

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF UGANDA TEXTBOOK ACADEMIC AND NONFICTION
AUTHORS ASSOCIATION (UTANA)

THE BUSINESS OF BEING AN AU- THOR: AUTHORS RECOVERY STRATEGY FOR POST COVID19

Reported by the Moderator,

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da Textbook Academic and Nonfic-
tion Authors Association (UTANA),**

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Approach

Writers and Translators Association (NFFO) organized a wakeup call Hybrid Seminar on “The Business of Being an Author” on the theme: Authors Recovery Strategy For Post Covid-19. The main aim of the seminar was to expose Ugandan authors to global trends and developments in authorship and provide strategic direction for mitigating the challenges caused by Covid-19. The seminar was held on the 26th November 2021, from 11:00am to 2:00pm at Silver Springs Hotel, Bugolobi (Physical meeting) and a Webinar (ID 95302676389).

Introduction

Globally, authors aim at adding to the world’s store of literature or knowledge content and contributing towards life-long learning for the transformation agenda of society. In particular, an author engages in writing in order to share knowledge, adventure and creativity, popularize an idea, build a legacy and make a living. For a long time, many Ugandan authors have taken authorship as a secondary source of income and thus depend much on their main jobs for earning a living. In the year 2019, when Covid-19 hit the globe, Uganda was not spared. The pandemic equally affected authors, particularly of primary and secondary schools, who were severely hurt. This is because many of them entirely depended on teaching in schools and could not cope with life to enable them do their authorship work. To recover from the limbo of unpreparedness among authors, Uganda textbook Academic and Non-Fiction Authors Association (UTANA) in collaboration with Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES), International Authors Forum (IAF), and Norwegian Non Fiction

UTANA INTERNATIONAL AUTHORS FORUM NFFO
UGANDA TEXTBOOK-ACADEMIC AND NON-FICTION AUTHORS' ASSOCIATION (UTANA)

TOPIC: BUSINESS OF BEING AN AUTHOR
FRIDAY 26 NOVEMBER 2021 11:00-13:30 (EAT), 09:00-11:30 (GMT)

Maggie Gee
Novelist, Professor Bath Spa University

Jonathan Kamesana
Commissioner, Ministry of Education and Sports, Uganda

Prof. Elisam Magara
Chair of UTANA Host

Emmanuel Otim
Deputy Head Teacher, City High School

Ely Nyamboko Sabiti
Professor, Makerere University

You can register for this event by following the link below:
https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_IDt8Vz9FGgGskD-5naukg

For more information, please contact Ms. Racheal Nakanya: admin@utanauganda.org

The seminar hosted by UTANA and moderated by Professor Elisam Magara, the Chairman UTANA and a professor at Makerere University was graced by four speakers who tackled different areas. Professor Maggie Gee, from Bath Spa University, representing the International Authors Forum, gave a talk on “Creating a Living: Authorship Global Trends and Lessons for Developing Countries”. Prof. Ely Nyamboko Sabiti, author of Agriculture Principles and Practices for O-level, A-Level and BTVET, of Busitema University, gave a practical experience on the Business of Being an Au-

thor. To get exposure on the situation of authors for primary and secondary schools, Mr. Emmanuel Otim, Deputy Head Teacher City High School, exposes the challenges and reflections on balancing teaching career and authorship in schools. To guide on recovery from the limbo of unpreparedness among authors, Mr. Jonathan Kamwana, the Commissioner, Department of Teacher Education, Training and Development (TETD) presented on the “Education Sector Strategic Directions in Promoting Writing and Authorship”. The speakers were able to reach online and physical audience exhibited by interactive discussions during the presentations. The IAF hosted the Webinar under the guidance of Athanasios Venitsanopoulos.

Presentations on Business of Being an Author

Commenting on global trends in authorship, Professor Maggie Gee projects the business of writing into two parts: one done alone and the other with others. It is a personal responsibility as an author to sit down and explore ideas and put them in order, and write before worrying about publishing. The second part is being with and learning from other people with different skills. The author does the writing, editing, marketing and hopes to earn money out of writing, a role that requires him/her to work very hard, believe in the job, a role without which, publishers have nothing to publish. You have to seek for help, ensure you have a good computer and a good working chair and also do exercises for physical fitness.

