

# Journey in Tourism, Teaching, and Transformative Education

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INTERVIEW  
WITH

# Professor Boukamba Kimo Hermann



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Professor Boukamba is a passionate educator and researcher in the fields of tourism and sustainability. From Gabon to a global academic journey, his approach to teaching and research is shaped by personal stories, cross-cultural experiences, and a strong belief in the value of inclusive education.



# GET TO KNOW YOUR PROFESSOR

**Q: What do you think is the charm or appeal of Beppu City?**

A: When I relocated to Beppu, about 3 years ago, one of the first places I visited was the famous hot spring district in Kannawa. What struck me most was the city's quiet, peaceful atmosphere, contrasted with the powerful natural energy of its hot springs. The hot spring water offers more than relaxation. It sustains the local economy and reflects the relationship between people and their environment. That unique combination of tranquility and strength is what makes Beppu truly special.

**Q: If you could take students on a field trip anywhere in the world to learn about sustainability, where would you go and why?**

I would take them to **Gabon, my home country**. It's one of the places I know best geographically and culturally. I believe teaching is most effective when it's grounded in personal experience. So, when I share stories from home, it allows me to move beyond abstract concepts and offer real, relatable examples that students can truly connect with.



# PROFESSOR'S LEARNING JOURNEY

**Q: After the restrictions faced during the COVID-19 pandemic, how do you think people's values and perceptions toward travel itself have changed?**

A: I think the pandemic has changed how people perceive travel. Before COVID-19, the focus was often on visiting as many places as possible and increasing tourist numbers. However, the global pause prompted many travelers to reflect more deeply on the purpose and impact of their journeys. Nowadays, there is more awareness of environmental impacts and a stronger desire to support local communities. As a result, travel has become less about mobility from one place to another, but more about an opportunity for meaningful and mindful experiences.



**Q: What was your inspiration to write “Sampling for All: An Inbound Approach to Travel Experience?”**

A: The idea came as a byproduct of a peer-review discussion when I was publishing a research paper during my PhD studies. One of the reviewers questioned the validity of my data because about 70 to 80% of the people I had interviewed in South Africa had never traveled internationally. That remark raised a bigger question for me: *Does someone have to travel abroad for their opinion to be considered relevant in tourism research?* I didn't think so.



There are still many people, especially in the Global South who, due to political, economic, or socio-cultural reasons, cannot engage in international travel. That doesn't mean they have no experience with tourism. Tourists come to their towns, interact with visitors, and engage with global culture through media like television and film. I wanted to challenge the idea that only international travelers can speak meaningfully about tourism. That's why I titled the paper "Sampling for All." It's about promoting an inclusive approach. I initially wanted to name it "Sustainable Sampling".

**Q: What initially inspired you to pursue a career in tourism studies, and how did your experiences at Tshwane University of Technology shape your academic interests?**

A: My interest in tourism began back in high school in South Africa. I decided to pursue it at Tshwane University of Technology from my first year all the way through to my master's. During my undergraduate program, we were required to write a mini dissertation. I really enjoyed the process of creating a survey, collecting responses, analyzing the data, and seeing how it all came together to tell a story. I also became a student mentor, helping others with courses like research methodology, tourism marketing, and strategic management. That experience deepened my interest not just in tourism as a subject, but also in teaching and academic research. Those early experiences at Tshwane shaped the path that eventually led me to pursue a PhD in tourism studies.

**Q: Could you share some key insights or challenges from your doctoral research at the Graduate School of Tourism and how they have influenced your approach to teaching and research?**

A: One of the major challenges I faced during my PhD at the Graduate School of Tourism was the methodological gap between my work and the surrounding academic environment. My research was heavily quantitative. I focused on scale development and structural equation modeling, but most faculty members around me specialized in qualitative approaches. This made it difficult to find direct methodological support or peer feedback that aligned with my work. As a result, I often had to independently justify and defend my methodological choices, which initially felt isolated but ultimately strengthened my critical thinking and resilience as a researcher. To overcome this, I started attending conferences and joined external research networks where I could exchange ideas

with scholars working on similar methodologies.. That process taught me the value of reaching beyond my immediate academic setting and staying open to diverse perspectives, even when they challenge my assumptions.

These lessons were carried into my teaching. In the classroom, I make a point to acknowledge that different viewpoints have value. I encourage students to explore multiple perspectives, but also to practice respectful dialogue and conflict resolution during group work, especially when their ideas or approaches clash. More importantly, I've come to understand that students aren't just pursuing a degree. They want to enjoy the learning experience. That insight guides me in designing courses that're not only rigorous and reflective, but also engaging, so that students feel personally connected to what they're learning.

