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RESEARCH

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Editor's Note

Dear Students and Colleagues,

Welcome to the latest edition of the Unicaf Research Newsletter, where we celebrate the dynamic efforts driving academic excellence, innovation, and impactful research across our community. This issue brings a diverse range of updates from across our network of partner universities and beyond, highlighting the depth and breadth of our collective achievements.

We begin with a feature on a grand proposal writing training organised by our Research and Innovation Centre (RIC) at Unicaf University in Zambia, led by Dr Daniel L. Mpolomoka, Dean of the School of Education,

Humanities, and Social Sciences (SEHSS). This initiative underscores our commitment to equipping researchers with essential skills to secure funding and drive their projects forward.

In this spirit of impactful research, Dr Clement Chela, Dean of Health and Applied Sciences at Unicaf University in Zambia, shares insights into his pioneering project on the specific health needs of women in the COMESA region. His work stands as a vital contribution to addressing the health challenges faced by women across our continent.

We are also thrilled to feature an exclusive interview with Dr Robert Ridley, Vice-Chancellor of Unicaf University in Malawi, who discusses his vision for driving academic excellence and expanding our global impact. His leadership continues to shape our institution's future and elevate our reputation on the international stage.

In addition, we have a call for reviewers for the Unicaf Online Journal, and our "Eyes to the Future" section showcases the work of two exceptional doctoral candidates who are pushing the boundaries of knowledge in their respective fields.

As always, we round up with a list of recent publications, alongside key funding opportunities and upcoming conferences. These resources are invaluable as we continue to foster a thriving research culture and seize opportunities for furthering our academic contributions.

Thank you for your continued dedication to excellence and innovation. We hope you find this edition both informative and inspiring.

Kind regards,

Dr Elena Papadopoulou Pro Vice-Chancellor, Teaching and Learning
Principal Editor, Unicaf Online Journal
Principal Editor, Unicaf Research Newsletter

Driving Academic Excellence and Global Impact: Dr Robert Ridley on Unicaf University's Partnership with SDSN



We are excited to feature Dr Robert Ridley, Vice-Chancellor of Unicaf University in Malawi, in this edition of our newsletter. With a distinguished career spanning academia, industry, international public health, and diplomacy, Dr Ridley has made significant contributions to malaria drug and vaccine research, public-private partnerships, and innovation. Prior to his current role, he served as Vice-Chancellor at Mzuzu University and Pro Vice-Chancellor at the University of Malawi. His experience also includes leadership roles at Roche, the Medicines for Malaria Venture, and the World Health Organization. Dr Ridley's expertise, with over 100 scientific publications and several patents, continues to drive impactful advancements in global health.

In this interview, Dr Ridley, Vice-Chancellor of Unicaf University in Malawi, shares his thoughts on the university's recent engagement with the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN). He discusses how these meetings can elevate the university's national and international profile, enhance research activities, and contribute to addressing global challenges. Dr Ridley provides key insights into how the collaboration with SDSN aligns with Unicaf University's strategic goals, particularly in advancing sustainable development and academic excellence. He also highlights the vital role that the university's research community will play in these efforts.

How do you believe the recent meetings with the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) will contribute to promoting our university on a national and international level?

The UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) (<https://www.unsdsn.org/>) was created in 2012 under the auspices of the UN Secretary-General. It seeks to mobilise the world's universities, think tanks and research groups to promulgate the SDGs. Through universities it also seeks to help achieve the SDGs through the education of young people, scholarly research, incubation of technical and institutional innovations, outreach to society, and active work with government, business, and other stakeholders. Its President is Professor Jeffrey Sachs of Columbia University.

SDSN has multiple national and regional networks of academics with specialisations in different fields. SDSN presents itself as the world's largest knowledge network for the SDGs. It has over 2,000 members from 140 countries. The question is not just about joining SDSN to promote Unicaf but to see how Unicaf can work within the SDSN to assist in achieving the SDGs and to promote the role for higher education as a key partner in realising the SDGs. This is particularly important in Africa where higher education is less established than in other parts of the world and where the potential of its contributions is often underestimated. This underestimation occurs despite the fact that the problems of attaining the SDGs for low-income countries are perhaps best understood within Africa, including by its academics and its students.

The development of Zoom technology has greatly enhanced the reach and activities of the SDSN. Leaders of African universities are now convened annually by Zoom to discuss major issues that are of concern to global



policy makers and senior UN personnel, notably from the UN Economic Commission for Africa. Unicaf University in Malawi was invited to a first continental zoom meeting in 2023 and to another this year in May 2024. In the 2023 meeting the role of online education was high on the agenda post-Covid and I was able to explain Unicaf's operating model and the ease with which we had been able to continue our programmes throughout Covid. The discussion demonstrated to me how strong the Unicaf online model is and its potential for further scaling up across Africa.

The most recent meeting in May this year focussed on the upcoming UN General Assembly and an important event coinciding with the annual gathering of world leaders entitled 'Summit of the Future'. My intervention at the meeting focused on the need to expand our African university doctoral programmes and the experience of Unicaf University to delivery excellent research through its online doctoral programmes. From the broad-based discussion on academia's contribution to development, it was agreed that there should be a strong statement issued by academic leaders from around the world, under the auspices of the SDSN, in support of the SDGs and that:

"at the Summit of the Future, the world's governments should extend the mandate of the SDG framework to 2050, with updated high-ambition milestones and quantified objectives the continuation of the SDG concept beyond 2030."

