



MAKERERE UNIVERSITY



Speech by the Vice-Chancellor at the Dissemination Event for the project Translating Folklore into Animated (Film) for Educational Purposes

Date: 15th October 2020

Venue: Central Teaching Facility I, Rm 1.2

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The Principal, College of Humanities and Social Sciences

Our Partners on this Project: from government and private sectors, and scholars from Makerere

The Deans

The Heads of Departments

Members of staff and students

And all the online participants from wherever you may be following this event,

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

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Goodmorning / Afternoon! Thank you for taking time to be part of this exciting event where we disseminate findings from research that has drawn Team Members, not only from the Department of Literature where the Principal Investigator comes from, but in a multidisciplinary manner pooled resources from Technology, Philosophy, and the Performing Arts. This research, thus, brings the Humanities and STEM into a creative synergy that has produced the outcome we are celebrating today. I am honoured to be part of this remarkable vision and creativity. For me, as the Vice Chancellor of this university, it is gratifying to lead a team of scholars who are keen to translate the vision of making Makerere University a hub of research excellence on the continent; not for its own sake, but to transform society and building this nation. That your research is contributing to the cultural identity of Uganda, by using our stories to reconstruct this, is praiseworthy. Thank you Prof Dipio and the team for this initiative and the achievement so far made.

In 2019, Makerere received a grant worth UGX30 billion under the University's Research and Innovations Fund (RIF) to facilitate the local generation of translatable research and scalable innovations that address key gaps required to drive Uganda's development agenda. It was envisaged as an avenue where researchers in the University could collaborate with partners, in and outside the university, on groundbreaking research areas. What we are disseminating today is one of the many projects that launched the RIF last year. Seeing this product come out at a challenging time as this shows the resilience and passion of the researchers. We are grateful to the Government of Uganda for giving us this opportunity to not only research development areas, hence fulfilling our connection to the Sustainable Development Goals, but also placing Makerere at the heart of research agenda in Africa and the world at large.

This RIF project, **Transforming Folktales into Animation Film for Educational Purposes** is important to all of us for several reason. In the first place, we all love stories as human beings. Stories make us who we are: they embed our values; they are points of reference when we are lost and need guidance and inspiration; and they are the storehouse of our identity. Without



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stories, our lives are drab. For this reason, since the beginning of human existence, we have created stories to survive culturally, as a community, and as individuals. Therefore, in our African cultural logic, stories have always been important. Children were exposed to it early, around the fire, or in the kitchen, with the mother or the grandmother ‘serving’ them stories as if it were dessert after the evening meal. But now, we are living in changed times, where the ‘fireside’ has migrated into the television screen of cinema screen. Technology, now, helps us to migrate our stories and adapting a medium that suits the context! This is where the innovativeness of this research resides in. It is very important, as it make our stories also travel in the spirit of cultural exchange; so that we are not always the recipients and consumer of foreign cultures, but we also offer ours for others to consume. This will particularly satisfy the hunger of your children and youth for wholesome cultural content. These stories open crucial areas conversation, not just for children, but also for us adults. What values do we inculcate in them? And what should we, adults, do to ensure the survival of this rich heritage passed down to us from generation to generation?

I am glad that Prof Dipio has started this journey for us. I call on many more to engage in research that allows our valuable traditions to be brought foregrounded, so we can learn from them as we progress.

Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to thank our partners in this project: Cross-Cultural Foundation of Uganda, Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, the Uganda Communications Commission, the National Curriculum Development Centre, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). These are the pillars on which culture and education are built. We are sure that with your support, such products will not only be brought to the limelight but be taken on as national and transnational projects for the resurgence of our culture in the media and in classrooms. Once our children are introduced to these community creative expressions, I am sure that they will have something to replace the western-centric forms of entertainment and education some of which are detrimental to their cultural development. There is no reason why a child should look to Cinderella or Rapunzel when we have *Njabala* and *Hidden Riches*, for instance.

Finally, I would like to thank the leadership at the College of Humanities and Social Sciences. CHUSS has become a centre of excellence, producing multiple grant winning proposals and as I recently heard, CHUSS is indeed on the move. I have been part of RIF dissemination events from the College in the recent weeks and seen the vigour with which research is taking shape at the College. Thank you so much, Dr Ahikire for inspiring your team to such heights. I would also like to thank Dr Okot Bengge, the outgoing Head of Department, Literature, for the academic leadership in the Department. Thank you for giving colleagues the environment in which to work and still carry out their research.

To the team members on this project, I sincerely congratulate you. Let this be the beginning of greater products to come.

As we build for the future.