

WBS PROPOSAL COMMITTEE REPORT

Applicant name & Number:	John King'athia Karuitha, 855810
First year of Registration	2017
Research proposal title:	Empirical Evaluation of the Possible Impacts of the Transformation of Microfinance Institutions in Africa
Dates of Panel:	Friday, 29 March 2018 @ 12h00

The *Senate Standing Orders on Higher Degrees* make clear that applicants should not be admitted to the degree based solely on meeting the academic qualifications and performance requirements. According to this policy, the WBS does not rely solely on paper qualifications alone. When a potential candidate meets the academic qualification and performance criteria, and when a qualified supervisor is available, the PhD proposal is assessed by a subject expert.

The reasons for the assessment are at least two-fold. First, the originality and importance of the intended contributions are assessed. The proposal must outline an original and substantive contribution to the literature. Second, the proposal provides an objective indication that the candidate has achieved the expected HEQSF outcomes for the Master's degree and an indicator of the applicant's ability to successfully achieve exit expectations for the PhD degree.

These expectations are summarised in the SA government's *Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (2014)*. Please note that these expectations are integral to the accreditation of South African universities and are integral to the evaluation by which foreign degrees are accepted for admission to South African universities:

Master's Degree by coursework and mini-dissertation: Purpose and characteristics

A coursework programme requiring a high level of theoretical engagement and intellectual independence, and...demonstration of the ability to relate knowledge to a range of contexts for professional practice. In addition, this variant of a general Master's degree must contain a research project...

Master's Degree graduates in general must be able to reflect critically on theory and its application. They must be able to deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively, design and critically appraise research, make sound judgements using data and information at their disposal and communicate their conclusions clearly to specialist and non-specialist audiences, demonstrate self-direction and originality in tackling and solving problems, act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks with a theoretical underpinning and continue to advance their knowledge, understanding and skills. (HEQSF, 2014, p.36)

PhD Degree: Purpose and characteristics (over and above Master's degree)

The doctorate...requires a candidate to undertake research at the most advanced academic levels culminating in the submission, assessment and acceptance of a thesis...The defining characteristic of this qualification is that the candidate is required to demonstrate high level research capability and to make a significant and original academic contribution at the frontiers of a discipline or field. The work must be of a quality to satisfy peer review and merit publication...

During the candidate's presentation of the proposal and its defence, the PhD proposal is assessed according to several criteria. The Committee's assessment of the current PhD proposal is summarized on the following page for each section of the proposal.

Introduction

The most important characteristic of the PhD proposal is that it identifies the nature and content of the intended contribution to the literature. The introduction outlines the constructs and relations and the rationale for the novelty and importance of the proposed contributions. Focal constructs should be introduced formally and the theorised relations should be explicit. The definitions and motivations for the theorized relations should be firmly grounded in theory. An overarching theory explaining the mechanisms, processes, or rationale underpinning the expected of construct relations, should be introduced. At the end of reading the introduction, the reader should have an overview of the study and understand the nature (e.g., conceptual, empirical, methodological), content and importance of the proposed contributions.

Admission criterion or issue	Meets	Partially meets	Does not meet
1. The intended contributions are explicit and their nature explained (e.g., conceptual/theoretical; empirical/practical; methodological).	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. The constructs are formally defined, with definitions are grounded in strong theory.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. The focal theorised relations are identified and underpinned by brief arguments grounded in strong theory.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. If a conceptual/theoretical contribution is intended, a puzzle, a gap, a discrepancy or contradiction between a new fact & old ones or some other factor identified that leaves one feeling uncertain, confused, or curious? Is it clear why this study might cause us to think differently?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. If a practical contribution is intended, is an event, condition, or circumstance identified as a destabilizing condition for the practical problem? Is it clear why this study might cause us to think differently?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Is there sufficient focus? Does the opening paragraph establish common ground? Are problems and potential solutions clear?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Is the institutional context for the research made explicit? Are the consequences of heterogeneity, change and theoretical assumptions introduced?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Is the positioning of the study appropriate?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Additional comments for applicant:

Theory section of the proposal (conceptual development)

The theory section of the proposal outlines the conceptual development of the proposal. It should be written tightly around the intended contributions, grounding the variable definitions in the literature and clarifying the overarching theory and conceptual rationale for the theorized relations.

The theory section should open by establishing common ground with the reader concerning our current understanding and make clear why some destabilising condition suggests that we might think or act differently.

Generally speaking, it is difficult to motivate the rationale for doctoral research based exclusively on national context (e.g., n researched in South Africa before). However, some influential perspectives (e.g., institutions-based view) provide a compelling conceptual rationale to support claims that emerging markets are different. This opens

the door to new institutional context-based contributions. Replication studies should be underpinned by argument showing that the institutional context differs considerably from prior research and that these differences can be related meaningfully to the implicit assumptions underlying an existing theory.

