

SHARON MWAKA AUTOBIOGRAPHY

INTRODUCTION

Every individual carries a unique story shaped by their background, experiences, struggles, and dreams. An autobiographical essay is not merely a chronological record of events but a profound reflection on how those events have shaped one's identity, character, and sense of purpose. It offers a window into the journey of growth and transformation, uncovering the forces that influence the person we become. This autobiography is a detailed journey into my life so far, capturing the essential moments and experiences that have shaped me into the person I am today. It is a story of growth, resilience, ambition, and an unwavering belief in the power of knowledge and technology as catalysts for transformative change both for individuals and for entire communities.

My name is Sharon Mwaka, and I was born and raised in Meru County, Kenya, in a small but vibrant town called Mutunyi. Growing up in this region, enriched with culture, tradition, and strong community values, gave me a deep sense of belonging and responsibility from a very young age. My upbringing was grounded in principles such as discipline, honesty, respect, and perseverance, values that continue to guide both my academic pursuits and personal life decisions. From childhood, I learned that success is not merely measured by personal achievements but by the positive impact one creates in the lives of others and the community at large.

This autobiography reflects my journey through childhood, education, personal challenges, and professional aspirations. It documents how my environment shaped my worldview, how my curiosity about technology and innovation gradually became a defining part of my identity, and how these elements intertwined to chart my path forward. Living in a developing region, I became acutely aware of social and technological gaps in society. I witnessed firsthand how limited access to resources, education, and digital tools could hinder progress. Rather than discouraging me, these realities fueled my determination to become part of the solution and to use the skills I acquire to bridge these gaps.

My roots in the Giriama culture, alongside my upbringing in Meru, taught me invaluable lessons about the importance of community, cooperation, and resilience. I was raised to understand that personal growth is deeply intertwined with collective development. Through storytelling, traditions, and community engagement, I developed strong moral values that continue to shape my interactions with others and my approach to challenges in life. These early lessons instilled in me a profound sense of responsibility to use my abilities in ways that are meaningful and constructive, contributing positively to society.

Education has been the primary pathway through which I have pursued my dreams and aspirations. From primary school to secondary school and eventually to university, each stage of my academic journey has played a critical role in shaping my goals and ambitions. My decision to pursue a degree in Business Information Technology (BBIT) was deliberate and meaningful. It represents a convergence of two fields I am deeply passionate about: technology and business solutions. I view technology not only as a tool for innovation but also as a critical bridge between ideas and practical solutions that can improve efficiency, communication, and development in various sectors.

Throughout my life, I have encountered numerous obstacles that have tested my determination and resolve. Financial constraints, limited access to technology, academic pressures, and moments of self-doubt were constant challenges that I had to overcome. However, rather than allowing these difficulties to become barriers, I chose to see them as stepping stones. These experiences strengthened my resilience, sharpened my problem-solving skills, and taught me the importance of patience, persistence, and a positive mindset. Each challenge refined my character and deepened my appreciation for the opportunities I have been fortunate to receive.

This autobiography also highlights my involvement in projects and initiatives that connect technology with social good. My participation in the ZuruSmart tourism project and my attachment to Northern Rangelands Trust (NRT) provided me with invaluable insights into how digital tools can promote conservation, empower communities, and contribute to sustainable development. These experiences have shaped my long-term vision of becoming a professional who not only achieves career success but also makes meaningful contributions to societal advancement through technology.

Moreover, this essay explores my identity as a young woman pursuing a career in technology, a field that remains predominantly male-dominated in many parts of society. My journey represents determination, courage, and the willingness to challenge societal limitations and stereotypes. It is a testament to the idea that with focus, commitment, and belief in oneself, it is possible to rise above societal expectations and redefine one's personal and professional boundaries.

Ultimately, this autobiography is a reflection of who I am becoming. It is a record of transformation from a curious child growing up in Mutunyi to a motivated university student aspiring to create technological solutions that empower and uplift communities. It captures my hopes, lessons learned, achievements, and future aspirations. By sharing my story, I aim not only to fulfill an academic requirement but also to inspire others who may be facing similar challenges to believe in their potential and pursue their dreams with relentless passion and determination.

This essay stands as a reminder that our stories matter. They shape who we are and influence who we can become. My journey is still unfolding, but with every step taken, my belief deepens that a purpose-driven life, supported by education and innovation, holds the power to change the world one community at a time.

Cultural Identity and Roots

Culture is much more than traditions or customs; it is the very foundation upon which our identity is built. It shapes how we view the world, how we connect with others, and ultimately how we understand ourselves. For me, my cultural background has been a guiding force that has deeply influenced my values, my character, and my outlook on life. Being rooted in the Giriama culture while growing up in Meru County exposed me to a beautiful tapestry of traditions, beliefs, and practices that emphasized respect, unity, and responsibility. These cultural influences have been instrumental in shaping not only who I am but also how I choose to live and engage with the world around me.

