

UGANDAN DUTCH ALUMNI URGED TO EMBRACE CRITICAL THINKING

By Herbert Musoke

Ugandan alumni of Dutch universities have been urged to emulate the culture of critical thinking that defines education in the Netherlands. The call was made by Prof. Rose Namara, chief of research and innovation at the Uganda Management Institute (UMI), during a Netherlands Alumni Association meeting at the residence of the Netherlands' ambassador in Kololo, Kampala.

The meeting brought together Ugandans who studied in the Netherlands to apply their knowledge and skills towards national development.

Namara said Dutch institutions emphasise teaching students how to think rather than what to think.

"Netherlands education



Prof. Namara speaking during the Netherlands Alumni Association of Uganda's meeting in Kololo, Kampala

has a lot of critical inquiry, debates, professors engage with students knowing that students have something to say," she recalled, drawing

from her experience in the 1980s while pursuing a master's and doctorate in the Netherlands.

She explained that students

are trained to engage holistically.

"For example, you may look at me and see me just as a woman, but I am also a professor, a teacher, a mother and a wife. All those identities matter," she said.

LINKING EDUCATION TO POLICY

Dutch education connects science to policy, a lesson Uganda must embrace, Namara emphasised.

"We need to understand that if we do not influence governance and policy spaces we will face challenges," she said.

Following her studies in the Netherlands, she spearheaded a thinktank at UMI that has been operational for over 15 years, working with ministries to shape policy.

Namara called for a revision of Uganda's education system to prioritise collective success over individual achievement.

The association was

established in 2018 with the ambassador as patron, according to the secretary, Jackson Odong.

Most activities are volunteer-driven, including innovation projects, short courses, consultancies, internships and advocacy, said Dr Doreen Tuhirwe, the chairperson of the association.

"We have over 2,000 alumni who studied in the Netherlands, but only 350 are registered members. We are still searching for others," Odong said.

STRONG RELATIONS

Daniel Opio, a Ugandan development policy advisor and an alumnus of Erasmus University in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, where he earned a master of arts in development studies at the International Institute of Social Studies, said the interactive multicultural learning environment sharpened

SUPPORT AND PARTNERSHIPS

Every year, 110,000 international students study in the Netherlands, according to Quispel Fredrieke, the Netherlands Ambassador to Uganda.

"If you went to universities in the Netherlands, you carry pieces of the Dutch spirit of collaboration. I am excited to see how we can strengthen relationships, do business and help develop Uganda," she said.

Fredrieke encouraged alumni to apply their knowledge in areas such as food security, health and business development.

his critical thinking and strengthened his ability to link theory to real policy reform.

"I work with Enabel in Uganda as a labour rights and social dialogue expert. During my studies in the Netherlands, I specialised in social justice, deepening my understanding of human rights, gender, conflict and inclusive development," he said.