was little recognition of the Pre-Primary Education in Uganda, and it was mainly in urban areas. However, there is an increasing demand for it as parents (especially urban working parents) seek pre-primary education even for baby-sitting purposes. Therefore, it has become increasingly imperative that the Ministry of Education & Sports recognises and regulates Pre-Primary Education.

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<sup>5</sup> Wandira, Asavia (1972). *Early Missionary Education In Uganda (A Study of Purpose in Missionary Education)*, Department of Education, Makerere University, Kampala, Pg. 115.

<sup>6</sup> Tiberondwa, Ado K. (2001). *Missionary Teachers as Agents of Colonialism in Uganda*. Kampala: Fountain Publishers, Pg. 75-6.

<sup>7</sup> Ministry of Education and Sports, Republic of Uganda, *Education and Sports Sector Annual Performance Report, Financial Year 2016/ 16, Page ii*.

Besides, the Pre-Primary (Nursery and Kindergartens) section is foundational to the entire Education Sector. However, it is still a far cry to a pre-primary education that is tailored to meet the human developmental needs of that age group. Instead, some education institutions see pre-primary education as a means to recruit into the Primary school or a step toward Primary Seven! Most of them, especially in the semi-urban and rural districts, and which tend to be privately owned, operate in substandard makeshift structures, with unpolished floors and walls, completely unfit for this tender age group.

Below are some factors that I believe have a bearing on the learners at this stage and may negatively affect their interest in the subsequent education levels.

- i. Some learners begin to detest education, as it denies them normal growth through the childhood playfulness and “excitement” fitting at their level.
- ii. The staff handlers at this level are often ill-equipped, in part because of their inadequate training. We cannot also ignore the fact that the staff are usually in that profession due to their failure to progress further in their own education. Furthermore, the regulation of institutions training nursery school teachers is deficient in clarity, and most institutions training these instructors are privately established and focused on reaping from their investment. Generally, training of Nursery School teachers is given peripheral concern. This is foundational to achieving the quality of Education we need.
- iii. I know of no standard instructional material used across all the institutions training Nursery School teachers. In most cases these institutions combine lots of uncoordinated material to come up with what to teach the pre-school going learners, something that leaves the assessment of the learners at the mercy of the individual examiners. This greatly comprises the quality of education we end up with at the end.
- iv. Additionally, the instructors are often very poorly remunerated at the Pre-Primary stage. Needless to say, their attention to their vocation and the learners may also be half-hearted.
- v. Not enough attention has been given to stipulating the age groups appropriate for Pre-Primary learning. Children are taken to these schools by “*busy, corporate and occupied*” parents, at as early an age as 1½ years. Such a child misses out on the informal education, social-cultural development and bonding with the parents, which are so critical for child development. He/she has not even learnt the basics of greeting and asking for help. It further denies the child the inculcation of values that is best taught in a parental context. The minds of these young learners are not well developed to cope with the expected intake. I infer that the fatigue and disinterest in Education in later years results from an education above the age of the learner.

My thesis is that a discussion of Quality Education is inseparable from a holistic education passed through comprehensive means. Therefore, Quality Education should be emphasised beginning with the Pre-Primary level since this stage is foundational for the later scholarly life of the learner. It is possible to come from a warped Pre-Primary Setting and become a star performer at subsequent levels but often the harm incurred may be incurable.

I propose the following:

- a. Government together with all stakeholders in the Education Sector should take a keener look at quality Pre-Primary Education as a fundamental step in the life of the learner.
- b. Through Public-Private Partnerships, Government should regulate nationally recognised training institutions for Pre-Primary instructors, under close supervision by the Ministry of Education and Sports.
- c. While I can foresee a future when higher education institutions will play an important role in preparing pre-primary instructors, I maintain that our present development stage does not necessarily justify their involvement in the teaching of Pre-Primary instructors. It may result in churning out overqualified and less relevant instructors.
- d. I have already highlighted that Pre-Primary and Primary Education are most crucial in the learner's lifecycle. Therefore setting up an independent structure to handle Pre-Primary education is well worth Government's consideration.
- e. The National Curriculum Development Centre should be central in the development of instructional materials for use at the Pre-Primary level. This should be coupled with an enforcement mechanism to ensure compliance for all the concerned schools.
- f. The Parliament of the Republic of Uganda should resurrect discussions about the minimum wage policy and repeal the obsolete Minimum wage policy of 1984 that fixed the threshold at UGX 6000/= per month! Some proprietors of pre-primary institutions exploit their hapless employees. Motivation of the instructors at this level is paramount in shaping budding learners. This threshold is obsolete.
- g. Government should, through its supervisory and regulatory agencies, determine and compulsorily enforce a school going age for the Pre-Primary Education.

