



MMUST NEWS

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Post

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One on One with...

The Grand Master of Letters: Prof. Egara Kabaji

Inside:
A Talk with International Students

UPCOMING

EVENTS



□ 13th Multi Disciplinary International Conference-19th June, 2019



Editor's Pen



Dear MMUST Community,

Today, we bring you a captivating interview with the only full Professor of Literary Communication in Kenya. Find out why he is referred as the grandmaster of letters.

We also bring a research project by members of staff from the School of Disaster and Humanitarian Assistance in their quest to tackle climate change.

In this issue, we give you a piece interview of the first President of the International Students Guild at MMUST as we gear towards a full focus on the international students in subsequent editions.

Read on.

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School of Agriculture and Veterinary hosts 3rd MMUST Agri Expo

By Mike Omukuba

Since its launch in 2017, MMUST-Kakamega Agri-Expo has proven to be exactly what the University and Kakamega County had been missing. Various participants, prominent exhibitors and variety of products characterized the 2019 Expo. The event was held on Friday, 24th of May 2019 at the Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology model farm driven by the Theme 'Positioning Agriculture for Sustainable Food and Income Security through Technology and Innovation' with the objective of teaching as well as learning from the farmers. The Expo was organised by the School of Agriculture, Veterinary Sciences and Technology in conjunction with other exhibitors around the Western region.

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It attracted a large number of farmers from all over the County; schools, exhibitors and prominent leaders with interest in agriculture. Davis and Shirliff and *M-kopa* solar were among the machinery exhibitors that made sure farmers were at hand with the current technological advancement in the agricultural sector. Research Institutes such as KALRO and financiers were like Kenya Commercial Bank and Agricultural Finance Corporation gave farmers a briefing on the available agricultural loans which can be accessed to improve their farming.

Among exhibitors in attendance were; Kenya Seed Company, Ecological Organic Agriculture, Pioneer, Kenya Commercial Bank, Davis and Shirliff, Seed Company, Mkopa solar, Feed the Future, Mavuno Fertilizers, Western Seed Company Limited, Yara, Mila Power, Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Institute(KALRO), MMUSTMUG, Coopers Limited, Pannar, Juanco Growing Ideas, Baraka Fertilizers, Bubayi Products Limited, Kukuchic Limited, Anglican Development Services, Syngenta Seeds and Agricultural Finance Corporation.

Mr Kasim Were Ali, the Minister for Industrialization, Kakamega County represented the Governor, H.E Wycliffe Oparanya. Mr. Were noted that the County Government has an initiative of

boosting farming in the region.

"Plans are underway to establish milk processing plant in Malava and a maize processing plant in one of the sub-counties. We also have One Village One Product initiative which will see each sub-counties majoring in the production of one product to enhance specialisation," he said. Mr. Were also emphasized on the need for developing partnership between Kakamega County and MMUST so as to avail new technology to the local farmers.

The Acting Deputy Vice Chancellor, Planning, Research and Innovation, Prof. Charles Mutai, confirmed that the University is undoubtedly committed to working with farmers by creating new knowledge and enabling farmers to learn.

Kakamega County Women Representative, Elsie Muhanda, urged the County Government to develop policies to support farmers so as to see a reduction in the imports of agricultural products such as *sukuma wiki*, tomatoes and milk that can be produced locally.



**My mother was
a Doctor**

Prof. Egara Kabaji

Prof. Egara Kabaji, a Professor with a magic touch has seen establishment of several projects in MMUST including the Department of Journalism, DPCAP, MMUST FM and also the founding Principal of Turkana University College. In a rare Interview, we bring you the full story of the man, his beliefs and philosophy of life.

Interview by Nashilluh Brenda

Q: You are known all over the nation for the things you have done in your life, tell us about yourself

I consider myself a humble hard working Kenyan nationalist and a Pan Africanist interested in leaving the earth a better place than the way I found it. There is nothing really spectacular about my life except the fact that I spent 11 months in my mother's womb. I was born in Navuhi Village and like any other village boy, I went to school bare footed and through the grace of God I managed to pass my exams and worked hard up to where I am. My mother was a doctor while my father was a teacher.

Q: Did you say your mother was a doctor? Did you want to say herbalist?