The statement also stresses the role of universities to engage in sustainable development through teaching, research, innovation and partnership. I was proud to represent Unicaf University in adding my signature to those of other university leaders from around the world for this powerful statement.

In what ways can the collaboration with SDSN enhance the research activities and output of our university?

Modern day research is highly dependent on collaborative research to deliver local, national and global solutions to our problems and developmental challenges.

SDSN provides many opportunities for partnership through its networks, its access to globally organised 'virtual' and 'blended' lectures and conferences, and its outreach to facilitate a global national, regional and discussion on developmental challenges. At a very practical level it provides a regular update to its members on research grant opportunities that are available to researchers in African universities.

Could you share any insights or key takeaways from these meetings that you think will directly impact our university's strategic goals, particularly in relation to sustainable development and academic excellence?

As an online university, there is a danger that our PhD student researchers feel isolated addressing their particular problem in isolation from a wider research community. We seek to address this issue at Unicaf through our online presentations and our annual graduate conferences. However, it is important that we work harder place our research, and indeed our academic activities as a whole, against the wider needs and experiences of our societies.



Membership of SDSN provides an important avenue through which we can engage with the global academic community. It can provide a stimulus for us within Unicaf to engage collectively in discussing wider issues of development. Such discussions on these broader issues may facilitate the establishment of research groups within Unicaf that can jointly address common problems in addition to focussing on isolated research issues.

How do you envision this partnership influencing our university's approach to addressing global challenges, and what role do you see our research community playing in these efforts?

The potential for influencing our university's approach is dependent on our research community being open to engage collectively in wider, open-ended discussions about whether and how best we can have an impact on development through our research. Individual research can have an impact. We see this through the many excellent dissertations that are being generated through our doctoral programmes. However, we have a unique opportunity at Unicaf to address challenges from a multi-country and multi-cultural perspective. Perhaps the next phase of our institutional research growth should incorporate more strategic discussions around sustainable development with our doctoral researchers, both individually and collectively. These discussions could initially focus on how they may gain from a wider discussion on how we place our research within society and, importantly, how we can contribute to societal development through our research. Our membership of SDSN provides a platform and a perspective through which such discussions can be facilitated.



Research Activities at Unicaf University in Zambia



Unicaf University in Zambia Successfully Concludes Grant Writing Training Program

Unicaf University Zambia proudly announces the successful conclusion of the three-day Grant Writing Training Program, held virtually from 28th to 30th August 2024. The program, organised by the University's Research and Innovation Centre (RIC), was led by Dr Daniel L. Mpolomoka, Dean of the School of Education, Humanities, and Social Sciences (SEHSS). The program designed to empower Unicaf faculty and early-career

researchers, on enhancing grant proposal writing skills, with a particular emphasis on Early Childhood Education (ECE). The broader objective of the initiative is to strengthen human resource capacity in early childhood education across the region.

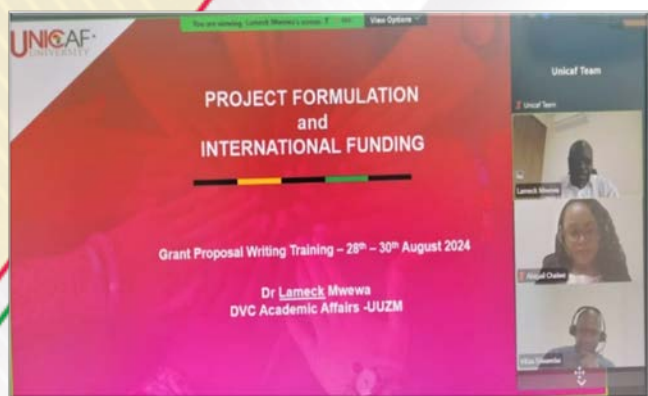
This training builds on the foundation laid at the Early Childhood Development (ECD) Grant Writing Workshop in Nairobi, Kenya, earlier in the year, which Dr Mpolomoka attended. Recognising the critical role of early childhood education in national development, Unicaf University has taken this bold step to cultivate the internal expertise necessary to secure funding for innovative and impactful research projects.

The program attracted over 41 participants from the Unicaf University network, representing faculty and researchers from multiple campuses. Facilitators from seven African countries—Zambia, Ghana, Uganda, Tanzania, Nigeria, Mozambique, and Ethiopia—shared their extensive experience and knowledge on best practices in grant writing. The curriculum was designed to address the key components of successful grant applications, including:

- Identifying funding opportunities and potential donors;
- Project formulation and securing international funding;
- Crafting compelling problem statements, objectives, and project evaluations;
- Developing detailed budgets, managing risks, and ensuring project sustainability;
- Building long-term relationships with funders for sustained project success.

Participants not only gained valuable technical skills in grant proposal writing but also engaged in hands-on collaborative sessions, allowing them to work in teams on mock research proposals. These sessions were instrumental in fostering a spirit of cooperation and strengthening the research ecosystem across Unicaf's global network of universities.





In his closing remarks, Dr Thiruppathi Marirajan, Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Research and Innovation, commended the participants for their dedication and reiterated Unicaf University's commitment to advancing research excellence. He stressed the significance of leveraging research networks and securing international funding to drive transformative projects across Africa, particularly in the field of early childhood education.

