

## 2.7. INSTITUTIONAL CASE STUDY: MAKERERE UNIVERSITY, UGANDA

### 2.7.1. Institutions of higher learning and the achievement of gender equality: a case study of Makerere University

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This paper discusses the role of higher education in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. My focus on Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 3 is partly due to the widely acclaimed hypothesis that eliminating gender inequality and achieving women's empowerment are essential to the achievement of **all** the Millennium Development Goals and that progress is slowest on MDGs which depend most heavily on improving the status of women and girls.<sup>41</sup> It has also been argued that the education of women has a remarkable effect on a range of 'quality of life' indices and is a key factor in development."<sup>42</sup>

Using Makerere University as a case study, the paper posits that there is need for policies and structures which ensure gender mainstreaming for purposes of:

1. Increasing women's access to higher education (gender parity)
2. Increasing women's participation at higher levels of management and key decision making bodies within institutions of higher learning
3. Increasing women's representation in academia
4. Engendering university curricula and thus inclusion of women's perspectives and pedagogy – an issue of the relevancy of education and thus a quality assurance issue

I further argue that gender mainstreaming must be accompanied by the mentoring of women to empower them take to advantage of ensuing gender sensitive policies and opportunities.

#### Context

Why gender mainstreaming?

##### At the international level

In 1995, there was international recognition of the need to use gender mainstreaming as a tool to promote gender equity and equality. This was officially stated at the Beijing UN Women's Conference.

##### At National Level

In Uganda there is national awareness that gender mainstreaming is an important tool for national development. The government has made efforts to engender national policies/strategies and programmes. Both government and civil society support the role of gender mainstreaming in promoting gender equity and equality.

##### At Makerere University

It was realised that:

- The number of women in the high echelons of academia was dismally low
- There was a lack of women in top management positions

<sup>41</sup> UN "Millennium Development Goals Indicators Database" (2007)

<sup>42</sup> Brenda Gourley, 1997, Gender defenders of Africa at <http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk> (Accessed on 6/16/07).

- There was a lack of knowledge about gender and the effect of gender on career development
- There was lack of academic discourse on gender issues within the institutions of higher learning
- There was absence of gender responsive research

## **Strategies & policies to promote gender equity & equality at Makerere University**

In 1991, Makerere moved towards the creation of academic structures and the Department of Women and Gender Studies was established. In 1998, the department held an awareness raising and sensitisation seminar for members of Makerere's top management (policy makers). One outcome of the seminar was the decision that a Gender Mainstreaming Committee be established.

In 2001/02 Makerere developed a Gender Strategic Plan and in 2001 the University incorporated the gender mainstreaming perspective into its Strategic Plan 2001/05.

In 2002, Makerere began the creation of Gender Mainstreaming Support Structures with the establishment of the Gender Mainstreaming Division (GMD) to coordinate gender mainstreaming activities in the University.

### **What Has Been Done by the GMD?**

- Awareness raising of the need for gender mainstreaming
- Training women in leadership skills
- Research and documentation of the status of gender in the University
- Review policies and other documents to make them gender sensitive
- Introduction of new gender related policies such as the Sexual Harassment Policy
- Mainstreaming gender in the teaching and research curricula

Through the activities of the Division, gender mainstreaming was recognized as a priority area in the University Strategic Plan 2001-2007. The newly approved Strategic Plan 2009-2019 has maintained gender mainstreaming as a priority and refers to gender mainstreaming as a cross-cutting issue.

### **Success stories: Status of the student body**

In 1990, in a bid to increase enrolment of women into the university and to enable more women to enrol in what had traditionally been male dominated programmes, the 1.5 affirmative action points scheme was introduced. Under the scheme all female applicants for undergraduate programmes are automatically awarded a bonus of 1.5 points. We have seen a statistical increase of enrolment of female students from 25% in 1990 to 43% in 2003, 45% in 2007 and 46% in 2008. In January 2010, Uganda watched as Makerere had 13,766 graduates, 50.4% of them women.

### **Gender terrain in the academia and administration**

Despite the leaps made in gender parity in the student population, the presence of women in the high echelons of academia and management is still very low. To date, only six of the 63 full professors at Makerere are women and only 15 of the 99 Associate Professors are women.

