Education for national development: The Makerere University dual mode experience

Jessica N. Aguti
Department of Distance Education, Makerere University, Uganda

Abstract
Makerere University is the oldest university in Uganda. Since it started in 1922 as a technical school, Makerere has continued to educate people for national and regional development. However, in the last few decades state funding has decreased although there are more people desiring to join the university. To cope with this challenge, Makerere has adopted a number of strategies including evening and external programmes.

In 1991, to meet the increasing demand for education and to provide the much needed human resource, the External Degree Programme (EDP) was launched with two degree programmes Bachelor of Education and Bachelor of Commerce. Since then the EDP has grown and now includes a Bachelor of Science and a Diploma in Youth Work and Development. The student numbers have also grown from the initial 246 that enrolled to nearly 6,000.

The EDP has benefited because of Makerere’s dual mode status. The programme has been able to utilise existing staff, resources and other capacities for its growth and development. However, because Makerere was set up to provide internal programmes, the systems and structures have not always enhanced full exploitation of the advantages that dual institutions offer distance education programmes.

1.0 BACKGROUND
Makerere University was established in 1922 as a technical school and in 1949 became a University College linked to University of London; then in 1963 became a constituent college of the University of East Africa. Makerere finally achieved its full university status in 1970. It has since grown and transformed itself into a major player in the provision of university education in the region with day, evening and external programmes being offered at its 22 schools, faculties and institutes. The current student population is 30,000 undergraduates and 3,000 postgraduates.

When it was started, Makerere offered only a few courses that were meant to help train blacks to support the colonial government. Over the years the number of courses being offered have grown in variety and student numbers. Today, Makerere has a total of 133 undergraduate programmes and 139 postgraduate programmes. The growth of the courses has been in response to the growing demand for higher education and the University’s desire to train the required human resource vital for national development.

In its effort to meet the growing demand both in-country and regionally; it has recently been an example of a public university that has transformed itself from an institution relying entirely on government subsidies to a university with diverse programmes some that generate income. Makerere now offers day, evening and external programmes.
2.0 MASSIFICATION AND DEMOCRATISATION OF EDUCATION

The Government White Paper on Education acknowledges the role of education in fulfilling the national goals of development, and so the national objectives of education are stated in conformity to these goals (The Republic of Uganda 1992). A number of national policies were therefore put in place to ensure that these national goals and objectives are achieved.

Uganda perceives education as a basic human right for all Ugandan citizens regardless of their social status, physical form, mental ability, sex, birth or place of ethnic origin (The Republic of Uganda 1992:162). However the education system in the country has not provided adequate facilities and opportunities for all the citizens to access education. In an effort therefore to democratise education, government recommended provision of continuous and life-long education. The White Paper recommends that tertiary institutions, especially the universities should expand the activities of their Centres for Continuing Education and Extension work (The Republic of Uganda 1992:183). Dual mode universities like Makerere University were therefore expected to diversify their programmes so as to ensure provision of continuing and extension education. This is increasingly becoming important because the national demand for higher education has steadily grown over the years. For example, in 1962 when Uganda became independent, Uganda had one university, one technical college and one national Teachers College; by 1999 the numbers had grown to 10,500 primary schools and 625 secondary schools and two universities, by 2002 the number of secondary schools had risen to 2,198 while the universities had grown to 14 (Ministry of Education and Sports 1999:5).

However, although the number of universities has grown tremendously, admission figures from the other universities remain low while Makerere remains the largest university with the highest enrolment. Ultimately the total number of places available for higher education is too small compared with the number of school leavers and adults requiring higher education. The growth in school enrolment is partly because of government's efforts to massify and democratise access to education in the country. What remains now is to ensure that higher education is also democratised.

For example, in 2005, 59,329 students presented themselves for the advanced level examinations, out of these 35,172 passed with a minimum of two principal passes which is the required minimum pass for entry into undergraduate programmes in the public universities (Ahimbisibwe & Mugisa 2006). However Makerere University, with the highest intake, admitted only 2,493 on government scholarship and another 13,116 as private fee paying students and 1,309 (7.7% of total admission) as external students. In spite of the enormous increase in enrolment at Makerere, many young people are still left without hope of accessing higher education. This is compounded by the fact that a number of students admitted, as fee-paying students, do not always pay the required fees and ultimately drop out of the university.