She was a doctor that is why I do not doubt what she told me about my birth. This is where we go wrong. This racist classification of professionals is absurd. When you meet an African doctor you call him or her a herbalist or a witch doctor, but when you meet some people with a tag of MBChB you call them doctors. Go to Navuhi Village and people will tell you about the good work she did as a doctor before going to meet her creator.



Q: What type of parents did you have?

Humble God fearing couple. While my father was that typical strict teacher with a good memory, my mother was a flamboyant doctor with a strange sense of humour and pride. They were both very good story tellers.

Q: How does a typical day in your life look like?

Well, I wake up at 5.00am as a rule. And for one hour I familiarize myself with news for one hour on BBC. I leave for the gym at 6.00am to 7.45am. This is an addiction. I cannot see myself doing anything outside this routine in the morning. This prepares me for the day. Apart from office work, and my teaching assignments, I spend most of the remaining hours of the day reading and writing. Over the weekend, I join the few friends that I have over a glass of wine and Rhumba.

Q: Talking about writing, you seem to be very prolific, how many books have you written?

I started writing stories as a small kid. As I grew up, I decided that I would concentrate on writing for children and young adults. I have published well over forty fictional works so far. I also write and publish in refereed journals and text books for schools. I am sure you have seen **Text it Fix it English**, and **Spot on Comprehension** published by Oxford University Press and many others that I have authored.

Q: Tell us your experiences as a writer

I will always thank God for the gift of telling stories. When I am away from people, I lapse into my mental library and create worlds for myself. A writer creates universes which he sensibly populates. He gives his characters mixed fortunes; brings happiness, sorrow and joy to each one of them in various measures. That is like playing God!

Q: What can you tell those who aspire to write?

This is a serious business. If you want to be a writer, then, first learn to spend time alone reading and writing. But more importantly, learn the craft. You see, writing is like making love. As you write, you must take care of the interest of your partner who in this case is your reader. You must worry of whether you are making sense to your reader.

Q: You are well known as a columnist and broadcaster

Well, I am a public intellectual and therefore I use mass media to express my views on matters of interest to me and to the nation.

Q: We are interested in knowing your professional and academic journey.

You are right to use the word journey. Life is a journey. I am only in the middle of my journey. My journey has seen me obtain Bachelors and a Master of Arts degree from Kenyatta University and a PhD degree from the University of South Africa. I have also completed yet another Masters degree from Jomo Kenyatta University in Business Administration (Strategic Management option).

I have taught in many universities including Catholic University of Eastern Africa, University of Nairobi, Kenyatta University, Moi University. Outside this country, I have worked in the Republic of Rwanda and served as a Fulbright scholar in Residence in the United States of America. I am also an external examiner in over ten universities.

**Q: What are your achievements so far?**

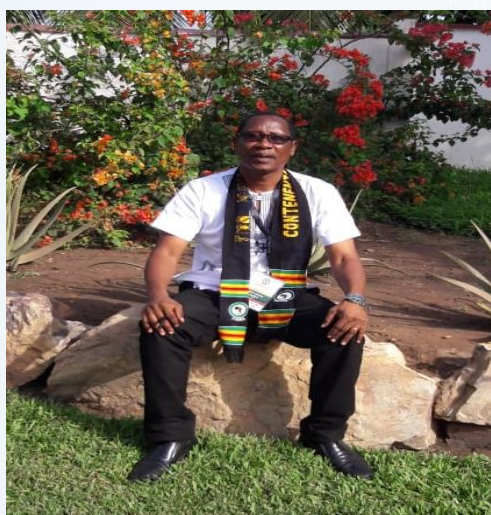
I have mentored thousands of students in this country and beyond. This gives me great pleasure. I believe great things are those we leave in the hearts and minds of people.

Q: Tell us about your life at MMUST.

I was one of the first employees of what was then referred to as WUCST. I started teaching here in the year 2002 when WECO was elevated to a university college. In a sense, I am one of those who carry the institutional memory of the University.

Q: You have a long history with the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication

Yes. I developed the Bachelors of Journalism and Mass Communication programme then established the MMUST FM radio station. I am proud of that. We became the first public University to offer the programme in the country. I developed yet another unique Diploma programme in Public Relations and Creative Advertising. No other university offers this blend of a programme in this country to date.