## 2. Primary Education

In reference to the “*Education and Sports Sector Annual Performance Report*” of the Financial year 2015/2016, total Primary education enrolment was 8,772,655 in 2014/15 but reduced to 8,264,317 in 2015/16. This was attributed to high attrition rates.

Education at this level intends to equip learners with basic numeracy skills and literacy knowledge. A number of upcountry Primary Schools conduct their lessons in local languages though the final Primary Seven Examinations are conducted in English. This mismatch in Language probably contributes to the 15% failure rate at P 7, though there are other contributing factors.

The major quality concerns at Primary level do not differ significantly from those at Pre-Primary level. Quality of education is affected by poor infrastructure, high pupil: teacher ratio, which in the 2013 data stood at 46:1 and 43.1 in 2016, among other factors. The pupil-teacher ratio in countries like Cuba stands at 9:1, and in the more developed countries, between 10 -15:1.

- i. Student enrolment growth estimated at 3.5% per annum, with some increments in infrastructural developments, staffing and funding, but hardly commensurate with enrolment growth. Government’s ongoing programme to put up permanent structures must be commended and accelerated. Still, even the limited infrastructure available is insufficiently developed with many learners studying in temporary make shift structures or under trees. The Ministry of Education Report acknowledges the “shortages of critical infrastructure especially classrooms and sanitation facilities occasioned by rapid expansion of enrolment that outstrips capacity to provide this infrastructure.” Such an environment hinders quality education. I am cognizant of the gains made by the Universal Primary Education Policy, specifically the increased enrolment to 8,264,317 in 2016. However, if quality is to be realised, this increased enrolment needs a matching increase in the requisite auxiliary services.
- ii. Funding for Primary Education is still wanting, and this is shared off the declining Budget for Education generally, which in the 2019/20 Budget stands at 10.26. For the FY 2015/16, Primary Education Sector received 68,452bn of the expected UGX. UGX68.5bn as capitation grant to UPE Schools for a total 6,321,964 Primary school pupils. This translates into approximately UGX. 10,000/= per pupil per year, or UGX. 3,300/= per term. Clearly this does not square with the unit cost of educating a Primary Pupil for a term. This calls for urgently increasing Government’s national budgetary allocation to education.

- iii. The content being taught at the Primary School Level and the mode of delivery may also need review. There are some expletives from the National Curriculum Centre on review of this and higher levels, but we must take note that this has been in the works for more than a decade. The implication is that it may be too small, too late, and with inadequate implements to effect the required changes.
- iv. For years, there has been an outcry about the Examination-centred approach to education in Uganda. Examinations are necessary for assessment of the learner. Unfortunately, current trends have made examinations, promotion to the next education level and appearing in newspapers the purpose of the education, rather than a means to evaluating a learner's understanding.
- v. Absenteeism: There is a high Headteacher and teachers' absenteeism, estimated at 20%. It is estimated that on average, a primary school teacher is absent for at least 2 days a week! This points to challenges of ethics and professionalism, in addition to low motivation.

My suggestions are implicit in the foregoing. I will reiterate them here briefly:

- a. Increased enrolment calls for matching enhancement in all the other auxiliary services.
- b. Government must take another look at the national budgetary allocation to education to raise it to no less than the target 15% for education generally. The budget should be incrementally better with each new Financial Year.
- c. Regular Curriculum reviews are necessary to match current needs and to improve the retention capacity of the learners at this level. Like all others, this calls for more funding for this fundamental function.
- d. Build capacity and strongly support the supervisory agencies/officers. District Education Inspectorate Offices should be equipped adequately with professional and committed staff, and given the required resources such as transportation, to execute their mandate efficiently.
- e. Carry the Public-Private partnership into a more cooperative enterprise. Private players have become a significant force in primary education but need to be harnessed into a positive force. The present trend that makes profit almost the sole goal of private education is untenable.

