

8. ANALYSING THE NEED FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A CENTRE FOR IMPROVING TEACHING AND LEARNING EFFECTIVENESS AMONG THE ACADEMIC STAFF OF MAKERERE UNIVERSITY*

Introduction

It might be argued that a book of cases for administrator training need not include cases relating to aspects of teaching and learning since these rest in the world of the academic and, by tradition, are remote from administration. Apart from the fact that an increasing number of academic administrators - heads of departments and deans - are becoming aware of the need to seek administrative skills there are two other strong reasons for the inclusion of this case. The first is that effective administrators have an overview of the university. Its goals and purposes must be understood and shared by them. The second is that nothing happens without planning and without resource allocation, and herein lies the administrator's function. If he does not know or have concern for what is taking place in the teaching departments, he, as an administrator, is less than fully competent. The writer of this case raises pertinent topics both with regard to the purposes of academic staff development and to its organisation within universities.

The Case Study

The purpose of the case study presented in this paper is to analyse and consider the possible ways in which Makerere University academic staff could be assisted to improve their teaching and learning effectiveness. Although no study has been made to gauge the performance of Makerere academic staff in their day to day teaching, it is a well-established fact that most of them have had no orientation whatsoever to a career in teaching. With no concrete data as a base, it is difficult to establish that Makerere University staff would benefit from an orientation in teaching/learning techniques. However, based on findings elsewhere on the need for improving university teaching, and on the writer's own experiences in the Makerere University context, an attempt will be made in this paper to establish that a teaching and learning improvement centre would greatly improve the teaching performance of the academic staff. Where possible, examples and illustrations using some available data, will be given in arguing the case.

The case study will be divided into five basic parts: 1. the historical background of Makerere University; 2. establishing the rationale or need for the centre; 3. what the centre itself would be; 4. how the decision to establish the centre would be reached, and 5. the implications of such a centre to Makerere University.

* Prepared by Martin Rutangye, Makerere University. This case study was prepared for discussion purposes in September 1981. It is not intended to show effective or ineffective management.

1. Historical Background

The history of Makerere as a centre for higher learning goes back to at least the year 1922 when the former technical school on Makerere Hill became Makerere College with the incorporation of the medical courses at Mengo and the institution of agricultural, engineering, veterinary and teacher training courses. All instructors at the time were drawn from public service departments. For example engineering courses were taught by the Works Department technician and the head of the Lands and Survey Department. Right from the early days, Makerere does not seem to have had any professionally qualified teachers. On the eve of the Second World War, Makerere had evolved into an independent and international institution providing a variety of courses in the arts, science and various other disciplines.

Special Relationship with London

The war, of course, had its inevitable setbacks for Makerere but by 1945 a report of the Asquith Commission on Higher Education in the Colonies (set up by the British Government) was published and this paved the way to Makerere becoming, in November 1949, an institution of university status with the establishment of a "Special Relationship" between Makerere and the University of London. Through this relationship, which had also been established between London and other British Colonies in Africa, Makerere began to offer degree courses leading to the general degrees of the University of London. At this time Makerere relied heavily on Britain to provide the academic staff.

The Three Phases in Staffing Policy

The Makerere University Staffing Policy has undergone three basic phases since its inception as a centre for higher learning. The first phase was the expatriate phase. This was a staffing policy whereby Africans were regarded as incapable of developing to the level of academic intellectuals and hence were completely excluded from holding any university teaching posts. It may be true that in the beginning most Africans had not progressed to that level but as late as 1962, when Uganda gained its independence from Britain, Africans could only hold research assistantships in the university departments. One department, for example, had three doctorate holders working as research assistants while the head of department had a mere bachelors degree from Britain.

After independence the Africans in Makerere appealed to the newly formed Parliament. Parliament resolved to start the policy of East Africanisation of Makerere staff. Makerere at this time was still serving the three East African countries, Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania. Although the other two countries had started their own university colleges, Makerere had a higher reputation. The competition for teaching jobs in Makerere University was more acute than in its two counterparts because most Africans preferred to teach in Makerere which was better established.