Prof. Kabaji in Ghana attending the Pan African Writers Association Executive Meeting as Vice President. Photo: /Courtesy

Department, Director, Public Communication and Publishing and Deputy Vice Chancellor and as Founding Principal, Turkana University College

It has been quite exciting. I learnt to listen, empathize and act in the best interest of the institution. I have, over the years, learnt that as a leader, you are to grow those under you. More importantly, treat your workers with respect and accommodate their varied perspectives. I am proud to have driven the whole initiative of establishing Turkana University College in the remote North Western region of Kenya.

Q: You are amongst the few literary scholars to take up senior administrative positions, what would you attribute this to?

Leadership comes from God. When he picks on you, there is no turning back. Remember the story of Moses in the Bible? He even told God that he stammers and that he cannot lead but God rejected his plea.

Q: I am told you are the only full Professor of Literary Communication in Kenya

I was humbled when I qualified and was appointed to that position. Such positions come with responsibilities. I believe that the peasants of this nation spent their meagre resources to educate me to this level in order for me to serve them with dedication. That is why I continue to serve with passion.

Q: Comment on the discourse on STEM and the relationship with social sciences.

That is a useless debate. Any educated man or woman who has read about development of knowledge from Socrates, through Aristotle, Plato to Egara Kabaji should be ashamed to imagine that some disciplines are superior to others. We have heard extremely uneducated statements on this matter showing that ignorance pervades our appreciation of the value of knowledge.

Q: Tell us of your experience as Head of



Q: What is your view on Competence Based Curriculum?

Those opposed to this system are not being fair to the children of this nation. We have studied 8-4-4 system and we know its weaknesses that have ruined many people in this country. At the university, we have to move from closed book to open books examinations urgently.

Q: What are some of your current research interests?

I am happy to report that my Inaugural Lecture is ready and I will be requesting the Committee concerned to schedule me for presentation. The tentative title is ***"Texts and Contexts: Telling the African Story on a***

Multiplicity of Ideologically Charged Platforms". I am in the middle of an ambitious work of art that problematizes issues of identity and social decay.

Q: I have heard your students refer to you as the Grand Master

Hahaaaaaaa.... As a person I have earned many nick names since childhood. This is just a later addition by students who genuinely believe I am a black smith with words so they called me grand master of letters. Otherwise, I am sure you know that in Navuhi they call me "Position" while others simply refer to me as EK.

Coming Soon.... Newspost Classifieds





Meet Emeka: The First International Student in MMUST

By Wambugu Mary Wangari
and Mike Omukuba

Mr. Emeka Marizu is an international student from Nigeria who did his undergraduate, and is now doing his postgraduate studies at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology. He was also the first chairman of the International Students Guild (ISG). We interview him to get a glimpse of his life.

Interview





Q: Please tell us about yourself

My name is Onwuemenyi Marizu Emeka. I come from the Eastern part of Nigeria, a State called Imo. It's an Igbo community. I am also a postgraduate student of Criminology in MMUST.

Q: How did you know about MMUST and what made you choose this institution?

Well, I think it was in 2010. I actually wanted to study law, but then it was so competitive and my dad diverted my interest to Criminology. I came across the then Vice Chancellor Professor Wangila who was doing his masters in my country. He was like a father to me and through him I gained admission here. I had other options of going to other countries like South Africa but I have never liked the life there. In addition, Criminology is well recognized in Kenya.

Q: How would you describe your former classmates?

They were amazing. You know, being a West African, in the midst of a lot of East Africans was hard. They used to play around with me so much because of maybe the way I speak. They would come to me and be like 'Oga ooh!' and so on. But they were actually an amazing set of people. They were always willing to help, for instance, when I came I didn't know how to speak or understand Kiswahili. Some lecturers would use Swahili in class and would sometimes make jokes in the language. I would then see everybody laughing. They would

laugh and at the end of the lecture, they would translate the joke and I laugh along. In other words, they made me love the country, as well as my course. I am actually so proud of them because most of them are doing well and even up until today we keep in touch. We have a group chat on Whatsapp which we use when we have one or two situations that we need to help out.

Q: When did you graduate and what have you been up to since then?