The Giriama culture is deeply communal, with a strong emphasis on respect for elders and close family ties. From a young age, I was taught that no individual exists in isolation—we are all part of a greater social fabric. Every choice I make carries weight, reflecting not just on me but on my family and the community that supports me. This understanding instilled in me a profound sense of accountability and discipline. I grew up knowing that my actions mattered, that they had the power to uplift or disappoint those who believed in me, and this awareness shaped my behavior profoundly.

One of the most enduring lessons from my culture is the value of respect. Respect for elders, parents, teachers, and peers is woven into every interaction. Simple acts such as greeting elders politely, listening attentively when spoken to, and offering help whenever possible were not just polite gestures but essential parts of my upbringing. These practices nurtured my interpersonal skills and taught me humility—an attribute I still carry with me today, whether in academic settings or professional environments. I have learned that respect is the cornerstone of cooperation, understanding, and meaningful relationships.

Community gatherings and cultural ceremonies were more than just social events; they were vibrant classrooms of life. These occasions provided opportunities to learn about our history, traditions, and the power of unity. Through storytelling and communal discussions, the elders shared timeless wisdom about perseverance, leadership, and integrity. Listening to their stories, I realized the strength embedded in our heritage and developed a deep sense of identity and

belonging. Those moments nurtured my pride in where I come from and reinforced the importance of preserving these traditions.

Growing up in Meru while staying connected to my Giriama roots exposed me to a rich diversity of cultures and perspectives. This experience taught me adaptability and openness, allowing me to appreciate differences without losing sight of my own identity. It prepared me well for future environments, be it school, university, or work, where I would interact with people from diverse backgrounds. I learned to embrace diversity as a source of strength, collaboration, and innovation, qualities that are vital in our increasingly interconnected world.

My cultural upbringing also instilled in me a strong work ethic. I observed adults in my community engaging tirelessly in farming, small businesses, and community projects, all contributing to the well-being of their families and neighbors. This environment taught me that success is earned through dedication, perseverance, and hard work. These lessons became deeply rooted in my approach to academics and personal projects, where I strive to give my best consistently.

Another vital aspect of my culture is the spirit of sharing and cooperation. In difficult times, the community would come together to support those in need. Whether helping a family facing hardship or participating in collective efforts, unity was always paramount. This sense of solidarity taught me empathy and the importance of lifting others as I climb. It fuels my desire to use my knowledge and skills for the greater good, helping to build stronger, more supportive communities.

Traditional values also emphasized discipline and moral responsibility. I was taught to distinguish right from wrong, to understand the consequences of my actions, and to take responsibility for them. These principles have become my moral compass, guiding me through life's challenges and decisions. Discipline has taught me self-control, patience, and the importance of setting clear goals and working steadily towards them, even when the path is difficult.

My cultural identity has also been a source of confidence and pride. Knowing where I come from gives me a firm sense of purpose and belonging. Rather than seeing my background as a

limitation, I view it as a reservoir of strength and inspiration. My heritage motivates me to represent my culture positively in academic and professional spaces, breaking stereotypes and opening doors for others.

Furthermore, the leadership values I learned from my culture have shaped how I approach teamwork and responsibility. Leadership, as taught in my community, is rooted in service rather than authority. A true leader supports, guides, and protects others with humility and compassion. This understanding has influenced how I engage in group work and projects, encouraging me to lead by example and with empathy.

Resilience is another important lesson from my cultural roots. Life is not always easy, and challenges are inevitable. However, patience, endurance, and the ability to learn from setbacks are highly valued. This mindset has helped me stay focused and motivated even during demanding academic tasks and complex projects. It reminds me that every obstacle is an opportunity to grow stronger.

Lastly, cultural identity has taught me a profound sense of responsibility toward future generations. Traditions and values are gifts passed down through time, and it is my duty to protect and promote them positively. This understanding pushes me to ensure that my work reflects dignity, respect, and accountability, fostering a legacy that future generations can be proud of.

In essence, my cultural roots are not just a part of my past; they are an active, living force shaping my present and guiding my future. They influence my morals, fuel my ambitions, and define my purpose. Culture has given me strength, clarity, and direction—it is the foundation upon which I build my academic pursuits, professional goals, and personal growth.

This chapter represents the deep connection between the person I was raised to be and the person I am becoming. My cultural identity has equipped me with resilience, empathy, discipline, and a strong sense of responsibility. These values continue to inspire and guide me as I strive to harness education and technology as powerful tools for empowerment and community transformation.

Early Childhood and Family Life

Family is the first school of life. It is within the walls of home that character begins to take shape, values are quietly absorbed, and the foundation of identity is laid. My early childhood was profoundly influenced by the love, guidance, and discipline I received from my family. Growing up in the peaceful town of Mutunyi, Meru County, my childhood was marked by simplicity but rich in responsibility and strong family bonds. These formative years planted the seeds of who I am today, nurturing my growth with care and structure.

