

The Politics of Higher Education Reform: The Case of Makerere University

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Abstract

The political and economic crises of the 1970s and 1980s left an indelible mark on social services in Uganda. Using Makerere University as a case study, the paper shows how the adverse consequences of the crises unleashed on the educational sector were revised through reforms along 'liberal' lines. Under funding of education, a major outcome of the crises led to a brain drain and a deterioration in the quality of teaching and learning. Governance in the higher education sector was adversely affected as the central authority of the University increasingly found it difficult to demand or receive the co-operation of students, staff and faculty. However, from the early 1990s, an extensive institutional reorganisation of Makerere University was embarked upon. The paper argues that these reform measures in the areas of financing, administration and programmes, have put the University on a path of transformation that is radical and irreversible.

Background

Makerere University was established in 1922 as a Technical School. In 1937, the school was expanded into a college for higher education. By 1949, it had become a university college for the whole of East Africa. On July 1, 1970, by an Act of Parliament, Makerere University became an independent national university of the Republic of Uganda, offering undergraduate and postgraduate courses leading to awards.

When Politics Fell Apart: Underfunding, Mismanagement, and Academic Inertia

Within a year of MUK's independence from the University of East Africa, the country was plunged into the most turbulent years of its existence. The army coup of 1971 that brought Idi Amin to power marked the beginning of Uganda's slide to political and economic disintegration. The political and economic crises of the 1970s and 80s that are well-documented (Brett, 1990; Kajubi, 1989; Semboja

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et. al.,1995) left an indelible mark on the country's social services. Makerere University was no exception to the political and financial crises that paralysed every aspect of life in Uganda. Between 1972 and 1985, the country's fiscal position and performance was characterised by a decline in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and a sharp fall of 35% in real per capita incomes. Embattled governments cut social sector spending to the bare minimum, leaving social service provision to individuals and groups. Education was hit the hardest by the cut backs in government spending (Kajubi, 1989; Mwiria, 1999).

The decline in government funding took place at a time when higher education was facing two other serious challenges. The first challenge concerned the ideological shift in educational funding away from tertiary education towards primary and secondary education. The second challenge related to the growing social demand for higher education and the resultant increases in enrolment.

Influenced by economic and social arguments that "public investment in Universities and Colleges brings meagre returns compared to the returns for primary and secondary education, and that higher education magnifies inequalities", donor support for the university declined (World Bank, 2000:10). The decline in the external funding to MUK came at time when the university was experiencing increasing pressures to expand. The increase in enrolments at Makerere during this period was not accompanied by a corresponding improvement in financial and material resources. The most obvious sign of this discrepancy was the sharp deterioration in the quality of teaching and learning; bare laboratories, empty library shelves, chronic shortages of scholastic materials and overcrowded halls of residence (Makerere University Visiting Committee Report 1990–1991). The state of the halls of residence perhaps best illustrates the extent of the financial crisis. Filled far beyond their capacity, halls of residences' libraries and common rooms, toilets and washroom facilities were converted into additional students' rooms, leaving students to make their own alternative toilet arrangements.

As a corollary to the deterioration in the quality of teaching and learning at Makerere, underfunding accentuated old problems and exposed new ones. The old problems related to financing, and the quality and relevance of higher education. The extensive brain drain at Makerere is largely attributed to underfunding by government and external sources. Meagre salaries that often came too late to have any meaningful impact on individuals' lives demoralised lecturers. For example, in December 1989, not one member of the entire University staff got their salaries and wages in time for Christmas (Ngobi's Submission: Makerere University Visitation Committee Report, 1990–1991:6). Many lecturers opted for greener pastures, both within and outside of Uganda. Those lecturers who remained, moonlighted as tutors for school children, taxi drivers, or 'business men' in order to survive, using University facilities as strategic operating bases. Although many gave the odd weekly lectures, they had little time for seminars, tutorials or

one-to-one student contact, let alone research or formal academic forums for academic staff to debate intellectual issues.

Testifying before the Makerere University Visiting Committee of 1990/1, the Makerere University Academic Staff Association (MUASA), argued that the dire consequences of this “under-funding secured a steady institutional regression with potential disastrous multiplier effects on national development...” (MUASA, Submission, 1990/91).