At the end of the program, all participants promised to be given certificates of completion, and facilitators were recognized for their outstanding contributions to the success of the event. This training marks another milestone in Unicaf University's mission to foster research-driven innovation and secure essential funding to support its academic and societal goals.

Research Day Event

On 9th August 2024, Unicaf University Zambia held its Weekly Research Day Meeting, chaired by Dr Thiruppathi, Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Research and Innovation. Several key agenda items were discussed, beginning with Mr. Golden Moonga's (Unicaf Librarian) presentation of three research database platforms: Dimension, Scholacy, and Open Access Library (R4Life). These platforms offer comprehensive academic resources, research management tools, and free access to scholarly articles. The UUZM faculties were encouraged to explore these platforms and provide feedback, with a training session on R4Life planned for the future.

Dr Daniel Mpolomoka provided an update on the UUZM book project, 'Zambia at 60: Milestones in education and national development' noting that 17 abstracts had been received, and guidelines for final submissions were under review. Contributors were reminded to submit their chapters on time, and a revised project timeline would be circulated.

Dr Thiruppathi concluded the meeting with a briefing on the recent visit by the HQ team, discussing key outcomes and future directives.





Research Project on Specific Health Needs of Women in the COMESA Region

Dr Clement Chela, Dean Health and Applied Sciences is currently undertaking a research project on Specific Health Needs of Women in the COMESA Region.

The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) member countries, Burundi, Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Kenya, Libya,

Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, Sudan, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, working through the COMESA Secretariat, are concerned with the negative effects of diseases in the region. The effects of diseases, illness, and poor health of citizens in the region ultimately affect negatively the regional economic integration and sustained development of member countries, as identified in Chapter 14, Article 110, and Chapter 21, Article 123 of the COMESA Treaty.

The COMESA secretariat intends to provide institutional support for the development of the pharmaceutical industry in region through strengthened capacities of the region's pharmaceutical regulatory bodies, quality control and management systems, research, and development institutions for effective manufacturing of safe and quality pharmaceutical products. In support of the goal of development of the pharmaceutical industrial capacity of the region COMESA has sources funding for research on sexual and reproductive health needs, and the extent and response to gender specific cancers affect women and men. The study will identify sexual and reproductive health services available and gaps existing in the pharmaceutical sector in meeting these needs.

The objective of the consultancy is to carry out research in the COMESA region on the sexual and reproductive health needs of women and identify the extent and response to breast, cervical, ovarian cancers and uterine prolapse among women and the extent and response to prostate cancer among men. The study will also identify ways in which these diseases could be addressed by the pharmaceutical sector in the region.

The following are the specific objectives of the assignment:

- i. To assess the sexual and reproductive health needs of women and the pharmaceutical services in the COMESA region.
- ii. To assess the extent of breast, cervical, ovarian, and uterine prolapse cancer and the pharmaceutical needs among women in the COMESA Region.
- iii. To assess the extent of prostate cancer and pharmaceutical needs among men in the COMESA region.
- iv. To identify pharmaceutical services available and gaps existing in the pharmaceutical sector in the COMESA region in relation to sexual and reproductive health needs of women, and breast, cervical, ovarian, and uterine prolapse cancers.
- v. To identify pharmaceutical services available and gaps existing in the sector in the COMESA region in relation to prostate cancer.



To address the specific objectives the study seeks to answer the following key questions:

1. What are the sexual and reproductive health needs of women and the pharmaceutical services available to meet these needs?
2. What is the extent of breast, cervical, ovarian, and uterine prolapse cancer and the pharmaceutical services available to meet these needs?
3. What is the extent of prostate cancer and the pharmaceutical services available to meet these needs?
4. What pharmaceutical services exist and the gaps in relation to meeting the sexual and reproductive health needs of women with breast, cervical, ovarian, and uterine prolapse cancers.
5. What pharmaceutical services exist and the gaps in relation to meeting the sexual and reproductive health needs of men with prostate cancers.
6. What are the existing sexual reproductive service gaps relation to the diseases and what are the possible means of addressing them as COMESA Secretariat or per individual member states?

The study is significant as it will document and provide an understanding of the sexual and reproductive health needs of women the sexual and the pharmaceutical services available to meet these.

It will also provide an understanding of the needs and perceptions of women with breast, cervical, ovarian, cancers and uterine prolapse including an understanding of the needs and perceptions of men with prostate cancer. This will then allow for a charting of a response to these health issues meeting the pharmaceutical needs of individuals in the region.

The findings will identify ways of in which these diseases could be addressed by the pharmaceutical sector and COMESA member states in collaboration with several region organizations such as the African Union and WHO.

Identifying strategies to address these gaps will allow for the mitigation and reduction of the impacts of high morbidity and mortality of these diseases on young men and women. This in turn will allow for an improvement in their lives, and livelihoods leading to a reduction in the negative effects on regional economic integration and sustained development in the COMESA region.

Research activities at Unicaf University in Malawi



Science Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA 2034)

In 2013, coinciding with the 50th anniversary of the creation of the Organisation for African Unity, the African Union the African heads of state and government signed the “50th Anniversary Solemn Declaration”, re-dedicating Africa towards “*An integrated, prosperous and Peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens, representing a dynamic force in the international arena*”. The realisation of this declaration was a 50-year blueprint towards

achieving this vision through the publication of “*Agenda 2063: The Africa we want*.” There followed its first 10-year implementation plan to 2023 and recently a second ten-year implementation plan was issued to take us to 2033.