I come from a family of five—my parents, my siblings, and myself. My parents were the steadfast pillars that held our home together. Their role extended far beyond providing for our physical needs; they nurtured our emotional well-being and moral compass. Education was always a priority in our household. From an early age, my parents impressed upon us the belief that education is a powerful key—one that could unlock doors to opportunities far beyond what we could see in our immediate surroundings.

I vividly remember my father waking up early every morning, even before dawn, to tend to his small farm and prepare for the day's work. His hands, weathered by years of labor, were a testament to his dedication and perseverance. One particular morning, I accompanied him to the farm, struggling to keep up as he moved swiftly through the fields. He paused, looked at me with a gentle smile, and said, "Sharon, hard work is the bridge between dreams and reality." That moment stayed with me—it was more than a lesson in farming; it was a life lesson.

My father has been one of my greatest role models. I watched him diligently fulfill his responsibilities, not only within our family but also in the larger community. His commitment was unwavering, and his integrity and perseverance left a lasting impression on me. He taught me through example that true leadership is not about wielding authority but about embracing responsibility and serving others selflessly. His life inspired me to develop a strong sense of duty, not just toward my family, but toward society as a whole.

My mother, a remarkable woman of strength, patience, and compassion, shaped my understanding of kindness and resilience. I can still picture her sitting by the fireplace in the evening, weaving baskets while softly humming traditional songs. Despite the daily challenges at

home, she always made time to listen to us, her children, offering comfort and wisdom. One afternoon, after I had failed a school test, it was my mother who reassured me with calm words: “Failure is not the end, but a step toward success if you keep trying.” Her unwavering belief in me taught me the true meaning of unconditional love.

My siblings have been my closest companions and teachers in life. Growing up together, we learned the importance of cooperation, sharing, patience, and understanding. I remember the countless evenings we spent studying together by the dim light of a lantern, quizzing each other on lessons and helping one another with homework. Through our interactions, I developed essential social skills like communication, conflict resolution, and teamwork—skills that have been invaluable throughout my life.

Discipline was a cornerstone of our family life. Simple yet consistent routines—waking up early, completing chores, respecting household rules—instilled in me a sense of responsibility and self-discipline. I recall how every morning, no matter the weather, I was expected to fetch water from the nearby well before school. Although tiring, this chore taught me the value of commitment and time management. These habits became second nature and later helped me manage the demands of academic work and personal commitments with focus and accountability.

Storytelling and guidance from elders were woven into the fabric of my childhood. Family gatherings often involved sharing stories rich with lessons about life, morality, and ambition. I remember sitting around the fire during chilly evenings, listening wide-eyed as my grandfather recounted tales of our ancestors’ courage and wisdom. These stories sparked my imagination and deepened my understanding of right and wrong. They taught me that wisdom is earned through experience and that listening carefully is just as important as speaking.

Like many families, we faced financial challenges. But my parents approached these difficulties with resilience and determination, never allowing hardship to dampen our spirit. I remember one season when the rains failed, and the harvest was poor. Despite the worries, my parents remained hopeful, working harder and encouraging us to stay focused on our dreams. Watching their perseverance taught me gratitude and a deep appreciation for every opportunity I was given. It

also ingrained in me the belief that hard work and perseverance are essential to improving one's circumstances.

Community was another vital part of my upbringing. Neighbors were like extended family, and mutual support was a daily reality. I fondly recall the festive gatherings during harvest seasons when the whole community would come together to celebrate, share food, and help each other prepare for the coming months. This environment fostered in me a sense of trust, cooperation, and social responsibility. It reinforced the understanding that success is never truly individual—it is collective, built on the support and collaboration of those around us.

Religious and moral teachings also played a significant role in shaping my conscience and sense of purpose. These teachings emphasized humility, patience, and gratitude—values that continue to guide my daily choices and interactions.

Play and creativity were joyful parts of my childhood. Through games and imaginative play, I developed problem-solving skills and social confidence. I remember afternoons spent playing traditional games with friends under the shade of mango trees, inventing stories and roles that sparked my creativity and built my confidence.

As I grew older, my responsibilities within the family grew as well. I became increasingly aware of my role and the importance of setting a positive example. These responsibilities nurtured a sense of maturity and leadership that I carry with me to this day.

Our household encouraged open communication. I always felt safe expressing myself, sharing my concerns, and seeking advice. This openness nurtured my emotional intelligence and confidence, qualities that have been invaluable in both academic and professional settings.

Looking back, my early childhood was a time of learning, love, and character building. It taught me the importance of family unity, discipline, and resilience. These experiences shaped my personality and gave me the emotional strength to face the challenges that lie ahead.

My family remains my greatest source of motivation and inspiration, guiding me as I strive to create a meaningful and impactful future.

Primary School Life and Early Academic Experiences

My primary school years marked the beginning of my formal educational journey and laid the academic foundation for my future. I attended Mutunyi Primary School, a place that holds a special place in my heart because it is where my curiosity was first nurtured, and my love for learning began to take root. Those early years were filled with discovery, discipline, and the gradual realization that education was the key that could unlock the doors to my dreams.

