

Gender mainstreaming in the university context: Prospects and challenges at Makerere University, Uganda

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Synopsis

This article focuses on gender mainstreaming, a relatively recent strategy to bridge gender gaps in diverse aspects of university life. It analyses gender mainstreaming, in relation to systems, structures, and processes, as well as the varied actors involved in this process. It assesses the parameters within which the strategy can be applied. The influence of gender mainstreaming in the wider university community and within the academic and administrative programmes is assessed.

The experience of Makerere University in Uganda is the basis for the analysis. The article draws on a wider research project focusing on gender equity in higher education in Uganda with special attention on issues of access, curriculum and staff development. The research involved extensive documentary reviews. Interviews with key selected stakeholders, representative of students, academic and administrative staff and top-decision makers and implementers were also conducted.

The Makerere University gender mainstreaming model is unique in its combination of both academic and institutional interventions — a full-fledged vibrant academic Department of Women and Gender Studies and a Gender Mainstreaming Division strengthens the Gender Mainstreaming Programme (GMP). The Programme has the official recognition of the highest governing organ of the University (the Council) and has clear and recognized tentacles in lower organs of the University. A large number of both male staff and students at various levels are involved.

The article suggests that the application of a gender mainstreaming strategy is possible, though complex. The case study institution analysed shows some progress but there are still many challenges relating to structural issues, sustainability, policy formulation, the commitment of actors involved, and the whole aspect of attitudinal change both at individual level and collectively for the institution. Positive aspects and the achievements of the intervention are analysed.

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Introduction

The rationale for gender equity in higher education has attracted a lot of attention, especially since the 1990s. This article focuses on the concept of gender mainstreaming, a relatively recent strategy aimed at attaining gender equality, in the context of a university. It examines Makerere University's experiences of

gender mainstreaming, in relation to existing systems, structures, and processes, as well as the varied actors involved in this process.

The article draws on the findings of a more extensive Ugandan study analyzing gender equity in higher education, with Makerere University as the case study.¹ The twenty-four month study (2003–2005) analysed key interventions undertaken by the university to achieve gender equity. First, access issues, and in particular, affirmative action programmes were assessed. These were in two forms — additional points to raise the entry points

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of each female applicant to undergraduate programmes, and the running of a female scholarship to increase enrolment. The second component of the research focused on the curriculum — incorporation of gender in terms of content and process. Staff development issues relating to career development opportunities for women and men were the third aspect investigated. Within this context, Makerere University has instituted a gender mainstreaming programme and interventions studied were assessed within this framework.

The study's findings resonate with critiques by feminists and development practitioners which the article addresses within the text. Within this wider study, findings included the affirmation by the respondents, of the complexity of gender and gender mainstreaming concepts. This was also apparent in various institutional gender training and related reports. Translating gender mainstreaming theory into practice seemed a puzzle to many. There was apparent aloofness towards gender equity issues by various stakeholders. This compelled the research team to delve more into the process of gender mainstreaming and this article is a specific response to the need for further understanding of emerging issues from the findings of the Uganda Gender Equity Research contained in the cross-national report "Gender Equity in Higher Education in Selected Commonwealth Countries" (Morley et al., 2006).

As part of a comparative study encompassing selected Commonwealth countries, the study gained from periodic analyses and assessment from the research team, (focusing on Sri Lanka, South Africa, Nigeria, Tanzania and Uganda). Documentary evidence from institutional and external sources, interviews with key decision makers and students and staff of the university, as well as relevant government ministries, non-governmental organisations were enriched by focus group discussions and observations. Through the interrogation of the gender mainstreaming concept and process, the article presents an analysis of good practice in achieving gender equity in higher education.

The overall goal of the article is to examine the efficacy and viability of the gender mainstreaming process within an institution, highlights emerging challenges and critically assess "good practice" issues in relation to the existing body of knowledge within the wider understanding of the gender equity in higher education institutions.

It is important to point out that the lead researcher of this project in Uganda was an "insider", which might introduce some "personal" perspective to the analysis.² However, the fact that members of the research team (external to Uganda) have had periodic inputs in the

process, in terms of questioning, and in view of the many evaluation initiatives of the Gender Mainstreaming Programme (GMP) by both internal and external groups and individuals, the potential biases should be insignificant. Such evaluations include those of formal external consultants (1997, 2000 in respect of the Department of Women and Gender Studies) and annual in-house and external evaluation sessions with regard to the GMP.

The gender mainstreaming concept

Gender Mainstreaming (GM) was born out of the dissatisfaction with earlier approaches to achieving gender equity and equality despite various interventions. In particular it became clear, after the 1970s, that the Women in Development (WID) approach which paid specific attention to women, through projects and programmes had not eliminated gender inequalities. Gender and Development (GAD) became the preferred approach because it allowed for the analysis of inequalities in relation to men and women, and advocated the transforming of various arenas. Within the context of GAD, gender mainstreaming became a mechanism for ensuring a wholesome approach to development, gender equity and equality. As such, the gender mainstreaming strategy eliminates the practice of appending gender oriented policies or projects at a later stage (Rai, 2001). The international women's movement, and the efforts of the United Nations, especially through the periodic World Conferences on Women (1975, 1980, 1985 and 1995) promoted GM (Charlesworth, 2005; Razavi & Miller, 1995; United Nations, 1996a, 1999; UNDP, 1998; Visvanathan, Duggan, Nisonoff, & Wiegersma, 1997).

The importance of gender mainstreaming was underscored by the international community when it was approved as one of the *Twelve Areas of Concern* for United Nations member states to execute (Charlesworth, 2005; United Nations, 1996a, 1999). The UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) defined gender mainstreaming as follows:

Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit

equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality (1997).

As Charlesworth (2005) points out, many institutional and organizational definitions draw from this initial internationally agreed definition. The UN and its agencies (e.g. UNESCO, WHO, ILO and UNDP) have formulated such policies. International bodies (such as the World Bank, Commonwealth Secretariat and European Union) have adopted this strategy and national governments and their agencies such as the United States Development Agency (USAID) also subscribe to this practice. Although not so widespread, some universities have begun to apply this strategy, albeit not yet a common practice yet within the higher education sector.