### **3. Secondary Education**

The Current Secondary School Education consists of Ordinary and Advanced levels, bequeathed to Uganda by the British colonial Government. Completion of these leads to the following awards: Uganda Certificate of Education (UCE) and Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education (UACE). According to the Ministry of Education and Sports, the total Secondary School enrolment stood at 1,284,008, as of July 2016, lower than the 2015 figure of 1,391,250.

According to the Ministry of Education and Sports, Sector Annual Performance Report for the Financial Year 2015/2016, survival rate at Primary 5 & 7 stood at 59.9% and 30.1% respectively. 86% of those who completed P7 passed their Primary Leaving Examinations. The same report put the S4 completion rate at 36.2% and pass rate at 91% of the total candidates.

Two questions need to be adequately addressed:

- a. **Why do more than 50% of the total enrolment in P1 fail to complete P7?**
- b. **Can we devise ways to retain these dropouts until they complete at least P7, which is the basic education in Uganda?**
- c. **What do they know (if they know) at the point of exit that enables them to beneficially contribute to national development?**

These are vital questions targeting the very purpose of Universal Secondary Education (USE). It is self-evident that learners who do not complete Primary education do not make it to Secondary education, and cannot acquire entry into most technical schools. Their skills set is capped for life and it is the nation's loss!

The factors hindering the quality of Education at the Secondary School level include: high teacher: student ratio, limited funding, limited infrastructure, especially science laboratories for practical lessons, disinterest in Education by some learners, lack of community support especially for the nomadic cultures that view Education as a waste of time and money, early child marriages, forced child labour, among others.

### **4. Higher/Tertiary Education**

According to The World Bank, tertiary education includes universities as well as institutions that teach specific capacities of higher learning such as colleges, technical training institutes, community colleges, nursing schools, research laboratories, centres of excellence, and distance learning Centres.

We use the term 'higher education' to include all tertiary forms of education for avoidance of monotony. It is a truism that no nation has ever achieved

Middle Income status without making higher education a principal emphasis; higher education may not be for all, yet development cannot be without it.

In Uganda, Higher Education comprises of: Universities, Other Degree awarding Institutions, Teacher Training colleges, Health Training Institutes, Agricultural and Veterinary Schools, Bible and Theological Colleges, Vocational Training Institutes, Military Academies, among other forms of instruction subsequent to the high school Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education (UACE). As Barber, et.al. says,

*"Each university needs to be clear which niches or market segments it wants to serve and how. The traditional multipurpose university with a combination of a range of degrees and a modestly effective research programme has had its day."*<sup>8</sup>

Admittedly, standards in most of the above institutions are lacking and challenges are diverse as highlighted below:

- i. According to the National Council for Higher Education<sup>9</sup>, the ideal is that each student in any institution of Higher learning should enjoy 2.5m<sup>2</sup> of classroom space, 2.5m<sup>2</sup> library space, 3m<sup>2</sup> Computer laboratory or any other science laboratory space. The same regulation recommends 1:40 book: student ratio, 1:5 Computer: student ratio and internet access for at least 20 hours daily. In a number of private universities that are still struggling with basics of paying staff, electricity and power bills, with unprecedented appetite for profits (since a good number of them are investors not educationists) such requirements are interpreted to be extravagance and luxury. The public higher education institutions do not necessarily fair much better either since the onset of private tuition students.
- ii. The students admitted into the higher education institutions in Uganda are products of a weak education system, anyway, operating amidst the challenges outlined above. If the foundation is weak, the structure above ground cannot be strong.

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<sup>8</sup> Michael Barber, Katelyn Donnelly, Saad Rizvi (2013). *An Avalanche is coming: Higher Education and the Revolution ahead*. Institute for Public Policy, UK.

