Knowledge for Transformation in Colombia and Uganda

Bita Correa* and Joseph Lample†

Development in Transition: Rethinking Rural Futures | DOI: 10.65566/193f9v3y

Abstract: *Over the last fifty years, FUNDAEC (*Fundación para la Aplicación y Enseñanza de las Ciencias*) has pioneered a distinctive approach to rural development in Colombia, defining "development" not as a modernization package to be delivered but as a universal aspiration that integrates material progress with moral and spiritual empowerment. In this conversation from the summer of 2025, Bita Correa, Executive Director of FUNDAEC, and Joseph Lample, Programs Lead at Ugandan sister organization Kimanya-Ngeyo, trace the evolution of this philosophy and practice from the mountains of Colombia's Norte del Cauca region to rural communities in East Africa. Centering their dialogue on the Preparation for Social Action (PSA) program, Correa and Lample explore how a shared curriculum can empower rural populations to become the protagonists of their own development.*

The conversation reveals the transformative potential of this approach through concrete examples of Ugandan teachers who shift from viewing themselves as passive dispensers of information to "scientists" of their own classrooms, integrating environmental stewardship into subjects as diverse as mathematics and Kiswahili. Moving beyond the binary of "global" versus "local" knowledge, Correa and Lample articulate a method in which rural actors engage with modern science and global ideas on their own terms, becoming equal partners in the generation, application, and dissemination of knowledge. Ultimately, they offer a hopeful vision for sustainable development where rural communities serve as equal partners in the advancement of a global civilization.

* Bita Correa is the Executive Director of FUNDAEC. Correspondence: direccion@fundaec.org.

† Joseph Lample is Programs Lead at Kimanya-Ngeyo in Uganda. Correspondence: jlample@kimanya.org.

Benjamin Davis: This conversation explores the work of two development organizations, FUNDAEC (*Fundación para la Aplicación y Enseñanza de las Ciencias* [Foundation for the Application and Teaching of Sciences]) in Colombia and its sister organization, Kimanya-Ngeyo in Uganda.[1] Both FUNDAEC and Kimanya-Ngeyo are development organizations that share a common educational curriculum, the Preparation for Social Action (PSA) program, which FUNDAEC developed in Colombia and later adapted for use in Uganda.

Bita and Joseph, you both have doctoral degrees and are well-versed in the critiques of prevailing development thought and practices. Latin American scholars, in particular, are pushing the frontiers of "post-development" thought. And yet, you both are still working for and holding onto this idea of "development," though it means something different from how, say, the World Bank might define it. What does "development" mean to you?

Joseph Lample: Where things start for us, and why I believe we are committed to this concept, is that there is a very distinct conception of development that people are often reacting to. The idea of "development," as it predominates in social science and political discourse today, tends to imagine a type of industrialization particular to the West, a material advancement that some parts of the world have already "achieved."

The version of development that we are considering is instead one that is an aspiration for all people equally. It's not predetermined. It speaks to what we view as the core nature of human beings—that we are not just material, existing physically, but that there is also a moral and spiritual element to our existence. Therefore, development should give as much attention to spirituality as it does to materiality.

What is often called development tends to focus on a form of material advancement that is not aligned with these spiritual principles. It accepts a large disparity between wealth and poverty. It accepts the pursuit of material advancement in ways that are detrimental to the environment and are unsustainable. This is not the vision we have in mind. It's not something that's already achieved. It's not a package that some can bestow on others. It's a pursuit all people have a responsibility to engage in.

As with many things in language, rather than abandon a concept because of a single definition—however commonplace—there is value in propagating a new, potentially more constructive meaning. We're saying that the prominent conceptualization of development is not the same thing as what we view as a global enterprise that all must engage in. FUNDAEC and its

[1] This conversation, which was facilitated for this volume and moderated by Benjamin P. Davis and Kerilyn Schewel, was held in June 2025 via video conference call. The transcript that follows has been edited and condensed for clarity.

programming uphold the idea that all people have a responsibility to contribute to the advancement of a global civilization.