This article adopts the ECOSOC definition of gender mainstreaming, as a mechanism, process, or strategy for achieving gender equity and equality, across the board. At institutional level, and in the context of a university setting, gender mainstreaming should encompass the entire spectrum of the university function (teaching, research, and community service). Instruments of change need to be all-inclusive in relation to the various stakeholders (male and female students, academic and other categories of staff). The entire organisational environment should be scanned and appropriate GM activities undertaken applied to all stakeholders.

The central goal of this article is to examine whether gender mainstreaming, as a strategy and process can be implemented within a university setting to achieve gender equity. Gender mainstreaming is still contested in terms of both theory and practice (Charlesworth, 2005; Rao & Kelleher, 2005; Walby, 2004). The case study institution offers an insight into some of the debates concerning gender mainstreaming from the perspectives of feminist theory and actual practice.

The Ugandan national context

Uganda has, since the late 1980s enjoyed a positive image regarding gender equity. Affirmative action programmes in favour of women and other “marginalized” groups, including youths and persons with disability have been established. The major elements include a mandatory seat in the National Parliament for a district woman representative. Women must form at least one third of all the councilors under the Local Government’s Act 1997 (Republic of Uganda, 2001). The Uganda Constitution (1995) affirms the need for affirmative action and has many clauses aimed at eliminating gender discrimination (Republic of Uganda, 1995). These efforts to include women who have hitherto

been virtually excluded from top political positions are significant. Political appointments point to gender sensitivity actions — the most outstanding of these was the appointment of a female Vice President (1994–2003). The Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development is charged with ensuring that national policies and programmes incorporate gender. Several initiatives within the education sector aimed at achieving gender parity are also evident, including Universal Primary Education (UPE), and the establishment of alternative forms of education to enable pupils to take classes within their cultural setting (e.g. nomadism). There are other policies to ensure equity in the classroom through teacher training, provision of essential facilities such as appropriate latrines to make the school environment friendly and scholarships and bursaries at secondary and tertiary levels. Makerere University therefore operates within a conducive national environment where gender equity is already accepted, as a principle, although the practice still poses challenges.

Brief history of Makerere University

Makerere University began as a Technical College. In 1922, it was recognized as a higher education institution offering specialized training in technology, medicine, agriculture, science and the humanities. Women were only allowed to enter in 1945, but prejudices towards women students continued to exist, and the numbers did not increase as rapidly as expected. By 1960, there were only 100 women students. Its phases of development include a spell as a College of the University of London (1945–63), a Constituent College of the University of East Africa (1963–1970) and a subsequent period as a fully-fledged university. The higher education sector has since changed in Uganda and Makerere is no longer the only national university, though it remains the most established and largest state university. Current student enrolment is over 40,000 of whom women represent about 43% (Makerere University, 2005a). It was only in 2005 that two women managed to move into the top management cadre,³ but the academic and administrative/management profiles of the University illustrate that despite a visible change, the gender terrain at Makerere University remains male-dominated. The Gender Mainstreaming Programme (GMP) is aimed at eliminating such disparities.

The Makerere University gender mainstreaming programme

There has been a debate as to whether an analysis of institutional transformation should take a “snap-shot” of

contemporary events or take account of the historical development (or build-up) to the current status. As Mills (2002) argues, in order to gain an insight into what generates the contemporary inequalities, it is important to follow the dual route:

The contemporary focus helps to illuminate current workplace practices and the associated attitudes and feelings. The longitudinal focus helps to illustrate how those practices developed and the rooted understandings that keep them in place. (Mills, 2002: p.288)

In the case study under review, the dual approach is most relevant as the efforts to work towards gender equality have not only evolved over time but they demonstrate clear periodic moments of change.

The essence of the Makerere University Gender Mainstreaming Programme is captured in the following words, within its Five-Year Rolling Strategic Plan initiated in 2001 (Makerere University, 2001):

*The objective of gender mainstreaming in Makerere University is to integrate gender equality concerns into teaching and learning, research, governance, and administration, outreach, student and staff welfare, public space, data management and the organisational culture. In this connection, the gender mainstreaming strategy for Makerere University means that resources, opportunities and benefits from the University function shall be equally distributed. It is essential; therefore, that equality and equity concerns guide the analyses and formulation of policies and programmes. The participation of women as decision-makers in determining priorities is a key strategy in the mainstreaming process. The process will therefore enable women to become part of the mainstream of the function of the University. It will ultimately call for changes in the system and structures to allow for increased visibility of women in all areas of the University.*⁴

The Makerere University gender mainstreaming programme has evolved, one step leading to another, and this, in many ways, has made it a more complex process than it would be if it was composed of a long term systematic plan in its initial phases. The highlights of this process include the admission of women students and staff in 1945. This was indeed a land mark, and a great leaf forward, for the institutional mandate and organizational culture of the time reflected in the College Motto of “*Let Us Be Men!*” The organizational culture in existence then was exemplified by the fact that the six women who were admitted had to be carefully observed.

Although they could study with male students, they had special classes, in social studies, the aim being to guide them in etiquette and related issues. The second stage relates to the introduction of affirmative action in favour of women, termed the 1.5 Points Scheme for Undergraduate Female Students, since 1990. Under this scheme, each eligible female candidates receives a bonus of 1.5 points added to their score gained through the Advanced Secondary School examination which is the basis of direct entry to the University (Makerere University, 2004a). Points respond to the level of performance, and constitute a significant determinant in accessing study programmes of one’s choice and government sponsorship to such programmes. The main criticism labeled against this scheme is that it ignores the root cause of imbalances (for both genders and within the women group) that derive from the lower levels of the educational system, that is, the wider considerations of an all-inclusive educational system. Such an affirmative action programme ignores the fact that female students are not a homogeneous group and this “blanket-cover” approach creates different inequalities.⁵ This is in line with observations made by Hankivsky (2004) and Walby (2004) that gender mainstreaming ignores other forms of inequality — hence the debate to unearth the pros and cons of gender mainstreaming as opposed to diversity mainstreaming.

