

Ethical Science

Dr. Julius Ecuru

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Doctorate Studies: Blekinge Institute of Technology, Sweden and Makerere University 2010 -2013;

Doctorate Research Area: Innovation Systems and Development

Title of Doctorate research: 'Unlocking Potentials of Innovation Systems in Low Resource Settings'.

Dr. Julius Ecuru is an Assistant Executive Secretary at Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST). He is one of the leading scientists and scholar at UNCST. He has been on a number of research committees/teams both at the national and international levels. He was one of the experts selected to serve on the International Research Panel of President Barack Obama's Presidential Commission for the Study of Bio-ethical Issues (PCSBi) in 2011.



"President Obama directed the Commission Chair to set up an International Research Panel to consider current U.S. Government regulations and international standards that guard the health and well-being of participants in scientific studies supported by the U.S. Government, and specifically to be assured that 'the current rules for research participants protect people from harm or unethical treatment, domestically as well as internationally'. The President was interested in guarding against a recurrence of the 1946 – 1948 Guatemala unethical studies in which hundreds of soldiers, prison inmates and psychiatric patients were deliberately infected with syphilis and other sexually transmitted diseases without their consent to study effectiveness of penicillin. This injustice was done by American Public Health Service and Guatemalan doctors in their study of penicillin," he explains.

The Panel of 14 members had only two Panelists from Africa; Dr. Ecuru from Uganda and Prof Adel Mahmoud from Egypt. The subsequent report of the Commission entitled 'Moral Science: Protecting Participants in Human Subjects Research,' is available online at www.bioethics.gov. The

report recommended, among other things, more accountability in research, trainings on research and research ethics especially for developing countries, more community engagement from inception to research output, and compensation to victims of research-gone-wrong. Dr. Ecuru has since participated in developing the WHO operational standards on research ethics and other local and international research entities.

At UNCST, Dr. Ecuru is responsible for research and technology management, which includes human, social and environmental safeguards in research, innovation management, and institutional development matters. “We facilitate the conduct of all kinds of research from engineering, agriculture, life sciences to humanities and social sciences. UNCST now registers close to 700 new research projects annually in all fields of science and technology, up from around 100 in 1990. We also advise on intellectual property management issues, and translation of research products to innovations in the market place. Occasionally we provide grants for people to do research and technology development. My Doctorate feeds into my work here and it has added much value to my work and our team. I am grateful for SIDA’s sponsorship of my research.” he adds.

The key finding

Innovation systems, particularly in the biosciences, are evolving in Uganda. They need to be supported by clear policies with goals and incentives that spur innovation. The university is emerging as a key actor, as demonstrated by the growing number of university-driven entrepreneurial initiatives. This presents a an opportunity for greater interaction and learning among actors (especially with private sector), and to position the university as the centre for research and innovation.

Membership to Professional Organisations

- Member, Uganda Society for Health Scientists
- Member, Bio-Resources Innovations Network for East African Development
- Member, Applied Research Ethics National Association
- Member, Uganda Society for Professional Chemists