Giving his practical experience of over 36 years as a professor, Elly Nyambobo Sabiti contends that having passion in writing is the first step of a successful author. He links his interest in writing to the personal ambition developed early in secondary school, writing and research training and mentorship acquired at undergraduate and post graduate education. As he himself explains: “When I entered university, in Agriculture, we had good training of how to write”. In the process observation skills, asking questions, research skills, and report writing are acquired which are essential to authorship. The research skills acquired in training and engagement in scientific research, ushered Sabitii into writing articles and book chapters that enabled him to earn a living through promotions, paid-for travels, attending conferences, which provided content input to his dream of becoming a book author. Having connec-

tions is one way to support the authorship process. Accepting professional challenge from others, connecting to previous relationships of colleagues, mentorship and team work, humility and support from the publishing house in terms of accepting to publish your book, and advice are motivational factors to lift up one’s authorship. Like Maggie, Sabitii expresses that an author needs to perform their expected role of writing very well, which includes writing, and ensuring reviewing, editing, and marketing among others are done well. All these require patience as you focus on your roles and responsibilities of writing. As he recalls: “the first draft produced seven hundred pages...it took us about 6 years to finish publishing 3 books”. In addition, attitude change and accepting other parties’ contribution like in reviewers and editors to your work is very crucial. Sabitii recalls that “the process of reviewing was by the people I looked at as junior yet they were reviewing my work”. Earning a living is an expectation of every author. For Sabitii, his ability to produce three books which are now found on Amazon, widely read by schools and farmers and society in East African countries gives him a sense of pride and satisfaction, which turned out to be a big achievement to him. On top of being an author, performing other responsibilities like editing a number of journals, editorial work, book review, mentoring and supervision, venting of papers for promotion are some of the things that tie him together to the business of being an author.

Explaining the need for “balancing teaching career and authorship”, Otim Emmanuel echoes what *Albert Einstein once said, “Education is not the learning of facts. It’s rather the training of the mind to think”*. Otim explains that for a teacher to perform his prime task of imparting knowledge, values, skills, attitudes and competencies to a learner, it requires him/her to use relevant tools including books and instructional materials. As required by the Teachers’ Professional Code of Conduct, a teacher is expected among other things to: Devote time to duty but also show personal responsibility. For example, to develop his/her subject, a teacher should be a constant reader of books and information materials as a strategy to help broaden the outlook of his/her learners. Further, to enrich and enliven his/her teaching, teachers often are involved in writing of books and/or contribute to various instructional materials. Referring to his experience, Otim noted that authorship is a business and thus it requires investing a lot in terms of time,

money, equipment like computers, skills like design and typesetting and editing, and publishing costs. This situation makes authors dependent on other parties like publishing houses for support, typesetters, editors and printers. Lastly, Otim advised teachers to have something from which they can earn some money besides the salary they get from teaching. Many things can be done in this respect such as authorship.

Challenges

Many problems in the business of being an author are a result of history, Maggie asserts. She said that many writers would prefer writing in their local languages but the colonial history did not help in the development of writing in local languages. Authorship she observed “is a great social service to education and promotes sharing of knowledge and ideas. Therefore, there is a need for writers to claim their universal right to payment of work done and payment for the use of our work is essential as is copyright. So this would be something authors should fight for collectively though they desire/need help from the government. According to Sabiti, “I had never looked at authorship as a business to make money”. But with new trends in academic authorship that demand money in addition to the content, authors need to wake up and demand to be enumerated for their efforts. To mitigate for Post-COVID-19, opportunities of online technology have opened up new modes of publishing, there is however a need for corresponding support for access in terms of connectivity and cost on data. All the speakers bring out the issue of balancing academics and authorship as a major challenge. Otim advises that care should be taken to see to it that those activities do not interfere with the teaching process or the teacher’s obligations. Otim enumerates some of the challenges to include: design and production of authors works, transparency on declaration of books and proceeds from the sale of books and expressed unfavorable remuneration on royalties of 10% for authors, inability of some publishers not signing publishers’ contracts with their authors. As an author, you need to identify a gap and must produce a product that is going to fill a vacuum, Sabiti advises. He said he found that agricultural books in Uganda were scarce, so his book aiming at filling a gap in the education sector.