The implementation of UPE has boosted school enrolment figures in the primary school system and this is creating a UPE bulge that will demand specific strategies to ensure that the huge number enrolling in primary school will continue to secondary education and later to
tertiary/university education. In 2004, a total of 433,010 students sat the primary leaving examinations, if by 2010 when this cohort is expected to sit for A Level examinations 30% will have dropped out, 303,107 will sit the examinations; if only 50% of these complete and pass the examinations, then in 2011, nearly 150,000 students will be eligible for university education. In 2003 the total admissions to all the universities and tertiary institutions was 108,295 (Ministry of Education and Sports 2005). If therefore these institutions maintain the same capacity, more than 40,000 students will not gain admission into any institution of higher education. To do so would require alternative means of providing higher education. Figure 1 represents this scenario.

Figure 1: Projected Student Numbers Joining Tertiary Education in 2011

2.1 Makerere and Massification of Education
Makerere’s response to this increasing demand for higher education has been through the diversification of its programmes to include evening and external programmes. The introduction of evening programmes was so as to open up access to the working class wishing to study and to increase the number of school leavers admitted; while the introduction of external degrees was so as to provide access to a cross section of clients including adults working and living in the countryside. The impact of all this has been an enormous increase in the students enrolling for programmes in Makerere. Figure 2 gives the growth of student numbers in Makerere since 1991 when the External Degree Programme was introduced. By 1991 Makerere had a total enrolment of 5,597 undergraduate students, by 1999 this number had grown to 16,042, and to 31,302 by 2005 reflecting a 459% increase. This year 2006 Makerere has admitted a total of 17,019 undergraduate students.

This is a clear illustration of Makerere’s attempt at fulfilling the government vision of massifying higher education. However even with this kind of increase, Makerere still needs to find much more effective and efficient ways of expanding access without compromising quality.

Figure 2: Undergraduate Student Numbers in Makerere University 1990 - 2004

Sources:
Admissions office, Makerere University
Makerere University Annual Report

3.0 EXTERNAL DEGREE PROGRAMME

3.1 Objectives
The External Degree Programme (EDP) was launched in 1991 at the then Centre for Continuing Education (CCE) now the Institute of Adult and Continuing Education (IACE) with the following aims in mind:

3.2 Management
Under the EDP scheme, the Department of Distance Education can in collaboration with any
other Department run any programme as a distance education programme. The Department therefore collaborates with the Faculty of Economics and Management in running the Bachelor of Commerce (External); the School of Education for the Bachelor of Education (External) and the Faculty of Science for the Bachelor of Science (External). Under this arrangement, the Department is responsible for the management and administration of the programme while the collaborating faculties are responsible for the teaching functions. However, although this arrangement seems quite plain and clear, it has created some problems. These are discussed later as part of the challenges distance education faces in a dual mode institution.

Programmes
The External Degree Programme was launched with only two courses, Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) and Bachelor of Commerce (B.Com). Since then the Department has introduced two other programmes ♦ Bachelor of Science (BSc) and Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP) Diploma in Youth Work and Development.

3.3 Study Package
The study package for the EDP consists of written study materials, student study groups, face-to-face sessions, assignments and audiocassettes. The study package is therefore a blended package although because of inadequate study materials, the programme is skewed towards heavy reliance on face-to-face sessions.

3.4 Quality Assurance
All programmes offered under the EDP are subject to the University general quality assurance guidelines and mechanisms. This is one way in which Makerere is attempting to achieve parity of esteem for all the programmes. The Academic Registrar oversees the development of programmes, student admission, examinations and academic standards. Also, as far as is practically possible, students sit the same examinations with the internal students as in the case of Bachelor of Commerce, the same external examiners are involved in assessing both the internal and external students; and all programmes employ the same general university examination regulations.

This strategy has helped promote acceptance of the external students in both the university and in the job market. Although again no empirical research has been carried out to establish acceptability of the graduates, anecdotal evidence is available to show that all graduates are employed without discrimination.

