



CENTRE for BASIC RESEARCH

Civic Education Training for Leaders: The Role of the National Leadership Institute (NALI), Kyankwanzi



*The Keynote speaker **Brig. Gen. David Kasura-Kyomukama** and the participants who attended the January 31, 2019 Expert Seminar on Civic Education in Uganda held at Centre for Basic Research, Kololo.*

Introduction

Centre for Basic Research (CBR) is implementing a three year project titled: 'Strengthening Evidence-based Democratic Governance Agenda Setting and Engagement by Civil Society in Uganda'. The project is supported by Democracy Governance Facility (DGF). As part of the project, CBR conducts Monthly Expert Seminars on critical Civic Education issues to generate public discussions around selected thematic areas ranging from social, political, religious, cultural and economic perspectives on civic education.

The Monthly Expert Seminars are considered as an important avenue for the convergence between theories and the practices of Civic Education in Uganda in general. They provide opportunities for Civic Education practitioners for engaging with emerging issues from on-going civic education initiatives and researches to understand not only the contribution of the civic education that has been so far undertaken by the state and non-state actors, their approaches, delivery mechanisms and impact, but also the intellectual debates on the appropriateness of the civic knowledge generated in which are embodied the country's core national values and principles.

The Monthly Expert Seminars provide an interactive platform for researchers, academics, policy makers and the general public to continue with the debates on the practical necessities of how civic education can become a better vehicle for providing citizens with skills and tools with which to enter the market place of ideas to engage in a deliberative process in which ideals of the democracy we desire as a country are discussed openly and candidly to generate a minimum consensus aimed at enhancing tolerance of divergent political views and promoting peaceful coexistence.

Through Monthly Expert Seminars participants and/or citizens are enabled to think beyond their current political, occupational, intellectual and cultural dispositions because they engage in critical inquiry into broader issues and conceptualization of civic education as well as discourse on the structural constraints in civic education pedagogy, its practical approaches and strategies as a way to understand how several ways democracy can strengthen citizenship.

In other words, the Monthly Expert Seminars are aimed at influencing the democratic governance processes by enhancing on one hand, the responsiveness of government to needs of citizens through dialogue, and on the other, building a critical mass within the citizenry that understands the importance to listening and appreciating each other's opinions and perspectives.

The theme for the 6th Expert Seminar was: 'Civic Education Training for Leaders: The Role of the National Leadership Institute (NALI), Kyankwanzi'. It was delivered by Brigadier General Kasura Kyomukama, the Director of NALI. The seminar discussants were: Prof. Mwambustya Ndebesa, Research Fellow, Centre for Basic Research, and Senior Lecturer, Makerere University; and John Ssenkumba, PhD Graduate Fellow, Makerere Institute for Social Research (MISR) and Research Fellow, Centre for Basic Research. The seminar was held on January 31, 2019 at Centre for Basic Research offices, Plot 15 Baskerville Avenue, Kololo.

Issues that Emerged from the Keynote presentation

The Director, NALI, Brig. Gen. Kasura told the seminar that civic education should be a subject of interest to anyone with the right conscience who desires genuine development of the country. Indulging in discussions about civic education cannot be left to politicians, as all categories of Ugandans have a stake, including ordinary Ugandans, scientists as well as professional soldiers. This means there is a certain minimum level of knowledge and skills that all citizens require about the country, especially where it is coming from, and it should get where it desire to go, which can only be obtained through concerted efforts.

Institutions such as NALI, among others, are involving in providing knowledge and skills required to foster nationalism in the population, focusing on a presentation of a new interpretation of the history of the country. Part of this process, entails articulating the role of the NRA/NRM revolution that changed the political development of Uganda and the central role played by the UPDF as a people's army. At NALI, where Ugandans of all walks of life and political orientations were welcome, skills imparted are diverse, although the focus was mainly on nurturing leadership skills that will facilitate

the transformation of the country from a peasant society to a middle income status before the end of the next two decades.

In responding to doubts whether NALI offers an environment objective enough to allow different political views to be aired, purveyed especially by government critics in the political opposition, Brig. Gen. Kasura allayed negative mindsets that perceive NALI as a 'propaganda' tool of the NRM government for indoctrination of Ugandans. He argued that NALI offers objective civil-military trainings to conscientize all Ugandans to love their country and make sacrifices to take it forward. He said when the UPDF took over the management of the Institute, as a people's army with a role to play in knowledge creation, management and dissemination, as well as skilling of Ugandan, it also embraced the central role of advancing the leadership training agenda at NALI where an institutional platform is provided for impartial and non-partisan knowledge engagement for the benefit of all Ugandans without any stereotypes, biases or prejudice.