The Female Scholarship Initiative (FSI) for undergraduate students (2001)⁶ was launched. At the time of writing, almost 600 students had benefited from this scholarship with more than half the students drawn from the science-based disciplines. This scholarship fund aims at filling the gaps realized under the 1.5 Points Scheme, through addressing the rural/urban divide, the varying socio-economic levels of the applicants, as well as the under-representation of women students in science. In addition a scholarship fund for female diploma holders in science related fields has been established (2004) in order to tap professional women at the field level.⁷ At the graduate level, the scholarship intervention is weaker numerically and in frequency although the Swedish Agency for International Development (SIDA) runs a specific component for females for PhD and Masters’ studies. This supplements the general scholarship available from various sources under the University Staff Development Programme which demonstrates gender consciousness in the award process.⁸

Within the same period, the Department of Women and Gender Studies was established (1991). This runs both undergraduate and graduate programmes as well as short courses and outreach programmes. The creation of

the Department came into force after protracted lobbying and canvassing by promoters of gender equity (women activist groups and individuals). Although the above initiatives do not strictly fall within the general gender mainstreaming framework and some were indeed instituted long before the concept was popularized, they are part of the evolutionary process — a process aimed at gender inclusiveness.

Another important step is the establishment of the Senate Gender Mainstreaming Committee in 1999.⁹ In 2001 the Gender Mainstreaming Programme was approved by the University Senate and Council, the two supreme organs of the University. Soon after, the inclusion of gender mainstreaming as one of the six priority areas in the Makerere University Strategic Plan¹⁰ cemented the process. This plan spells out the gender mainstreaming concept applied, recognizes existing imbalances, and re-affirms the goals of the GMP under the various strategic objectives within the plan (including the teaching and learning arena, research, consulting services, outreach programmes of the University, governance and management, staff and student welfare, infrastructural development, and ensuring that there will be an equal opportunity mechanism). For administrative purposes, the establishment of the Gender Mainstreaming Division — the secretariat which implements the programme was created in 2002 as part of the Department of the Academic Registrar, and operates as a full unit under the guidance of the Senate Committee on Gender Mainstreaming. The Division is spearheaded by a core of gender experts and there is a lot of outsourcing for selected tasks, mainly because of the heavy workload in these initial stages.¹¹ Due to the multiple activities run simultaneously, staff are over-stretched and periodic outsourcing ensures adherence to time frames.¹²

While these structures were being formalized, gender oriented programmes within other University units, both academic and non academic are taking place.¹³ New programmes and innovations are continually devised (Makerere University, 2004b). Of late, the University Council has agreed to allocate a portion of student registration fees towards sustaining the GMP.

The route which the GMP has so far taken demonstrates that there is flexibility and adjustments can easily be made to fill gaps as they arise, especially in specific areas. However, the fact that the bigger picture was not taken into account at inception (such as when the affirmative action programme became effective), means that at times, corrective decisions have to be made to fill such gaps, in retrospect. For example, detailed research to ascertain the gender terrain (situation analysis) was

only undertaken in 2004, long after the programme was put in place. Some activities would have been conducted differently or at different times if this vital information was available at programme conception.

An important feature of the Makerere GMP is its dual approach — the academic arm which is aimed at fulfilling the core mandate of the University (creation and dissemination of knowledge, and the institutional transformation component, aimed at making Makerere an all-inclusive, people-oriented gender sensitive organization). Needless to state, these interventions many times overlap in terms of activities and from the perspective of the actors.

The activities undertaken under the GMP cut across the function of the University, including curriculum development and management, policy formation (e.g. anti-sexual harassment, and production of guidelines for engendering university documents), among other. They also reflect the need to fill gaps as they arise, as reflected in situation analysis and review of affirmative action programmes studies. Creation of awareness, through training workshops, multi-media and publications (e.g. newsletters and promotional materials), gender analysis workshops for staff and students at all levels, and establishment of focal points in key units are all important. Documentation (e.g. Gender Concept Handbook), and capacity building for staff is to ensure that the university community operates with a common understanding of concepts and practices. There are many advocacy related activities, which take account of the sensitive nature of gender mainstreaming as has been pointed out by various scholars and practitioners (Rao & Kelleher, 2005; Razavi & Miller, 1995).

Accomplishments: what is visible?

In line with the aim of the article, assessment of whether any gains have been made through the application of the GM strategy will be derived in ascertaining any visible accomplishments. As a process, the GMP still has a long way to go, but the promise on which this programme was conceived takes account of the local saying that despite its very slow pace the earthworm eventually reaches the well to quench its thirst. Any step made in the right direction is a relief and is equally appreciated.

Legitimacy

This is a key aspect in gender studies. For gender mainstreaming to take root across the board, in all subunits of the entire university function, legitimacy is

essential. In the case study under review, the GMP derives this sanction from its official approval through key organs of the University, and key working documents such as the Strategic Plan, as well as the operational channel through the work of the Senate Committee on Gender Mainstreaming.

Visibility

Studies in gender and institutional change emphasize the need to make such interventions “visible” (Goetz, 1995, 1997; Rai, 2001; United Nations, 1996a). This enhances acceptance and adaption and identification with the programme. It provides the necessary clout. Visibility in the Makerere version is reflected through numbers as well as other forms. Over 500 men and 400 women have been trained in gender awareness and analysis and they have in turn contributed to the ways in which the GMP can be enhanced, such as the identification of the need to produce a locally-grown Gender Concepts Handbook. The student community has embraced the programme, probably faster than staff — through formation of the Gender Students Association and through the proactive nature of student gender peer trainers who are trained annually. Although numbers do not reflect full success of the GMP, the gender gap has greatly narrowed in student enrolment, particularly at the undergraduate level, where the female percentage has risen from 20% to 43% since 1990. This visible increase shows “tangible” results and contributes to awareness of the need for gender parity, and to some extent, the acceptance of these positive notions. Affirmative action programmes have greatly contributed to increased enrolment of female students, although the general expansion in access relates to other additional factors too.¹⁴

Acceptance

One of most teasing aspects of gender oriented interventions (academic and/or non academic) is how to get them accepted by the institution as a whole — the actors at different levels. How does one “see” evidence of such acceptance? In the case study institution, there is evidence of rising interest from many units of the University, reflected in periodic approaches to the Gender Mainstreaming Division (GMD) for assistance in effecting change in different units, and increased numbers of staff seeking to offer services to the Division. There is rising consciousness about good gender practices, in formal meetings and informal communication, and in terms of decision-making, such

as appointments to committees. Access to scholarships related resources reflect the gender perspective (author’s personal experience through participation of key university meetings such as Staff Development Committee, Senate and Council). GMP practice has been adopted by other interventions, for instance, donors who are not involved in GMP now require the Division to assess gender sensitivity of proposals for their particular funding.