Admission criterion or issue	Yes	Partially	No
1. The argumentation establishes common ground and makes clear problems and potential solutions.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. An overarching theoretical framework for the current research is presented	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. The theorizing summarizes the conceptual rationale for studying these variables and relations as opposed to other variables and relations.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Constructs are defined formally, with definitions briefly grounded in strong theory.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. The theorised relations are identified and underpinned by brief arguments grounded in strong theory, which reflects thinking published in leading scholarly journals of standing (e.g., on the accredited lists and, generally, with ISI impact factors above 1.0).	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. The rationale for the theorized relations reflects current developments in the literature (i.e., within the last three years).	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. If a conceptual/theoretical contribution is intended, a puzzle, a gap, a discrepancy or contradiction between old and new facts or some other factor is identified that leaves one feeling uncertain, confused, or curious. It is clear why this study might produce results that would cause us to think differently.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. If a practical contribution is intended, is an event, condition, or circumstance identified as a destabilizing condition for the practical problem? Is it clear why this study might produce results that would cause us to behave differently?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Is the institutional context for the research made explicit? Are the related consequences of heterogeneity, change and theoretical assumptions introduced?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. The literature review is appropriate, citing the appropriate literature and avoiding indiscriminate excessive citations.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. The positioning of the study is appropriate	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Does the research present clearly structured arguments, making clear the claims, reasons and evidence as well as acknowledging and responding to other theories that might be suggested by the argument presented?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. Writing style show evidence of good spelling, grammar and punctuation?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. Does the writing show signs of coherence and concision? That is, is a tightly focused around the intended contribution and devoid of waffling and padding?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Additional comments for applicant:

Methods section of the proposal (methodological development)

The methods section of the proposal outlines the methodology that will be employed. It is not enough to say that one intends to employ a quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods approach. There should be an indication of the approach, sample and instruments that would be employed, even if there is a need to explore this further during study for the degree as well as a compelling rationale linking the research design to the theory and intended contributions. After reading the methods section, it should be possible to replicate the proposed study.

Admission criterion	Yes	Partially	No
1. The research design is appropriate for the current research objectives.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. The sample is representative of a national or international population. The results can be generalized to other populations at that level.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. The sample is not intended to be representative of a national or international population. The results may not generalize to other populations.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. The sample is appropriate for the current research objectives.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. In quantitative research, instruments are appropriate for collecting reliable and valid data. Confirmatory factor analysis, item response theory, or another approaches used to validate the reliability of scales in the nomological validity of constructs.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. In quantitative research, the intended models are statistical analysis techniques to be employed are explicit and appropriate.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Would another more appropriate statistical approach be likely to yield different results?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. In qualitative research, data collection is appropriate to the methodology being employed. There are attempts to employ qualitative techniques (e.g. triangulation) to enhance the quality of the results.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Additional comments for applicant:

Conclusion section of the proposal

The conclusion section should mirror the introduction section, clearly summarizing what the intended contributions and presenting a coherent rationale for their novelty and importance. The resources required and project plan also should be presented.

Admission criterion	Yes	Partially	No
1. Is common ground adequately restated in the summary and are the problem, destabilizing conditions, costs and consequences restated?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- | | | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 2. Is it clear how the proposed research will move us forward, causing us to think or do something differently? | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Is the type of contribution clearly identified (e.g. conceptual/theoretical, empirical/practical, methodological)? | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Is the importance of the contributions clearly stated and well-motivated? | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Is the nature of the contribution clearly grounded in the recent literature, reflecting problems the top scholars would believe to be important? | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. Is there reason to believe that this research could open our eyes to new problems that are not yet solved? | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Additional comments for applicant:

RECOMMENDATION: (Please tick the appropriate box)

Proposal Rejected, student to deregister

☐

Proposal to be Reviewed and panel reconvened

☐

Proposal to be Reviewed and circulated to panel

☐

Proposal Accepted, student to proceed under guidance of supervisor

☒

PANEL MEMBERS:

NAME

Prof. Odongo Kodongo (WBS)

Dr. Jones Mensah (WBS)

Prof. Christopher Malikane (SEBS)

Dr. Diran Soumonni (WBS)

SIGNATURE

[Handwritten signatures of Prof. Odongo Kodongo, Dr. Jones Mensah, Prof. Christopher Malikane, and Dr. Diran Soumonni]

In Attendance:

Prof. Kalu Ojah (Supervisor)

[Handwritten signature of Prof. Kalu Ojah]