I graduated in 2015 and of course after graduation you have to look for greener pastures. I wanted to further immediately but I needed to gain some experience, so I did some jobs here and there. I also trained with the military in Nigeria for a while. I spent a whole year at the West African forces under the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) which was in Makurdi. Markudi is the capital of Benue State; I was attached to the Nasme Barracks. From there I worked with the Bureau of Cooperatives in the same State. That is where I made the decision of coming back to Kenya to further my education, because I found out how marketable my course is, not just in Nigeria but in the world. Actually, MMUST emailed me and told me that they had started Masters in Criminology, which was not there when I left the institution.

*International Students
on a Retreat*





Q: Would you encourage international students to join MMUST? Why?

Yes. Well, I have encouraged and also processed the admission of quite a number of them. When I came here, I was the only Nigerian student in this part of the country and it was difficult. The second Nigerian student that came here was through me. Apart from that, I have been involved in one or two international linkages.

Q: What can you say about the International Students Guild?

The International Students Guild was a body that was there when I joined MMUST but it was not active. I picked it up and started reaching out to international students. I gathered a few of them that I could get. I also incorporated a lot of Kenyan students because I believe in diversity. When the number increased, the then ISG patron, Prof. Asenath Sigot suggested that we conduct an election and that is how I became the first International Students' chairman in the University. As at now, other international students refer to me as 'Elder' of 'Father.'

Q: What are your achievements as the founding President of the International Students Guild?

Well, I was to gather a number of international students around the University and incorporated them into ISG. We held our first ever international students retreat in 2012 at the Rondo Retreat Centre. We also paid a courtesy call visit to Prof. Asenath Sigot, the then Patron, in Maseno. All these helped in fostering togetherness. In addition, we were able to formulate the International Students Guild Constitution and harmonized international students on how to apply for students permits.

Q: What are the benefits of being an ISG member?

One, you receive a membership certificate. One

is also able to learn diverse culture, experience less culture shock, be versatile and again elaborate knowledge once you meet other international students. We also help students settle and get accommodation and also register with the Directorate of International and Academic Linkages. In short, we become a family.

Q: What do you think should be done differently concerning international students at MMUST?

I wish to, first of all, thank Prof. Elizabeth Abenga, the late Dr. Bob Mbori and the current Director of International and Academic Linkages, Dr. Catherine Aura. They have really done a commendable job of ensuring that the international students are made comfortable. However, may be more regard need to be given to international students because they are the ones who make MMUST truly international. MMUST could mount programmes in order to them together including students and staff. They can also be linked with other international students Kenya.

The residences, compared with other universities, are not well accorded to them. MMUST could have an international building/hostel just for the students. Right now, most of them live outside the University in crime prone areas. This makes them vulnerable for victimization by the community. In turn, they do not know how to defend themselves.

Students also experience difficulties in getting International Students Pupils Pass especially currently. May be DIAL could facilitate acquisition of these. Students face serious challenges and, sometimes, they have to make more than one application due to loss of documents. Lastly, international students could have representation in DIAL to handle administrative matters.

Kenya Railways Holds Public Participation Forum on Railway Bill 2019



By Sandra Dorcas Awuor

The Kenya Railways Corporation (KRC), also known as Kenya Railways (KR), held a public participation forum to discuss the proposed Railway Bill, 2019 at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (MMUST) on 22nd May 2019.

The Bill proposes to establish Kenya Railways Corporation as a network and train operators, provide for the functions of the National Transport and Safety Authority (NTSA) as the railway economic and safety regulator, provide for open access and licensing of other train operators, establish the Railway Training Institute for connection purposes.

Eng. Kanyaura, from Kenya Railway, elaborated on the re-establishment of the Kenya Railways Cooperation under the new law. According to the Bill, the Corporation, whose headquarters shall be in Nairobi, shall be a body corporate with perpetual succession and a common seal. In Section 6(1), it says that the corporation shall have the following functions;

- Plan, develop, and construct railway infrastructure and other necessary or desirable works required for the purposes of the Corporation;
- Maintain, repair and improve the Kenya Railway Corporation network;
- Allocate infrastructure capacity to operators;
- Control and manage traffic on the Kenya Railway Corporation network;
- Undertake training in the railway sector;
- Carry passengers or goods for hire or reward through a subsidiary or through a third party hired for that purpose;
- Develop, own and manage on commercial basis directly or through a subsidiary or through third party hired for that purpose real estate along the Corporation network.