Technological development, innovation and associated entrepreneurship and industrialisation, allied to social innovation, are crucial components for the realisation of Agenda 2063. This recognition led in 2014 to the parallel development by the African Union of a 10-year Science Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA 2024), which has elevated science, technology and innovation politically and practically over the past decade. As STISA 2024 was coming to an end, the African Union Commission undertook an evaluation of STISA 2024. With this evaluation in hand, it then engaged in discussions with continental experts on the development of a revised 10-year strategy, STISA 2034, which aligns to the second 10-year implementation plan of Agenda 2063.

Dr Robert Ridley, Vice-Chancellor of Unicaf University in Malawi, has been a member and facilitator of a broad-based consultative African Union Task Force overseeing and guiding the development of STISA 2034. This has involved engagement with experts from academia, industry, national, regional and continental bodies, and civil society. It has further benefitted from an expert drafting team.

After several physical and virtual meetings over the past 6 months the ‘draft’ STISA 2034 document is now almost ready to present to a meeting of a Specialised Technical Committee of the African Union in November this year, comprising Ministers of Education, Science and Technology. After the document has been reviewed, and modified as appropriate, by the Ministers it will proceed to the African Union Heads of State and Government Summit in February 2025 for adoption.

Students' Hub



We are pleased to introduce Dr Georgia Sakka-Vronti, the esteemed Dean of the School of Business at Unicaf, federal who has recently authored an insightful article on Using AI Responsibly in Research. Dr Sakka-Vronti holds a Bachelor's degree from Aristotle University, a Master's in Educational Leadership from the University of Manchester, a Master's in Management from Brunel University, and a PhD in Business Administration from the University of Nicosia. Her research focuses on Social Media in the Workplace, Marketing, Digital Innovation, and Sustainability, with her work published in top-tier journals. She has also presented at international conferences and served as a Session Chair. Additionally, Dr Vronti has managed European-funded research projects, overseeing both scientific and administrative aspects.



In her article, Dr Sakka-Vronti addresses critical questions about the role of AI in research, exploring both its potential as a tool and its risks as a threat. She examines the ethical challenges posed by AI and offers guidance on how researchers can ensure its responsible use.

We encourage all students and faculty to read Dr Sakka-Vronti's article to deepen their understanding of the ethical and responsible use of AI in research.

Using AI Responsibly When Conducting Research

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as a powerful tool in the academic world, particularly with the advent of generative AI models such as ChatGPT. These tools offer unprecedented opportunities for enhancing research efficiency, but they also bring significant ethical considerations that students, especially at the master's and doctoral levels and also researchers, must navigate with care. This article explores how to use AI responsibly when conducting research, ensuring that it supports rather than undermines academic integrity.

What makes AI both a tool and a threat in research?

The rise of generative AI, such as ChatGPT, has transformed academic environments by enabling the rapid generation of content across various formats—text, code, data, and more. This technology offers significant



benefits, including efficient assistance with academic tasks and streamlined research processes. However, it also brings risks such as disinformation and potential compromise of research integrity. The European Commission (2024) underscores the importance of using AI responsibly, as its misuse can lead to ethical dilemmas, particularly regarding plagiarism, data privacy, and the reliability of research outcomes.

As AI tools become more integrated into academic settings, it's crucial for students to understand both their advantages and potential risks. While ChatGPT can be a valuable asset in managing heavy workloads and time constraints, it should not replace genuine academic inquiry. Over-reliance on AI for generating academic content can hinder cognitive engagement and undermine the learning experience. Instead, use AI as a complementary resource for tasks such as proofreading, idea generation, and summarising complex information (Abbas et al, 2024).

Balance technological assistance with personal effort to foster a holistic learning approach. Engage actively in critical thinking and problem-solving tasks that AI tools cannot complete to ensure your skills and understanding are fully developed. Be mindful of the potential negative effects of excessive AI use, including diminished memory and academic performance. By staying informed and using AI responsibly, you can leverage its benefits while ensuring it supports, rather than detracts from, your educational journey (Abbas et al, 2024).

What challenges lie in the ethical landscape of AI?

Students and researchers have a unique opportunity to leverage AI tools to enhance their academic work, but it's vital to approach these tools with responsibility and integrity. AI can help improve your learning process, but it's important to remain aware of its limitations. For instance, ChatGPT can sometimes produce biased or inaccurate information based on the data it was trained on. This makes it crucial to critically assess the output, cross-check facts, and avoid blindly trusting AI-generated responses (Mhlana, 2023).

As you use AI tools, always protect your personal data. Before engaging with these technologies, ensure you understand how your data is collected and used, and consent to those practices. When incorporating AI into your work, be transparent about its use—whether in research or assignments—and ensure that human oversight remains central to the process. ChatGPT is best used as a tool to complement your learning, not as a replacement for your own critical thinking, creativity, and the expertise of your educators (Mhlana, 2023).

The ethical use of AI in research is guided by several principles, including honesty, transparency, respect for intellectual property, and accountability. The European Commission (2024) underscores the importance of researchers maintaining ultimate responsibility for their scientific output, even when AI tools are involved. This means that any content generated by AI must be critically evaluated, and researchers should be transparent about the extent to which AI has contributed to their work.