This is something that takes inspiration from the writings of the Bahá'í Faith, which also inspires Kimanya-Ngeyo. That's why I feel attached to this concept—because it has meaning when you articulate it clearly and invite people to participate. FUNDAEC has always been intentional about making its guiding concepts explicit. This creates a shared conceptual framework, a paradigm we are comfortable working within because we have taken the time to engage with these definitions.

Bita Correa: I think we would agree with many of the critiques that have been directed towards the concept of development or what has been done in its name. We're not naïve, nor do we think it has been a perfect enterprise. But at the same time, as Joseph said, you don't abandon an idea or a word just because it has been misused or misinterpreted. You can redefine words. That's what we've been trying to do, both in what we say about certain concepts and, more importantly, in how we work. I think that when you do things differently, and are consistent in that, you can ultimately redefine a concept. And that is what we are doing. We are redefining the concept while not defending the ways in which the word has been misused in the past.

Benjamin: We'd like to learn more about the places and communities where you're working. Could you tell us about the history of the regions, the livelihoods, and the cultures where you work?

Joseph: Of course. I'll share some pieces about Uganda, though I speak only from some personal experience and research, not as an insider. Uganda is an East African country and a former British colony. The country is partially understood as being divided between the south and the north—the south has Bantu-speaking populations, a more developed economy, and greater political influence, while the north is largely inhabited by Nilotic-speaking groups that have experienced significant economic marginalization.

The center of colonial activity was largely in the south, so the south has become more prominent in terms of culture, language, and where power exists—the institutions, the capital Kampala, and the main airport are all in the south. While Uganda is a multiparty democracy, we've had the same president for over thirty years. English is the primary language of instruction and commerce, but you'll also find Luganda, the language of the capital region, widely in use.

In regard to the population, Uganda is quite young: almost three-quarters of the population is under the age of thirty. The economy largely centers around agriculture. It's an equatorial country with two rainy and two dry seasons, making it quite lush, especially in the south. Its major exports include coffee and sugar, with many smallholder farms throughout the country.

Something specific about Uganda is that, while there are urban centers around the country, most people, regardless of whether they live there or not, still tend to maintain very strong ties to their birth villages and communities. At various times in the life of an individual, they actively maintain these connections. People who primarily work in urban contexts will still go back for holidays, to deal with land issues, and for other family obligations. These ongoing ties form one defining characteristic of people's lives here.

Education in the country has its challenges. The school system has primary, secondary, and tertiary programs, but the majority of education happens at the primary level. There's a very small percentage that transitions from primary to secondary and an even smaller one to tertiary education. Correspondingly, there's a very small middle class in the country. Most people are living on subsistence farming activities, though you have an emerging middle class that largely centers around urban contexts like Kampala. There is a decentralized system of governance where many powers are delegated to the district level, but key policies like education tend to emanate from the center out, with regional bodies mostly involved in implementation.

Family ties are very strong in the country. Cultural willingness to support one another also runs very strong. The general cost of living can be quite high—food prices have gone up over the past few years, education is costly, healthcare is costly, and marriage is another costly activity. It's quite common for people to turn to their community, whether coworkers, friends, or family, when it comes to being able to provide for the things that are needed. That's part of the culture.

Bita: It is difficult to briefly describe the complex history and dynamics of Colombia, but it is fair to say that Colombia is an extremely diverse country. This refers to both its nature—it's the second most biodiverse country in the world—but also in terms of its culture and regions. The country has many different regions, ethnic groups, languages, and microclimates. We have the Caribbean coast, the Pacific coast, the Amazon, the plains, the three ranges of the Andes mountains—all with their own particularities. Yet, at the same time, maybe even as a testament to this diversity, there is a very strong and shared national identity that unites the country.