"If the proposed Railway Bill is signed into law, the Kenya Railway Institute, which runs as a department of Kenya Railway, will be made autonomous and serve larger areas," said Ms. Victoria Bulwa from the Legal department- Kenya Railways.

She also added that the Kenya Railways is going to build a new railway from Lamu to South Sudan, known as LAPSET (Lamu Port-South Sudan-Ethiopia-Transport).

The Institute shall undertake rail safety training, training for the railway sector, undertake research to inform curriculum and training in the railway, transport and logistics industry, offer consultancy in the railway, transport and logistics industry, undertake technical and vocational training, promote equity and access to research and training in the railway, transport and logistics industry, amongst other functions as stipulated in the Draft Railway Bill 2019, under Section 137(1).

The Railway Bill, 2019 is currently undergoing public participation, in accordance with the Kenyan Constitution, which began on 20th May 2019. Members of the public can also obtain the draft Bill in the Kenya Railways' website www.krc.co.ke.

MMUST-SDMHA Researchers enter into Continental Research on African Tropical Cyclones

Prof. John Obiri, Dr. Veronica Kiluva

Cyclone hazards are among the most catastrophic natural phenomena in Africa, yet least understood. For instance, on 14th March 2019, over 3 million residents across Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Malawi were unexpectedly impacted by cyclone Idai that left over 1000 people dead and properties of over US\$2Billion lost. This cyclone followed a string of many other previous ones such as the devastating Enawo cyclone that hit Mozambique in 2017. Rural communities are most vulnerable with thousands of structures destroyed and livelihoods completely devastated. Perhaps, the most vulnerable country in Africa is the island nation of Madagascar which lies precariously on the direct path of the Indian Ocean generated cyclones.

In this regard, three research consortia have been created to study Madagascar's resilience to cyclones and to also unearth the local communities' adaptive capacity as the climate changes. These consortia are hosted in institutions located in three countries i.e. The **United Kingdom** (University of Edinburgh - UoE), **Madagascar** (NGO-Conservation International - CI) and **Kenya** (Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology - MMUST, specifically the School of Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance - SDMHA, represented by Dr Veronica Kiluva and Prof. John Obiri).

The research project is titled '**Resilience of Traditional Structures in Madagascar to Cyclones in a Changing Climate (RC3)**'. A post-doctoral researcher will be deployed to collect extensive datasets in Madagascar besides having an initial hazards and disasters research incubation and induction period in SDMHA, Kakamega.

The RC3 hopes to address four key objectives. **First**, to develop a tool that will assess the structural capacity of traditional structures to resist the cyclone winds. **Second**, to characterize Madagascar's exposure to cyclones in the changing climate scenarios. **Third**, to assess the adaptive capacity of the Malagasy society towards the vagaries of cyclones and, **Fourth**, to develop a probabilistic model that will predict scenarios of resilience to cyclones. These objectives will be capped with stakeholder studies encompassing NGOs and local Malagasy communities so as to transfer and strengthen their local adaptive capacity.

Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology appreciates The Royal Society that led the Call for Proposals on behalf of the UK National Academies (British Academy, Royal Academy of Engineering and The Academy of Medical Sciences for the Resilient Futures Challenge-Led Grants award that runs from the year 2019 to 2021.



Figure 1. Map of Africa's Island Nation of Madagascar

Source:

<http://camaleones.reptiles.com.es/furciferpardalis.htm>



Figure 2. An image showing residents looking at a road that collapsed in the aftermath of Cyclone Kenneth, at Wimbe village in Pemba, Mozambique, April 29, 2019. [Photo/Agencies]

Source:

<http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201904/30/WS5cc7a56aa3104842260b943d.html>



Figure 3. An image showing a man standing on fallen trees which damaged his home in Moroni, Comoros, April 25, 2019 after Cyclone Kenneth hit the island nation of Comoros. [Photo/IC]

Source:

<http://africa.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201904/28/WS5cc490e1a3104842260b8c93.html>



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