I still remember my very first day at school, the mix of excitement and nervousness that bubbled inside me as I stepped into a classroom filled with unfamiliar faces and new rules. The classrooms seemed large and the teachers stern, but over time, the school became like a second home. The teachers there were more than just instructors; they were mentors who believed in me and encouraged me to believe in myself. Their words of encouragement and faith in my potential planted the seeds of confidence that would carry me through many challenges ahead.

Discipline was one of the earliest and most important lessons I learned at Mutunyi Primary. From the importance of arriving on time to completing homework and maintaining neatness in my work and appearance, I learned that responsibility was key to success. The insistence on respect for teachers and classmates created an environment where learning could flourish. These lessons in discipline did not just prepare me academically; they helped me develop habits of focus and accountability that have shaped my approach to life.

Academically, primary school was a time of exploration. I discovered subjects that fascinated me and others that tested my limits. Kiswahili and Social Studies captured my imagination because they connected me to my culture, language, and community. These subjects gave me a voice and a deeper understanding of the world I lived in. On the other hand, Mathematics and Science presented challenges that sometimes frustrated me, but working through those difficulties taught me resilience, problem-solving, and critical thinking. Each small victory in these subjects boosted my confidence and showed me that perseverance leads to growth.

Primary school was also where I first understood the balance between competition and collaboration. Participating in class activities, group projects, and school competitions helped me see that while healthy competition can drive us to do our best, working together is equally

important. I learned patience, effective communication, and teamwork—skills that have been invaluable in my academic journey and beyond.

Despite the limited resources at our school, the environment was rich in spirit. We shared textbooks, worked in groups, and supported one another, learning to be resourceful and adaptable. These experiences taught me that determination and creativity can overcome many obstacles, a lesson that has stayed with me through various challenges.

Extracurricular activities were a vital part of my primary school experience. Playing sports, debating, and participating in creative clubs allowed me to grow in ways the classroom did not always offer. These activities built my confidence, discipline, and social skills, teaching me how to balance academics with personal development, a skill that I continue to refine today.

The teachers at Mutunyi Primary were more than educators; they were role models who inspired me to take my studies seriously. I remember one teacher in particular who, noticing my curiosity, would stay after class to help me understand difficult concepts. She often reminded us that education was not simply about passing exams but about shaping our futures and contributing positively to society. Their belief in my potential motivated me to strive for excellence even when the path seemed challenging.

Friendships formed during these years played a significant role in my growth. My classmates were my first peers to share the journey of learning, and through them, I learned empathy, cooperation, and mutual support. We celebrated each other's successes and encouraged one another through difficult times, creating a positive environment that made learning enjoyable.

Financial challenges occasionally threatened to interrupt my schooling, such as difficulties in accessing materials or paying school fees. Yet, these challenges only strengthened my resolve. I learned to value every opportunity and to work harder to overcome obstacles rather than be deterred by them.

As I approached the final years of primary school, the pressure of examinations introduced me to the importance of preparation, discipline, and confidence. The anticipation of those exams taught me how to manage stress and stay focused on my goals. These formative experiences cemented my belief that hard work and persistence inevitably lead to success.

Looking back, my primary school years were a transformative time filled with lessons on responsibility, ambition, and self-discovery. This period laid the crucial groundwork for both my academic achievements and personal discipline. The values and skills I developed during this time continue to influence my attitude toward education, challenges, and life in general.

This chapter represents the beginning of my journey toward academic excellence and personal growth. It was in primary school that I first realized my dreams were within reach, achievable through education, persistence, and a strong belief in myself.

Secondary School Journey and Personal Growth

Secondary school marked a significant transition in my life—a time of self-discovery, growing maturity, and a deeper understanding of my own abilities and aspirations. I attended Kibirichia Girls Secondary School, an institution that played a pivotal role in shaping not only my academic direction but also my personal identity. These formative years were filled with a mix of challenges, achievements, friendships, and valuable lessons that equipped me for the demands of higher education and the responsibilities of adulthood.

Starting secondary school was both exciting and overwhelming. The atmosphere was noticeably more demanding than primary school, with increased academic pressure, strict schedules, and higher expectations from teachers and peers alike. I quickly realized that success at this stage required far more than just effort; it demanded discipline, time management, and self-motivation. This transition forced me to grow more independent, teaching me to take responsibility for my actions and decisions in ways I had never experienced before.

Academically, secondary school opened doors to a broader range of subjects and more complex thinking. I found myself drawn deeply to History and Kiswahili—subjects that connected me to my culture, identity, and the power of communication. History, in particular, fascinated me because it revealed stories of leadership, struggle, resilience, and societal transformation. It taught me that change is possible even in the face of daunting challenges. Kiswahili strengthened my ability to express ideas clearly and confidently, nurturing skills that would prove invaluable in both academic and professional settings later on.

Science and Mathematics, though often challenging, taught me patience and problem-solving. There were moments when I struggled to understand complex concepts, and it was through persistent effort and practice that my understanding grew. These experiences taught me an important life lesson: growth often comes from facing difficulties head-on rather than avoiding them.