**Q: What do you see as the biggest hurdles in making tourism truly sustainable right now?**

A: I think one of the biggest challenges is balancing the interests of local communities and the private sector. Local people often want to preserve their culture and environment, while businesses are mainly focused on maximizing profits. However, those same businesses also provide jobs for local people, so it becomes a complex situation. For example, in Japan, locals may be frustrated with over-tourism in places like Kyoto or around attractions such as Nijo Castle. However, if those attractions were closed to protect the area, many locals would also lose their jobs. For that reason, the problem isn't just about limiting tourism, it's about finding a balance that works for everyone involved.

## FROM LEARNING TO TEACHING



**Q: Did you face any challenges when teaching in the new ST College?**

A: When I joined APU, the ST College had not yet officially opened. So, I was teaching ST-related courses under APS. During that same year, I was fortunate to be selected for the Minnesota Faculty Development Program, which focused on enhancing teaching skills in multicultural environments. That experience was incredibly valuable, and it continues to shape my teaching style to this day.

Because of the support I received and the training I went through, I didn't face any major difficulties. Even when I was teaching new material, faculty members were generous in sharing teaching resources and advice. Therefore, I was able to adjust quickly. Overall, I found the transition smooth and well-supported.



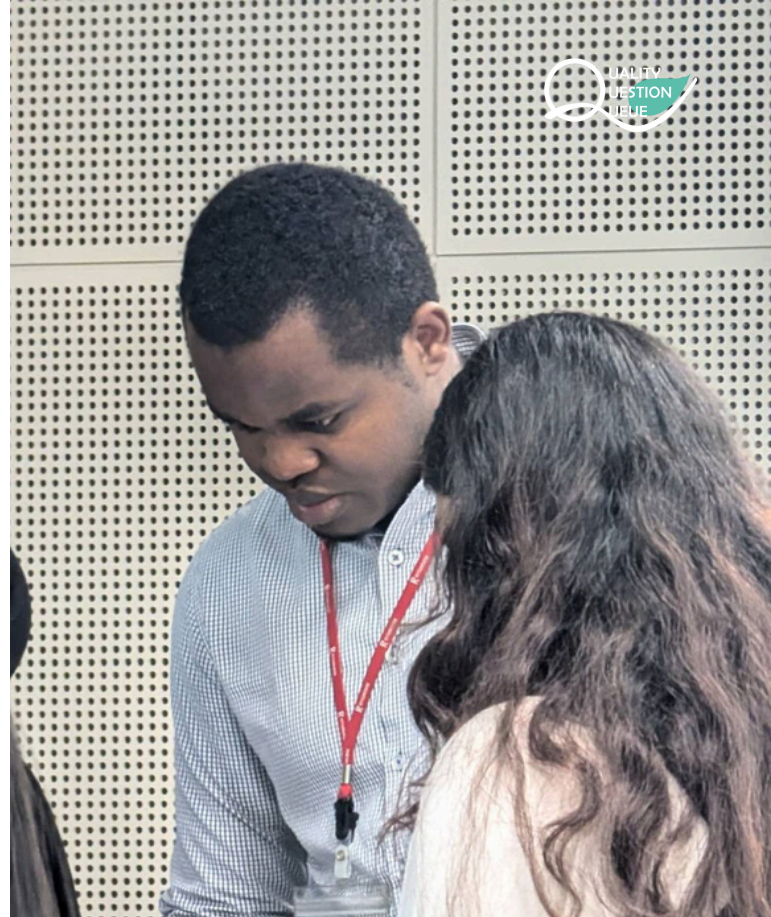
**Q: How do you keep large classes engaged?**

A: It all starts with the lesson design. For me, keeping large classes engaged begins with making the content relevant, not just in terms of the syllabus, but also in ways that feel meaningful to the students themselves. I pay close attention to how I present the material. For example, I use consistent color coding throughout my slides to highlight key points and examples. This visual structure helps students stay focused and makes the material easier to follow.

After a lesson that covers a lot of content, I usually create around 20 multiple-choice questions. Then, I use ChatGPT to generate a simple interactive web page where students can answer the questions via touchscreen. This activity often takes place in the final 10 minutes of class or at the beginning of the next session as a quick, engaging review. It reinforces what they've learned and turns passive listening into active participation. It works well, even in large lecture settings.

**Q: Have you learned anything from your students?**

A: Absolutely. I've learned a lot from my students. Courses like MCW are especially valuable because students work more independently in their roles as TAs. Watching them lead activities and teach others gives me a fresh perspective. Their creativity and initiative often surprise me, and it challenges me to reflect on my own teaching.