The new problems accentuated by the funding crisis related to governance issues, both within Makerere and between Makerere and the state. Underfunding insidiously undermined the University’s authority making it increasingly difficult for central administration to demand or receive the cooperation of students, staff, and faculty. Between 1972 and 1986, there were a total of seven student and staff riots and protests, resulting in the university’s closure in November 1989 (Makerere Visiting Committee Report, 1990–1991). Financially impotent to provide the very minimum and basic requirements to facilitate the teaching and learning process, the administration was rendered ineffectual. The administrative impasse was exacerbated by the archaic University Act of 1970, which gives government political control over the University administration. Although the Act states that the University Council is the supreme governing body and employer, its authority is undermined by Section 22, which creates an independent Appointments Board as a parallel authority. The Act empowers this Board, which consists of nine members appointed by the Chancellor, to make faculty appointments, promotions and removals and to discipline academic and administrative staff in the employ of the University (Makerere University Act, 1970).

A further constraint on the university’s capacity to act is Section 25 of the Act which forbids the University to dispose of its surplus funds on fixed accounts without the prior approval of the Minister of Education. Section 35 gives the Minister of Education leeway to interfere in the University’s administration:

The Minister may, if in his opinion it is in the public interest, give directions on any matter to the University Authority as to the exercise of any powers and performance of any functions under this Act and the Authority shall comply with such directions (Ibid. Also see Makerere University visiting Committee Report, 1990–1991:22).

Empowered by the University Act, consecutive governments issued directives, and formulated and implemented policies for Makerere with complete lack of respect for and involvement of key stakeholders.

The shrinking of the political space for participation and consultation was evident in the government’s relationship with the formal bodies representing student and staff interests (Makerere University Visiting Committee Report, 1991). For example, the banning of MUASA in 1975 and the abolition of Makerere University Students’ Guild in 1978 were a serious abrogation of the democratic rights of students and staff. The effort to silence and curtail students and academic staff protest and

discussion of the conditions affecting them on campus marginalised and divorced academic staff, students and workers from the central administration. The Vice Chancellor remained, surrounded by Heads of Departments in the Main Buildings (the Central Executive), with almost no regular interaction with the academic staff and academic departments (Makerere University Visiting Committee Report, 1990–1991). Distanced from the realities of living and working at Makerere as experienced by students and staff, Central Administration was unable to effectively respond to emerging and long-standing problems. For example, the Central Executive's prognosis of the student boycott of lectures in 1989, was that:

It was a matter of indiscipline by "spoilt youth" whose treatment would be a firm hand of an experienced disciplinarian (Makerere University Visiting Committee Report 1990/91: 5).

The solution to this display of discontent was to call in the police to keep law and order, serving to illustrate the high handed manner in which the university administration continued to deal with academic and administrative problems.

Despite a more favorable political climate, following the NRM's rise to power in 1986, students continued to feel constrained in exercising their rights. For example, students resented and reacted to the University Council's action in 1988/9 of handing them an "already made" constitution. Disenchantment and suspicion among the student body and university staff was in part responsible for the growth of active power centers on campus organised around MUASA, the Students' Guild, Makerere University Workers Union, MUK Resistance Councils (RCs).

'Back from the Brink'

In the academic year 2000/01, Makerere University recorded an unprecedented increase in its undergraduate and postgraduate admissions. Seven years after embarking on radical changes in its admissions, financing and teaching programmes, Makerere University's expansion has broadened its revenue base, and helped to bring it back from the brink of collapse (Court, 1999). Today, in addition to the expanded admissions, Makerere University administration boasts of having opened up the "ivory tower" and instituted an "open door policy" to dialogue and consultation with students and staff that has helped in solving problems on campus (Epelu-Opio, 1999). These developments represent a picture that is in stark contrast to the one hitherto associated with Makerere. Prior to 1993, Makerere was often portrayed as a university teetering on its last legs, an ivory tower that had virtually lost touch with its environment and was at odds with national development needs. The extensive changes at Makerere are the more remarkable because as Court and Mwiria note, they were 'achieved in a context of declining financial support from government' (Court, 1999; Mwiria, 1999).