## Gender terrain in the academia and administration

**Table 1: Status by Gender in Top Management: April 2010**

	Male	Female	Total
Vice Chancellor	1	0	1
Deputy Vice Chancellors	1	1	2
University Librarian	0	1	1
University Secretary	1	0	1
University Bursar	1	0	1
Dean of Students	1	0	1
Director of Planning	1	0	1
Director of Human Resources	1	0	1
Academic Registrar	1	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>10</b>

Among the ten members of top management, only the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academics) and University Librarian are women: a 20% female representation.

**Table 2: Status by gender in the Academia: 12 August 2008**

	Male	Female	Total Number	% of women
Professors	41	2	43	4.56
Assoc. Professors	73	14	87	16.09
Senior Lecturers	142	43	185	23.24
Lecturers	303	100	403	24.81
Assistant Lecturers	228	113	341	33.13
Teaching Assistants	158	77	235	32.76
<b>Total</b>	<b>945</b>	<b>359</b>	<b>1304</b>	<b>27.53</b>

Note: Presence of women in the high echelons still very low. Only 15.2% are at Associate Professor and Professor levels.

**Table 3: Percentage of female academic staff in science-based disciplines, August 2008**

	Male	Female	Total	% of Female
Professors	31	1	32	3.1
Associate Professors	52	8	60	13.3
Senior Lecturers	107	21	128	16.4
Lecturers	176	56	232	24.1
Assistant Lecturers	132	62	194	32.0
Teaching Assistant	113	56	169	33.1

Note: It must also be mentioned that the number of female academia in science-based disciplines is dismally low as indicated in Table 3 above

It is imperative that in its promotion of scholarship and training, the university applies affirmative action to help address gender imbalances. Makerere's strategic plan 2008/9-2018/9 directs that gender mainstreaming must be integrated into all university activities and functions – it is a cross-cutting issue. The indicators to be used in evaluating success will be:

- Percentage of women in academia and non-teaching positions increased to 40% by 2018
- Increased % of female academia with PhDs

- Establishment of a special fund for academic and administrative female staff for sabbaticals, exchange visits, attachment and training.

The call for an increase of women in top management and in the high echelons of academia is based on the assumption that women's participation at such levels would improve their opportunity to influence the policies and direction of the institution. This would hopefully translate into student and employee focused gender responsive policies.

I am also in agreement with Marnie Wilson et al. (2008) that, although gender parity is not synonymous with gender equity, "within a gender – balanced professoriate, there is increased likelihood both males and females will be involved in the establishment of practices intended to promote equity."<sup>43</sup> Further still, an increase of female academia would create more beneficial conditions for scholarly activity among female students."<sup>44</sup> The availability of female academia will also ensure mentoring of female students and may result in more women choosing careers in universities.

Gender parity in the professoriate is an issue of quality assurance, for, as noted by Marnie Wilson et al. (2008), "in a post-secondary environment that focuses on students as consumers, administrators must realize that their "customer" can best be served by a more diverse, gender balanced professoriate".<sup>45</sup> "Given the makeup of the current student population in universities, efforts to make university positions attractive to women is essential"<sup>46</sup>.

I agree with scholars such as Gourley (1997) that research on the codes and rituals that hold women back as well as informal hierarchies and norms of institutions that continue to thwart academic women must be conducted and this, (I argue),- by universities as the renowned knowledge hubs. It is thus crucial that research on good governance in general and gender issues in particular are made priority areas in the research agenda of universities.

The move towards mainstreaming gender in teaching and research is an example of developing curricula which serves societal needs and ensures that graduates are fit for the job market. This is an issue of relevancy and fitness for purpose and thus quality assurance.

All disciplines have values. My call for mainstreaming gender into teaching and research is premised on the belief that higher education has the ability to induce change and progress in society. The role of curriculum as a transformation tool in terms of human rights and development cannot be ignored. Higher learning and research act as essential components of cultural change and have the potential to contribute to achieving gender justice through the curricula. Gender mainstreaming of the curriculum facilitates the pursuit of human rights through highlighting gender images and languages and providing examples of methodologies and approaches for curricula transformation. Research impacts policy and practice through uncovering discrimination against women and draws attention to women's special needs. It plays an advocacy role through provision of empirical evidence of the gendered nature of society. This would act as a catalyst for social change.