<sup>9</sup> NCHE Checklist of Quality & Universities Capacity indicators, UOTI Act 2001

- iii. Most of the Ugandan populace values only one facet of higher education and despise the others. The colonial mentality thinks that they should acquire qualifications that will land them white collar jobs and to this end regard technical Education as “*Second class Education*”, “*a last resort*”, “*for those who could not make it to the University*”, and many other related notions. The preference for University Education to Technical Education holds its unique place in escalating unemployment rates in Uganda. We have university professionals without artisans; engineers without masons, electrical workers, etc.; architects without draftsmen, and so forth. Technical education is neglected yet it has the ability to create sustainable employment and self-employment in addressing society challenges.

The Higher/Tertiary Education Sector has over time suffered numerous challenges, which have paused serious hindrances to the delivery of quality education to the citizenry. I propose that we seriously consider the following to foster quality Education in the Institutions of higher Learning in Uganda:

- a. **Community Partnerships.** If the Quality of Higher Education in Uganda is to be improved, Institutions of higher Learning, whether Private or Public, should collaboratively partner with governmental and non-governmental entities and professional entities (e.g. NARO, ACCA/CPA, etc.) to define areas of improvement and pay due attention to them. The partners are the consumers of what the Universities produce, in the form of research and graduates. In Uganda, National Agricultural Research Organisation and its sister organisations have established themselves as a force to reckon with in matters of research. However, they were established as parallel to the universities whose work is complementary to theirs. Public Service, Local Governments and the business community, are the biggest employers of higher education graduates and the largest consumers of research output. Indeed, curriculum reviews cannot be done meaningfully without these partners to make them current and relevant. If higher education institutions in Uganda evaluate themselves in their silos they will likely come up with biased self-assessments. To this end, I am convinced consumers of higher education outputs would offer good partnerships, hence improved quality of Education.
- b. Similarly, practicums and fieldwork should be accorded their rightful place. Quality Education will only be achieved if the theoretical knowledge is supplemented with practical knowledge, in both humanities and the natural sciences. Quality programs have inbuilt work placements/internships that facilitate development of employability skills. Learners from a higher education institution should be able to transform their theoretical knowledge on organisational behaviour and human conduct to gain the ability to harmoniously live at peace with neighbours and teamwork. It is an absurdity to earn a doctorate in peace and conflict resolution and lack the



ability to live at peace in a local community, or to qualify in Business studies without the requisite knowhow to start a business. If education is to be accorded the value it deserves, learners must exhibit ability to transform their classroom knowledge into practical situations. This is possible if the training allows the learner to apply the knowledge acquired while learning. Practical programmes like agriculture, engineering, nursing and medicine should indeed be practical to make learners relevant to the communities where they are to execute their duties. The perennial slavery to examinations as a measure of understanding needs to be revisited, and due regard given to Coursework, Application and Examinations in assessment.

- c. There must be an intentional establishment of entrepreneurial incubation centres to enable learners acquire practical skills. The ever increasing higher education graduate unemployment levels in Uganda have been attributed to poor quality education that our graduates are continuously exposed to. They complete their studies to become job seekers instead of job creators. Due to the “cram and vomit” examinations format that learners go through for the bigger part of their education, most of them are poorly equipped for basic logic and reason. At the incubation centres, learners should be required to spend considerable time gaining life skills so that education impacts the learners and the community.
- d. Genuine accreditation and licensing procedures: It is vital that assessment for accreditation and licensing of institutions is strengthened. I argue that public higher education institutions cannot presume on public (taxpayers’) funding for their quality; that funding is diminishing from year to year the world over. Therefore an accreditation that assumes *‘if it is from Government, it is good to go’* is a falsehood. Public Universities are no better than the population that yells helplessly, “Government etuyambe!” Private institutions too must prove their worth rather than *‘lobbying’* to be licensed or accredited. Once an institution is inadequately accredited or licensed, chances are high that it will not deliver the desired quality of education. Regulatory authorities should be empowered to execute their mandate without uncalled for interference, and if need be to withdraw a licence once the institution in question has not lived up to its mandate, without political interference. For example, the National Council for Higher Education needs to be well resourced to do its work well. I commend National Council that in the recent past has used courage to close some universities. Would that courage exist in the case of a public university?
- e. Effective monitoring and evaluation of Institutions of Higher learning by the regulatory bodies like NCHE and Ministry of Education Science & Technology, and professional bodies. This once again is a matter of resources. It is doubtful that any regulatory body can do regular and effective monitoring and evaluation of the institutions that it licenses with their present levels of funding. Without it, many students will pass through

the net with poor quality education. The regulatory bodies should be able to assure excellent curricula, quality assurance systems (including assessment procedures), dynamic research, learning inputs, learning-teaching processes, minimum requirements like laboratories and qualified personnel, learning environment, are adhered to.