For example, when using AI to generate ideas or outlines, it is crucial to ensure that the resulting content is original and not a rehash of existing work. Plagiarism detection tools have been updated to detect AI-generated content, making it essential for students to be cautious (Hew, 2023). Additionally, when AI is used to assist in research,

it is important to acknowledge this use in the final submission. This can be done by including a statement that specifies the AI tool used, the nature of its use, and how it contributed to the research process.

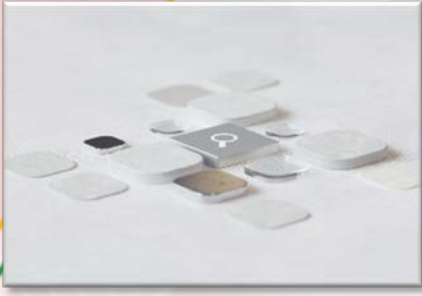
How can researchers ensure AI is used responsibly?

To use AI responsibly in research, students and researchers should adhere to the following guidelines:

1. **Acknowledge AI Contributions:** Always disclose if and how AI tools were used in your research. This includes specifying the tool, the version, and the nature of its contribution. Transparency is key to maintaining the integrity of your work (European Commission, 2024).
2. **Critical Evaluation of AI Outputs:** AI-generated content should be critically assessed for accuracy, bias, and relevance. Researchers should not take AI outputs at face value but should instead verify them against established academic sources (Hew, 2023).
3. **Avoid Over-Reliance on AI:** While AI can assist with various research tasks, it should not replace critical thinking and the development of original ideas. The goal is to enhance your research, not to let AI dictate it.
4. **Respect for Intellectual Property:** When using AI tools, ensure that the content generated does not infringe on the intellectual property rights of others. This includes proper citation of any AI-generated content that draws from existing works (European Commission, 2024).
5. **Stay Informed and Updated:** The field of AI is rapidly evolving, and so are the best practices for its use in research. Students should actively seek out training and stay informed about the latest developments and guidelines related to AI in academia (European Commission, 2024).

Finally, remember that while AI can assist in automating tasks and generating insights, it cannot replicate the nuanced understanding and personal interaction offered by human teachers. By using AI responsibly, you contribute to a fair, ethical, and academically sound environment that benefits everyone involved in the educational process. The integration of AI into academic research presents both exciting opportunities and significant challenges. As we incorporate AI tools into our work, it's crucial to use them responsibly, enhancing research while upholding the highest standards of academic integrity (Mhlanga, 2023).

Understanding the ethical implications of AI, maintaining transparency in its application, and ensuring robust human oversight are essential to responsible AI use. This responsibility extends beyond individual practice to the broader framework of AI development and deployment. Responsible AI encompasses diverse aspects, including effective governance and policy-making, the ethical conduct of developers, and the imperative of inclusion and diversity within development teams. Establishing clear guidelines, adhering to professional codes of conduct, and reforming education to include diverse perspectives are vital steps in fostering a more ethical and inclusive approach to AI (Dignum, 2019).



As AI continues to evolve, so must our strategies for its use in academia. By aligning our practices with these principles, we can navigate the complexities of AI with integrity and ensure that its benefits are realized in a manner that is both ethical and responsible.

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Eyes to the Future



In this edition of *Eyes to the Future*, we are excited to introduce two visionary Unicaf University graduates Dr Martin Owako and Dr Buyiswa Mokhosi.



Dr Martin Owako obtained his PhD in Business Administration from Unicaf University in Malawi.

Born in Uganda in 1966, Dr Owako brings over 25 years of experience in strategic business leadership, with a background spanning multiple sectors, including sales, marketing, and organisational improvement.

His extensive career has seen him work in industries such as telecommunications, hospitality, FMCGs, and NGOs. Dr Owako's PhD research focused on the "Effects of strategic innovation on organizational performance," equipping him with advanced skills in strategic planning, innovation, and business development. Currently, he supports start-ups and NGOs in Uganda and mentors MBA and PhD students in research.

Abstract: The main purpose of this study is to establish the effects of strategic innovation on organisational performance in 30 organizations selected from various sectors in Uganda. Inevitably, the following specific research objectives were formulated to guide the study: to validate empirically a proposed framework illustrating organisational performance implications of strategic innovation; to determine the relationship between strategic innovation and organisational performance; to determine the relationship between innovation strategies and organisational performance; and to explore the challenges facing the selected organisations in using strategic innovation to promote organisational performance. This study largely adopted a positivist research paradigm complimented by postpositivist research paradigm to guarantee reliability, validity and credibility of the findings. Accordingly, the study adopted mixed-methods research approach because of its complementary role to clarify and enhance results from one approach to another. While the sample was selected using stratified and purposive sampling techniques from various sectors of the Ugandan economy, data collection was conducted in Central Business District (CBD) and Wakiso district covering both corporate organisations and top SMEs. The researcher used 300 questionnaires and 15 interview guides to collect data thus achieving 81.3% and 53.3% on response rate respectively. Accordingly, descriptive statistics, correlation and regression analysis were used to establish the relationships between variables and effect of Strategic innovation on organisational performance. Conversely, deductive and interpretive data analyses techniques were applied to analyse qualitative data. In reality, the following key outputs were established: while the relationship between strategic innovation and organisational performance was very significant; both correlation and regression analyses revealed that all the tenets of strategic innovation studied are positively related to and



equally affected organisational performance positively. Moreover, incremental strategic innovation registered the highest effect on organisational performance as compared to strategic innovation and disruptive strategic innovation. While all the three key predictor variables are positively related to organisational performance, incremental strategic innovation is the highest influencer of organisational performance as followed by strategic innovation and disruptive strategic innovation respectively. Accordingly, the study outcomes indicate that strategic innovation is a strong predictor of organisational performance.

