You are kindly invited to the public defense to obtain the degree of

**DOCTOR OF EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES**

of Ms. Nanyanzi Alice Sheila

Which will take place on September 26, 2023 at 10 AM
Promotiezaal (room D.2.01)
VUB Main Campus Brussels - Pleinlaan 2 – 1050 Brussel
Or if you wish to attend online, [click here to join the meeting](#)

**UNDERSTANDING UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN A RURAL CONTEXT. A MIXED STUDY.**

**JURY**

**INTERN:**
- Prof. dr. Liesbeth DE DONDER (Chair)
  Dpt. Educational Sciences, VUB
- Prof. dr. Tom Vanwing
  Dpt. Educational Sciences, VUB
- Prof. dr. Sarah Dury
  Dpt. Educational Sciences, VUB

**EXTERN:**
- dr. Mark Kaahwa
  Mountains of the Moon University
- dr. Mustapha Almas
  Mzumbe University, Tanzania

**PROMOTOR(S):**
- Prof. dr. Chang Zhu
  Dpt. Educational Sciences, VUB
- Prof. dr. Leo Van Audenhove
  imec-SMIT-VUB
- dr. Kintu Mugenyi Justice
  Mountains of the Moon University

Coming by car? Please [register your licence plate](#) in advance to have access to the campus.

You are also invited to the reception afterwards.
Please confirm your attendance before September 24, 2023 via [alice.sheila.nanyanzi@vub.be](mailto:alice.sheila.nanyanzi@vub.be).

How to reach the VUB? Click for [directions](#).
This doctoral dissertation aims to understand university Community Engagement (CE) in a rural context in Uganda and to test a CE model and the processes of engaging various stakeholders in CE. The first study systematically reviews the literature regarding characteristics, theories, models, and critical elements that foster successful CE outcomes. The Place-based theory and the partnership models were dominant in explaining the CE phenomenon. The second study explored how engaged university stakeholders perceived CE regarding benefits, opportunities, challenges, and their needs for CE. Data were collected by way of a survey. Respondents were categorized as academic staff (n=53), students (n=194), and dairy farmers (n=203). One-way ANOVA findings showed that the three categories of stakeholders perceived CE differently and had multiple needs.

The third study focused on co-creating a dairy app as an engagement platform that could benefit the university and the dairy farmers. The study followed the stages of the design thinking model: ideation to generate content for the app's initial requirements, prototyping a usable app and testing the functionality and content of the app with end users. This study's findings showed that co-creation is a relevant strategy in CE initiatives that enabled the development of a contextual dairy app. The fourth study assessed factors influencing rural farmers' readiness and intention to use the dairy app. A survey was used to gather data from 466 respondents. A Partial Least Squares- structural equation modelling analysis technique was applied to test the research model using Smart PLS (v3.3.3). The findings strongly supported all the anticipated relationships predicted in the research model.

The last study focused on developing and testing a model of input dimensions influencing university CE processes and outcomes at the university and community levels. We tested the CE model with a sample of 126 academics and 216 community partners from the Rwenzori region of Uganda. The study used a structural equation modelling technique to assess the relationship in the model. The results demonstrated the significance of institutional, community, and professional/occupational dimensions to the engagement participation process.

The research is significant as it validates both theoretical and practical dimensions of CE in a rural context in Uganda, hence contributing to new knowledge from a developing country viewpoint. Besides, this research contributes to the CE debate by developing a model that can serve as a strategic roadmap for guiding the universities' efforts to create meaningful, sustainable, and reciprocal relationships with their communities.
CURRICULUM VITAE

Nanyanzi Alice Sheila holds a Master's degree in development economics (M.Sc.) from Uganda Martyrs University and a Bachelor of Arts in Education degree from Kyambogo University, Uganda. She has pursued her doctoral studies (PhD) in educational sciences at Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB), Belgium. Sheila is a lecturer in the social sciences department at Mountains of the Moon University, Fort Portal, Uganda. She has profound research interest and expertise in university-community engagement and development synergies. During her doctoral studies, she developed a keen interest in understanding university community engagement notion in a rural context. As part of her doctoral studies, Sheila participated in four international conferences with presentation contributions and is an author and co-author of several international peer-reviewed scientific publications.