- f. Aim at increasing research output. Institutions of higher learning, in particular Universities, are intended to serve three main purposes: teaching, research and community development/service. Most Universities in Uganda excel in one area, teaching. The institutions of higher learning should exhibit evident commitment to improve the level of research output, and to do research relevant to society.
- g. **Moonlighting:** A discussion of Quality Education is incomplete without addressing the woeful shortage of academic staff. It is a reality today, that universities are sharing 'full-time' staff! Everyone looks on helplessly, including NCHE. Research suffers, students have full-time/part-time attention, and academic staff never grow in their profession. Producing enough qualified academics is a long-term objective that must be pursued. But NCHE must consider accepting 'shared' staff in the meantime and put in place means to regulate what today is a public vice. I propose a Databank of academic staff for all universities by which they are monitored and regulated.
- h. **Quality of teaching.** Teaching is more than passing on propositions; it is mentoring. This is the essence of vocation rather than getting the job done. The present reality is that either staff have no space for mentoring their students or they are ominously absent from their students outside of class.
- i. **Duration of Study.** It is taken for granted that the years set for study suffice for learners to gain a good education. In recent times, there are voices rightly questioning these assumptions, especially with respect to the primary-higher education stretch. Alternatively, one must question if the years in a higher education institution suffice to foster a quality education, as students rush out to go and begin earning.
- j. **Learning styles/approaches are adopting online learning.** Higher education in particular cannot ignore the need for e-libraries, e-classes, e-mentorship and a variety of other e-means that make learning more flexible. These may appear futuristic but are in reality where education is headed. The working man or woman may not wish to suffer the traffic to class but rather go home and log into the class and library. We must begin to discuss what quality education will be like under this new regime. Its downside is the death of contact, which is essential to wholesome learning.
- k. **Research Output:** If there is going to be research output, there must also

be fora for dissemination. Today, Ugandan researchers mostly look to international conferences for presentation of their work. This is partly because universities are operating in silos, more inclined to compete than to grow the academic output of the nation; and so, do the professional entities. Where do NARO or Uganda National Academy of Sciences (UNAS) make their presentations? Does the Uganda Medical and Dental Practitioners Council (UMDPC) participate or gain from medical research work? There is need to establish academic discipline-specific regular conferences for presentation of research work. Such ‘conferences’ would allow professional bodies and universities to interface more in their work, would foster research in the professional bodies that are more interested in regulating, and simultaneously help these bodies to become more than mere regulators.

- l. Government funding is a catch 22 situation; you are doomed if you have it and you are no less condemned without it, as it has been shown so clearly at Makerere University. You are either enslaved or impoverished! And yet financing is vital to Quality Higher Education. Private higher education players keep under the radar by charging less than Nursery Fees! The question of funding is integral to a discussion of Quality Education. Inevitably for all, alternate funding is needed.

## **The proposed Curriculum Review for Primary to High School.**

The National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) has for years been working on reviewing Uganda’s Primary to High School Curriculums. NCDC’s new Curriculum attempts to cure the deficiencies of subject overlaps, content overloads and early specialisations of learners.

The purpose is to replace discrete subjects with Learning Areas to show the interconnectedness between similar subjects, to inculcate inquiry skills, and to enable modern and practical learning methods. It needs to be tested and evaluated after a few years to determine its effectiveness in fostering the quality education we desire. Some recent announcements indicate that they are now ready to launch out. Higher education institutions, especially Universities should take interest in observing and studying the NCDC proposals and implementation, as they are the consumers of what the new Curricula will produce.

## **Conclusion**

As I conclude my paper, I wish to raise some pertinent questions that demand our answers to arrive at a Quality Education.