The changes at Makerere University, which have far-reaching educational and developmental implications, cannot be isolated from the broader political, social,

and economic reforms undertaken by the National Resistance Movement (NRM) government. Since 1986, the NRM government has sought to reconstruct the country's politics and economy along more 'liberal' lines. The processes of privatisation, decentralisation, and bottomup planning and decision-making, were given legal definition by the new constitution that was promulgated in 1995, and the Local Government Act of 1997. These processes are key elements in the government's development agenda. The salience of education to the sustainability of on-going reforms has been recognised and reinforced by government. The prioritising of education is evident in the government's Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP), the Education Strategic Investment Plan (ESP) 1997–2003] and in the introduction of Universal Primary Education (UPE) in 1997.

Since the introduction of UPE, the number of pupils enrolled in primary schools has more than doubled, increasing from 2,900,000 pupils in 1997 to 6,591,000 pupils in 2000. An important consequence of the rapid expansion of primary school enrollments, is the pressure this expansion is posed to exert on the country's secondary schools and correspondingly on the country's institutions of higher learning. Currently, there are twelve universities throughout the country including Makerere University. Ten of these universities are private. The proliferation of private universities is, in part, a reflection of the government's support for privatisation, and, in part, representative of a growing trend in the rest of Africa. While Makerere University no longer enjoys a monopoly on university education, it remains the preeminent institution of higher education. Makerere University's position in the current constellation suggests that it is likely to face the greatest pressures to absorb the increasing demand.

In light of the changes in the university's admissions and financing, in particular, the move toward greater privatisation, the issues of equity, quality, relevance and accountability (financial and academic) become significant. Thus, *Who Pays? Who Benefits? And, What Determines the Outcome?* become important questions.

Within the context of educational reforms, the institutional changes at Makerere University raise three important and interrelated questions with particular relevance to this case study.

- First, to what extent can Makerere University align expanded access with equity, and improvements in the quality of teaching and research?
- Second, how can Makerere University strengthen its capacity for institutional planning, programme implementation, performance monitoring and evaluation?
- Third, how can the changes at Makerere be sustained, improved upon and consolidated?

The following section outlines the main findings of the case study on Makerere University carried out in 2001. It highlights the most important areas of change at Makerere University between 1993 and 2000.

Summary of Findings

The underlying argument of this case study is simple and straightforward: Makerere University has undergone a transformation that is radical and irreversible. Over the last seven years, 1993–2000, the extensive institutional reorganisation of Makerere University in the areas of financing, administration, and programmes include the following main characteristics:

- admission of fee-paying students
- equity in admissions
- the expansion, diversification, and modification of teaching
- the creation of limited liability enterprises called commercial units
- expansion of staff development and welfare
- expanded checks and balances for quality
- greater correspondence between university programmes and private and public demands
- cooperative planning between government and Makerere University.

Admission of fee-paying students

In the space of seven years Makerere has moved from a situation where none of its students paid fees, to one where 80 per cent pay fees, accounting for over 50% of the university's total revenue. In 1999, the university admitted 10,000 new students as first year students to various undergraduate courses and 1,900 students to post-graduate programmes. Of the 10,000 under-graduate admissions only 2,000 (20%) were government sponsored, the remaining 8,000 (80%) were privately sponsored (fee-paying students). The increases in the university's undergraduate admissions between 1993 and 2000 are illustrated in Table 1 and the graph below.