Strategic Directions in Promoting Writing and Authorship in Uganda

Generally quality education is key to human-centered capital, Mr. Jonathan Kamwana while addressing the audience on the subject of providing direction on the agenda for education with regard to authorship. Kamwana noted that the considerations for teachers, parents, learners/children and instructional materials become a priority. Learners use these materials to acquire knowledge, skills, values, confidences, some of which are usually not examined but are valued in life. A number of frameworks like Vision 2040, National Development Plan III, and Government White Paper on Education have guided the sector to develop the human capital as a factor for moving this country to a modern society. According to Uganda’s national constitution, education is a right and thus access to equity and quality of education. As guided by Government White Paper on Education Sector 1992, the goal of education is to promote technical and cultural skills to promote development goals. “As authors, you need to know “where we are coming from and where we are going, if you have to prosper in writing business”, Kamwana advised. To ensure delivery of quality education in the country and enhance efficiency and effectiveness of sports services at all levels, learners need to access reading materials e.g. books. Generally, TETD encourages the development of teachers to engage in authorship and the department is ready to partner with UTANA in writing books. Whereas online books are being promoted globally, the challenge is on ability for access by people in remote areas and inability for some people to purchase the gadgets needed. The target is in writing of books to be put in the hands of the learners/students as a way forward. The unfortunate thing is that teachers “have been a source of discouragement for learners to read” by selling their notes to children, Kamwana lamented. In that process, “teachers kill creativity, curiosity”. a situation that has made children just to cram, and thus cannot make analyses. As a way forward, he said the Ministry is in the process of coming out with a policy to support the writing of books, a strategy that is hoped to improve the reading culture in the country. As a department, he added “we are ready to collaborate with authors and to support this initiative of promoting the business of being an author” Kamwana concluded”: Let’s create reading and writing at the right stage by preparing students to write at an early an early stage”.

Observations

Maggie was asked why a right to remuneration is a solution to authors. Do authors have a right to be remunerated or it is a social service that they should write? In her response, Maggie contends that writers must be remunerated because there is a universal right to payment for work done and payment for the use of our work is essential as is copyright. Without those two principles writers can never make a living. Writers need to balance their time between teaching and writing, we need help from our governments and authors would do well in engaging writing project that brings in an enormous amount of money to contribute to the thriving creative economy of the State. Prof Sabitii was asked to advise on the importance of relationships and connections for the upcoming writers. He noted that relationships are very important for networking. He stressed that partnerships and developing relationships are crucial and advised writers to avoid the island situation. To Kamwana, there was need to incorporate reading as part of the timetable, involvement of teachers in the development of learning materials and self-study materials and a need to address/ build capacity for authors of pamphlets. Otim challenged authors to change as per the changing curriculum that guides on standard curriculum, scope, topical issues and academic subjects. Manage the challenges of on-line books, address the competing activities to writing books, in addition to attending to our duties (teaching and assigned duties) Otim cautioned teachers. He advised them to develop capacity in ICT skills, have the right environment for them to do their work and possess basic equipment (Laptop) to use. Like any other business, an author needs to have basic resources to invest in authorship and publishing of the work. He challenged the audience that “Suppose you were being paid better by government, would you still consider continuing writing (authoring books)?”

The following were recommended:

- Authors should commit themselves to write quality books. A Teacher-Authors working Group was formed to promote quality authorship in schools.
- Schools to create time within the timetable to make the learners read at least some work every day of the week.
- Teachers should endeavor to give work to learners which involves them to look for information outside and write.

- The learners should know that the teacher’s role is to facilitate learning and therefore it is their obligation to seek for knowledge.
- The public should be encouraged to buy materials authored by Ugandans as a way of supporting authors.
- We hold regular meetings/ seminars of this nature to inspire our teachers to write books, that’s one way you can say I have contributed.
- The country should recognize writing as an essential area. It’s only through writing that we can preserve knowledge that we need.
- Stakeholders and partners to encourage partnership and mentorship programmes in writing to utilize diversity of skills and knowledge among authors



Teacher-Authors Working Group

As we turn this into business, we also have to know that we are moving into an era of digitalization

When books are written, government especially MoES should take them up as important reference materials

Lastly, the Ministry should revise curriculum and/or integrate authorship in its operations as a mandatory competence developed at different ladders in education system.