What was your research about?

MO: The main aim for this study was to establish the effects of strategic innovation on organisational performance in selected organisations in Uganda. Additionally, this study aims to contribute knowledge to boost organisational competitiveness as well as enrich other stakeholders on numerous benefits of strategic innovation. In order to achieve this study purpose, the researcher focused on achievement of the following specific objectives:

- To validate empirically a proposed model illustrating organisational performance implications of strategic innovation.
- To determine the relationship between strategic innovation and organisational performance.
- To determine the relationship between innovation strategies and organisational performance.
- To explore the challenges facing the selected organisations in using strategic innovation to promote organisational performance.

What led you to choose this topic for your PhD research?

MO: Apart from empirical validation of the proposed framework for organisational performance implications of strategic innovation, this study aimed at closing methodological and data research gaps that were identified from previous works involving strategic innovation and other innovation typologies especially in Uganda (Abesiga, 2015; Byukusenge & Munene, 2017; Ibingira et al., 2017; Mutambi, 2013). Because of existence of limited studies on strategic innovation world over, this study generated recommendations that can be used to improve organisations' competitiveness. Notably, this study will further contribute to the body of knowledge particularly to the subject topic the effects of strategic innovation on organisational performance in Uganda and the rest of the world economies. Accordingly, the study will improve financial performance, efficiency and internal processes, organisational competitiveness, world economies, and more importantly enhance stakeholder satisfaction.

Specifically, this study will be of great benefit to the following stakeholders: academicians, principal investigator, organisations and investors, consumers, marketing practitioners, and government. A good number of authors such as Hajar, et al. (2021), Kataria (2013), Karabulut (2015) and Odor (2018) regard strategic innovation as a key driver of efficiency, superior performance, customer value, profitability, growth, and sustainability.



How do you think the findings of your research could be useful in Africa's context?

MO: Since it has been established that strategic innovation has a significant positive influence on organisational performance, a number of firms in Africa will use this study outcomes for making strategic decisions. These outcomes will also inform organisations specifically on the contribution of each dimension of strategic innovation on organization performance hence guiding them on how much to invest on each of these variables. Fortunately,

all the tenets of strategic innovation revealed closely the same degree of impact on organisational performance rendering the need for organisations to apportion an equal investment in each of them.

Furthermore, organisations can make a choice on a particular innovation type to invest in and depending on what objectives they are pursuing. So, the choice whether incremental or disruptive strategic innovation or both will depend on the objectives required to be achieved. For instance, organisations intending to scoop market share from other competitors using the existing product and current market will adopt incremental strategic innovation or Ansoff market intensification strategy which is related to it. The reverse is true for disruptive strategic innovation which seeks for outcomes related to product development and market development growth strategies.

Dr Buyiswa Mokhosi, a seasoned educator with over 13 years of experience in early childhood education and national reform, is making a global impact from her base in Dubai, UAE. Her expertise spans multiple countries, including South Korea, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Thailand, and the UAE. Dr Mokhosi holds an undergraduate degree from the University of the Free State, an Executive MBA from Hult International Business School, and a Doctorate of Education from Unicaf University in Zambia. Her PhD research, titled '*A Comparative Study: Investigating the Impact of a Nongovernment Philanthropic Primary School versus Quintile One Government Primary Schools in the Provision of Equitable and Quality Education in Marginalized Communities in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa*,' reflects her dedication to improving education for marginalised communities.



A member of the Project Management Institute (PMI), Dr Mokhosi is pursuing PMP certification and is a Golden Key International Honorary Society inductee. She continues to lead with excellence and is currently preparing to publish her doctoral dissertation.

Abstract: This study was motivated by the claims that rural, low income, and disadvantaged communities in South Africa could be facing challenges accessing equitable and quality education which threatens the country's commitment to meet its Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)-4 by 2030. The purpose of this study was to compare the impact of non-government philanthropic primary school against quintile one government primary schools in the provision of equitable and quality education in marginalised communities in the KwaZulu-Natal province in South Africa.



The sample size comprised of 27 respondents drawn from non-government philanthropic primary school, and seven randomly selected quintile one government primary schools in the same geographical area. A convergent mixed methods ‘triangulation’ research approach was adopted utilising both qualitative, and quantitative data from the sampled population. Both random, and purposive sampling techniques were employed to select the study respondents. The data were collected using survey questionnaires, interview guide, and an observation checklist. The quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics on PSPP and the qualitative data were transcribed and analysed using the first and second cycles of coding and thematic analysis on Taguette.

The findings demonstrated that the non-government philanthropic primary school has a positive impact on providing equitable and quality education to the population it serves. The findings demonstrate that other salient aspects included teacher retention included modes of teacher training, teacher turnover, infrastructure, students’ behaviour, and strategies for students’ well-being, community engagement, and using education as a tool of social justice.