Policy formulation and implementation

The legitimization of the GMP in university documents per se does not necessarily ensure implementation and policies to operationalise the “global” provision become important. Such gains include the adoption of the Anti Sexual Harassment Policy and Regulations, the review and production of guidelines to ensure good practices, and affirmative action programmes.

Relevancy

Once the institution and its community start to appreciate the rationale for a specific component of the change process, this opens up the door wider and faster. Applicability will be questioned less and less and the road to real and lasting transformation is clearer. The debate about gender studies constituting a discipline (which we discuss further later), calls for a demonstration of relevancy amongst the various stakeholders (decision-makers, staff, student community, employers and the wider public). In this case, the study applies the relevancy factor to the Department of Women and Gender Studies, created in 1991. This unit has had great impact on the general life of the University. Over 100 students (men and women) have been trained in gender studies at Masters level, and over 1000 at the undergraduate level where they combine Gender and Development with other subjects. Ten members of the staff have over the decade completed Phd studies. A series of short courses on gender have been run and these have attracted students to the longer term programmes (such as Gender and Management, Incorporating Gender into the Project Management Cycle, Gender in Health Management and Gender Budgeting), as well as tailor-made gender courses for specific institutions. Indeed, the GMP derives from the strong foundation of the Academic Department where the whole idea of transforming the University was born and nurtured — the decisive moment being the running of a gender training workshop for top management (1998)

where a decision was taken to institute a Senate Committee to address gender mainstreaming.

Evidence of gender-inclusiveness

Application of the gender mainstreaming strategy is partly demonstrated by bringing on board the under-represented group, enabling them to take part in decision-making and ensuring that they are truly part of the change process. At Makerere University, and mainly through the gender mainstreaming process, women are beginning to be accepted as decision-makers. There are now 6 women Deans or Deputy Deans, a big step forward from an occasional one such official). A similar number of Heads of Department has been registered. Two women (Deputy Vice-Chancellor and University Librarian) have recently joined the top executive of the university (termed Central Executive) in 2005.

Impact/influence beyond the institution

Interventions and transformatory changes should go beyond the immediate home ground. Indeed in academic terms, there is usually the need to have that global/international appeal, recognition, acceptance or applicability to other similar bodies. The GMP at Makerere University has had an impact on related national issues. For example, gender inclusiveness is now one of the check lists for a good University as assessed by the National Council for Higher Education which accredits such institutions. This is as a result of the influence of the Makerere University GMP. Government agencies and civil society organizations often involve staff of the GMP in their activities. For example the Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, on her own initiative, offered to work with the Division towards accommodation for women students. The GMP regularly hosts outsiders who wish to share experiences (Kenya, Ethiopia, Tanzania, South Africa, Commonwealth Secretariat, etc).

Challenges: no smooth path to gender mainstreaming

The road to gender equity and equality is long, as the study of feminism has so far demonstrated. This path has at times led to more challenges as adjustments are made along the way, as highlighted in this section.

Structural challenges: policy framework

In order for the strategy to take root official sanction is required. The Makerere GMP came into being without

an agreed systematic university gender policy to guide the programme and to make actors accountable. An operational framework would have put in place guidelines, rules, regulations, non-compliance measures, etc. In the initial process decisions were taken in an ad hoc manner — evolving as need arose. Decisions were also made at Council and Senate levels, but without a real blue print. Some of the effects of this top-down mode of operation point to lack of ownership of the GMP by the general university community, as confirmed through an extensively conducted situation analysis (Makerere University, 2004c). Even at the activity level, most attention was paid to the top hierarchy, as it was deemed essential to bring decision makers on board and work towards their acceptance of these interventions. Because of this approach, the lower units – faculties, institutes and departments – were unable to participate in the initial stages, except through representation by their “heads”. Promotion of the programme and dissemination of its content at the lower levels have had to be vigorously undertaken later. The process is still ongoing as this is a big community — over 40,000 students and over 1000 staff.¹⁵ The lesson is that consideration of a policy at the outset presents more opportunities for success — once the policy is agreed. But if the institution presents a lot of resistance, the “piece by piece” approach may provide a breakthrough as was the case at Makerere, where any opportunity presented to initiate change was seized.

Autonomy versus integration

The debate between *autonomy* versus *integration*, or *separation* versus *ghettoisation* is significant. The argument is normality that if such interventions are fully institutionalised in units, there is the danger of isolation and therefore marginalisation and ineffectiveness and not being taken seriously. On the other hand, the *integrationist* or *inclusion approach* is aimed at counteracting dangers of autonomy for relatively new and perhaps not wholly accepted disciplines. There is fear of becoming *invisible* and being easily *muzzled* up. There is the possibility that only a few courses or concepts will be appended to the mainstream discipline, thus losing track of the initial objective — to transform the whole discourse of knowledge and knowledge production. Some studies have focused on the middle path, described as the “double track policy”. This demands more time personnel, energy and knowledge (Jansen, 1996). It seems more sustainable compared to the intergrationist approach that may depend on the presence of interested individuals (Ahikire, 1994; Arat,

1996; Bonnin, 1996; Henriquez, 1996; Levin, 1996; Musoke, 1992; Mwaka, 1996; Pedersen, 1996; Prah, 1996). At some stage, it may be necessary to avoid placing “one leg here and the other there”, thus failing to take strides ahead.