Brig. Gen. Kasura explained to the seminar that courses offered at NALI cover topics such as 'Division of Labour, rights and obligations of citizens'; 'Governance of Society'; 'Social Transformation processes'; 'Understanding the Trajectory of Uganda's Historical Development'; 'Strategic issues of political integration in the East African Community', among others. Trainees are taught to understand democracy as a form of learning about patriotism at national and regional levels. Trainees are taught how democracy entails compromising 'some other interest' and not the utopian notion of pure consensual democracy. Patriotism is taught to enhance understanding of how we can forge a nation. This is because nationality is seen as something 'gained' or 'earned' and not 'a given'. It is embedded in production and therefore driven by material interests. In addition, trainees also learn entrepreneurship to prepare them for self-sufficiency, and military skills to demystify the gun.

Brig. Gen. Kasura intimated to the seminar that when the war of liberation was waged, everyone who joined the struggle regardless of academics and social status was challenged to undergo ideological and political education, in addition to military training. The political education focused mainly on the pre-colonial and post-colonial history of Uganda. This was not theoretical in nature, and was delivered in hands-on manner. Recruits were always challenged about their knowledge of Uganda's history; as well as how, why, and in what ways the country could become decolonized so as to enjoy real independence. Recruits were introduced to the critical knowledge using a historical-materialist analytical framework, which was relevant to understand how the past of Uganda affects the present and the future, and how ultimately the struggle was a fight against domination war was inevitable.

Issues that Emerged from the Plenary Discussions

The seminar learnt that leadership skills are not always in-born or inherited but have to be taught. Such skills make leaders what they are to be able to make others do what is desired either persuasively or through compulsion. Leadership and civic consciousness are driven by material conditions. Ideas are not always born out of experience. Correct mindsets have to be imparted for better outcomes. So leadership has to be taught as an ideological agenda, hence the relevance of institutions that focus on leadership skills training such as NALI, as well as all those who are involved in one form of civic education or another.

In agreement with the keynote speaker, the seminar heard that Uganda has a civic deficit even if schools, religious organizations, civil society, media and the state have done commendable work in civic education. Majority of Ugandans are apathetic in spite of on-going civic education initiatives. Even among those who are knowledgeable, civic consciousness and disposition is lacking as evidenced by high levels of corruption, sectarianism, and intolerance to views and positions of others. Going forward, it was proposed that the country should strive to create a civically competent population. Interventions ought to go beyond the teaching of 'civics' which is largely about obtaining knowledge, to engaging in 'civic education' that entails skills for social transformation and activism.

The participants at the seminar called for more proactive outreach by NALI in order to dispel any fears there might be about what happens at the Institute. In response, the seminar was told that while NALI was open to all categories of people, prospective trainees have to undergo some assessment. Potential trainees are subjected to an aptitude test comprising questions derived from the Primary Seven Social Studies (SST) Syllabus of Uganda. The seminar was informed that many times even university graduates have failed to qualify for admission after failing these admission tests. In addition, potential trainees have to undergo physical fitness test to avoid people getting hurt during drills. The Director NALI extended a one week all expenses paid invitation to CBR and its civic education stakeholders to enroll at NALI and have a feel of the learning that takes place at the Institute.

One of the seminar discussants intimated that it was not questionable that Ugandans have to be patriotic, but how patriotic can they be when those in public positions are not good examples of what patriots should be. Take the example of most Members of Parliament, who are elected to represent their constituencies but once in parliament, they give priority to their personal interests.

Key Policy Messages

There is a need to clarify further the pedagogy and andragogy of civic education in Uganda in light of the best practices and lesson learnt from the NALI training programmes.

NALI needs to undertake Tracer Studies to evaluate the achievements of its training programmes starting from cadre course Number One. This will enable NALI understand the extent to which it had achieved its objective of creating patriotic Ugandans who selflessly love and give back to their country. It would be appropriate for such an evaluation to be undertaken by an external and independent entity. Internally, there should also be a process of lessons' learning, if it is not yet taking place.

The training at NALI should be expanded to target not only political leaders at all levels of government, but also other categories of leaders, in the private sector, religious and faith-based organizations, as well as interested ordinary citizens. There should also be a way in which NALI should open its doors to the political opposition because the skills imparted are good for all Ugandans.

In light of the proposals in the National Development Plan II (NDPII) which recommended that all able bodied Ugandans should go for national service, there is a need for NALI to find ways of re-orienting its programmes to accommodate the possibility of an expanded mandate.



The Keynote speaker, Brig. Gen. David Kasura-Kyomukama, making a presentation at January 2019 Monthly Expert Seminar on Civic Education in Uganda.