When speaking about Colombia, it is also important to acknowledge its violent and fractured past. These diverse regions I mentioned have suffered from various forms of violence from different armed groups over time: the government, paramilitaries, guerrillas, and other criminal bands. The country also suffers from vast inequality between groups, a tendency toward power centralization, and, lately, increased political polarization. Right now, social violence is very much on the rise, which does not make it an easy place to work.

Navigating a complex social reality has been part of the context that FUNDAEC has worked in for the past fifty years and in which we continue to work right now.

Kerilyn Schewel: Thank you both for that context. Could you each share a little about your organizations and how you came to work with them?

Bita: FUNDAEC is a Colombian development organization that just turned fifty. This anniversary has made us reflect on our purpose. If I had to sum it up, I would say that FUNDAEC began with a group of individuals asking two central questions: How do we help individuals become the protagonists of their own development? And how do we empower individuals and communities to participate in their own paths, to become agents of change?

In trying to answer these questions, the centrality of knowledge became apparent—both knowledge about the material world and knowledge about the spiritual world. For example, as humans we need to grapple with big existential questions, such as questions about our identity and purpose, and, at the same time, learn how to carry out concrete actions—in our case, around service to the community.

Another core belief which has shaped FUNDAEC's work is that every human being can contribute to the betterment of the world. In the case of development work, this means that we believe that the degree and complexity of issues imply that any solutions are not only going to come from policy change or from a sort of top-down approach but, rather, that solutions require *everyone's* participation. They require everyone to be thinking about them, to be creative, and to contribute ideas. Neither one person nor one group will have all the answers.

In programmatic terms, one of the first programs that FUNDAEC developed is the tutorial learning system known by its Spanish acronym, SAT (*Sistema de Aprendizaje Tutorial* [System for Tutorial Learning]). The program was the result of FUNDAEC's early work in trying to learn about the questions I mentioned before with a group of students. This effort became known as "engineers in rural well-being." The work with this group of students became the foundation of the curriculum FUNDAEC developed.

Parallel to the curriculum being developed, the organization was grappling with questions about program delivery and growth. Ultimately, the program was structured around tutors who live in the same communities as their students and receive specific training in the curriculum.

In the early 1970s in Colombia, there was no large-scale secondary education available for rural areas. While there was universal primary education, the same had not been achieved for secondary education across the country. In many cases, secondary education was available in larger semi-urban centers or heads of municipalities and students had to either travel long distances or move to an urban center to access secondary education, so there was a great need for a program like the one FUNDAEC developed. The SAT program was unique in that it was designed specifically for rural areas and not simply adapted from an urban-centered curriculum;

its tutorial methodology was flexible for dispersed populations; and it allowed people to stay in their communities to work for their communities. That focus on a rural reality was foundational for the success of the program. The curriculum wasn't thinking about a student living in an urban center with no access to land; it always had in mind a student living in a rural area.

Eventually, the Ministry of Education of Colombia certified the SAT program as equivalent to a high school program and several organizations began implementing it. At one point, the program was present in seventeen out of thirty-five departments (administrative divisions) in the country.

As interest grew in the program outside of Colombia, FUNDAEC decided to revise the first level (the "promoter" level) of SAT, translate it into English, and make it more universal, which led to the creation of the Preparation for Social Action (PSA) program in 2006. The PSA program was then shared with several nascent organizations, the majority of them in Africa.

It's also important to note that PSA is a non-formal, non-degree-conferring program. That was another thing we had learned as an organization from our experience with SAT. Going with a full, accredited program meant having to work with ministries of education, which was complex and had curricular implications, such as making sure that students were meeting the national requirements for a high school diploma. At its core, the curriculum seeks to approach knowledge as a whole and, while understanding that sometimes knowledge needs to be separated into specific areas so that it can be accessed, it is not inherently fragmented. To address this issue, FUNDAEC uses the notion of a "capability" as a way to integrate knowledge, and this entire way of structuring the curriculum was oftentimes difficult to explain to experts who were looking for a computer class, or an ethics class, or a geography class, and could not find these exactly replicated in the textbooks. So, when we introduced the program internationally, we decided not to go the formal route, instead working directly with organizations like Kimanya-Ngeyo to implement the program and learn about it in their contexts.