As expected, this debate has consumed a lot of time and thought within the GMP roadmap. Should gender or women studies constitute fully fledged units or should they run as cross-cutting programmes without necessarily creating physical departments? In the Makerere University case, the Department of Women and Gender Studies has so far operated successfully as one of the Departments of the Faculty of Social Sciences. This has helped to keep it as part of the mainstream, through its involvement in all faculty matters. It has to some extent, overcome the dangers of ghettoisation, mainly because it became dynamic and has grown continuously. At the same time, it has been necessary to review its coverage because gender as cross-cutting issue should ideally be mainstreamed across the disciplines. The challenge for the Department, from the beginning was how to reach to other departments so that its programme does not remain isolated and “gender sidestreamed” (Charlesworth, 2005:1). Attempts have been made to overcome this through the undergraduate programme in which the Gender and Development course is one of the subjects of a student’s choice which can be offered to a student along with another discipline. The extension to students in other disciplines fills the gaps arising from an exclusive gender or women’s studies programme and subsequently numbers involved are larger as students come from the other disciplines. Other interventions have included joint research with colleagues from other units; staff of the Department teaching in other departments, research competitions where only staff from other departments can take part, thus servicing other units. However, this is not sustainable in such a big institution and therefore there is always an inadequate supply of gender experts.

Similarly the decision to house GMP in the Academic Registrar’s Department relates to this debate. While some decision-makers assumed that this would be part of the Women and Gender Studies Department, others reasoned that the wider university community would view this in isolation, and in relation to that Department rather than to the whole institution. The division has had to take particular care in order to fit in the regular registry type of unit. Awareness workshops have initiated them into the programme and some, especially heads of units opened the way and key volunteers come through this path.

Gender/women's studies as a discipline

A fundamental issue has been whether Women/Gender Studies constitute the discipline, in the traditional sense — a body knowledge. This partly determines the strategy of incorporating such studies into the courses such as history, education, politics or literature. It has also not always been automatic process to secure full academic tenured positions. This in some cases initiated alternative courses offered as “summer” courses, options or in a series of seminars and workshops that are not credited (Bonnin, 1996; Levin, 1996; Pedersen, 1996). The diversity of different forms of gender studies illustrates that debate is still live.¹⁶ The Department of Women and Gender Studies periodically faces this questioning. An example is the eventual fate of the Department in the ongoing restructuring of the humanities component of the University.¹⁷

Epistemological issues

Still pose a challenge. Some still regard the GMP as women’s issue and believe that women should spearhead the GMP and the academic concerns. There is still the belief, in some quarters, that being a woman turns one into a gender expert.

Actors/change agents

Institutional change requires interested and committed actors or change agents. In the case study, the genesis of this programme was through gender activism, as opposed to academic initiatives. This gives rise to the debate about the relationship between gender/women’s studies and the women’s movement. The 1970s saw the establishment of women’s/gender studies as a response to demands from the women’s movement (Howe, 1997). Should the two keep close ties, the theory practice? Which should feed into the other? Or should they not simply be inter-related? Which route gives sustainability and the desired momentum (Howe, 1997)?

The establishment of the Women and Gender Studies Department and the GMP derive from women’s activism.¹⁸ To some extent, this gave less value to a change process based in an academic setting. In addition, individual interest and commitment while essential tends to lead to “personalization”. The University community has tended, at times, to view this programme as belonging to a few activists. From the finding of the Situation Analysis carried out in 2004, it is clear that this presents a challenge of “ownership” of the GMP and ways and means have to be found to ensure that this is seen as a community programme.

Another challenge related to the actors is the question as to how far the decision-makers, beyond the implementers, are *committed* to this change. Gender awareness has actually been carried out amongst Heads of Departments, Deans of Faculties and top executives. Apart from the frequent staff turnover, an additional challenge is the commitment to translate what has been agreed in meetings into action. The experience so far is that while a few of these have been converted to the cause and act as expected, many still have to be persuaded, reminded if not coerced into accepting change.

Sustainability issue

In gender studies, and in women's activism as a whole, there is always the worry on how to sustain change, and in particular how to avoid a backlash. Feminist literature focuses on the different "waves" and the fact that some periods of abeyance do occur. How can such experiences be avoided in the case of gender mainstreaming? In particular, the facilitation of the whole process is very important, in terms of the committed cadre, financial and other related resources. The GMP and the Female Scholarship are donor-funded. What happens after the agreed period for funding? Are students able to continue from where they have been dropped? Efforts at ensuring the future have already achieved something. It has already been decided, that beginning with 2006/2007 academic year a portion of the student registration fee will be set aside for gender mainstreaming and female scholarship initiatives — a good beginning, although this will be less than the donor-supported fund.

Another form of sustainability relates to personal — in terms of numbers and expertise to perform the function. Perhaps a more important issue is the need to keep the fire burning so that the foundation laid leads to completion of the walls, roofing and the entire house. The potential danger is reflected in the fact that the GMP has enjoyed a core cadre who push it forward as and when necessary. How can the advocacy strategy be sustained? Although it is important to get the programme wholly owned by the community, there has to be a critical mass of people who believe in its usefulness, and who want to see it succeed. The challenge therefore is how to periodically inject that required stimulant to ensure that the process of change does not stall.¹⁹

In relation to the above, the gains so far made have often occurred after intensive lobbying of those "who matter".²⁰ Lobbying is constantly required to get documents approved, to expedite the approval of special

contracts in order to keep to deadlines of the programme, to the extent that this can be termed "begging" to overcome bureaucratic resistance. Experience has shown that there is still a challenge to translate what is on paper into action. Some highlights in what has happened so far are illustrative of this. In 1999, the University Senate followed up the idea of the workshop to create a Committee to follow up recommendations. The Committee did not take off until 2000, mainly because some felt they had no interest or expertise to carry out this responsibility. The University freely agreed to have the GMP fully represented on the drafting group for the Five-Year Strategic Plan. Once this was done and the document read as a "gender-sellable" document, the authorities thought it unnecessary to keep this representation during the subsequent annual reviews of this rolling plan. The justification was that gender representation would be realized at unit level and that the synchronizing team would not need that support. However, as the research on the gender terrain found (Makerere University, 2004c), even those unit plans generally lack the gender component.