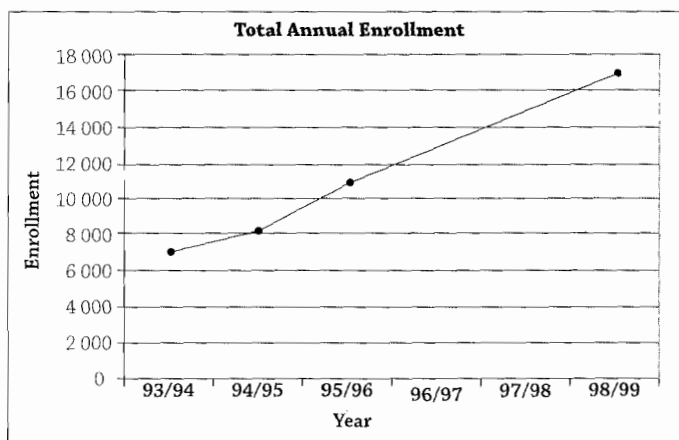


Table 1: Student Admissions, 1993–1999

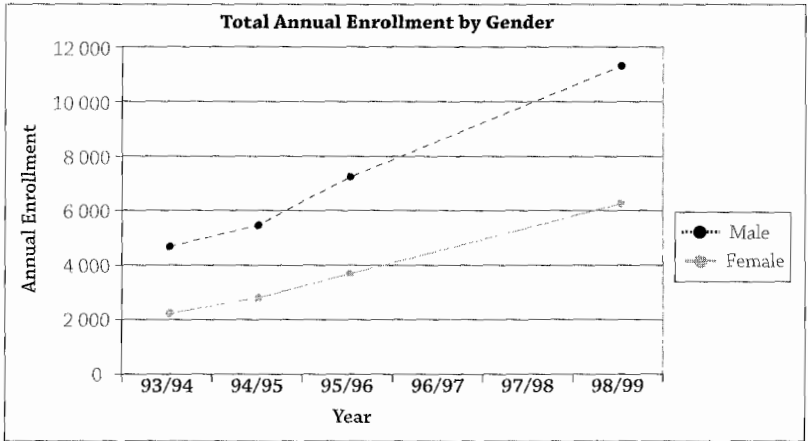
Academic year	Government	Private	Total	% Female
1993/94	2299	1062	3361	31.6
1994/95	2146	1106	3252	31.0
1995/96	2803	2521	4801	36.6
1996/97	2273	5631	7904	29.85
1997/98	2330	5919	8249	37.34
1998/99	2042	7348	9390	38.46
1999/00	1923	12316	14239	39.81

Source: The Registrar Office, Makerere University

As illustrated in Table 1, there has been an increase in the number of female students admitted to under graduate courses. While the increase is slight and still below an ideal female representation, it nonetheless represents 33% of the overall undergraduate admissions and is a positive trend.

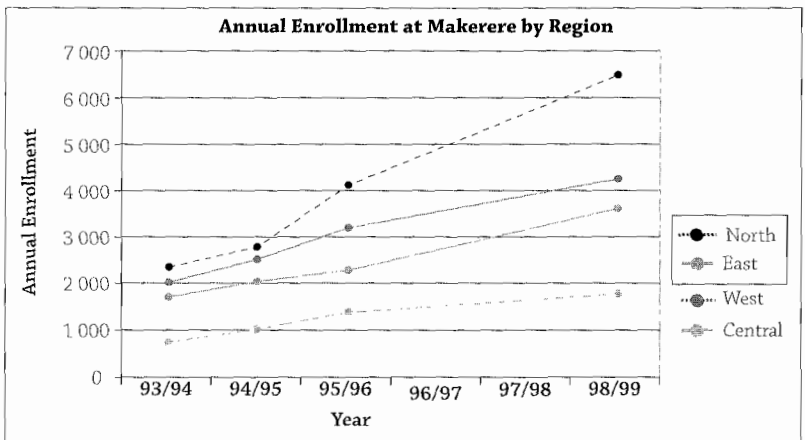
Equity in Admissions

The increase in female admissions could be attributed to university's sensitivity to gender imbalance and the disparities that exist in access throughout the educational system. In recognition of the importance attached to the education of women for both individual and national interests, the university continues to adhere to favourable selection of female students. Before the implementation of the affirmative action in 1989, only 12% of the admissions at the undergraduate level was female. The introduction of a weighting point system in 1989 was an affirmative action that enabled female students to gain access to the university on additional 1.5 points. However, as illustrated by the graph below, the initial increases in female enrolment seem to have reached a plateau.



Source: The Registrar Office, Makerere University

Another aspect of equity relates to regional imbalances in admissions. The regional distribution in admissions has also improved. Previously, due to several factors, including limited access to secondary education, political instability and war, many regions, particularly in the north and east were grossly underrepresented. However, while admissions continue to be dominated by students from the regions in the south, centre, and west, the following graph reveals a positive trend in regional representation in admissions.



