

**Fostering the Quality of Education in Uganda: A Response to Rev. Canon Dr. John Senyonyi's
Lecture in Memory of Professor William Senteza Kajubi**

By

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Introduction

There is no doubt that Prof. William Senteza Kajubi made a significant positive contribution to shaping of Uganda's education landscape. As a discussant responding to what Rev Canon Dr. John Senyonyi has presented in his wonderful paper, I wish to respond as follows:

1. I salute the leadership of the College of Education and External Studies here at Makerere University for coming up with the idea of commemorating the life and works of the late Prof. William Senteza Kajubi. I am in full agreement with the observation of Dr Senyonyi who stated that "the contribution of Professor Kajubi to the advancement of education in Uganda can never go unnoticed" (p.2). Indeed, Kajubi's name is closely associated with several landmark decisions that the Government of Uganda has made about education in the recent past - including on the introduction of Universal Primary Education and the liberalization of higher education policies in the country. Second, I salute the College of Education and External Studies for ably identifying the keynote speaker who has done us proud by ably and eloquently speaking about the life and works of Prof. Senteza Kajubi; and on how to foster the quality of education in Uganda. Finally, I also sincerely thank the organizers of this memorial lecture for according me the opportunity to serve as the Discussant at this lecture.

2. I am in agreement with Dr Senyonyi's description of the life and accomplishments of Prof William Senteza Kajubi. Personally, I was a post-graduate student in 1990 when Prof. Kajubi was appointed as Vice Chancellor of Makerere University for the second time. As a student, I have very fond memories of his oratory skills and friendliness. As Dr Senyonyi observes, Prof Kajubi had a humble beginning. First, as a "bus driver's son", Kajubi did not have the privilege to attend any special primary school. He went to the school in the neighborhood where other children of his time studied. At that time, almost all primary schools had the same kind of facilities and teachers - unlike today where there are marked differences in the kind of facilities and teachers that the schools have. The current status of education is denying opportunities for many children from humble backgrounds like Prof. Kajubi to excel in their studies. Second, Prof. Kajubi began as a geography teacher and rose through the ranks to become an accomplished university Professor and administrator. Kajubi was someone who loved his teaching job and did it with a passion. Unfortunately, this kind of attribute is now waning among many Ugandan teachers. The current teacher appears to love money and leisure more than his or her teaching job. This attitude of the today's teacher is highly hurting the quality of education in Uganda from the lowest to the highest levels of education. To make matters worse, the Government of Uganda has not come out strongly to motivate the teachers. This has created tension between the teachers and their employers. Yet, as Prof. Kajubi observed: "there is no education system anywhere that is better than the quality of its teachers". Third, Prof. Kajubi was a scholar of undisputable caliber. Even without earning a PhD, Kajubi remained one of the most published scholar of his time. In fact, there is no doubt that Kajubi was a teacher of high quality - an attribute that seem to be lacking in many of the today's teacher. Fourth, Prof. Kajubi was generally a good educational administrator wherever he served. According to Mande (nd), Kajubi began his education leadership in 1959 when he became the Secretary General of Uganda Teachers' Association

and rose through the profession to become the President of the Association of Teacher Education in East and West Africa in the early 1970s. Thereafter, Prof. Kajubi became the Vice Chancellor of Makerere University (1977-79 & 1990-93), the Principal of the Institute of Teacher Education, Kyambogo (1987-89) and later Vice Chancellor of Nkumba University (1994-2008). In fact, Kajubi's leadership was not only in institutions, but also in other fora like committees, councils and associations where several education policies were proposed and later enacted. Indeed, chairing the Education Policy Review Commission of 1987-89 which culminated into the 1992 Government White Paper (GWP) on Education could have been, in my opinion, Kajubi's greatest landmark on the Uganda's education scene. In that Commission, Kajubi and his colleagues did not only propose for the introduction of Universal Primary Education (UPE) and the liberalisation of higher education, but also mooted a host of other worthy ideas. This is why I agree with Dr Senyonyi when he recommends that issues of quality education should be approached from a "broad spectrum spanning nursery, primary, secondary, high school, and higher education, as each of these has peculiar demands". Unfortunately, Dr Senyonyi falls short of stating openly that some of the challenges that the education system in Uganda continues to contend with are as result of the failure by Government to implement some of the key recommendations of the Kajubi Commission. In fact, while the 1992 GWP was based on the review of the Kajubi report, in many cases it clearly diverged from, amended or strengthened recommendations within the review. A case in point was the change in the language policy which was introduced into the curriculum and against which Dr. Senyonyi remarks in his paper: "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." (p.12)