Being in an all-girls' secondary school had a profound impact on my confidence and self-belief. The environment encouraged female leadership and academic excellence, showing me that

gender should never limit ambition. This was especially meaningful in areas like technology, which are often male-dominated. I learned to see myself as capable and deserving of success in any field I chose to pursue.

Boarding school life added another layer of personal growth. Living away from home for the first time was both liberating and challenging. It demanded adaptability, responsibility, and cooperation. I had to learn how to manage my time effectively, maintain my personal space, and balance academics with social interactions. These skills were crucial as they prepared me for the independence required in university life and beyond.

The friendships I formed during this period were some of the most meaningful of my life. Together, we supported one another academically and emotionally. I fondly recall late-night study sessions, group discussions, and shared moments of laughter and stress. These friendships taught me the importance of teamwork, empathy, and mutual encouragement.

Leadership was a cornerstone of my secondary school experience, building on the leadership roles I had held in primary school. I was honored to serve as a prefect, a responsibility that deepened my sense of accountability and taught me practical leadership skills such as conflict resolution, organization, and servant leadership. This role required me to act as a role model, maintain discipline, and assist both teachers and students, experiences which refined my confidence and ability to lead with empathy.

Beyond the prefectship, I was actively involved in several school clubs, most notably the Wildlife Club, where I served as secretary. This role allowed me to develop my organizational and communication skills while nurturing a passion for environmental conservation. Being part of such clubs allowed me to engage with like-minded peers and work on projects that benefited the school and wider community, further shaping my sense of responsibility and teamwork.

Sports were another important part of my secondary school life. I participated in football with enthusiasm and dedication, going on to compete at several levels beyond what I had experienced in primary school. This involvement not only improved my physical fitness but also strengthened my discipline, teamwork, and competitive spirit. Playing football taught me resilience—how to handle both victory and defeat with grace, and helped build friendships across different groups.

Extracurricular activities, including debates and community outreach programs, became outlets for creativity and social development. These experiences built my confidence and refined my communication skills, reinforcing the importance of balancing academic success with personal growth.

Of course, secondary school was not without its challenges. Academic pressure, competition, and personal expectations sometimes felt overwhelming. At times, self-doubt crept in, but the encouragement of teachers, friends, and family helped me persevere. These challenges strengthened my emotional intelligence and reinforced my belief in myself.

Teachers at Kibirichia Girls were more than educators; they were mentors who nurtured my potential. Their guidance, motivation, and belief in my abilities pushed me to set ambitious goals and pursue them with consistency and dedication.

By the time I completed secondary school, my perspective had transformed significantly. I was more confident, disciplined, and ambitious than when I first started. I began envisioning a future where I could use the power of education to make a meaningful difference in society.

In reflection, secondary school was a defining chapter in my life. It transformed me from a curious learner into a determined individual ready to embrace higher education and greater responsibility. The experiences, friendships, leadership roles, and lessons I gained during these years remain at the core of my personal and academic foundation, guiding me as I continue my journey.

Choosing Business Information Technology (BBIT)

After completing secondary school, I found myself standing at a significant crossroads in life—a moment filled with both excitement and uncertainty. I had to decide the direction my future career would take, a decision that required deep reflection on my interests, strengths, and the kind of impact I wanted to make in the world. I wanted a course that would intellectually challenge me, allow me to be creative, and equip me with the tools to solve real-world problems. This thoughtful process led me to discover my path in Business Information Technology (BBIT).

My interest in technology had been quietly growing over time. I was always curious about how computers worked, how information was stored, and how digital systems made everyday tasks easier and more efficient. At the same time, I was fascinated by business—the way organizations operated, made strategic decisions, and managed resources to achieve success. I admired the blend of innovation, planning, and efficiency that successful businesses demonstrated. BBIT stood out to me because it merged these two dynamic worlds: technology and business.

Choosing BBIT was both thrilling and daunting. I was stepping into a field that was complex, fast-evolving, and often male-dominated. Yet, rather than being discouraged, I found motivation in this challenge. I saw it as an opportunity to break stereotypes and prove that women could thrive in technology-driven careers. I wanted to be part of a generation that harnesses technology not just for profit but as a transformative force for social good.

My journey at Dedan Kimathi University of Technology, a renowned campus nestled in the beautiful town of Nyeri, has been a rich tapestry of academic growth and personal discovery. The university environment, vibrant and diverse, offered me countless opportunities to explore beyond the classroom. From engaging lectures to lively discussions, and from cultural events to community projects, I found myself growing not just as a student but as a person.

The early days in the BBIT program were undoubtedly challenging. The coursework was technical and demanded logical thinking, patience, and consistent effort. Subjects like programming, database management, systems analysis, and networking introduced me to entirely new ways of thinking. Concepts such as coding syntax, algorithms, and system design initially felt overwhelming. I remember the long hours spent debugging my code or redesigning

databases, moments that tested my perseverance. Yet, with each small triumph—whether writing a functional program or completing a system design—I felt my confidence and passion deepen.