Joseph: My task is made much easier by following Bita, because the story of Kimanya-Ngeyo is the story of an organization inspired by the work of FUNDAEC.

Kimanya-Ngeyo was founded in 2007 by two individuals familiar with FUNDAEC's work. They moved to Uganda with the intention of exploring how the PSA program could be adapted to a new context. In the prominent language families of Uganda, Bantu and Nilotic, the words "kimanya" and "ngeyo" hold similar meanings—knowledge, understanding. Thus the name Kimanya-Ngeyo is intended to represent the diverse communities of Uganda and the central role that the pursuit of knowledge plays in development.

Kimanya-Ngeyo was among the first organizations in a network that emerged to explore this adaptation, and we were guided initially by FUNDAEC through training and direct support over

a number of years. We received training locally for our staff on how to implement the program and on how to facilitate the study of PSA materials, as well as general guidance on the vision of how to create an approach to raising up individuals who can contribute to local development through the generation, application, and dissemination of relevant knowledge.

FUNDAEC visited three to four times a year for about six years. It was a very interesting process because we were forming as a new organization at the same time. One year you find yourself training a group of people, then the next year you're training an entirely different group of people, and the year after that is almost an entirely new group. In this way, it took time for institutional knowledge about implementing the PSA program to take hold.

We wanted to determine whether the program was relevant for the Ugandan context, but to answer that, we first had to answer another question: Do we have the right people with the right training to do it justice? It didn't take long to see that the material itself spoke to the individuals who participated. But even then, what we've found is that we have never had the same level of success in implementing the exact approach to PSA as FUNDAEC used in Colombia.

One of the primary challenges is the population with whom we are working. In Colombia, PSA could function as an after-school activity. But in Uganda, students spend almost the entirety of their waking hours in school. Because of that, we found it challenging to find this extracurricular space. We were always asking, "Is it that we're not preparing our people well enough, or is it that we've not explained it well enough?" That's always been a question.

At the end of the day, because of the fact that students were not so available, we struggled to have a reliable population of participants. You would have a lot of turnover. You would have maybe thirty people, and then twenty of those individuals managed to form groups; of those twenty, ten of them managed to maintain groups for more than a year. Then you started over again, and you were constantly in this uncertain place.

The ones who did manage to persist for some time proved that the PSA materials were valuable for their personal growth, but it was hard to sustain a consistent program. Despite all that, we managed to have a good amount of participation over the years. There's been close to a thousand people that have completed the study of all the materials. There's a few thousand that have studied at least the first sets of books in the program.

So, throughout this process, we have explored ways to make use of the educational content of PSA to reach populations that might be particularly receptive. Where we've had the most success since 2015 was in creating a program that specifically targeted schoolteachers. We developed a yearlong training program using a selection of about six units from PSA and three units from a related curriculum, Discourse on Social Action. We've studied these nine materials with over

2,000 teachers. This is a population that is very receptive because the program speaks directly to their reality. The goal of raising "promoters of community well-being" is still at the heart, but we're accomplishing it with a reduced amount of time and content. This is where we have evolved as an organization—exploring how to make this powerful content fit our local reality while not deviating from its core purpose.

Today, Kimanya-Ngeyo has emerged as a sister organization to FUNDAEC—a local, Ugandan organization established specifically to contribute to the advancement of our country. We view the PSA materials as the key tool driving this vision of education for development.

Kerilyn: How is a teacher who's been through the PSA curriculum different from one who hasn't?

Joseph: Very quickly, you see a lot of change in their attitude toward education. There's a reimagining of the concept of education in light of what FUNDAEC teaches. Teachers see themselves contributing to a much larger project of social action and development rather than just playing a narrow role in education. Before, they might think: "I do my small piece in the project of schooling. I teach my piece, someone else teaches theirs, and I just make sure they memorize what I tell them." Now, they feel they have more of a role to play. They don't simply reduce their work to a set of predefined tasks given to them since college that they repeat year after year. They recognize that they are empowering individuals to transform the world around them.

