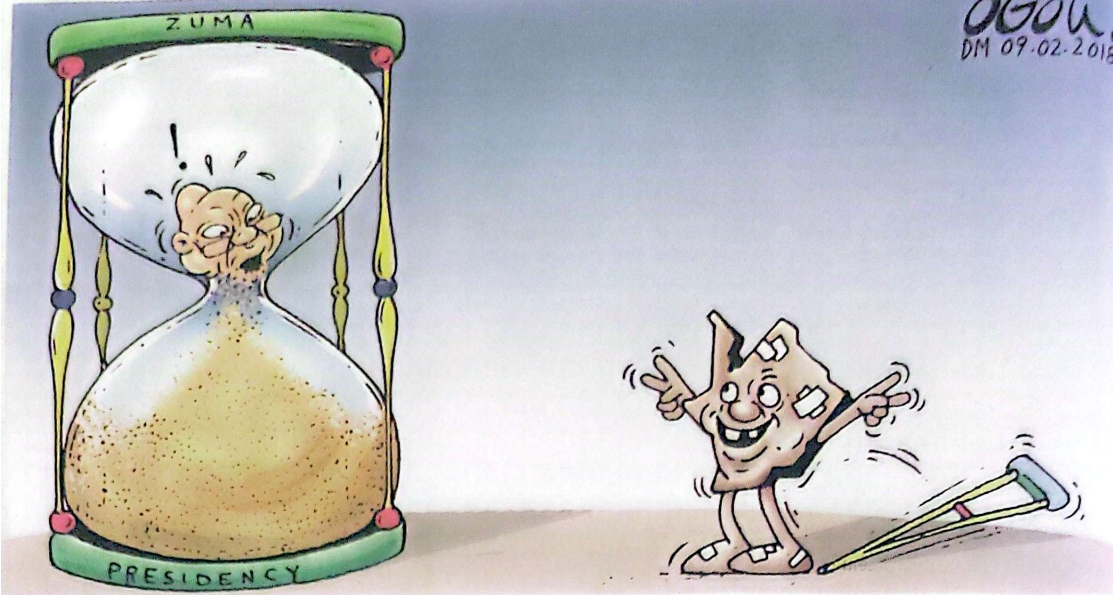


CARTOON. South Africa's ruling ANC party national executive committee has asked president Jacob Zuma to leave office.



MUWANGA BATUUKA > DEMOCRACY

Civic education makes citizens accountable and responsive

The renowned philosopher Aristotle once said persons must know both how to rule and how to obey. For many Ugandans, the 32 years of NRM government have been of dutiful obedience.

The ruling regime on the other hand, has been reluctant to obey laws or take advice from outside its circle.

Civic education is good for all citizens because it teaches us to be accountable and responsive to needs of the persons we serve and the nation as a whole. Although still work in progress, the American dream did not happen by accident.

It was the deliberate outcome of civic education that dates back to the 'federal papers' of Hamilton. With their new found freedom from United Kingdom, America needed consistent predictable practices that inspire confidence.

In their vision of an independent America, the founding fathers came up with the idea of universal education; used the tax revenue previously paid to the UK government to build public schools for all children, except the slaves.

The next step was to ensure that the universal education benefits the state. At which time, universal education was merged with the American civic education curriculum.

In their view, to create responsible citizens required more than teaching the basic mechanics of government and inculcating students with loyalty to America and her democratic ideals. If Uganda is to be a democracy, civic education would then become an educa-

Integrity. The idea that leadership is based on academic qualifications is wrong. Politics should be based on integrity while public service should attract academic and professional qualifications. The youth of today and tomorrow need to know about opportunities available to them irrespective of their 'tribe' or ethnic origin. We must restore dignity and integrity in government.

tion for self-government. This is when citizens are actively involved in their own governance; they do not passively accept the pronouncements or concede to the demands of others.

Meaningful citizen engagement must be based on informed, critical reflection, and on the understanding and acceptance of the rights and responsibilities that go with being a member of a society.

Stanford University papers define civic education broadly to include processes that influence people's beliefs, commitments, capabilities, and actions as members or prospective members of a community. It is not always intentional or deliberate; institutions and families transmit values and norms that are shared with others to ultimately build trust and confidence in the future. It is clear that civic education is not

limited to schooling and the education of children and youth. Families, governments, churches and the media can also contribute to this learning through meaningful engagement with fellow citizens.

As an example, Alexis de Tocqueville, a French thinker views "Town meetings brought within people's reach, teach persons how to engage and relate to each other".

This idea is not new to Uganda since all her traditional societies had some form of *Bitawuluzi* through which citizens participated in local matters.

However, these social structures have since been replaced by a top-down LC system. More than ever before, Uganda needs to re-think how it engages citizens as it prepares for her renewal as a nation state.

We will spell out what is expected of a citizen and what we expect from those, who seek to lead and teach this to children from an early age. The idea that leadership is based on academic qualifications is wrong. Politics should be based on integrity while public service should attract academic and professional qualifications.

The youth of today and tomorrow need to know about opportunities available to them irrespective of their tribe or ethnic origin. We must restore dignity and integrity in government by doing away with the "envelope" culture as instituted by Mr Museveni.

Mr Batuuka is the spokesperson of Ugandan Democratic Federation