

Exploring the State University of Zanzibar's Achievements, Learnings, and Future Endeavors

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The East African Newspaper had the privilege of interviewing the Vice Chancellor of the State University of Zanzibar, Professor Mohammed Makame Haji, to delve into the university's achievements and its strategic trajectory for the upcoming years.

Qn: Can you provide an overview of the achievements and lessons learned during the implementation of SUZA's Strategic Plan from 2018 to 2022?

Ans: During 2018-2022, SUZA achieved significant milestones, securing research funds and establishing a robust research culture through a comprehensive Research and Publication Policy. Accreditation for all academic programs by the Tanzanian Commission for Universities attested to the high quality of SUZA's offerings. The addition of new schools and institutes, such as Dentistry, Agriculture, and Media, diversified academic opportunities. These accomplishments aligned with SUZA's mission to provide relevant education for the 21st century. Lessons learned included prioritizing research fund allocation, enhancing research management, and ensuring financial sustainability through diversified revenue sources. Clear communication and effective outreach program management, including SUZA TV, were highlighted. Strengthening occupational health, conducting regular self-assessments, and aligning student enrollment with facility expansions emerged as pivotal for future planning.

Qn: How has SUZA addressed the enhancement of staff recruitment, retention, and development during the period covered by the Strategic Plan (2018-2022)?

Ans: Our focus on human resources has been integral to SUZA's success. During this period, staff remuneration saw a significant increase, reflecting our commitment to attracting and retaining top talent. The formulation of new organizational structures, scheme of services, and staff regulations exemplifies our dedication to establishing a conducive and structured work environment. Additionally, the drafting of an approved training policy ensures that our staff continuously enhance their skills and knowledge, aligning with the ever-evolving landscape of higher education. The establishment of an Administration Staff Council fostered a collaborative and inclusive decision-making process, improving the overall work culture at SUZA.

Qn: Could you provide more details on SUZA strides in infrastructure development plans?

Ans: SUZA's strides in infrastructure



Prof Mohammed Makame Haji,
Vice Chancellor of SUZA

and technology have been substantial. With a draft of the Master Plan and title deed in place, we are strategically planning the construction of blocks for a laboratory complex, a school of agriculture, and student hostels. This aligns with our commitment to providing cutting-edge facilities for academic and research purposes. The increase in internet bandwidth and the connection of all SUZA campuses with a fiber backbone ensures a robust and reliable network infrastructure. Furthermore, the ongoing plan for the automation of all SUZA services under the HEET project is a testament to our dedication to embracing technological advancements. The availability of a draft ICT policy and related guidelines ensures a structured approach to integrating technology into our academic and administrative processes.

Qn: How has SUZA actively aligned itself with national and international frameworks?

Ans: SUZA's strategic alignment with national and international frameworks underscores a commitment to comprehensive development objectives. Notably, our initiatives contribute directly to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education. The emphasis on gender mainstreaming further aligns with SDG 5 on gender equality, demonstrating our dedication to fostering diverse and inclusive learning environments. Additionally, our strategic focus on research and innovation for socioeconomic growth directly supports SDG 9, which targets industry, innovation, and infrastructure.

On the continental stage, SUZA harmonizes with the African Union Agenda 2063, contributing to the realization of well-educated citizens and skills revolutions driven by science, technology, and innovation. Concurrently, our commitment aligns with the East African Vision 2050, emphasizing the pivotal role of higher education institutions in advancing regional economic transformation through research and innovation. At the local level, SUZA strategically aligns itself with Zanzibar-specific frameworks, including the Zanzibar Development Vision 2050 (ZDV 2050) and the Zanzibar Development Plan



Caption here

(ZADEP) 2021-2026. Our role in building a high local and higher education capacity for innovation aligns with ZDV 2050's aspirations, and our interventions support ZADEP's focus on human capital and social development, aligning with government needs for societal progress.

Qn: How does the financial management approach during the implementation of SUZA's Strategic Plan (2018-2022) reflect prudence and efficiency?

Ans: The financial aspects of SUZA's strategic plan implementation reflect a prudent and efficient approach to resource management. While the initial budget for the 2018-2022 period was TZS 134,384,937,024, we effectively utilized TZS 112,804,888,928, representing 84% of the allocated budget. This disciplined financial management shared our effort in utilizing resources effectively for op-

portant impact. The increase in university revenue and the initiation of partnerships with various universities and organizations have played a pivotal role in enhancing our financial capacity. The implementation of an integrated financial management system software further ensures transparency and efficiency in financial processes.

Qn: Can you provide an overview of the key projects SUZA has been involved in, namely PEBL, EEI-SHEA, ZANSHEA, HEET, and the impacts and benefits they have had to the university?

Ans: SUZA has been at the forefront of transformative projects, showcasing a commitment to academic excellence and regional development. In the Partnership for Enhanced and Blended Learning (PEBL), SUZA collaborated with East African partners to develop accredited courses addressing staff shortages and enhancing teaching quality.

The Enhancing Entrepreneurship Innovation E-learning and Sustainability in Higher Education in Africa (EEI-SHEA) project focuses on aligning the Bachelor of Science in Environmental Health with regional priorities, emphasizing Entrepreneurship, Innovation, E-learning, and Sustainability. SUZA's pivotal role in the Zanzibar Spatial Data Infrastructure for Coastal and Marine Areas (ZANSHEA) project establishes the university as a national competence center, managing environmental data through Geographic Information Systems. Currently, in the Higher Education for Economic Transformation (HEET) project, SUZA, with a \$20 million allocation, is actively enhancing infrastructure, curriculum, and staff capacity to elevate learning environments and program relevance, reflecting a commitment to sustained educational impact.

Qn: Could you elaborate on the core aspects of governance and leadership development as used by SUZA to help it meet its objectives?

Ans: Governance and leadership development are core aspects of SUZA's strategic plan. The existence of a draft organizational structure provides a clear framework for effective governance. The formulation of gender mainstreaming and anti-sexual harassment policies underscores our commitment to creating an inclusive and safe environment. The presence of functional committees, bodies, senate, and council further ensures a structured decision-making process. Regular leadership training for university management enhances the capabilities of our leadership team. Additionally, consistent audit and accountability reports are provided, showcasing transparency and adherence to best practices.

Qn: Looking ahead, how does SUZA plan to sustain its commitment to producing competitive graduates and fostering excellence?

Ans: Looking ahead, SUZA envisions a future marked by continued excellence and innovation. Our commitment to producing competitive graduates through quality and relevant programs remains unwavering. Strengthening the quality of academic programs, embracing innovative teaching methodologies, and continually improving teaching and learning processes and facilities are integral to our vision. We will persist in our efforts to enhance research, innovation, partnership, and outreach services, contributing to a transformative regional academia. Furthermore, our strategic objectives include improving the working and learning environment, supporting services, and strengthening institutional capacity. As we move forward, SUZA remains dedicated to its mission of offering quality and broadly relevant education and research to foster a competent society capable of tackling the challenges of the 21st century and beyond.

HIGHLIGHTS

- SUZA excelled in securing substantial research funds, utilizing TZS 112.8 billion out of the allocated TZS 134.4 billion budget, and obtaining accreditation for all academic programs.
- SUZA learned looks to focus on research funding prioritization, policy approval processes, and the alignment of student enrollment with facility expansions. An integral part of their outreach efforts was the SUZA TV program.
- The university's commitment to human capital investment was demonstrated through increased staff remuneration, organizational restructuring, and the allocation of \$20 million for the HEET project, emphasizing skill enhancement and fostering a conducive work environment.