Attitudinal change

The fundamental challenge for everyone is how to stimulate attitudinal change to embrace new approaches, especially at a personal level. There is a reasonable number of male staff who have confessed to being "converted" at personal and family levels.²¹ Makerere's experience therefore is that one needs personal commitment, as an actor in the gender mainstreaming process, in order to marry theory with practice. This implies that the attitudes and stereotyping arising out of the socialization process have been re-oriented by the individual. Alas, there are still many more instances where individuals demonstrate that personal commitment is important. For example, in 2003, one of the writers received an anonymous call from a group of students detailing the unbecoming classroom interaction with one of the lecturers. Their complaint was that this lecturer uses women whenever he has negative illustration to emphasise his point, such as the concept of diminishing returns in economics. Students wanted the writer to warn him (which she did) because they were planning to "give him a lesson themselves".

Enabling factors: applicability of the gender mainstreaming strategy

The gender mainstreaming process at Makerere has provided a learning arena for many of the actors involved

as it started in a “fragmented” form with the birth of one idea, followed by campaigns to get it implemented, and subsequent blocks added to the original ones. One key learning issue is that in gender mainstreaming, the *moment of opportunity is vital*. Whenever such a chance presents itself, action should be taken. For instance, in response to public outcry, an anti sexual harassment policy and regulations had to be formulated and approved even before the wider framework of a gender policy is in place, because awaiting the latter would delay such a development — a development where the environment was ripe for change. A lot of reports on sexual harassment and “marks for sex” appear frequently in national newspapers and the GMP saw fit to act fast.

Similarly, when “allies” within management come out they should be fully utilized. The staff of the GMD and members of the Senate GMP Committee, for instance, recall, with appreciation the role played by one of the Deputy Vice-Chancellors who provided solutions whenever they were stuck. At a personal level, he was always ready to guide others at meetings in the proper use of gender sensitive language. He equally assisted in redirecting debates whenever the GMP faced resistance. In this connection, therefore, lobbying, advocacy and “persuasion” have helped to translate action from “paper”.

Other like-minded persons include a core group in the Faculty of Agriculture who over recent years have engineered the process of gendering the curriculum of the Faculty, training lectures in better pedagogical approaches, training students beyond the classroom, to impart gender analysis skills and getting all this approved by the entire Faculty and the University. A similar group has accomplished this within the extension unit of the Veterinary Medicine programme. These, and many other individuals and groups in units, who have devised gender oriented courses at departmental levels help to strengthen the programme.

The GMP operators have also learned that it is vital to make information easily accessible to the university community, in a non-strenuous mode, in order to increase their gender awareness levels, which will lead to their appreciation of its relevance. Newsletters, public lectures, seminars, workshops, and related training are important in this case.

Promotional materials, such as t-shirts, cups, with informative but also “catchy” messages are important. Visibility of the programme is enhanced and more and more members of the community get interested.

Provision of factual data is vital. Dissemination of research findings and presentation of gender disaggregated data reinforces such interventions. This has an impact on the decision-makers and the general public in

order to overcome the frequent excuse that “women are not available”.

The balance sheet: conclusion

This article has demonstrated that gender mainstreaming as a strategy to transform an institution is possible and that Makerere University has moved forward in this direction. It has also shown that although many positive steps have been taken and there is evidence of some change, this is only laying the grounds for change and a lot of effort is still needed to make this sustainable. In order to relate this to the wider context, the concept and theories surrounding gender mainstreaming are reviewed in as far as they reveal what would constitute the balance sheet for Makerere University.

The Makerere University approach to gender mainstreaming: agenda setting or integrationist?

Razavi and Miller (1995), Walby (2004) and Charlesworth (2005) amongst others, make a distinction between agenda setting and integration; where the former aims at transforming the institution as women’s concerns are addressed, while the latter integrates women’s concerns within existing structures. Agenda setting relates to the definition prescribed to in the case study. However, the assessment so far illustrates that change has yet to be applied to the function of the University. There is some progress in making the community aware of the need for gender equity and equality. Some units are already taken on board, but many others are not as is illustrated by the status of curriculum change in only a handful of units. While some aspects of staff and student welfare and related aspects of organizational culture are being unearthed and addressed. This is only at the very initial stage (for instance the Anti-Sexual Harassment Policy is yet to be effectively applied). The much needed University Gender Policy to ensure accountability is yet to be formulated. Until these are effected, the approach will remain integrationist (e.g. affirmative action programmes) as they are yet to be tackled along with the negative effects of organizational or societal culture.

One explanation to the approach so far taken is the fact that the GMP has evolved over time and change effected partly because of national and international events. For example the intervention to increase the enrolment of undergraduate female students without a study to transform the institution is reflected in their continued under-representation in science as illustrated in [Table 1](#). Transformation would consider the elimination of

Table 1
Comparative statistics for B.SC and B.A. arts: assessment of the 1.5 points scheme

Academic year	Program	Programs	
	SCI (%)	ASS (%)	ARS (%)
1996/97	20	35	39
1997/98	18	40	36
1998/99	17	40	44
1999/2000	20	44	44
2000/2001	20	46	47
2001/2002	20	44	42
2002/2003	18	51	54

Source: Makerere University (2005a).

underlying factors (at the lower levels of education and within the University).

The Situation Analysis study (2004) highlighted that gender roles and women's "double burden" in addition to the gender blind research policies still affect women at the postgraduate level, in particular. In relation to male students, they face more obstacles in completing programmes on time. Research focusing on gender issues is still limited, and gender is yet to be effectively translated into the university research policy. Donor agencies (such as the Carnegie Corporation of New York) insist on the minimum of 30% female of recipients of the schemes they support but female numbers are still low.