3. In the paper, Dr, Senyonyi attempts to define what quality education is. I agree with him that quality education - as beauty - is a concept that is difficult to define. I also agree with him that quality education needs to be defined in terms of context. In the context of Uganda of today, many individuals are losing out the 'sense' of quality. This, unfortunately, is happening in all spheres of life - including in trade, leadership, music as well as education. We are generally failing to distinguish anything of quality - including quality education. Therefore, there is a need for re-conceptualizing what quality education is and what needs to be done to improve the quality of education in the country.
4. Dr. Senyonyi is right to say that 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" (p.7). However, Dr. Senyonyi appears to ignore the context in which educationists deviate from the truth or facts. The truth is: truth flourishes in the context of trust, respect for one another and tolerance. In Uganda, where these democratic credentials are wanting, teachers often tend to twist facts for the sake of their own survival.
5. I am also concerned with the question Dr Senyonyi raised about what went wrong with our education system where the current educated people are un-willing to work hard so as to earn an honest living. Unfortunately, no scientific studies have been done to un-earth the changes in work attitudes and general behavior that have taken place among Ugandans. Yet according to Sharma (2016), "education is the only one thing that can remove corruption, unemployment and environmental problems" (para 2). I also agree with Dr Senyonyi when he observes that there is a difference between the student of yesteryear and today's student who views education as an entitlement. We are not all sure about the cause of these

unfortunate changes in our education system - but we can all guess that our students are learning these habits from their elders.

6. I am also in agreement with the historical perspective of education in Uganda that Dr Senyonyi described. However, I am interested in the Phelps-Stoke Commission of 1924-25 which recommended for the centralization of education management in Uganda, under the colonial government. Unfortunately, our Government currently appears to be 'impotent' in managing what takes place in the country's education system - particularly in private education institutions, and this is something that is truly hurting the quality of education at all levels in the country.
7. Dr Senyonyi ably reported on the current performance of the country's education sector. He showed that enrolment figures at all levels of education are on the increase. However, he also lamented about the rising rates of school dropouts - especially at primary and secondary school levels. Nonetheless, as gentleman, Dr Senyonyi did not want to attribute many of these weaknesses witnessed in the education sector to the failure by Government to systematically plan and execute its plans. In fact, the capitation grants given to UPE schools which Dr Senyonyi revealed could translate to giving for educating a pupil a paltry UGX. 10,000/= per pupil per year, or UGX. 3,300/= per term is not only a mockery of education funding, but an indicator of lack of good will on the part of Government to offer quality education to the majority of Uganda's children.
8. I am also in agreement with several of the recommendations that Dr Senyonyi has proposed in his paper including: using public-private partnerships to enhance the provision of education, enhancing budgetary allocation to education, conducting regular reviews of the curriculum, building the supervisory capacities of educational agencies/officers, etc. Unfortunately, all these recommendations are truly not new to Ugandans and their Government. What may be new, however, is that these same words of wisdom and plea have

this time round come from Rev. Canon Dr John Senyonyi - another accomplished educationist and servant of God. Probably, this time, they may be taken seriously by concerned stakeholders!

9. In conclusion, I wish to state that I largely agree with the reflections of Dr Senyonyi. However, I suggest that the Government of Uganda should play a centre-stage in addressing the challenges that the education sector is facing. Finally, I suggest for a new quality movement among scholars and policy-makers in Uganda in order enhance the culture of quality improvement and maintenance among Ugandans, or else, the quality of education may persistently continue to decline at our own peril. Chair, I submit!

References

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