We especially see a renewed focus on character. Even if I'm a teacher of math, I have to think about the character of my students. You see teachers becoming a lot more creative, rediscovering their love of education. Now there's an experimental, exploratory process. I have to get to know my students. I have to see where their strengths are. I have to really think about what it takes to help someone understand these concepts. I have to ask: How do I connect this to larger themes?

You have a Kiswahili teacher who says, "Look, I can teach Kiswahili while also talking about environmental issues, which inspired me when I studied the PSA material. I can help my students do projects related to improving the environment or waste management, all while we're studying Kiswahili."

They get inspired by this concept of seeing themselves as scientists. A scientist who is a teacher is much more than someone who transfers information. It's someone who has theories, devises plans, tests those plans, and refines them over time. It's a very big transformation.

This parallels the transformation we see in other adults who participate in PSA. The transformation is evident in how they see themselves, their commitment to service to their

community, and their desire for their work to do more than just benefit themselves personally. They develop an appreciation for their own agency and see that social reality is fluid and can be constructed through their own contributions.

Bita: But when one talks about impact, it's important to think about the aims of a program. Its impact on what? A program has a set of aims or a purpose, and you work towards that. If you achieve those, then you're having the desired impact. The main goal of the PSA program is to help individuals become "promoters of community well-being." We think of this not just as a title they receive, but as an identity they develop over time.

Then the questions are: What is a promoter? What does a promoter do? What does it mean to promote your community's well-being? Does it mean you have to be concerned about your own welfare and your family's? Does it mean you begin to carry out economic projects? Does it mean you become involved in the environment? Does it mean you go into leadership positions in local government? Does it mean your family structure, or how you influence your family, improves? Does it mean you're a better son or daughter? Does it mean you decide to go to university? Does it mean the profession you choose is one for improving the well-being of others?

Answers to these questions can define what it means to become a promoter of community well-being. We have cases of everything I've described. The impact should be measured against this purpose. In Uganda, the idea has revolved around a more specific question: What does a promoter of community well-being look like in the specific profession of a teacher?

Kerilyn: This is a perfect segue to one of the reasons we wanted to get you both together: to reflect on how a common curriculum is being used in very different settings and what you are learning about the relationship—and tensions—between "global" and "local" approaches to rural education. Joseph, can you tell us more about how you understand these tensions in the field of education for development?

Joseph: The way I see it, this conversation about reconciling the tension between the local and the global often sparks from a valid concern that the local will be ignored or cannibalized. But, the more you scrutinize the question of what is truly "local," the messier it gets. Are we just romanticizing a certain past? Can we ever get to something authentically local, untouched by outside forces? For me, since the "what" is so complicated, it's more important to ask about the real motivation behind wanting to prioritize the local. Two reasons seem particularly important. First is a desire for diversity—we don't want just one way of seeing or doing things. Second, and relatedly, a focus on the local requires a focus on participation.

From my understanding, FUNDAEC's education programs would like to have everyone become an equal player in the generation, application, and dissemination of knowledge. The type of

knowledge I speak of is knowledge that draws from advances in modern science while reflecting local experience. It is knowledge that will directly support the participants' lived realities and help them reshape their habits, attitudes, and current practices so that they can realize the type of community they would like to see. As a farmer studies PSA materials, for example, rather than blindly following a set of prescribed "best practices," they are helped to see how a scientific understanding of the makeup and characteristics of healthy soil may inform their consideration of conditions that consistently lead to poorer yields each year: irregular rainfall, exhausted soil, monoculture farming, the increasing cost of fertilizers and pesticides, etc.

The process of studying and seeking out new solutions in other materials are the first steps of knowledge application. This in turn leads to a process of knowledge generation as farmers apply what they have learned about soil fertility and regenerative farming. Yet they are not simply copying predesigned solutions but are rather investigating ways to resolve local challenges.