By 1970 the three university colleges of East Africa, Makerere in

IMPROVING TEACHING

Uganda, Nairobi in Kenya, and Dar es Salaam in Tanzania broke up and each college became a full-fledged university in its own right. Makerere then adopted a staffing policy of Ugandanisation. Makerere had by this time adopted a staff development scheme whereby Ugandans who performed well in their first degrees were retained by the University, attached to a relevant department for one year and then sent out or registered locally for a second degree. After the second degree these Ugandans were appointed as full-time staff members thus gradually replacing the expatriate teachers. These events are summarised in the following table:

TABLE 1

ACADEMIC YEAR	TOTAL STUDENT ENROLMENT	NO. OF APPROVED POSTS	STUDENT/STAFF RATIO	NO. OF EXPATRIATES (other than African)	NO. OF AFRICANS (other than Ugandans)	NO. OF UGANDANS
1960-61	912	136	6.7	128	6	2
1965-66	1237	220	5.6	176	17	27
1970-71	2712	353	7.6	202	17	134
1975-76	3721	539(340)*	7.0/10.9	82	22	236
1979-80	3978	625(303)*	6.3/13.1	38	2	263

* No. of Posts filled

Source: Makerere University Report - Donor's Conference at Lake Como, Bellagio, Italy, 13-17 April 1980

From the figures it can be seen that the number of Ugandan lecturers in Makerere was growing by 1970. However, when Idi Amin's military regime came to power in 1971 Makerere saw an exodus of its staff, both expatriate and Ugandans, out of the country. Thus the period between 1971-79 was a time of decline and stagnation for Makerere University. According to Makerere University Institute for Social Research (MISR) Survey, about 196 Ugandan lecturers had left the country by 1977.

Makerere is now in the post-Amin era - a period that requires the reconstruction and the rehabilitation of Makerere. It is a period when Makerere University staff have to try to catch up with their colleagues abroad in research, new developments in their academic fields and also in new teaching and learning techniques. This is an area that has been neglected throughout the phase outlined above. But as the Vice-Chancellor pointed out at the Como Conference, Makerere is now in a period of sorting itself out. One feels inclined to agree with him in his call to all friends of Makerere:

"...to participate in the task of defining a new role and vision for Makerere in African development; for today Makerere stands at the cross roads".(1)

One of the new paths Makerere must define is how to increase its teachers' effectiveness in teaching. The paper will now turn to why it is felt that this need is strong enough to deserve attention amongst Makerere's many pressing problems at the moment.

2. The Rationale for the Centre

Looking back at the history of Makerere it is worth noting that Makerere has never had any orientation courses to equip its teachers with any teaching skills. Teaching skill has not been a prerequisite for appointment, remuneration or promotion. The current requirement to be appointed to a full time teaching post is a minimum qualification of a second degree in one's area of specialisation. There is a strong conviction amongst academics at Makerere that once one obtained a master's or doctorate degree, then one is quite capable of teaching that discipline to others. This view is not confined to Makerere alone. Richardson writing on American lecturers notes that, for example

"...there is much that is good to be said of the School. The individual who passes its courses and receives its highest honours is fairly sure to be competent in his command of the subject-matter of his speciality".(2)

However, Richardson goes on to argue that command of the subject is not enough guarantee that the graduate will be able to teach the subject to others. This view is strongly objected to by a UNESCO publication on "Planning the Development of Universities" which points out that:

"The quality of teaching is thought to be determined by the qualifications of the teaching staff - but this does not necessarily guarantee a high level of teaching if, for example, too much time is spent on research and there is little contact with students ... the assumption that a teacher can teach at the same academic/research level is questionable".(3)

IMPROVING TEACHING

One could therefore argue that a good mastery of one's discipline is not a guarantee that the holder will communicate the knowledge to his students. It is hence necessary to equip Makerere teachers with at least some basic skills that will enable them to train the nation's manpower more effectively. Makerere University is the sole supply of the nation's highly-trained manpower. According to the Uganda Ministry of Planning and Economic Development Report for example, Makerere produced 7,000 graduates between the years 1972-79. These helped to fill the posts of expatriates and Ugandans who had left the country. The training of such people cannot be left to the trial and error methods described by Stanton: a university teacher

"...typically embarks on a teaching career with little or no technical training in pedagogy, the task to which he will devote most of his life. If he is sensitive of his failing he will spend much of his career in bumbling trial and error, seeking the pedagogical password".(4)

If one accepts the above arguments then it becomes clear that the quality of a university lecturer's teaching ability cannot be left to chance. This is more so in a country like Uganda with only one university where the teachers are few, student numbers large, resources limited and the output of high quality graduates badly needed for the country's manpower.

