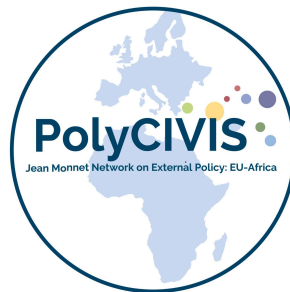


DEVELOPING AFRICAN-EUROPEAN JOINT TEACHING PROGRAMMES

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“EQUIPPING STUDENTS WITH A CAN-DO MINDSET FOR SUCCESS IN A COMPLEX WORLD”

Interviewee

Dr. Kamatara Kanifa, Lecturer at Makerere University in Uganda

Interviewer

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in Europe and Africa.

Introduction

Dr Kamatara Kanifa, an agricultural expert from Makerere University in Uganda, provides a unique perspective on how the polycrisis is manifesting itself in the Ugandan context, particularly in the agricultural sector. From the impact of climate change on farmers to the challenges of food security and population growth, Dr Kanifa's insights offer a window into the multi-dimensional challenges facing her country and the innovative approaches being taken to address them.

Dr Kanifa emphasizes the importance of equipping students with a can-do mindset to navigate the complexities of a world marked by multiple crises.

This underscores the role of education in fostering resilience and adaptability in the face of uncertainty, and the potential for innovation and cultural preservation to drive economic development and empower communities.

THE INTERVIEW

[Q1.] Which topics and courses are you currently teaching, and within which programmes?

Kamatara Kanifa: At the undergraduate level, I teach livestock management for agriculture, food sciences and land use students. I also teach small ruminant production systems, apiculture (beekeeping), poultry management, as well as rabbit and pig management.

At the end of the academic year (recess time from May to August), we teach practical skills, for instance the conservation of feedstuffs such as hay and silage. At postgraduate I teach Pre and post slaughter handling as well as meat quality assessment technologies.

[Q2.] Could you give an example of a multidimensional challenge a farmer might face, triggered by climate change?

Kamatara Kanifa: To livestock keepers, decreased availability of feed and water are among the top challenges, as they result in low production of animal products. Heat stress, disease and

parasite outbreaks have the effect of weakening animal immune systems. In extreme cases such as prolonged droughts, floods, and hot and cold waves, animals die in large numbers.

To crop farmers, climate change has had a negative impact on quantity and quality of crop products. Farmers are becoming uncertain as to when to plant: since planting seasons are no longer accurately predictable. Additionally, there are increased emergencies of new crop diseases and pests. These at times cause total crop failure.

Overall, these challenges have a significant negative effect on farmers' livelihoods with lifelong impacts such as mental illnesses, increased child sturdiness and in extreme cases, deaths.

The economy is currently in a tough situation, being exposed to waves of climate change, pandemics, and political instability such as refugees coming in from DRC and South Sudan. Some of my colleagues are helping to train refugees from countries mentioned above to help them integrate, and valorise skills they bring that are sometimes lacking in Uganda.

[Q3.] How do you explain or understand the term “polycrisis” in the Ugandan context? Is it currently being used? If not, are there any similar or related terms?

Kamatara Kanifa: The term “polycrisis” is a new term, but different disciplines have already been using different terms to define multidimensional crises. For example, in agriculture, we talk about the “triple crisis” i.e Food insecurity, population growth and climate change. This a challenging situation where agricultural experts must innovatively propose/design strategies that can provide enough nutritious foods to a rapidly growing population amidst climate change-hit production systems. On the other hand, the livestock industry is faced with a “Double edged challenge”.

This term refers to the need to produce more meat for a rapidly growing population as the country's meat consumption stands at 6kg/person/annum far below the 50kg/person/annum recommended by the WHO. However, livestock production is castigated as a key contributor to global warming through the production of greenhouse gases. Hence the livestock industry is challenged to produce more meat amidst the climate change challenge.

[Q4.] What kind of joint teaching would you like to develop with PolyCIVIS partner universities?

Kamatara Kanifa: Multidisciplinary teaching is becoming more and more interesting for me as a mid-career lecturer and researcher. With another colleague from Makerere, I have suggested setting up a Blended Intensive Programme (BIP) on the “Enhancement of skills in handling polycrisis situations”. We have already developed its structure, and its content will follow shortly. What I think is particularly important is to empower students with a can-do mindset, as they are socialized into a world whose multiple crises can easily lead to anxiety and discouragement. We hope to make an educational offer that allows them not only to survive, but to thrive in such a complex environment.

[Q5.] How do you make sure that teaching in your fields of expertise remains relevant to current challenges, and fully equips your graduates for their job environment?

Kamatara Kanifa: Their biggest challenge is getting a job in the first place, as the job market is quite competitive. Our main employer is the government, but not everybody who graduates gets a government job. The private sector is catching up and is now starting to offer more jobs. They want a multitasker, an allrounder: a team leader with good soft skills, and fully versatile technically. Such persons don’t come around very often, at least not right after graduation.

When you look at the Bachelor of Science in agriculture, it’s a 4-year course. In the 4th year, we let the students take options (electives): animal, soil or crop science. Employers tell us which skills they need: we have a regular curriculum reform every three to five years, so we can remain relevant to job market needs and the advancement of technologies. Such reviews are required for all programmes taught at Makerere University; it first goes through internal quality assurance and then through an external review body. This periodical review of programs makes us remain relevant as we continue to train students.

On a personal basis, I go for refresher courses, go for further skilling in new and emerging areas. When I joined as an undergraduate, climate change wasn’t an issue, but it is now. I have had to go for some climate change courses and have done a lot of reading on my own. I have also gone for soft skills training.

[Q6.] How does your teaching link with other more practice-oriented projects?

Kamatara Kanifa: I've recently won a start-up grant titled "Transforming traditional meat products into heritage value commodities- a driver of economic development and socio-cultural revitalization in the Karamoja region" from the Makerere University research and innovation fund. The grant aims to transform traditional meat products into heritage value commodities. This is to act as an economic and socio-cultural driver for women in one of the pastoral communities in the Karamoja region in Northeast Uganda, bordering South Sudan and Kenya. The preliminary results are good and it is still ongoing work.



Dr Kamatara Kanifa

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PolyCIVIS: confronting the polycrisis in Europe and Africa

PolyCIVIS is a Euro - African collaboration that brings to the forefront the global polycrisis, allowing a better understanding of the impacts of several concurrent major societal crises challenging the world in the form of a polycrisis.

In the wake of the global polycrisis, urgent challenges have emerged, prompting PolyCIVIS to take action. Our initiative is dedicated to addressing these pressing global issues and their interconnected consequences.

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