4.0 ACHIEVEMENTS

4.1 Enrolment
The Department of Distance Education has helped boost the University intake numbers through its EDP. Since its launch in 1991, the EDP enrolment has grown from 245 registered students in 1991 to currently nearly 6,500 which is almost 30% of the total university enrolment.

Prior to the launching of the B.Ed (External), Makerere University did not have any students for this degree except for students who were studying at the Institute of Teacher Education Kyambogo (ITEK) and registered for this Makerere degree. Even then only about 300 students
were admitted each year. Whilst with the B.Com, each year the university admitted about 60 students, today more than 500 students are admitted each academic year. Also, with the introduction of the EDP, more and more adults are retuning to school as opposed to only 10% that were admitted each year prior to the introduction of both the external and private students scheme. The introduction of the EDP therefore gave Makerere University the opportunity to expand its intake, diversify its clientele, fulfil the nation’s objective of massifying education and provide the much needed human resource for national development.

However, there have been no tracer studies carried out to establish the impact of the EDP graduates the economy. This is an area that requires urgent attention.

4.2 Increased Income for the University
The EDP was the first fee paying degree programme of Makerere University and can therefore be said to have paved the way for the introduction of fee paying programmes in Makerere. This innovation was in the midst of a lot of doubt and scepticism about the feasibility of any University programme levying fees. Till this time, all University programmes received full funding from government. However due to pressures of reconstruction and rebuilding the nation, and the donor conditionalities, government subsidies were shrinking and Makerere was under pressure to find alternative sources of funding. Introduction of fee paying programmes was therefore one way of diversifying funding while at the same time increasing access to the much demanded university education.

4.3 Developing High Quality Materials
As pointed out earlier, the EDP uses a study package that includes written materials, student study group meetings; face-to-face sessions; audiocassettes and radio. Both the external and internal students of the university are using the study materials that have been developed. In so doing the programme has helped address the problem of lack of reading material in the university.

Another related development has been that some of the lecturers who have been trained in the development of distance education materials have gone further and written and produced other books using the skills acquired in these training sessions. This is a huge contribution towards building up capacity in the university staff.

4.4 Strengthened University’s Capacity to Run Distance Education Programmes
After the correspondence courses of the 1960s collapsed, the university lost its capacity to run distance education programmes. However, since the launching of the EDP, the University capacity has grown stronger as evidenced by:

- Establishment of the Department of Distance Education in 1992
- Increase in the number of staff in the Department of Distance Education with some of them undertaking various studies in the field of Distance Education
- As part of the University’s growing confidence in its ability to run distance education programmes, a Bachelor of Science (External) was launched in 2002
The launching of the EDP has certainly helped rejuvenate distance education activities at Makerere University.

5.0 CHALLENGES DISTANCE EDUCATION FACES IN A DUAL MODE INSTITUTION

5.1 Management
All the programmes currently offered are on a collaborative basis involving the teaching faculties and the Department of Distance Education. As earlier mentioned, the responsibilities are shared however, the demarcation into administrative and academic function is not that obvious. The case of the (B.Com External) best illustrates this. At the launch of the programme, B.Com (External) was run in collaboration with the Faculty of Commerce, however when this Faculty became Makerere University Business School (MUBS), there was no clear agreement between the Department of Distance Education and the Business School over what constitutes administrative and what constitutes academic functions and disagreements erupted.

Also, distance education requires specialized skills and management which is not often found in Universities running internal programmes. Introducing distance education therefore brings in new demands creating tensions and pressures that Makerere does not seem to have given adequate thought to. The uniqueness of the Department, its staff, and student population do not seem to have been taken into account. As a result, the Department establishment is as for any other Academic Department with the resultant effect that the Department is under-staffed and there are key positions that are not catered for. Such inadequacies are likely to compromise the quality of the service delivered to students and the quality of the programmes as a whole.