Several other arguments seem to stress this need for a centre to improve teaching effectiveness. One factor is that most of the experienced academic staff left the country during the military regime. Most of these were expatriates, but also included were a good number of Ugandans. According to the Institute of Social Research figures, for example, Makerere had lost 16 professors, eight associate professors, 35 senior lecturers and 137 lecturers making a total of 196 experienced Ugandan staff. The establishment is now full of young inexperienced lecturers who could benefit from the teaching skills centre.

Another factor is that the methods of teaching and assessment currently used lack creativity and efficiency. The lecture method is the commonest method used for every teaching session; examinations and course work the major assessment methods. Many other methods of teaching and assessment have been successful elsewhere and could be tried in Makerere too.

On top of these poor teaching and assessment methods are the student enrolments. These have increased in number. According to Table 1, the teacher/student ratio has risen from 7.6 in 1970-71 to 13.1 in 1979-80. This is a staggering number for staff who have not been equipped with skills needed for handling students. More pressing still is that student expectations in Makerere have changed. The Vice-Chancellor noted for example, that,

"on their part, students wish to launch community-based programmes that will take them out of the physical walls of the university".(5)

Thus it seems to be clear that Makerere University staff will find themselves continually under pressure from students, Government, the University and the community to be more accountable for their products. They will have to find ways of satisfying a new clientele of students. Students no longer, in the true African tradition, respect somebody because of his age and take his word as gospel truth. Students now openly question the efficiency and integrity of a lecturer. A new sense of militancy against poor quality teaching is now an emerging phenomena in Makerere. For example, in the 1978-79 academic year two lecturers were rejected by the students. One was transferred to administration and another confined to research. In 1979-80 three academic members of expatriate staff from Pakistan, two in the faculty of law and one in economics, were rejected by students on grounds of poor teaching performance. The university had to cancel their contracts and paid heavy compensation. The time is now ripe for Makerere to think of ways of improving the teaching quality of its staff as it reorganises the rest of the university activities. The need to train Makerere staff, therefore, cannot be overstressed. This can be summed up in the light of this UNESCO recommendation on "Planning the Development of Universities":

"The above suggestions show the necessity for Teaching Staff to go beyond the mere teaching of their subjects and that they should know more about the psychology of their students, methods of learning, the place and role of University education in society, the theory and practice of curriculum planning, the theory and practice of teaching/learning process and that consequently universities should consider providing not only scientific training for their future teachers, but also professional educational training".(6)

3. Nature of the Centre

It is not the purpose of this paper to deal with the activities of the proposed centre in detail. Rather, an attempt will be made to outline the objectives of the centre, the possible activities the centre could offer and how the programme would be evaluated. To analyse what the role of the centre would be one needs to ask oneself these two basic questions:

- a) Why should a teacher be trained?
- b) What are the qualities a good teacher should display? - in other words - in what should a teacher be trained?

The answers to both questions will give us the basis for deciding on what a centre should offer to Makerere teachers.

a) Why should a teacher be trained?

Perhaps one of the best answers is given by Pullias and Lockhart. Writing in the early sixties Pullias and Lockhart first acknowledge that there is some truism in the old cliché that "a teacher is born, not made". They argue that some individual traits that shape one's art or style of teaching may

IMPROVING TEACHING

be inborn. But then there is the scientific aspect of teaching. This involves the acquisition of knowledge in one's subject, the psychology of the learner and the teacher himself, and the various skills in the communication process(7). There are certain skills which an aspirant in teaching should acquire if he is to make a successful teacher.

b) What are the qualities of a good teacher?