Therefore, it was concluded that the NGO School had a positive impact on providing better school choice through the provision of equitable and quality education in the community. It was recommended that the South African government should allocate adequate funds to the quintile one primary schools to ensure access to equitable and quality education to the disadvantaged communities. There should be equity in allocating funds to schools serving both rural and urban communities to equalise educational conditions in terms of infrastructure, scholastic materials, school environment, and staffing levels.

What was your research about?

BM: In 2015, the United Nations introduced the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that all member countries should achieve by 2030. According to the United Nations’ SDG brief, SDG 4 aims to achieve the provision of inclusive and equitable quality education for all to bridge wealth disparities. Researchers such as Thakrar (2018) and Du Plessis and Mestry (2019), who have been studying the challenges faced by the education sector in democratic South Africa, have highlighted that the democratic South African government still has a long way to go to bridge educational inequities that exist within the country’s education system. Therefore, this study focused on investigating the education conditions of quantile one government and non-government philanthropic (NGO) primary schools serving marginalised communities in the KwaZulu-Natal province, South Africa.

What led you to choose this topic for your PhD research?

BM: My journey towards selecting this topic for my EdD research was shaped by a convergence of personal, professional, and academic motivations. Growing up in rural South Africa, where my parents dedicated themselves to the education sector, I witnessed first-hand the stark inequalities plaguing underserved communities, particularly in education. While I was fortunate to access high-quality education through opportunities provided by my parents, many of my peers back home were not as privileged, relegated to substandard government schools due to economic constraints.



Driven by a deep-seated concern for the plight of marginalised communities, I resolved to leverage my professional experiences and scholarly voice to advocate for equitable and quality education, particularly at the primary school level. My research aims to shed light on the enduring urban-rural education gap prevalent in underdeveloped and developing economies, emphasizing the critical importance of addressing this disparity to foster societal progress.

As Nelson Mandela rightly asserted, 'Education is the most powerful weapon you can utilize to transform the world'. This conviction underscores the central role of education in driving positive change and overcoming socio-economic barriers.

Through my research, I endeavour to contribute to the ongoing dialogue surrounding educational equity and pave the way for meaningful interventions that empower all individuals, irrespective of their background, to realize their full potential.

How do you think the findings of your research could be useful in Africa's context?

BM: The findings of this research offer valuable insights for addressing the challenges of equitable and quality education in Africa, particularly in marginalised communities. By comparing the impact of a non-government philanthropic primary school with quintile one government primary schools in South Africa's KwaZulu-Natal province, the study highlights the potential of alternative education models to bridge educational gaps.

The positive impact observed in the philanthropic primary school underscores the importance of community-driven initiatives in providing quality education. These findings advocate for greater support and investment in such initiatives, emphasising the need for adequate funding allocation from governments to ensure equitable access to quality education for disadvantaged communities.

Moreover, the recommendations to prioritise funding for quintile one primary schools and promote equity in resource allocation between rural and urban schools are pertinent for policymakers across Africa. By addressing disparities in infrastructure, scholastic materials, staffing levels, and school environment, these measures aim to create an enabling environment conducive to learning for all students, regardless of their socio-economic background.

Overall, the findings of this research serve as a catalyst for policy reforms aimed at advancing educational equity and quality in Africa, aligning with the continent's aspirations for sustainable development and inclusive growth.



CALL FOR REVIEWERS



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The **Unicaf Online Journal (UOJ)** is an interdisciplinary, open-access, peer-reviewed, free-to-submit and free-to-publish journal. UOJ publishes original contributions, research articles, review articles, case studies, book reviews, technical notes, commentaries, position papers, books, theses, and dissertations relevant to the five disciplines it covers: Business, Education, Public Health, Social and Political Sciences, Technology and Sciences. Manuscripts are accepted on a rolling basis or even simultaneously by the five different Journals that fall under the UOJ umbrella.

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Thank you for considering this opportunity. If you have any questions or need further information, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Kind Regards
The Editorial Team



RECENT UNICAF PUBLICATIONS

New peer-reviewed publications by our students and faculty



Students:

Benjamin, Wehye & Asiiimwe, Specioza. (2024). Decoding barriers and failures in Liberia's educational policy implementation. *World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews*. 23. 495-508. [10.30574/wjarr.2024.23.1.2009](https://doi.org/10.30574/wjarr.2024.23.1.2009).

Faculty:

Ayodele, J. O., Adeyemi, O., & Adebisuyi, J. R. (2024). Intra-Lagos migration and spread of COVID-19: revisiting the structural vulnerability theory. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 10(1).

<https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2023.2298095>

Benjamin, Wehye & Asiiimwe, Specioza. (2024). Decoding barriers and failures in Liberia's educational policy implementation. *World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews*. 23. 495-508. [10.30574/wjarr.2024.23.1.2009](https://doi.org/10.30574/wjarr.2024.23.1.2009).

Elhami, A., & Roshan, A. (2024). The History of Acculturation: A review article. *Social Sciences, Humanities and Education Journal (SHE Journal)*, 5(1), 180 – 196. DOI:[10.25273/she.v5i1.19330](https://doi.org/10.25273/she.v5i1.19330)

Elhami, A., Roshan, A., & Chandan, H. (2024). Principles of conducting qualitative research in multicultural settings. IGI Global. <https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3693-3306-8>

Ileri, Kioko & Ochieng, Jimmy. (2024). Determinants of women legislators' media coverage in a male-dominated Kenya political landscape. *Journalism*. 1-18. [10.1177/14648849241264103](https://doi.org/10.1177/14648849241264103).