What I particularly appreciate about BBIT is its practical and problem-solving nature. Unlike purely theoretical courses, BBIT requires us to design systems, solve real business problems, and think critically about efficiency and innovation. I began to see technology not just as a subject but as a powerful tool for empowerment—capable of transforming service delivery, enhancing education, and supporting sustainable development projects.

Another aspect that drew me to BBIT is its versatility. The skills I am acquiring can be applied across many sectors, including healthcare, tourism, education, finance, and conservation. This flexibility aligns perfectly with my passion for community development and making a positive social impact. I realized that through technology, I could contribute meaningfully to society in ways that inspire progress and uplift communities.

In reflection, choosing BBIT has been a pivotal decision—one that continues to open doors of opportunity and growth. It is a journey that challenges me to push boundaries, think creatively, and strive for solutions that matter. As I continue my studies, I remain committed to using the power of technology not just for career success but as a force for positive change in the world around me.

CHAPTER SEVEN

University Life and Academic Growth

Joining university marked a new and exciting chapter in my life—a time of independence, responsibility, and profound self-discovery. It was a significant transition from the highly structured environment of secondary school to a world where personal discipline and self-motivation became essential. University life opened my eyes to diverse ideas, cultures, and challenges, broadening my perspective and shaping my identity as a young professional in training.

I vividly remember my first days at Dedan Kimathi University of Technology. The campus buzzed with energy and possibility, but beneath the excitement lay a sense of uncertainty. Unlike secondary school, where teachers closely monitored attendance and assignments, university demanded that I take full responsibility for my own learning. No one reminded me to attend lectures or submit homework; it was entirely up to me. This shift was both daunting and empowering. I quickly learned that my progress would depend on how seriously I took my responsibilities and how well I managed my time.

Academically, the workload was heavier and far more technical. Courses such as programming, database systems, systems analysis, web development, and enterprise resource planning required intense concentration and consistency. There were times when juggling multiple assignments, projects, and exams felt overwhelming. Late nights in the library, endless lines of code, and group project meetings became routine. Yet, these challenges strengthened my time management and organizational skills, teaching me how to prioritize and work efficiently under pressure.

University sharpened my critical thinking in ways I had never experienced before. I learned not just to memorize facts but to analyze problems deeply, research solutions thoroughly, and articulate my reasoning clearly. Presentations and group discussions pushed me out of my comfort zone, enhancing my communication skills and boosting my confidence. Writing detailed reports and defending my ideas taught me how to be persuasive and professional—skills that are essential in any career.

The technology labs became my second home, a place where theory met practice. Each successful program I wrote and every system I designed reinforced my belief in my abilities. Of course, there were many moments of frustration—errors in my code, systems that wouldn't work as planned—but I learned to embrace these setbacks as part of the learning process. Debugging became a test of patience and determination. Instead of giving up, I developed a mindset of persistence, learning to research solutions, ask for help, and try again.

Beyond academics, university life expanded my social awareness. Meeting students from diverse backgrounds challenged me to appreciate different cultures and perspectives. These interactions enriched my understanding of teamwork and collaboration, teaching me how to listen actively and respect others' viewpoints. I realized that success is often a collective effort, built on mutual support and shared goals.

I became more intentional about my personal growth. I sought mentorship from professors, actively participated in class discussions, and explored opportunities beyond the classroom. Earning certifications in Microsoft Office and network fundamentals complemented my academic learning and strengthened my professional profile. These steps helped me prepare for a competitive job market and gave me confidence in my skills.

Balancing academics with personal life required discipline and resilience. I learned to manage stress through careful planning, setting realistic goals, and taking time for rest and reflection. These habits not only helped me succeed in university but also prepared me for the demands of future professional environments.

Looking back, university life has transformed me profoundly. I am no longer just a student; I am a confident learner, a problem-solver, and a future innovator. My time at Dedan Kimathi University of Technology has deepened my belief that education is not just about earning a degree but about becoming a capable, responsible, and impactful individual.

This chapter represents my journey of growth from a student adapting to new challenges to a professional in training, equipped with knowledge, discipline, and a vision for meaningful contribution to society.

Attachments and Professional Exposure

One of the most transformative parts of my university education was the opportunity to engage in attachments. These experiences bridged the gap between classroom theory and real-world practice, allowing me to apply the knowledge I had gained in a professional setting. My attachment experiences offered my first true exposure to workplace environments and helped me understand what it means to be a responsible and competent IT professional.

Among these, my attachment at the Northern Rangelands Trust (NRT) in the IT department stands out as particularly impactful. NRT is an organization dedicated to conservation, community development, and sustainable livelihoods. Being part of such a meaningful organization allowed me to witness firsthand how technology can support environmental conservation efforts and empower local communities. This experience gave deeper meaning to my studies, as I could see the direct impact of digital solutions on real problems affecting people's lives.