For as I said at the beginning, the importance of ensuring that higher education institutions are involved in the promotion of gender equality is that education empowers women. The value inherent in this is the assumption that eliminating gender inequality and achieving women's empowerment are essential to the achievement of **all** the Millennium Development Goals and that progress is slowest on MDGs which depend

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<sup>43</sup> Is gender parity imminent in the Professoriate? Lessons from one Canadian University by Canadian Journal of Education 31, 1 (2008): 211-228.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid 4

<sup>45</sup> Ibid 4 page 223

<sup>46</sup> Ibid 224

most heavily on improving the status of women and girls.<sup>47</sup> It has also been argued that the education of women has a remarkable effect on a range of 'quality of life' indices and is a key factor in development."<sup>48</sup>

### **A call for mentoring of female students and young academics**

For gender equality to be achieved, gender mainstreaming should be accompanied by mentoring of upcoming women by women who have been able to achieve success within the predominantly male dominated/patriarchal institutional culture of universities.

I argue, however, that the concept of mentoring cannot be taken at face value. I thus call for the feminisation of mentoring/feminist critique of mentoring. I also question whether mentoring as understood and presented today is not a western concept and thus call for the Africanisation of mentoring if it is to bear fruit in an African setting. This may necessitate research/re-visiting African traditional society so as to mainstream African values of "sisterhood" into the contemporary concept and practice of mentoring.

It is also important to recognise the need for skills training and capacity building for women role models if they are to play their role effectively. This necessitates the development of networks where, among other things, we learn how to mentor.

### **Preliminary Conclusions**

What are some of the strategies required to mainstream gender in institutions of higher learning?

- Gender mainstreaming policy to promote gender equity and equality
- Gender mainstreamed budgeting policy
- Commitment from top management
- Creating of support structures
- Continuous gender awareness raising, lobbying & advocacy
- Gender training: giving people gender related skills
- Mentoring of young upcoming women
- Development of networks – women connecting with women

We note that no steps have been taken towards establishing and institutionalising mechanisms for mentoring upcoming women.

### **Mentoring of women in higher education: The feminisation and Africanisation of the concept**

"While definitions vary, a mentor is generally someone already experienced in a role new to a mentee. The mentor guides, advises, and is supportive of the mentee."<sup>49</sup> A mentor is a wise and trusted guide, advisor, teacher or counsellor. We note that in Greek mythology, Mentor was a friend of Odysseus. When Odysseus left for the Trojan War he placed Mentor in charge of his son, Telemachus, and of his palace. Mentor was thus among other things, a tutor to Telemachus.

<sup>47</sup> UN "Millennium Development Goals Indicators Database" (2007)

<sup>48</sup> Brenda Gourley, (1997), Gender defenders of Africa at <http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk>

Accessed on 6/16/07.

<sup>49</sup> Weisbord (1996:1) "Mentoring Women in Higher Education" at <http://www.library.wisc.edu/libraries/WomensStudies/bibliogs/mentor.html>. Accessed on 5/3/2006

It is often said that many of the world's successful people have benefited from having a mentor. It is said that Aristotle mentored Alexander the Great. One can thus state that mentoring is a vehicle for leadership development.

The value of mentoring is that it can increase the participation of socially marginalised groups (in this case women) in leadership positions. It helps a less experienced person climb the ladder, to reach her full potential.

### **Mentoring and role models**

As women in leadership positions, often described by many young women as role models, one of the questions for us is: What is the link between being a role-model and a mentor? The phrase "role model" has been used in reference to "a person who serves as a model in a particular behavioural or social role for another person to emulate"<sup>50</sup>. Others hopefully will follow the example. A woman professor can be seen as a role model for other women, on the strength of her furthering of the profile of women in academia. Alternatively, she could be seen as a role model for aspiring academics, regardless of their gender, on the strength of her academic achievements and/or dedication to her chosen discipline.<sup>51</sup>

A role model is a "person who serves as an example of the values, attitudes, and behaviors associated with a role. ... Role models can be persons who distinguish themselves in such a way that others admire and want to emulate them. For example, a woman who becomes a successful brain surgeon or airline pilot can be described as a role model for other women."<sup>52</sup>

The act of picking a role model consists of first evaluating what one's values are (answering the question "what kind of things are important to me") then finding a person (usually a famous person) that exhibits a majority of those points and then emulating them. "Sometimes we learn by imitation. We look around for somebody who is doing what we want to do in a way that we admire or at least accept. And then we take that person as an example to follow."<sup>53</sup>

It is because a role model is admired and considered worth emulating that we as women leaders should offer ourselves as mentors to women who are less experienced than we are in professional and employment spheres.