Source: The Registrar Office, Makerere University

Expansion, Diversification, and Modification of Teaching Programme

Teaching programmes at the university have been greatly expanded, diversified, and modified. To ensure relevance and correspondence with private and public interest, new courses including professional courses, have been added to existing programmes. In 1999 alone, several demand-driven courses were established. For example, Masters of Agribusiness Management in the Faculty of Agriculture, Masters in Ethics and Public Management in the Faculty of Arts, Bachelor of Community Forestry; Bachelor of Science in Wood Science and Technology; Master of Arts in International Relations and Diplomatic Studies in the Faculty of Social Sciences and Diploma in Records and Archives Management in the East African School of Library and Information Science. These new courses have increased access by making the university more responsive to its immediate economic and social environment. In addition, the expansion and diversification of courses has opened up the university to income generating opportunities,

Furthermore, to align the university's expansion with teaching practices, the university introduced the semester system in 1998 in the place of the traditional term system that ran from October to June. The introduction of the semester system was aimed at improving efficiency and reducing 'dead time'. The university administration has argued that the semester system is more flexible for the students on a fixed study time, a view that is supported by many students. Responses on a questionnaire administered to a cross section of students show that 70 per cent of the students view the semester system as time efficient. Many of the students interviewed indicated that there were several reasons for favouring the semester system over the old term system. For example, they argued that faculty and students are kept busy and course assessments were easier and more realistic. Students are examined on fresh material and the assessment is more comprehensive than in the traditional setting where students are examined at the end of a full academic year on the materials accumulated. Another advantage cited was the cost efficiency of the semester system. The semester system enables students on a tight budget to have a flexible system of payment by staggering fees payments while, at the same time, they continue to acquire course credits.

Financial Mobilisation and Management

Prior to the innovations, Makerere University was solely dependent on government subsidies, a situation that has been overturned by broadening its scope for resource mobilisation. The Vice Chancellor's Report (1999) reveals that over 60% of the capital budget of Makerere University are currently resourced privately. Between 1993 and 1999, donor support to the university, through bilateral collaborations and grants, accounted for no less than US\$5million annually (Musisi, 2000). This support in addition to private initiatives within the university substantially contributed to the university's financial resource base.

In 1999, the university raised Ug.Shs. 12 billion from its own resources (The Vice Chancellor's Report). The bulk of the money raised went into capital development including the construction of a new administration building (Senate House). Furthermore, in addition to the money raised through the admission of private students, the admission of foreign students has contributed to the university's source base.

Over the last seven years, the number of foreign students admitted to Makerere University has increased substantially. In 1993, there were 41 foreign students (mainly from neighboring countries) enrolled in courses at Makerere University. By 1999, the number of foreign students admitted to courses that ranged from Bachelor of Librarianship to Bachelor in Medicine and Surgery had risen to 188 students. The increase in foreign student admissions could be attributed to the comparative advantage of the fees structure at Makerere University. Nationally, when compared to private universities, namely, Uganda Christian University-Mukono and Uganda Martyrs University-Nkozi, and regionally with the University of Dar-es-Salaam, for example, the fees structure at Makerere University, for similar courses, is competitive. Tables 2 and Table 3 illustrate the comparative advantage currently enjoyed by Makerere University vis-a-vis other universities.

Table 2: Academic Fees, 1999/2000 for Makerere University, Uganda Christian University, and Uganda Martyrs' University

Course	Makerere University	Uganda Christian University – Mukono	Uganda Martyrs' University – Nkozi
BBA	1,500,000	1,000,000	1,900,000
BA/ED	810,000	910,000	Not Offered
LLB	1,200,000	1,200,000	Not Offered

Source: The Academic Registrar's Report 2000

Table 3. Academic Fees, 1999/2000 for Makerere University and the University of Dar-es-Salaam

Makerere University			University of Dar-es-Salaam	
Course	Uganda. Shs	US\$	Tanzania Shs	US\$
BSC ENG	1,650,000	1,092.7	1,200,000	1,485.1
MB.ChB	1,920,000	1,271.5	1,500,000	1,856.4
BSC	1,080,000	715.5	950,000	1,175.7
LLB	1,200,000	794.7	1,000,000	1,237.6
B.COM	1,200,000	794.7	900,000	1,113.9

Makerere University			University of Dar-es-Salaam	
Course	Uganda. Shs	US\$	Tanzania Shs	US\$
BA/ED	810,000	536.4	900,000	1,113.9
BA(Arts)	810,000	536.4	900,000	1,113.9

NB. 1US\$ = Uganda Shs. 1,510 1US\$ = Tanzania Shs. 808

Source: Academic Registrar, Makerere University.