- a. **The purpose of Education vis-à-vis Quality Education. When can we say that our education has accomplished the required end?**

According to UNICEF<sup>10</sup>, defining and achieving quality education is an ongoing challenge with continuing debate on what it means and how to assess it. The UNICEF report states that, *“access to education that is of poor quality is tantamount to no education at all”*. Furthermore, that on any given day, more than 1 billion of the world’s children, go to school. Whether they sit in buildings, in tents or under trees, ideally, they are learning, developing and enriching their lives. Most of these children endure difficult conditions, like missing or access to inadequate teaching materials, makeshift sanitation facilities, lack of competent teachers and appropriate curricula, among others. This is a challenge we know only too well. Should we abandon these children with decrepit facilities to a life without education? Certainly not. *What do we need to do so that the education of those children delivers literacy, numeracy, and equips them with critical life skills?*

Improving quality of education should include: increasing school retention, improving completion and pass rates, reviewing curriculums periodically to ensure that they are in tandem with the needs of the hour, and unrelenting infrastructure development. Quality Education should be more holistic and comprehensive, learner-friendly, emphasise capacity development for teachers on quality learning and teaching, tap into current technologies, and promote an enabling safe school environment.

- b. **What is quality education? How shall we recognise quality education? What factors are associated with quality education?**

I have tried, albeit with utmost brevity, to address these questions above. According to UNICEF (in the same report), *“quality education is education that works for every child and enables all children to achieve their full potential”*. Please note that this definition pays no attention at all to values, cultural or religious. If that is neglected, it will be the doom of our nation.

All the same, our scarcity of well-trained teachers fails to nurture each child individually, and therefore cannot enable every child to reach their full potential. Our teachers are trained for ‘omnibus teaching’; as long as all children get on the omnibus going to the same destination, we assume all is well. The goal we may need to heed, and I admit that this is not a short term goal, is for each child to be educated to their particular talent and potential. This means first and foremost, greatly improved pupil:teacher and student:instructor ratios.

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.unicef.org/education>, accessed on October 28, 2016.

Uganda's Education System is comprised of different levels and as we have noted, each level suffers enormous challenges. A solution must not disaggregate the different levels to the point of independence; they each feed into or from the other. It suffices to note that more effort will be needed to ensure the education system in Uganda offers quality education to all learners. And this is for us all who have had the privilege to see beyond. We owe it to the consumers of our 'product', education.

- c. **Benchmark with other nations, especially those like us or which have grown through our learning curve: What are they doing that could instruct our own endeavours to achieve quality?**

On the international Scene, UNICEF states that *"79 countries have developed national Policies on corporal punishment, 50 out of 142 countries have national education sector plans that address issues of children affected by HIV and AIDS, 88 countries are implementing 'WASH in Schools' activities, benefitting 4.2 million children in over 20,000 schools"*. As Ugandans we must be cautiously learn from others. The recent uproar about books in our schools funded by UNICEF, is a red flag to exercise maximum restraint. Learning from others need not compromise our values or determine our virtues. It is incumbent upon us to reflect critically on what we adopt from elsewhere.

### **Recommendations:**

1. There is need to develop specific qualitative and quantitative tools of what quality education is. Such should be widely circulated amongst all the stakeholders.
2. Establish well researched causes of school drop-outs, and address them.
3. Gradually but persistently strengthen monitoring and evaluation of the Educational institutions, at all levels.
4. Consolidate the gains of Universal Primary Education. This calls for improving the various implements mentioned in the paper; e.g. infrastructure, better trained and continuous training of teachers, employ technology, etc.
5. Universities in particular, may offer Teacher-Workshops to bring them up to speed in their disciplines.
6. Put in place innovative financing mechanisms since most educational institutions in Uganda are financially constrained. All institutions, especially higher education institutions, should be assisted by Government to build endowments and minimise Government handouts; i.e. this will discourage political patronage which only serves to increase

restiveness. This does not mean financial injection; ideally it should be in the form of tax incentives to donors and universities.

7. Improve knowledge gathering and sharing across agencies, governments and levels of education and key stakeholders. This will help identify any bottlenecks to knowledge transfer and seek redress in a timely manner. Besides, it enhances partnership rather than patronage.
8. Identify emerging areas that need more systematic attention because of their impact on education. Some of these areas are: urbanization, entertainment, school going age, migration, wars and conflicts, climate change, and learning and development needs of adolescents among others.

I thank you for listening to me.

***JS, November 14, 2019***