Relatively less work has been carried out in the field of governance and administration, which is a key component of the programme. Women represent 23% of the staff base, while men account for 77% (refer to Table 2). There is a larger representation of women in the lower cadres (clerks, messengers, cleaners). There are a reasonable number of women in the middle cadre, but not at the top. Inroads into this direction are still very much required since this will constitute the bulk of the required changed agents.

Gender blind policies still pertain and the welfare aspect of the university has yet to be tackled. Inadequate support systems in terms of student and staff welfare (such as accommodation, feeding, recreation, etc.) indicate that priority has not been placed on the "well-being" of the community. Housing is inadequate, and the governing regulations are open to discrimination. Women, for example occupy 15% of the available housing. Security is still a challenge with many unlit or poorly lit corners of the campus. Theft and rape cases are periodically reported.

This evidence goes to show that although an entry has been made into the institution, more vigorous ways of ensuring transformation have to be undertaken. A

comprehensive University Gender Policy — a wider framework than the current Gender Mainstreaming Programme is essential.

Organisational culture

Organisational culture is emphasized as one of the areas of institutional concern — to be addressed through the GMP. As Mills study of British Airways (2002) illustrated, this presents a "useful theoretical lens through which to explore gender discrimination at work..." (Mills, 2002 p.303). Again, Goetz (1997) and Rao and Kelleher (2005) show, there is a need to change the rules of the game both stated and unstated. The latter point to the need to change women's and men's individual consciousness, women's access to resources, informal norms and exclusionary practices as well as formal institutional laws and policies so as to attain a complete systematic change. Evidence on the ground shows that this has not been systematically addressed in the case study. There is still a need to "convince" some actors that gender mainstreaming is relevant in their programmes and units. Less is expected of women students and staff in terms of academic performance, and as leaders. The electoral colleges or the student governing body restricts the participation of female students (according to Halls of Residences — which are fewer for women — although enrollment is now at 43%). The process of electing the Vice-Chancellor and Deputy Vice-Chancellors (2004) demonstrated that the community was willing to "risk" the deputy level for a woman but not the very top executive position. This was observed at the Senate and Council levels (the electoral colleges for this purpose), where stringent measures were taken to eliminate such female applicants. It was openly discussed (though not formally) by some Council and Senate members that Makerere University was not ready for a female Vice-Chancellor (personal experience and observation of the process).

Level of challenges

Makerere University has not yet overcome the challenges that are normally predicted by the Gender

Table 2
Academic staff by gender

	Prof. (%)	Ass.prof (%)	Sen.lec (%)	Lec (%)	Ass.le (%)	TAs (%)
Male	93	91	71	70	58	71
Female	7	9	29	30	42	29

Source: Makerere University (2004d).

Mainstreaming Strategy. Translation of commitment into action is still a problem as there is still need to lobby, advocate and persuade decision-makers. Until the Gender Policy is put in place to ensure measurable indicators, monitoring will still be a challenge. Charlesworth (2005) and Walby (2004) warn against sustained resistance and the case study has demonstrated that this has yet to be overcome. Rao and Kelleher (2005) point to the need for clarity of the challenge and this can be envisaged if a comprehensive policy is in place. Our case study shows that there is still need to address these issues. The Situation Analysis study (Makerere University, 2004c) illustrated that many members of the community still require the basics of gender awareness. There is still need to train more gender “experts” to ensure the smooth running of the programme.

Gender mainstreaming versus diversity mainstreaming

Hankivsky (2004) highlights the fact that gender mainstreaming overlooks other forms of inequalities. In the Makerere study, this has been illustrated through the Affirmative Action Programme where the rural/urban divide is not addressed and yet it constitutes a serious form of exclusion. Although the University has an affirmative action programme for people with disability who are accorded some additional points at the admission level, the two programmes are run separately and the latter has not received similar attention (for review) and is less visible. Other forms of exclusion would include students from war torn areas and hard-to-reach areas (both national issues).

Some feminists regard the gender mainstreaming strategy as limiting (Walby, 2004; Hankivsky, 2004) as indicated above. This view was also echoed at various round tables during the Beijing +10 Women’s Conference in New York (March 2005 personal observation). The concern was that gender mainstreaming was “marginalizing” women’s issues, with the excuse that gender is a cross-cutting issue, and therefore women-specific interventions were being ignored. These debates confirm according to Booth and Booth and Bennett (as cited by Walby, 2004) that ‘equal treatment perspective’, the ‘women’s perspective’ and the ‘gender perspective’ should be taken as components of a ‘three-legged stool’ (Walby, 2004:p. 9). In this connection, the Makerere University approach touches on each of these perspectives, but without making this formal. In some ways, the gender mainstreaming strategy has shown inclinations towards some marginalization of women’s issues, especially with regard to the proposed administrative restructuring of the university and formation of colleges. In short, this is still a delicate situation in terms

of women’s issues. Gender in the Makerere context is more “sellable” and acceptable and the situation needs to be observed carefully.

Organisational mandate and ideology

Organisational mandate and ideology have been pointed out as key to the success of institutionalizing WID/gender concerns (Razavi & Miller, 1995). Makerere University has always been “an exclusive club” in terms of its staff and students (Kwesiga, 2002). Until 1995 when its gates were opened to privately sponsored students, only a regulated number of students were admitted. Diversity mainstreaming was never a policy issue. Prior to the late 1980s, students received free education, including pocket money. When the state could no longer afford to do this, some half-hearted ill-conceived policy to provide work for “needy students” was put in place but only lasted a few years. The current institutional mission statement does not include equity — and in fact efforts to include it were resisted during the planning process (2001). This creates a gap in the application of gender mainstreaming. It is for this reason that government has since 2005 “coerced” Makerere to put aside a few places as district quotas to ensure that some districts whose schools do not perform so well should not be perpetually eliminated from government scholarship. It is therefore no wonder that though the GMP is well funded — the take off stage took so long.

In conclusion, although the gender mainstreaming process at Makerere University has taken off, there are key issues to resolve. The transformation of the entire institution will take some time. Rao and Kelleher (2005) argue that transformation of gender relations requires access to and control over material and symbolic resources. How does this apply to women and men at Makerere University? Statistics show that this is yet to be achieved. It is always motivating to celebrate the few achievements made and Makerere University should be commended for taking these bold steps to work towards institutional transformation. The immediate requirement is how to ensure that this remains a dynamic programme and that more and more innovations get embedded in the system to ensure sustainability.