Expanded Staff Development and Welfare

The expansion of the student body has been matched by the university's efforts to bolster staff capacity. The staff capacity at Makerere stands at approximately 911 senior members of staff. While, the number of senior staff is below the University's requirement, plans are underway to boost this capacity.

Staff Development

The university administration has used the internally generated funds to boost the staff development committee to ensure that the training and retraining of staff members continues to keep pace with the university's expansion. In line with the recommendations of the Mujaju Report, it is now a university requirement that all lecturers must hold a doctorate degree. Currently, only 25 per cent of academic staff hold a Ph.D. It is estimated that the funds available through the staff development committee can accommodate the retraining of a substantial number of lecturers wishing to undertake a Ph.D. Table 4 illustrates the university's current staffing capacity. The total number of staff with a Ph.D. is 221, 25 per cent of the total number of 911 teaching staff. In 1999, the university sponsored 82 Ph.D. students both at Makerere University and abroad in a drive to increase and upgrade its staffing capacity.

Table 4. Academic Staff with Ph.D. 1998/99

Faculty	Number
Faculty of Agriculture	36
Faculty of Arts	31
Business School	1
School of Education	20
Faculty of Law	8
Faculty of Medicine	13
Faculty of Science	47
Faculty of Social Sciences	18
Faculty of Technology	18

Faculty	Number
Faculty of Veterinary Medicine	14
Institute of Adult & Continuing Education	1
East African School of Library & Information Science	1
University Library	–
Institute of Statistics & Applied Economics	8
Margaret Trowel School of Industrial & Fine Arts	1
Makerere Institute of Social Research	4
Total	221

Source: Chairman, MU-NORAD Task Force, 1999

Salaries

The salary structure for academic staff at the university has been revised to include ‘top-up’ allowances from the funds generated from the fee paying private students. While, the average salary for an academic staff still does not meet the demand for a “living wage”, and is relatively low when compared to other government institutions, it has substantially increased over the last seven years. Academic staff currently earn between US\$1,060 and US\$ 1,600 (including a top up allowance) per month, compared to a previous salary of between US\$300 and US\$500.

Checks and Balances for Quality

Mindful that the expansion, diversification and modification of teaching programmes have to be supported by a tight rein on quality, the university administration has taken measures to ensure that teaching standards are not only maintained but are also improved. An ad hoc Academic Quality Assurance Committee that was set up in 1997 became the Senate Standing Academic Quality Assurance Committee in 1999. The establishment of this committee in addition to the long established practice of external examiners who audit examination standards provides the university with important checks and balances for monitoring and evaluating quality.

Correspondence of University Programmes with Private and Public Demand

According to government and university officials, the increase in private sponsorship has, *inter alia*, encouraged the university to address the relevance of its curriculum to the needs of the wider community. The courses currently offered at Makerere, including vocational and professional courses correspond to public demand.

Makerere University Business School (MUBS), for example, attracts professionals seeking to upgrade their skills. The Faculty of Technology has established a successful consulting business – Technology Consult. The firm has been involved

in a wide range of multi-disciplinary work in civil engineering, mechanical engineering, land survey and architecture, telecommunications and computers, both at the university and within the broader community. The Faculty of Law is largely responsible for making the country's new constitution accessible to the general public through its translation of the constitution into the country's indigenous languages. Furthermore, through its Human Rights and Peace Centre, the Faculty of Law has promoted a greater consciousness and awareness among Ugandans about individual and collective rights. The university's exposure to outside interests is healthy for its development, bringing it into line with wider interests and encouraging its scrutiny by stakeholders on matters both academic and financial.