Lawal, B. M. (2023). Structural equation model of academic mindset, motivation, perseverance, engagement and secondary school students' performance in economics in south-west, Nigeria. *Journal of Social and Educational Research*, 2(2). <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10444314>

Lewkowicz, N. (2024). *The Cold War in the 1950s*. Sussex Academic Press.

Shobayo, M. A., & Ajayi, O. S. (2023). Education for sustainability development in Nigeria: The expectation and reality. *ACU Journal of Social Sciences*, 2(1).



Deadline: 10 October – Expression of Interest

Area/Disciplines/Themes: global youth perspectives on climate education

Date: 17 October

Area/Disciplines/Themes: Health Justice, Climate Justice, Freedom of expression (not-for-profit civil society organisation (CSO) registered in an eligible Commonwealth Foundation Member State)

Deadline: 24 October

Area/Disciplines/Themes: irrigated and mechanized agriculture, agri-food systems

Deadline: 31 October

Area/Disciplines/Themes: any field of applied global health research

Deadline: 6 November

Area/Disciplines/Themes: STEM

Deadline: 8 November

Area/Disciplines/Themes: applied research that will address global health challenges and inequities

Deadline: 3 December

FELLOWSHIPS / AWARDS / COURSES

List of fellowships, awards and courses



[Kohli Fellowships for Sociology](#)

Area/Disciplines/Themes: Sociology

Deadline: 18 October

[Aarhus Institute of Advanced Studies](#)

Area/Disciplines/Themes: all research disciplines of any nationality

Deadline: 5 November

[Wellcome Career Development Awards](#)

Area/Disciplines/Themes: any discipline - including science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), experimental medicine, humanities and social science, clinical/allied health sciences, and public health
Deadline: 26 November

[Wellcome Discovery Awards](#)

Area/Disciplines/Themes: any discipline - including science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), experimental medicine, humanities and social science, clinical/allied health sciences, and public health
Deadline: 3 December

[Mental Health Award: Accelerating scalable digital mental health interventions](#)

Area/Disciplines/Themes: develop scalable digital interventions to advance early intervention in depression, anxiety and psychosis

Deadline: 5 December

[AIAS Visiting Fellowships](#)

Area/Disciplines/Themes: open

Deadline: 1 May 2025 and 1 November 2025

CALLS FOR CONFERENCES AND EVENTS (WORKSHOP / WEBINARS)

Upcoming conferences and events



Save the Date: Annual Unicaf Master's Conference 2024

Mark your calendars for the upcoming Annual Unicaf Master's Conference 2024, taking place online from 18th to 22nd November 2024. Sessions will run daily, starting each day at 09:00 am Cyprus time (UTC+3). Please be sure to confirm your local time [here](#).

This virtual event offers a fantastic opportunity to attend fellow students' presentations and engage in dynamic discussion sessions. More details, including the conference programme and reminders, will be shared as the event approaches.

For any inquiries, please contact the respective schools at:

business-school@unicaf.org

science-school@unicaf.org

humanities-school@unicaf.org

We look forward to your participation in this exciting academic event!



Unicaf University Doctoral Research Groups (for Doctoral Students)

The Doctoral Research Groups (DRGs)' s aim is to foster collaboration, knowledge exchange and feedback provision between doctoral researchers and faculty, with a view of advancing original and rigorous research. The initiative is aimed at Unicaf University doctoral researchers and faculty, during which doctoral researchers present ideas and share expertise that can enhance their research. The open dialogue between doctoral researchers working on similar subjects will facilitate information exchange and will be a vibrant forum in which students can receive feedback on their work.

The next Doctoral Research Groups are held on:

Date and Time: 3 October 2024, 14:00 - 16:00 (Cyprus time, UTC+03:00)

Area/Disciplines/Themes: Public Health

Zoom Link: https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_VLnNX0XmSFqeYk4ukVz92g

Date and Time: 17 October 2024, 14:00 - 16:00 (Cyprus time, UTC+03:00)

Area/Disciplines/Themes: Law and Politics

Zoom Link: https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_PrDjxU5nQT6oU0ADaMWVAA

Date and Time: 7 November 2024, 14:00 - 16:00 (Cyprus time, UTC+02:00)

Area/Disciplines/Themes: Business


Zoom Link: https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_sogJXTqXRXWjmCSEuxZNRw

More information regarding the Doctoral Research Groups can be found at our [webpage](#).

OTHER NEWS - What we think might interest you



We would like to take this opportunity to kindly remind everyone that we welcome doctoral and Master's students (or graduates) who have already published, or are in the process of publishing their work to share their peer-reviewed publications with us by utilising the following link: <https://forms.gle/u6jyfopDaCyUfvyY8>. Additionally, please mention whether the publication is affiliated with Unicaf / Unicaf University.

Moreover, we extend the same invitation to faculty members who have publications to share. If you are a faculty member, please send us your publications (with correct reference or DOI) to research.office@unicaf.org. Kindly indicate whether the publication is affiliated with Unicaf / Unicaf University, as this information will assist us in accurately registering your publications in our database. 



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