5.2 Funding
As a fee-paying programme, the EDP has for long been classified as an evening programme and has therefore been contributing 41% of its income to the Central Administration of the University. No special arrangement was made for the EDP taking into its uniqueness. As a result, the Department has been dissatisfied with the way this is being handled whilst the Central Administration seems baffled by the Department's position. Clearly this is lack of clear understanding and appreciation of the uniqueness of DE programmes.

This is compounded by the fact that all running costs of the programme with the exception of salaries for some staff is meant to come from fees collected and yet the students pay very low fees. At the time of launching the programme, fees was deliberately kept low so as to open up access to the underprivileged. However, the current fees have been overtaken by inflation and should change. The Department also needs to diversify sources of income.

5.3 The Department's Mandate
Although the proposal to establish the EDP gave the Department the mandate to develop any other programmes in collaboration with other faculties, this mandate seems to be either not well understood or not well appreciated by other departments which now want to independently run distance education programmes and have little or no association with the Department. The major
reason for this is because in all the current programmes, the Department has control of the finances generated which has become a bone of contention.

5.4 Low Enrolment
The enrolment figures for the external programmes in Makerere is still low. Although the current figures appear massive considering the total university population, the full potential of distance education to reach many more students has not been fully exploited. The major handicap is inadequate development of critical systems necessary for the expansion of programmes. For example, student support system is very weak and so there are no effective learning centres in all the major towns in the country. A highly centralised student support system does not reach out to the very persons for which the programme was designed.

5.5 Inadequate study materials development
Written materials were supposed to be the core medium of instruction in this programme. However, the rate of development of the study materials has been extremely slow. A lot of study units have been written but only a few have been published. This seems to be a major handicap of this programme for as it is pointed out,

unfortunately, the EDP still relies heavily on face to face sessions as the major form of support. This is partly because of lack of sufficient study materials which should really be the core of the study package (Department of Distance Education 2001:1).

Any distance education programme that has inadequate learning materials is running the risk of compromising the standard of its programmes. Makerere University is therefore running this risk and should therefore make every effort to address the need for more study materials.

6.0 LESSONS LEARNT
The Makerere University dual mode experience in contributing towards the development of the country provides a number of key lessons that can be learnt.

- Introduction of distance education programmes in a traditional university require careful planning to avoid disenfranchising the students enrolled in these programmes. New systems and structures that cater for the needs of distance learners will need to be put in place.
- Universities intending to become dual mode must also invest in the development of distance education learning materials, structures and systems. It is a fallacy to believe that because a university already has structures and systems these will be sufficient for distance education as well.
- Quality assurance mechanisms employed should help achieve parity of esteem for both the internal and external students
- The opportunity to offer distance education programmes provides opportunity to traditional universities to open up access to university education.
- Dual mode universities can maximise the utilisation of resources since the physical facilities and the academic and non-academic staff can be involved in reaching more students than is permitted in a traditional university.
Distance education offers universities opportunities to reach more people and exploit the changing work and study demands in changing economies.

7.0 CONCLUSION
Makerere University has attempted to address the national demand for higher education and the needs for human resource through the diversification of its programmes by offering day, evening and external programmes. The External Degree Programme in particular has opened up access to hitherto neglected clients and has gone a long way to facilitate the acceptability of distance education in the country and in the job market.

With the increasing demand for higher education in many Sub Saharan Africa distance and open learning are strategies that could be utilised to increase access and promote development. However, since most governments do not have adequate funds to build more new universities, traditional universities can adopt distance education to diversify strategies; but for this to work effectively then the right systems and structures should be put in place.

8.0 REFERENCES

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Figures

Figure 1: Projected Student Numbers Joining Tertiary Education in 2011

![Bar graph showing projected student numbers joining tertiary education in 2011.](image)

- Primary (2004): 433,010
- A' Level (2011): 303,107
- Eligible for Tertiary (2011): 150,000
- Admitted: 108,295

Figure 2: Undergraduate Student Numbers in Makerere University 1990 - 2004

![Bar graph showing undergraduate student numbers in Makerere University from 1990 to 2004.](image)

- 1990/91: 5597
- 1991/92: 5969
- 1996/97: 14612
- 1999/2000: 20366
- 2003/04: 31,302

Note: The x-axis represents the academic year, and the y-axis represents the number of students.