Commercial Units/Business Enterprises

The commercial units at Makerere University comprise the guesthouse, a maize mill, bakery, a building unit, the University Press, and Makerere University Consultancy Bureau (MUCOB). The aim of establishing various commercial units was to increase and diversify the University's revenue base.

A summary of operations of industrial and commercial units for the year 1997 suggests however, that performance among the various units for that year was average. The net profit before tax was Ug.Shs. 25 million for printery, and less than 5 million for the rest of the units. An income statement for 1997, calculated in Ug. Shs millions is summarised in Table 5.

Table 5. Summary of Operations of Industrial and Commercial units

Particulars	Guest house	Printery	Maize Mill	Bakery	Building Unit	MUP
Total Sales Revenue	190	235	192	93	47	
Less cost of sales	78	110	166	67	41	
Gross profit	112	124	26	26	6	
Less Operating Costs	107	99	23	23	3	
Profit before Tax	5	25	3	3	3	

Source: Department of Planning and Development, Makerere University

The figures for MUCOB are not included in the above table. MUCOB, incorporated in 1997, offers research, training, and consultancy services to both private and public institutions. Since 1997, MUCOB has successfully tendered for national training and research services. In 1999, MUCOB earned close to Ug.Shs. 50 million before tax. However, despite financial assistance from the European Union towards capacity building, and a measure of success in its operations, MUCOB needs to be nurtured to effectively compete for work.

The Challenges of Change

Despite the impressive rejuvenation of Makerere University, there is growing concern from a cross-section of the university's stakeholders, faculty, students, government officials, and donor agencies. The key development challenges to the ongoing decentralisation reforms in the country remain human resource capacity development. Many of the growing concerns about the sustainability of the innovations at Makerere University relate to the sustainability of the innovations and the university's capacity to contribute to the national development needs. Central to the challenges faced by Makerere is the concern of what has been referred to as the "over commercialisation" of the university, resulting in the lack of focus, leading to a gap between skills acquired and needs of the country. Specifically, the concerns link the rapid and unplanned expansion of the university with a decline in standards, quality and equity.

Standards and Quality

In a draft report, *The Future of Makerere University*, by the Secretariat of Makerere University Academic Staff Association (MUASA), September 1999, the authors noted that the unprecedented expansion of the university was cause for concern. They noted that the growing student population at Makerere, from 867 in 1960/61, 16,000 in 1997/98, to 22,000 in 2000/01 has not been matched by corresponding increases in facilities, notably, lecture halls, seminar rooms, laboratories and equipment for science-based subjects. They argued that more than half of the registered students in some courses did not attend lectures due to a lack of sitting space and audibility in the lecture halls. Consequently, according to the authors of the report, the serious shortages noted in addition to the high student /lecturer ratios, the quality of academic output is being compromised.

Similar concerns have become the subject of recent media attention. Newspapers reports have focused on the abolition of tutorial, reduction in course work, and the introduction of multiple choice exams in most departments except Political Science, as indicative of a decline standards of the "Harvard of Africa" (*The New Vision*, Monday, September 18, 2000).

Table 6 illustrates the burgeoning numbers and the lecturer-student ratio across faculties at Makerere University.

Table 6. Lecturer-Student Ratio per Faculty at Makerere University

Faculty	Number of Lecturers	Students	Students per Lecturer
Agriculture	87	539	6
Arts	107	4233	40
MUBS	63	2940	47
Forestry	22	157	7

Faculty	Number of Lecturers	Students	Students per Lecturer
Law	32	971	30
Medicine	243	82	3
Science	129	68	7
Social Sciences	95	27	31
Technology	88	6	8
Veterinary Medicine	82	211	3
School of Education	68	3769	56
School of Fine Arts	27	221	8
Librarianship	6	225	38
Continuing Education	22	183	8
Computer Science	13	***	***
Institute of Psychology	18	***	***
Institute of Statistics	37	487	13

Source: *The New Vision*, September 18, 2000

Although the overall university-wide student-lecturer ratio is 1:19, which is well within acceptable international standards, when differences in staffing levels among the various faculties are considered, the reality is quite different. For example, the average number of students per class for Business Administration is approximately 500 students, and 800 and upward for many courses in the Arts and Social Sciences. Student responses to questions on standards on the questionnaires suggest that there is a qualitative decline in teaching standards. Among many of the students, the decline in standards is attributed to more than infrastructure deficiencies. Many of the students viewed the decline in standards as linked to the broader issues of student welfare, including living and studying conditions that have worsened as a result of the huge numbers.