Pullias and Lockhart argue that the role of a good teacher is that of "a guide on a fascinating journey of learning". The average Makerere teacher does not regard himself as a guide but as a consultant, all knowing and as "the dispenser" of secrets the student should know. The lectures are normally read out from an old file and afterwards the teacher walks out. There is very little effort to have contact with the students who are expected to sit and listen obediently asking for clarification only here and there. However, if one accepts Pullias's argument that a teacher is a guide then it is necessary to examine the qualities a teacher should have. Thaman outlines five characteristics of a good teacher; he should,

- (i) have a high level of intellectual and physical energy with which to approach instructional tasks;
- (ii) have a mature, up-to-date knowledge of his subject;
- (iii) understand the psychology of the learner; his learning problems, learning capacity, his motivation and interests;
- (iv) be well informed about specific structural techniques and materials in his field, and have the skills to use these with his students;
- (v) be dedicated to improving his skills as a university instructor.(8)

In their study in America to find out what students viewed as the characteristics of a good teacher, Gaff and Wilson came out with similar conclusions, namely: a thorough knowledge of the subject, skill in presentation, friendly relationship with the students, and enthusiasm.(9)

A Makerere teacher should be able to depict those qualities. One can make an assumption that the teachers have no problem with the mastery of their disciplines. Indeed, according to the 1980 teaching staff list in Makerere one can notice the following data.

- (i) By the end of 1979 Makerere had about 330 teachers. (It is possible that some were special assistants who were not considered as full-time, official members of the establishment). The Academic Registrar reports only 303 teachers.
- (ii) Out of 330 teachers, 106 held doctorate degrees.(10)
- (iii) About 186 held master's degrees.

- (iv) The remaining 34 just had the first degree. (These were perhaps the special assistants who were not full staff members). It can therefore be seen that more than 80 per cent of Makerere's academic staff had higher degrees in their fields of specialisation. If good quality teaching depended on knowledge of the subject then Makerere would have no teaching quality problems. However, to cite the examples given earlier of five cases of members of staff who have been forced out by the student militancy, four had doctorate degrees, and one a master's degree. Two of them were associate professors.
- (v) Out of 330 total teaching staff, only 26 had a formal teaching qualification, either certificate, diploma or degree in education. Fourteen out of the 26 teachers with a professional teaching qualification were in the faculty of education and eight were in the National Institute of Education. Another two out of 26 were in the Centre for Continuing Education.

It can be argued from the above data that Makerere has no professional teachers. The 6 per cent of the total academic staff establishment with some form of professional qualification are engaged in areas of teacher education. Since there are no orientation courses, workshops, seminars or conferences organised by Makerere to improve teacher education, one can conclude that the University has neglected this field of staff development. There are many complaints from students, and external examiners who come in at the end of each year to mark student papers, about poorly organised courses, badly set questions, poor standard of marking etc. All these shortcomings could be ironed out by the centre.

Objectives

The objectives of the centre would therefore be, in brief, to:

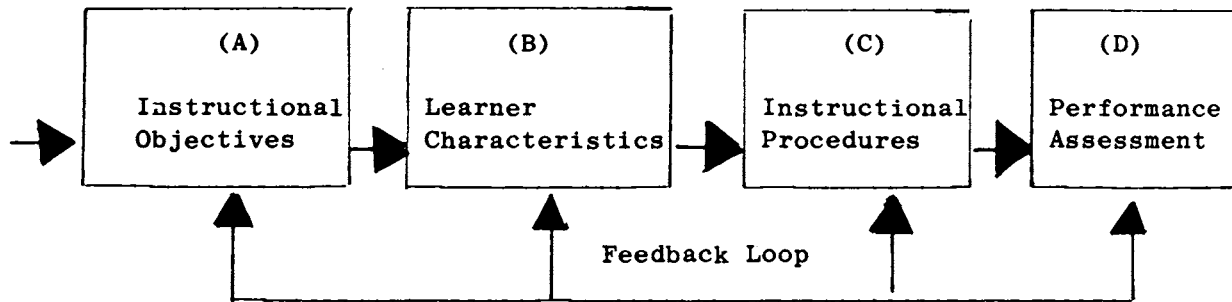
- (i) improve the quality of teaching amongst the academic staff by demonstrating exemplary performance;
- (ii) organise workshops, conferences and seminars on teaching improvement;
- (iii) invite specialists to advise and help staff in improving their teaching;
- (iv) act as a consultant to staff who need help in teaching methods, use of teaching materials, student assessment and course design;
- (v) innovate and research new ways in which university teaching in Makerere could be improved.