As women, many of us are the "first" female leaders in the management of the higher education sector. We have learnt to successfully function in a male dominated world. However, the number of women in the high echelons of society in general and in the higher education sector is still miserably low.

It is imperative that we find ways and techniques for recruiting and retaining women in administrative and academic positions in higher education. Mentoring is one such technique.

It is interesting that in several definitions of a "role-model" offered by different authors, women are a reference point. Thus, as stated in the Wikipedia free encyclopedia above, "A woman professor can be seen as a role model for other women, on the strength of her furthering of the profile of women in academia."<sup>54</sup> And in defining a role model, Answers.com also uses women as an illustration thus: "For example, a woman who becomes a successful brain surgeon or airline pilot can be described as a role model for other women"<sup>55</sup>

<sup>50</sup> A positive role model carries out a role demonstrating values, ways of thinking and acting, which are considered good in that role. Answers.com <http://www.answers.com/topic/moral-example>. Accessed on 12/06/06

<sup>51</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Role-model>. Accessed on 12/06/06

<sup>52</sup> Answers.com <http://www.answers.com/topic/moral-example>. Accessed on 12/06/06

<sup>53</sup> Answers.com <http://www.answers.com/topic/moral-example>.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid 11.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid 12

Reference to women as examples in the context of role models is not accidental. I presume it arises out of the fact that women are poorly represented in high echelons of society and there is a need to deliberately offer role models for upcoming women in a society whose structures are predominantly male dominated. There is value in mentoring women so as to help them successfully negotiate their way in predominantly male dominated structures.

But whereas there may be little doubt that we are role models, can we quickly but effectively turn into mentors? There is need to:

- Acquire the skills of mentoring. This is especially because many of us may not have been mentored.
- Create networks, where among other things we learn how to mentor.

Another problem is the scarcity of senior female mentors: can women be successfully mentored by male persons? What are the difficulties of cross-gender mentoring relationships?

### **The feminisation of mentoring**

Several women have, with time, learnt how to function in a male world, but we must nevertheless acknowledge that women's experiences and perspectives are different from those of their male colleagues. There is a need to understand and take seriously the perspectives and experiences of women. We must therefore provide a feminist critique of the conceptualisation of mentoring. What should you consider when mentoring a woman rather than a man? This calls for re-visiting the accepted (in fact male) models.

To what extent is the "original" concept based on male models and have women leaders appropriately integrated gender concerns into the concept? Have we successfully provided new models for feminist oriented mentorship?

For example, according to Weisbord (1996:1) "Some studies have found differences from the traditional male model of mentoring when women are involved, suggesting that informality and friendship are more characteristic of successful mentoring of women"<sup>56</sup>

All these are questions we must answer if we are to succeed in using mentoring as a mechanism for ensuring women's visibility in the higher echelons of the university academia and top management.

### **The Africanisation of the concept**

In addition to the feminisation of mentoring, I believe that there is need for an "African" critique of the concept of mentoring. The ensuing questions would be:

- To what extent is mentoring a universal as opposed to a cultural specific concept?
- Is the concept of mentoring as it is presented and understood today alien to the African culture?
- How can we ensure that we capture cultural specific concerns?

We may need to re-visit African traditional society so as to integrate/mainstream African values of sisterhood into the "modern" concept of mentoring.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Weisbord (1996) "Mentoring Women in Higher Education"

<sup>57</sup> Of course this is not only relevant to those of us from Africa but it can be applied mutatis mutandis by persons from societies other than those where the "modern" concept has come from.

## Conclusion: Mentoring is a partnership

The mentoring relationship should ideally be a partnership; it is the recognition of reciprocal benefits that is most critical, not only for a successful mentor – mentee relationship but also for sustaining networks. We must however answer some questions:

- At what stage in one's career does one need a mentor?
- How do you become a mentor?
- How do you develop mentoring skills
- How does one select a mentor?
- Is there a clear distinction between friendship and mentoring?
- How do you ensure clarity of roles?
- What does the mentor expect in the relationship?
- What does the mentee expect?
- Should you have more than one mentor?
- Is a mentor-mentee relationship hierarchical?
- Is the hierarchical model a male mentoring model?
- What are the barriers to successful mentorship?

If mentoring is a partnership, then I call upon young women to look for mentors, and senior women to become mentors. It is only then that strategies to mainstream gender into university processes such as those adopted by Makerere will have full impact.