



L'Université Evangélique en Afrique as an Integrated University in Central Africa



The African University requires in-depth transformation to create a space where learners meet with their supervisors to develop a quadruple competence consisting of building knowledge, know-how, life and thinking skills to contribute to the development of the continent. It is therefore necessary that the university be considered holistically to develop skills that Africa needs. It is necessary to consider both the needs of the community in terms of skills, human resources available at the national and international level and building adequate infrastructures that promote a pleasant learning environment for African youth. To achieve this, it requires the involvement of all stakeholders in the education sector, namely governments, students, teachers and the private sector, first in determining priority sectors and then the investment of each one in the learning process. A weak commitment from the State makes it very difficult to accomplish this mission, especially when the budget allocated to higher education in many African countries, including the Democratic Republic of Congo, is very low and under 5% of the national budget. The private and above all ecclesiastical sector thus reinforces the State in the accomplishment of the educational mission. Indeed, Université Evangélique en Afrique was thus created in 1991 by the Protestant churches in the Province of South Kivu to first allow the Congolese State to have university executives endowed, in addition to academic skills, with the values characterizing the Protestant ethic. In the choice of faculties, it was thus decided from the outset to create the Faculty of Medicine and Community Health, the Faculty of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, the



Prof Gustave M. Nachigera
Rector of Université
Evangélique en Afrique,
DR Congo

Faculty of Protestant Theology, the Faculty of Economics and Management and quite recently the Faculty of Social Sciences.

Furthermore, the training provided to our medical students makes it possible to train both a general practitioner and a specialist capable of engaging in an environment where s/he has an appropriate technical arsenal, but also in rural areas where working conditions are precarious. In addition to continuing education, we provide ongoing training for doctors and health professionals who need retraining. We also offer short-term and very specialized training in the field of Vaginal Surgery, Infectious Diseases and Physiotherapy. To do this, we use both urban and rural clinics combined with medical simulation as an entry point to student clinical practice.

To ensure good health for the population, nutrition proves to be an important factor in terms of preventing disease and maintaining good health. Our faculty of agriculture sciences focuses its training on animal and plant production considering agroecological and environmental factors. Our students are thus in an environment where they work closer to farmers to help solve problems encountered in the food production chain, from production to marketing and food processing. Yet the food produced or purchased must not only be nutritious, but also of higher quality ensuring sustainable human health. In fact, our agronomists have additional skills in environmental studies and conditions necessary to ensure sustainable development. To make the profession attractive to young people, we are introducing new technologies to training. In the air where Africa is invaded by products coming from outside Africa and where the youth unemployment rate is on the rise, the development of the agri-food industry seems a sustainable solution. It is therefore necessary to train enough senior executives in the field of food technologies. In response to this need UEA has opened within its faculty of Agricultural sciences, a department of food technologies as both an opportunity for the DR Congo and the Africa Great Lakes region to have more skills in this field, but also allow young people to set up competitive products of high food quality. In the same vein, a project called “a student a product, a student a project” is being developed within our department. Each student must therefore, during their training, set up a labeled and competitive food product on the market which will be the subject of their professional project.

Faced with climate change, our University is committed to ecological agriculture that respects the environmental conditions. Thus, a Doctoral School in Agro Ecology and Climate Sciences was initiated during the first semester of 2022 in partnership with three other universities in the Eastern DR Congo (Catholic University of Bukavu, Catholic University of Graben and the State University of Bukavu). This doctoral school remains unique in the Great Lakes sub-region of Africa French-speaking area and thus constitutes a training opportunity for African youth. Research will focus on soil-plant-atmosphere relationships, microbial, plant, fish and animal biodiversity under various agro-climate conditions. In terms of fish resources, there is a growing sphere of interest and research on the African Great Lakes, which are acknowledged as home of the world's largest and most ecologically diverse freshwater systems. With the focus on social and ecological systems associated with these important natural resources, such interest and research outcomes can contribute to achieving the international community's sustainable development aspirations. This can use a mix of perspectives ranging from socioeconomic aspects through ecological impacts to livelihoods functions of their main exploitation patterns. However, it should be noted that the evolution of epidemics at the global level needs the creation of research centers on the One Health which is under development within UEA. This is an integrating project between our Faculty of Medicine, the Faculty of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences.

The implementation of products is a priority both in the food industry and in other sectors of life. At Université Evangélique en Afrique, we have thus initiated a Fab lab to supervise young girls and boys, students and non-students in the creation of products. A Fab Lab, or digital fabrication laboratory, is a place to play, to create, to mentor and to invent: a place for learning and innovation. This Fab lab operates in the Faculty of Economics and Management and initially focuses on the ecological recovery of waste.

The interconnectivity of our university is explained by the establishment of a Faculty of Social Sciences focused on social service, peace and conflict resolution, and gender. Indeed, we believe that development work only makes sense if it ensures the well-being of the community and in a sustainable way in an environment where women and men live in harmony. Through the training of social workers, our University invests in reducing inequalities and sharing national resources equally with all citizens. The African Scholar should thus put energy into the prevention and

management of conflicts at the national and international level to create an environment conducive to development.

Through the Denis Mukwege Center of Excellence, a center that was initiated by UEA to honor the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize, our University engages in the improvement of African women conditions and leadership empowerment as a focused goal. Hence, the lack of women potential empowerment in the public sphere in many African countries as advocated has led to development obstacle. As a Protestant University, we advocate for equality between women and men for the harmonious development of our continent. Finally, our Faculty of Theology bases its existence on a Protestant ethic considering work as a duty leading to the community and human double benefit.

About the Author

Professor Gustave Mushagalusa Nachigera has been the Rector of Université Evangélique en Afrique in Bukavu since 2008. He is a member of the Executive Board of RUFORUM where he represents Central Africa. Alongside his work as Rector, he coordinates the inter-university doctoral school in agroecology and climate sciences which brings together Université Evangélique en Afrique, Université catholique de Bukavu, Université catholique de Graben, Congolese universities members of RUFORUM.

This is our twenty-fifth issue in a series of articles we are releasing as part of the RUFORUM Seventh Africa Higher Education Week and RUFORUM Triennial Conference Digests. More information about the conference is available at <https://www.ruforum.org/Triennial2021/>. Join the Conversation on Social Media using our Official hashtag #AfricaHEWeek2021.