What the Centre would Offer

It is assumed that staff will acquire the following qualities outside the centre: knowledge of subject of specialisation, research methods and administrative techniques. The centre would then offer skills in course development, teaching methods, use of instructional materials and evaluation skills

IMPROVING TEACHING

of how to evaluate student performance, as well as the performance of the member of staff himself. These skills are summarised by Stanton in a simple systems model:



Feedback Nature of Systems and Priorities Involved in Instructional Process

(Source: Stanton, 1970, p.29)

The nature of the courses would take three forms:

- (i) orientation courses for all new staff on teaching methods;
- (ii) inservice courses for all staff in the form of seminars, conferences, study leave, workshops, organised both at departmental and university level or outside;
- (iii) non-compulsory award courses, part-time, leading to some form of professional qualification in education.

4. Decision Making Process

To discuss the process of reaching a positive decision on establishing the centre one needs to assess the strong circumstances both in favour of and against such a decision. It is important to identify the forces against such a decision.

(a) Resistance from Academics

In its report, UNESCO pointed out that,

"Universities must produce students who are not so much educated as educable. This requires a revolution in our teaching methods and not only has this change not taken place but it is being resisted".(11)

The report goes on to point out two possible causes of resistance namely, old academics who are conservative in their approach, and those who believe and concentrate on their discipline rather than learn how to teach it. These are fundamental sources of resistance in Makerere. The old academics argue that "they have been at it" for years and know what they are doing. The "discipline diehards" argue that mastery of the discipline is a guarantee to teaching it well. The other source of resistance would be time. Arguably, the required establishment is estimated to be 625 teaching staff but only 303 vacancies are filled. The student/teacher ratio which is supposed to be 1:6.3 is more than double at 1:13.1. This means staff do twice as much work to keep the University going.(12)

However a stronger argument is economic instability. According to Makerere Institute of Research figures, there had been an increase in price in a family's weekly shopping by a factor of 17.31 between 1971 and 1977. This factor is likely to have doubled by 1981. The academic staff cannot support their families. Thus, they use most of their spare time to look for alternative sources of money to make ends meet. Some have part-time teaching jobs, some use their cars as taxis in the evenings and some work on their land to produce cheaper food. Thus, these social-economic burdens might increase the resistance of staff to taking on any extra hours of study unless it is made worth the trouble.

(b) Political-Economic

Makerere is mainly financed by the Government. Thus, most of the funds to finance the centre have to be requested from the Government. The Government is suffering from political and economic tension and is not likely to react favourably to any suggestions and innovations that are likely to cause tension amongst university staff and cost the Government money.

At the same time, Council, which is the sole decision making body of the University, is not likely to endorse a decision that is going to antagonise staff and look an expensive request to the Government.

However, there are some strong factors pressing for this change which might favour a positive decision.

- (i) Students: After eight years of political oppression of the students, the change in government has brought to the students a new spirit of freedom. Accompanied by this freedom is a sense of "academic militancy". The students are demanding better methods of presentation, assessment, better designed courses and more say and representation on the major decision making bodies of the University. There have been many boycotts of poor quality lecturers. The University and the Government are now under pressure to re-examine the quality of the courses they are offering and the lecturers they employ to teach them.