On my first day at NRT, I remember feeling a mix of excitement and nervousness. Entering a professional space where expectations were high, and responsibilities real was an eye-opening experience. However, the supportive environment and guidance from my supervisors helped me settle in quickly. I learned that professionalism, punctuality, and clear communication were just as important as technical skills in the workplace.

During my attachment, I was involved in tasks such as managing databases, system maintenance, and handling digital records. I gained hands-on experience with SQL, data management, troubleshooting, and system support. This practical exposure strengthened my understanding of database-driven systems and highlighted the critical role that data security and accuracy play in organizational success. I also came to appreciate how essential IT systems are in supporting smooth operations and informed decision-making.

Working alongside IT officers and collaborating with other departments introduced me to the dynamics of teamwork in a professional context. I saw how technology functions best when aligned with the needs of the organization and supported by effective human collaboration and communication.

Working in a rural, conservation-focused environment came with its own set of challenges, such as poor internet connectivity and limited resources. These constraints taught me to be adaptable and creative, finding alternative solutions, managing expectations, and staying productive despite technical limitations. This experience sharpened my problem-solving skills and deepened my resilience.

My attachment also reinforced the importance of ethical responsibility. Handling sensitive data required confidentiality and accountability, teaching me that trust is fundamental in the IT profession and that ethical conduct is non-negotiable.

Beyond the technical skills, this experience broadened my worldview. I witnessed how technology can enhance conservation efforts, improve data collection, and strengthen community engagement. This reinforced my passion for projects that combine technology with social and environmental impact.

The attachment boosted my confidence and helped me see myself not just as a student but as a future professional capable of making meaningful contributions in the workplace. It clarified my career goals and strengthened my commitment to using technology as a tool for positive transformation.

This chapter marks a turning point where learning moved from theory to real-life application. My attachment experience shaped my professionalism, technical competence, and sense of responsibility. It prepared me for future roles in technology-driven environments and strengthened my vision of becoming a professional who leverages digital solutions to empower communities and promote sustainable development.

Challenges, Failures, and Lessons Learned

Every meaningful journey is marked by challenges—moments that test our strength, patience, and determination. My academic and personal life has been no exception. Rather than viewing obstacles as setbacks, I have come to see them as opportunities for growth. Each challenge brought with it valuable lessons that shaped my character and clarified my purpose.

One of the earliest challenges I faced was limited access to technology. Coming from a background where digital resources were scarce, I often found myself relying on shared computers, borrowed devices, or restricted lab hours to complete assignments. There were times when I had to wait patiently for my turn or make the most of brief access. This scarcity taught me to be resourceful and disciplined. I learned to plan carefully, seize every opportunity, and appreciate the value of each moment spent practicing my skills.

Financial constraints were another significant hurdle. School fees, project materials, internet access, and even basic academic resources required careful budgeting and planning. The pressure of financial uncertainty sometimes caused stress and anxiety. Yet, these challenges deepened my resilience and gratitude. I came to understand that education was not just a personal pursuit but a sacrifice made by my family, which fueled my commitment to make the most of every opportunity.

Academic pressure, especially in technical courses such as programming, databases, and networking, often feels overwhelming. There were moments when assignments piled up and exams loomed large, casting shadows of doubt over my confidence. Complex concepts sometimes seemed insurmountable. Yet, I refused to let doubt define me. Through steady practice, group study sessions, guidance from lecturers, and online resources, I gradually built both knowledge and confidence. These experiences taught me that persistence often outweighs innate talent.

Failure, too, became an unexpected teacher. Not every result met my expectations, and I faced setbacks that could have discouraged me. Instead, I chose to view failure as a stepping stone, a chance to learn and improve. It taught me humility and gave me a clearer understanding of my

strengths and weaknesses. More importantly, it showed me that setbacks do not define my worth or potential.

Balancing academics with personal life required developing strong time management skills. Particularly during busy semesters, I had to learn how to prioritize tasks, create schedules, and set realistic goals. Mastering this balance became one of my greatest personal achievements, helping me maintain focus and reduce stress.

Emotional challenges, such as self-doubt and the fear of not being good enough, were also part of my journey. Being in a technical field sometimes made me question if I truly belonged. However, encouragement from friends, mentors, and my inner resolve helped me overcome these doubts. I learned to trust my abilities and embrace the potential within me.

During my attachment at NRT, working in remote and resource-limited environments tested my adaptability. Frequent internet outages, limited infrastructure, and scarce resources forced me to think creatively and remain productive despite obstacles. These experiences strengthened my resilience and problem-solving mindset.

Gender expectations added another layer of challenge. As a woman in technology, I often felt the need to prove myself through consistent performance and dedication. Rather than allowing this to discourage me, it became a powerful motivator to excel and inspire others. I am committed to breaking barriers and showing that talent and determination know no gender.

Each challenge I encountered shaped me into a stronger, wiser, and more confident individual. They taught me perseverance, patience, and courage. I learned that true growth often comes from stepping outside comfort zones and facing difficulties head-on. Success, I realized, is built through determination and consistent effort over time.