Equity

In the questionnaire administered to students, 65 per cent of the students were of the opinion that the 'privatisation' of Makerere has had an adverse impact on equity, in particular, along gender and social lines. An often-cited danger of 'privatisation' was the increasing of the gap between the 'haves and have nots.' The opinion among students and the wider public is that the introduction of fees at Makerere has increased but not broadened access. It is often argued that access to Makerere is for a small social group, once more making higher education, a preserve of the elite. The fact that secondary education remains by and large dominated by private schools means that the majority of those admitted to Makerere are the sons and daughters of parents able to pay the high university tuition fees.

An example of newspaper headlines in the local press provide some indication of the growing concern over the issue of equity:

Makerere Suspends Needy Students (*The New Vision*, 30/10/93)

Makerere Goes Commercial (*The Monitor* 12/07/94)

Makerere University Unfair to Peasants (*The Monitor*, 27/08/97)

Damned if you are smart but poor: forget Makerere (*The Monitor*, 12-14/08/96)

MUK-Mpigi Students Appeal for Bursaries (*The Monitor*, 17/08/99)

Furthermore, the growing concern over standards and equity highlight a danger in the disproportionate attention given to quantity over quality. If not addressed, the decline in standards in equity pose a real danger to the quantitative achievements and innovations in admissions and programming made by Makerere over the last seven years.

Prior to its virtual collapse, beginning in the mid 1970s, Makerere University's strength lay in its reputation, location in a vibrant and growing city, its old and well established infrastructure. The quality of its staff, the selectively high quality of its student body, sound and innovative management, and external linkages and support earned it comparisons to Harvard and Oxford. Today, Makerere University is facing a serious, albeit nascent, challenge from other higher education providers, principally the private universities. The challenge of these universities lies in the quality of their programmes and their representativeness. Some of the new universities, for example, the Islamic University in Uganda, Mbale and Uganda Martyrs' University, Nkozi, offer more focused programmes and have been evaluated as doing better than Makerere. For example, the Islamic University offers practical courses with internships and on the job training. Uganda Martyrs' University has excellent information and communication technology facilities that complement its specialised programmes in ethics and integrity. Furthermore, while admissions to these universities remain low compared with the intakes at Makerere, they have, in the short period of their existence, demonstrated a capacity to purposively address the gender gap in their admissions.

In future, Makerere's ability to sustain and consolidate the positive elements of change will depend on its response to both internal and external challenges.

The internal challenges stem from:

- observed persistent and entrenched elements of conservatism, and vestiges of bureaucratic red tape
- poor terms of service for both academic and non-academic members of staff
- a dose of government interference in governance matters, financial insecurity
- the archaic 1970s University Act
- the hierarchical organisational structure that is cumbersome

- the uncoordinated compartmentalisation of resources leading to duplication and wastage
- poor information and communication technology.

The external challenges Makerere University faces relate to:

- the rapid expansion of education at different levels
- inter alia, the increasing demand in the face of declining financial support from government
- lack of autonomy
- the emergence of new universities as centers of excellence in particular fields of study.

Conclusion

It is important to note that the changes at Makerere are part of an ongoing process. Therefore, the findings of this case study have to be treated as preliminary and will need to be updated as time and events put the changes at Makerere in perspective. There are however, several areas that were identified in the case study of Makerere University and which have subsequently persisted as areas of concern. These areas, which have a direct relationship to teaching and learning at the University, will also determine the extent to which Makerere can compete in the global knowledge economy. Those areas identified for strategic intervention by government, the private sector and funding partners are as follows:

- the relevance and diversity of academic programmes
- university's research capacities both at the Faculty and individual levels
- equity in admissions and recruitment of students and faculty members
- information and communication technology
- student welfare (including housing, career counselling, and remedial measures for needy students)
- staff development, welfare and terms of service.

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