Finally, as farmers who are also PSA tutors generate knowledge about what is effective on their farms, they celebrate and further validate these successes by disseminating what they have learned. In our experience, this same process of application, generation, and dissemination repeats among all participants in PSA, be they farmers, teachers, business owners, or healthcare workers.

Often, one reason local voices have historically been marginalized is because people's capacity is not being raised through meaningful education to become equal partners in this process of knowledge generation. Because of this unequal balance of power, knowledge has become synonymous with insights generated in industrialized or economically prosperous parts of the world.

This is where I see the work of FUNDAEC and Kimanya-Ngeyo coming in. We're trying to help people who are inevitably going to be exposed to global ideas and ways of doing things. Let's empower them to engage with that knowledge and technology and make meaningful decisions about how they want to use them. We have to be less concerned with "are we giving voice to this or that?" and more concerned with "are we all becoming equals in a conversation?" As more people engage, they will inevitably determine what is meaningful for their context. They will apply these ideas, test them, challenge them, and come up with new things. That is how you allow diversity to exist—when everyone is able to contribute to the collective wealth of knowledge.

Benjamin: Bita, what do you think about this, particularly given the program's origins in Norte del Cauca, a region with a deep history of Afro-Colombian activism, as highlighted by scholars like Arturo Escobar?

Bita: The Norte del Cauca region is very special, and the people who live there are special as well. Their history of oppression and slavery, but, more importantly, of freedom, is a very particular one. I think one of the greatest contributions we can thank them for has been their response to an organization like FUNDAEC and, in that way, the world is indebted to this region and population, which has a long history of resilience. The interplay between FUNDAEC—in particular in its early years as it was developing the SAT curriculum—and that population has surely influenced the education materials produced.

Kerilyn: There's been a discourse around "participation" for a long time in development work. What are you learning about the conditions that nurture genuine participation and collective ownership?

Joseph: Before collective ownership, there's the question of individual ownership. What does it take to get an individual to feel they have agency and shake them out of complacency? I've seen this with teachers. The Discourse on Social Action materials help people see why we all have to play a more active role in systemic change. They are a set of three units, originally studied by SAT students in the final years of the six-year secondary curriculum, aimed at developing a student's capacity to contribute to meaningful social action through exploring fundamental principles and practices in the field of education for development. Within the first unit of those materials, there's a very simple example which says: "Everyone wants to see a more just world where people are living better lives and conditions are more equitable, where we're all prospering. Yet the majority of us go about our lives in ways where we kind of say, 'Well, I'll just do my own thing and maybe not harm others. And that's good enough.'"

The material then explores with you this idea that you're not going to see large-scale, meaningful transformation of conditions unless you consciously make an effort to systematically contribute to that transformation. If you just say, "I'm going to be content living my life and not harming others," that change isn't going to happen. It's this conversation that awakens something in our participants—the idea that the change you want isn't going to come from somewhere else. It has to begin with acceptance of your vital role. As individuals take ownership, they start to come together and see their collective potential to create change. That's where collective ownership emerges.

Bita: Yes, when you begin to work in education, you first see individual transformation, then change at the level of families. Community and organizational change is a higher level and more complex. Here, the context—government structure, etc.—plays a huge role.

We work through the people in the community; if they are transformed, the community is transformed. We also create spaces for conversation. The PSA program is one such space. It's important to center those conversations around concrete topics, like malaria or dengue. It might

seem mundane, but it's a tangible thing a community can take action on. There is a huge connection between action, agency, and ownership.

Benjamin: This leads to a question about method. What have you learned about the kinds of capacities or habits required to engage in this kind of community-based research and action?

Bita: What FUNDAEC has tried to do is help people investigate reality in a scientific manner. That means you need the posture of a scientist—to observe, make statements, and test things out. This comes from the founders, who were scientists themselves. For example, one of FUNDAEC's main founders, Dr. Farzam Arbab, was a physicist. Others in those early stages were also formally trained in a particular scientific methodology in their own fields. There were mathematicians, anthropologists, public health experts, and agronomists.