This chapter represents my transformation through adversity. Challenges did not weaken me; they refined me. They became the stepping stones that prepared me for future responsibilities, leadership, and the pursuit of my dreams.

Vision, Aspirations, and the Path Ahead

Reflections on My Journey

Looking back on my journey so far, I realize that every experience—whether a triumph or a setback—has played a vital role in shaping who I am today. My upbringing in Mutunyi, my education, and the challenges I have faced have all been invaluable teachers. Growth, I have learned, is rarely a straight path; it comes in waves, through moments of clarity and times of struggle. Reflecting on these experiences fills me with gratitude for the resilience I have developed and the core values that continue to guide my choices.

I often think about the small, meaningful moments, the times I helped a classmate grasp a difficult concept or contributed to a community project. These acts, though seemingly modest, have left lasting impressions on both others and me. They remind me that dedication, no matter how small, can ripple outward and create real change.

Academic and Career Aspirations

As I continue my academic journey, my focus sharpens on blending technical expertise with business savvy to craft solutions that address real-world challenges. My Bachelor of Business Information Technology degree has given me a strong foundation, equipping me with skills in software development, data analysis, and project management.

Looking ahead, I am passionate about specializing in data analytics and artificial intelligence, especially their applications in community development, education, and environmental sustainability. I envision leading projects that harness technology to open doors for underserved communities, helping to bridge the digital divide in Kenya and beyond.

In the long run, I aspire to contribute to technology-driven social enterprises, startups, and innovations that prioritize sustainable growth, community empowerment, and ethical advancement. I want to be recognized not only for my technical skills but also for my commitment to making a positive social impact.

Personal Growth Goals

Personal growth is a lifelong journey, and I know there is much more to learn. Leadership is an area I am eager to develop further. While I have had opportunities to lead projects, I aspire to deepen my ability to inspire, guide, and mentor others with empathy and vision. This includes honing communication, conflict resolution, and strategic thinking skills.

I also plan to expand my knowledge of emerging technologies such as machine learning, blockchain, and cloud computing. Staying abreast of global trends will empower me to bring innovative, locally relevant solutions to the challenges we face.

Equally important is cultivating a balanced life. I aim to nurture mindfulness, physical health, and emotional intelligence, ensuring that my professional ambitions do not overshadow my well-being and relationships. Understanding myself, building resilience, and fostering meaningful connections are essential to sustained success and fulfillment.

Giving Back to the Community

Giving back has always been close to my heart. My involvement in initiatives like ZuruSmart has shown me how powerful it is to use one's skills for the greater good. In the future, I hope to expand these efforts by creating programs that teach youth digital skills, entrepreneurship, and creative problem-solving.

One of my dreams is to establish a mentorship program specifically for young girls interested in technology, providing them with guidance, resources, and encouragement to pursue STEM careers. I also want to work alongside local organizations to improve access to technology in rural schools, ensuring that students everywhere have the tools they need to thrive in today's digital world.

Through these initiatives, I hope to leave a legacy of empowerment—demonstrating that knowledge, coupled with compassion, can foster lasting change that echoes across generations.

Anticipated Challenges and How I Plan to Overcome Them

I am aware that the path ahead will not be without obstacles. Limited resources, fast-paced technological changes, and the pressures of juggling multiple responsibilities will pose real challenges. Yet, my past experiences have taught me to view challenges as opportunities in disguise.

To navigate these hurdles, I plan to:

- Embrace continuous learning, staying adaptable by consistently updating my skills and knowledge.
- Build strong professional networks and seek mentorship from experienced individuals.
- Draw on resilience and perseverance, fueled by lessons from previous challenges.
- Practice strategic planning by setting realistic goals, breaking them into manageable steps, and tracking progress.

Approaching future obstacles with a proactive and positive mindset will allow me to transform potential setbacks into stepping stones on my journey.

Hopes for the Future

My vision for the future is rooted in a deep desire to make meaningful contributions. I hope to:

- Lead technological projects that address pressing social and environmental issues.
- Inspire and mentor others—especially young girls—to pursue and succeed in technology fields.
- Support sustainable tourism and digital innovation that benefit communities while preserving cultural and natural heritage.
- Achieve personal fulfillment by balancing professional achievements with emotional and social well-being.

I see the future as a vast canvas, full of possibilities. Each decision and effort is a brushstroke contributing to a larger, purposeful masterpiece—a life marked not only by success but by impact and meaning.

Conclusion

As I close this chapter of my life, I recognize that my journey is far from over. Every lesson learned, challenge overcome, and project undertaken has prepared me for what lies ahead. My story is a testament to resilience, curiosity, and an unwavering belief that knowledge, integrity, and service can create lasting change.

I step forward with hope, ambition, and a commitment to continue growing, learning, and giving back. This vision—anchored in experience and guided by strong values—will be my compass as I strive to lead a life of purpose, innovation, and meaningful impact.