IMPROVING TEACHING

- (ii) The Vice-Chancellor has been committed to the improvement of teaching quality. He has been constantly urging heads of departments to try and enforce quality teaching and take it into account when recommending promotions and study leave. At the Donor's Conference at Lake Como, he stressed this need and persuaded interested parties to give money to Makerere specifically for improving teaching quality.
- (iii) Financing: Some overseas donors have ear-marked money to improve the quality of teaching in Makerere. At the Como Conference for example, Dr David Cook of the Carnegie Corporation of New York had this to say:

"The Corporation was willing to offer on this occasion US\$30,000.00 divided into two parts - one part at the disposal and discretion of the Vice-Chancellor in meeting various emergencies, and the second part to assist towards the creation of a centre for the improvement of teaching and learning in the University. There was also an outstanding grant for Teacher Training and the Corporation would have no objection to proposals to convert this towards the repair and improvement of the Audio-Visual Centre in Education". (13)

It therefore appears that the idea of the centre is already on the drawing board but at the time of writing there was no indication as to what stage it had reached. It is a viable proposition and is likely to get a lot of financial support from outside. It would be up to the planners of the centre to look for ways of inducing staff to pick up the tempo of the occasion so that in rehabilitating knowledge of their disciplines they could also include teaching competence.

5. Implications for Makerere

There is some considerable evidence that universities in many countries like the USA, Britain and Australia are looking more towards the improvement of teaching amongst their academics. Makerere University has to wake up to this reality as it emerges from its eight-year period of stagnation. The time is ripe enough to start innovative ventures that will not only improve academic staff knowledge but also their teaching/learning quality. In the light of the socio-economic and political problems facing the University and the nation as a whole one might consider the following implications quite practicable for Makerere:

- a) Makerere is beginning to recruit new staff to increase the number from 303 to the required 625. The teaching ability of applicants should be considered among other qualities when recruiting.

- b) The new staff should get some orientation course in teaching and especially in dealing with the specific type of students they are going to teach.
- c) Makerere staff are very "political" in outlook and need political manipulation. For example the Vice-Chancellor could convince deans and council to appreciate the importance of the centre. If it is university policy that all staff get some training, the move will be more successful than appealing to staff on rational grounds.
- d) During this period of economic problems, the Government could give inducement to the staff by allowing them, say, an extra two increments on completion of a part-time teaching qualification. The academic staff are always proud to have an extra title in front of their names. Thus, if a range of optional programmes are given and some extra remuneration given, professional qualification awards are likely to be more popular with staff than mere orientation or short courses.
- e) Makerere is at the moment recruiting expatriate staff to relieve the regular staff of the extra burdens until Ugandans who left the country return. Some of these expatriates could be experts and consultants in teacher education who could help train other Ugandans who will manage the centre in the long run.
- f) Finally, some overseas donors are anxious to see Makerere improve the teaching quality of their academic staff. Some initial funds have been made available for a teacher improvement centre. Makerere must dance to the tune and add to this initiative to make the centre a viable investment.

One can therefore conclude, that in spite of the many problems Makerere is facing, the reality of the need to improve teacher effectiveness has dawned. Makerere cannot postpone this need for ever and the centre will have to come into being soon. With careful planning, there is large potential for an effective and viable centre to emerge on Makerere Hill.

REFERENCES

1. The Proceedings of the International Donors' Conference on the Reconstruction and Rehabilitation of Makerere University, held at Lake Como, Bellagio, Italy, 13-17 April 1980 (Makerere University, 1980).
2. Richardson, Leon Burr, "Training for College Teachers 1930" in Journal of Higher Education, Vol. 50, 1979.
3. UNESCO, Planning the Development of Universities, 1974, p. 7.
4. Stanton, H E, "An Instructional Model for the University Lecture in Journal of Higher Education, Vol. 4, 1970-72.
5. The Proceedings of the International Donors Conference, op cit, p. 7.
6. Planning the Development of Universities, op cit.
7. Pullias and Lockhart, Toward Excellence in Teaching (1963).
8. Thaman, 1977, p. 25.
9. Gaff and Wilson, 1978, p. 102.
10. Commonwealth Universities Yearbook (The Association of Commonwealth Universities, 1980).
11. Planning the Development of Universities, op cit.
12. Academic Registrar's Report for The Proceedings of the International Donors Conference, op cit, p. 5.
13. The Proceedings of the International Donors Conference, op cit, p. 119.