When it comes to the curriculum, then, one of the things FUNDAEC has tried to do is to help its students develop the language and framework to engage with the world around them. One of the ways it has done this is by clarifying the crucial difference between concepts and information. To interact with the world, one needs both concepts and information. When you really understand concepts, then information becomes useful to you. But if all you have access to is information, and no concepts to help organize them, then it just becomes data you can't make sense of.

Joseph: Bita has covered the core idea of the scientist. I'd add FUNDAEC's concept of developing capabilities. In developing the capacity to be scientific, you learn to identify the important concepts that need to be understood and the associated information that helps expand understanding of those concepts. But the FUNDAEC pedagogy also explores the necessary habits, spiritual qualities, and attitudes of a scientist. Those other pieces are really instrumental. Because it's one thing to say, "I can be scientific." But then you have to think about the commitment to intellectual honesty, the humility that's necessary, and also a confidence in what has been learned.

One component we're really trying to learn more about is the formation of habits that are essential for research and action. Our teachers strongly identify as scientists, but we've realized that, while they have the excitement, they haven't yet solidified what it means to not only carry out research on a regular basis, but to be able to generate their own questions and pursue them. We've been fortunate to be able to learn about this with FUNDAEC. Given their wealth of experience, we've been able to revisit some of the educational content they produced for training university-level tutors of the SAT program to see if there is insight we could adapt for the needs we currently see with our teachers.

The goal is to take a teacher who now sees themself as a scientist and help them to engage in cycles of action research. How do you help them go from following a particular set of questions you have defined for them to graduating to the point that they can define their own?

For example, one concept they explore is student assessment. They have to unpack what that idea means and how they've approached assessment. They're not just unconsciously repeating the same practices they've been exposed to—a beginning-of-term test, a midterm test, an end-of-term test. Instead, they ask: Why do I do that? What are the implications? What are other ways of looking at this? This is how we see the emergence of a community of practice. How do you take individual teachers to the point that they now form these little intellectual communities that are pursuing ways of refining their practice and not just sitting back and waiting for the experts, the curriculum designers, to tell them what things they need to fix?

Kerilyn: To close, what are the big questions you're both thinking about today? What keeps you up at night?

Joseph: The big question for Kimanya-Ngeyo is about extending what we've done well to reach larger numbers, while also exploring the next frontiers of learning. We now have rigorous research on the positive impacts of our teacher-training program. How, in turn, do you scale that experience without compromising quality, all while appreciating the urgency? We are fortunate that FUNDAEC is fifty years into this, so there are many lessons to learn from their history. And, as we look into scaling, we're also asking, "What's next for the teachers we've already trained?" That's where the action research work comes in—helping them truly own their professional development.

Bita: I think that question has different layers. There are certain things that are organizational, and then there are the big ideas. When you talk about the ideas, it can be very abstract. But, at the same time, there's also the running of an organization and having employees. How do I pay their salaries? Running an organization is extremely complex, relevant, and very practical.

People can be very interested in the ideas, but they don't realize that, behind them, it's an actual organization with day-to-day, real-life challenges. If one thinks about everything just as theoretical—"people should become protagonists"—yes, but how are they going to earn a living? How can people's lives actually improve? What happens when political systems are showing their limitations and people are stuck in the middle?

So, I would say what keeps me up at night is balancing both of these levels: the big ideas and the practical operation of the organization.

Copyright & License

Recommended citation:

> Bita Correa and Joseph Lample, "Knowledge for Transformation in Colombia and Uganda," in *Development in Transition: Rethinking Rural Futures*, eds. Kerilyn Schewel, Benjamin P. Davis and D. Lee Miller (Pivot Press, 2026). Available under CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 at https://www.pivotpress.org/correa-lample.

Published by Pivot Press

An imprint of the Center on Modernity in Transition

www.pivotpress.org

PIVOT PRESS