Endnotes

¹ The statistics in the article were collected during the course of the two-year research project on gender equity in higher education, with Makerere University as a case study. Research assistants were commissioned to gather the data, especially the type which required compiling directly from institutional files (e.g. on staffing, student

enrolment, etc). In most cases, the raw material had to be processed further for meaningful interpretation and publication purposes. Part of the data was obtained from University documents on special occasions, such as donor meetings, training seminars and workshops, and from annual reports of various units of the university.

² The lead researcher, Joy Kwesiga has been Head of the Department of Women and Gender Studies, founding Head of the Gender Mainstreaming Division and served in other senior positions at Makerere University, including that of Deanship of the Faculty of Social Sciences.

³ Top management includes the Vice-Chancellor and two deputies, University Secretary, Academic Registrar, Dean of Students, Director of Planning and Development, Librarian, Dean of Students and Bursar.

⁴ There are similarities with the ECOSOC parameters.

⁵ There is a clear rural–urban divide in the Ugandan context—rural institutions have poorer facilities, in terms of educational support, parents are poorer and cannot therefore pay higher rates of school fees which would in turn improve the quality of the school. Rural-based girls then face additional discrimination, mainly deriving from less value placed on the girl child. As a result of this complex situation, affirmative action helps those girls from urban and better socio-economic families to access free university education which is awarded according to merit, based on one examination, although the opportunities are not equitably accessed. Consequently, more girls from better facilitated schools access state funding by virtue of their higher scores.

⁶ This 10-Year Scheme is currently supported by The Carnegie Corporation of New York.

⁷ Sida/SAREC agreed to sponsor some female staff members studying at Makerere University (Masters and Ph.D). The Carnegie Corporation of New York agreed to offer scholarship to practicing female extension workers in the field — to work towards eliminating the gender disparity in science.

⁸ The Makerere University Staff Development Programme sponsors its serving staff for further studies at various levels (undergraduate, Masters, Ph.D. studies, attendance at conferences, etc). In addition, the University has a group of donors who are currently supporting the University in this form — such as Sida/SAREC, The Carnegie Corporation of New York, NORAD, and The Rockefeller Foundation. It is agreed that at least 30% of such awards should go to women.

⁹ This was passed at 110th Meeting of Senate, 7th January 1999, although effective work started way in the year 2000.

¹⁰ Other priority areas are Information Communication and Technology; Library Services; Science and Technology, environment and nature conservation; good governance and human rights.

¹¹ There are six full time senior staff with formal gender expertise. The division is headed by an experienced gender expert with managerial skills. The latter's minimum rank is that of Associate Professor. The group is supported by lower cadre staff (secretary, messenger, data entry assistants, etc.).

¹² Examples of outsourcing include the hiring of consultants to spearhead the process of producing an Anti-Sexual Harassment Policy, the writing of a Gender Concepts Handbook and the review of university documents and production of guidelines for gender-sensitive language in the various documents.

¹³ There are many courses on gender within the various programmes in the humanities (law, development studies, refuge and human rights, and various social sciences programmes both at undergraduate and graduate levels.

¹⁴ For a long time, Makerere University student enrolment was determined by the numbers that the state could afford to assist. Since 1995, the University opened up to the entry of privately sponsored students — widening access so much so that this new group constitutes

over three-quarters of the total student body. It is also important to note that affirmative action (additional 1.5 Points Scheme) is applied to this group too — thus aiding female students further.

¹⁵ At the end of 2005, there were over 10,100 members of staff, of whom only about 300 were female. The figure constantly changes (recruitment, resignations, retirement, etc.).

¹⁶ There are full-fledged centres, such as the Gender Institute at the University of Cape Town, South Africa. This does not make awards but provides facilities and guidance to students of gender and Women's Studies; full-fledged University Departments, offering teaching, research, and publications, such as the Departments of Women and Gender Studies at Makerere University; a University programme with components of WS in various university departments; the coordinator may be housed in one of the participants' departments, with no permanent secretariat (typical in North America and Western Europe). Thus course units offered within established disciplines; in effect, as a network; A separate research programme within a Research Centre (Turkey and Norway (Arat, 1996; Pedersen, 1996). Gender/Women's Studies oriented courses, and research projects within a Development Institute (Ghana, University of Cape Town or Institute of Development Studies (IDS), Sussex; some courses are not necessarily housed in universities. African Women's Development and Communications Network (FEMMET) based in Kenya, develops gender training materials, and publishes philosophical and general conscientisation documents relating to gender. There many other such national and regional organisations in Africa and elsewhere.

¹⁷ Due to the rapid expansion of the institution in terms of student numbers, it has been suggested to develop related faculties into colleges. From time to time, suggestions are made that the Department should be dissolved into a network so that all units may benefit from this process in order to make gender mainstreaming real, as it is argued that this is a cross-cutting issue that must be made so in reality.

¹⁸ Women's rights activists who were members of associations, and many of whom were Makerere University staff pushed for the marketing of the establishment of the Department at a donors' conference in 1987. This was eventually taken up. The GMP was partly achieved through activists — lobbying, advocating, persuading, etc.

¹⁹ As is the practice of the Born-again Christians who periodically hold "morale-boosting" conventions, so does GMP require so that there is continuity and the pace of the journey is not curtailed.

²⁰ The two top positions recently taken up by women did not just occur because they applied. A lot of pressure and networking by a group of interested individuals was exerted to enable the University Council accept that of the three positions advertised in 2004 (Vice-Chancellor and two Deputies), at least one of them should be taken up by a woman.

²¹ Personal encounters. The lead researcher for this article has been at the leadership level of the GMP since the idea was conceived in 1998 when she was then Head of the Department of Women and Gender Studies. She had the privilege of becoming the founding Head of the Gender Mainstreaming Division until early 2005 when she left the services of Makerere University.

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