**Q: What skills are essential for students interested in tourism?**

A: First and foremost, adaptability and cross-cultural communication are essential. Thankfully, these are skills that APU strongly cultivates. Tourism professionals constantly interact with people from diverse backgrounds, so being able to navigate different cultural contexts is key. In addition, systems thinking is critical. Students need to understand that tourism is not just about travel. It is deeply connected with the environment, the economy, policymaking, sociology, and the lived experiences of local communities. This requires a multidisciplinary mindset. Once students are able to do that, they will be well-equipped to succeed in the travel and tourism industry.

**Q: How did your experience outside Japan influence your teaching?**

A: My experience outside Japan, particularly during the Minnesota faculty development program, had a lasting impact on how I approach teaching. One idea that really stayed with me was the notion that *“teaching is competing for students’ attention.”* That concept reshaped how I see the classroom.

Students have many other places they could be. They could be at home or skip class to attend a cultural week show. So, when they show up for class, it means that they chose my lesson over other alternatives. So, I have to honor that choice by making the session meaningful. I’ve come to view teaching almost like being a chef. My tools are the slides, visuals, colors, illustrative cases, my desk, and my presentation style. My goal is to blend them into something memorable. So, each class is an experience that captures their attention and leaves a lasting impression.

*“TEACHING IS  
COMPETING FOR  
STUDENTS’  
ATTENTION”*







# FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

**Q: What are your future goals in research and teaching?**

A: It's still a bit early to map out a detailed 10-year plan, as I've only been at APU for three years. I'm still learning and growing within the institution. However, I believe that as I start offering seminar courses, I'll gain a more holistic picture, especially by observing how what I teach at the undergraduate level translates into student progress over time. That will help me reflect more critically on how certain courses could be structured to better prepare students with specific skills by the time they reach their final year.

In terms of research, my focus is gradually shifting toward more cross-cultural studies, particularly between Japan and Africa. I want to move beyond trending topics and focus on research that creates a meaningful impact, especially in underrepresented regions and communities. My goal is to produce work that not only contributes to academic knowledge but also informs practice and policy in areas that are often overlooked. Keep an eye out for my next paper, which explores the concept of *redirection rhetoric* in global tourism discourse.

**Q: Any message for APU students and faculty?**

A: To the students, I encourage you to aim higher than just fulfilling the basic requirements. Go beyond the rubric, not just for the grade, but to truly immerse yourself in the learning experience. Focus less on the score and more on how deeply you engage with the class, your peers, and the subject itself.

To my fellow faculty members, I'd say let's continue emphasizing the experiential side of teaching. When we move beyond rigid structures and allow students to explore, create, and interact, we open the door for deeper understanding and more meaningful learning. It might take more energy, more movement, or more planning, but the reward is a classroom that feels alive, where both students and teachers look forward to every session. That's where real learning happens.



# INTERVIEWERS' IMPRESSIONS



Name: Pipatnawin Pakkamon  
College: APM  
Country: Thailand

*Impression: Interviewing the professor truly opened my mind to tourism and allowed me to view the industry from a new perspective. His passion for the field was incredibly inspiring, and it motivates me to explore more and reflect on the deeper impact of tourism. His insight helped me understand the true value of meaningful travel and how it can positively influence both individuals and local communities..*

Name: Nguyen Minh Tu  
College: APS  
Country: Vietnam

*Impression: Professor Boukamba not only taught us about tourism, but he also taught us the importance of perseverance in our studies and making learning an engaging journey. I am truly grateful for the opportunity to interview him. I believe Professor Boukamba's journey will greatly inspire many people. To the readers, I hope you enjoy reading our new article!*

## WHAT IS

# Q

At APU, there are many professors who put together wonderful classes, and if we could get to know how these classes are planned, it would contribute to the improvement of other professors' classes. For that purpose, we have begun doing interviews in order to learn about class planning. These articles have been entitled [Q], comprising a variety of meanings such as: increasing the [Q]uality of classes, answering [Q]uestions to increase quality, and forming a [Q]ueue, or line, of class improvements. We would be very happy if these articles could contribute to the [Q]uest of APU professors' class quality improvement.

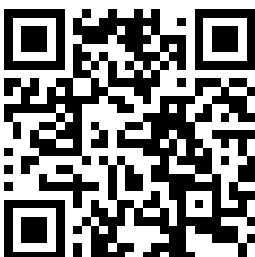
# NEW

# Project

## PODQUEST



Available on Youtube



Podquest is a new project by Q-Team where we casually interview professors to help you get to know them beyond the classroom. It's a more relaxed and personal take compared to our usual articles. Don't miss this chance to connect with your professors in a whole new way!