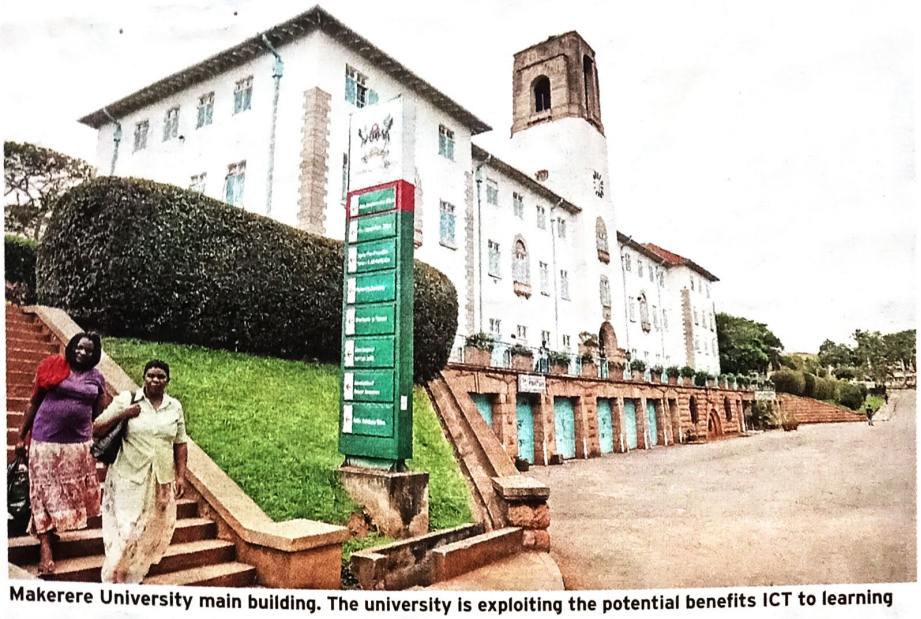
THE UNIVERSITY IS MOVING FROM TEACHER TO STUDENT-CENTRED LEARNING

By Owen Wagabaza



Makerere University main building. The university is exploiting the potential benefits ICT to learning

Makerere introduces online programmes

For years, Makerere University has run traditional distance learning degree programmes since 1991 when the External Degree Programme (EDP) was launched.

Since then, a large number of adults have had opportunities to return to school and acquired degrees, with many of them progressing to master's and PhD programmes.

Dr Jessica Norah Aguti, an associate professor at the Institute of open, distance and e-learning at Makerere University, says in addition to adults returning to school, the EDP also opened access to a larger number of young people accessing university education.

"The EDP has over the years graduated many people in bachelor of education, bachelor of commerce, bachelor of science and bachelor of agriculture and rural innovation. Makerere University has also run a master's programme in public health by distance education since it was launched," she says.

With the advent of increasing access to ICT, Makerere University is now exploiting the potential benefits ICT brings to learning.

"The university is committed to a paradigm shift in teaching by moving from teacher-centred to student-centred teaching as one of the strategies of ensuring the university prepares its graduates to be versatile, open to lifelong learning and ready for the competitive world of work in an ever changing environment," Aguti says.

According to Aguti, Makerere University is strategising to achieve this in several ways including mainstreaming open, distance and e-Learning (ODeL) for increased and more flexible access to higher education.

To provide for the right policy environment, the ODeL policy was approved by the university council in 2015 and the institute was subsequently set up to operationalise the activities.

Aguti says, the major role of the institute is to provide backstopping support services to academic units offering blended programmes and promote the development of blended e-learning (online programmes) in the university.

To achieve this, the institute provides continuous pedagogical training and support to academic staff in course design and development, content development and student support for the development of quality blended learning programme.

The institute also provides for continuous promotion and development of Makerere University e-learning environment for delivery of courses and programmes, provision of robust training and support to all students enrolled on blended programmes as well as the internationalisation of programmes and student enrolment.

"Our conviction as an Institute is that ODeL are the future and Makerere University has positioned itself to take advantage of the potential, "Aguti says.

The Institute of ODeL has introduced four new programmes of which two are online. These include master of instructional design and technology (MIDT) and bachelor of youth development work (BYDW)

● Master of instructional design and technology (MIDT)

MIDT is a cohesive programme of study designed to enhance the knowledge, skills and professional development in instructional design and technology.

The programme focuses on the effective instructional design in online, electronic and distance learning and delivery of teaching using technology.

The programme enhances one's skill in the design and delivery of technology-supported curricula and methods of leading as well as managing in technology-enhanced learning environments.

The programme also orients one to methodologies of educational research, specifically in instructional design and emerging technologies.

MIDT explores current issues impacting curriculum design, pedagogy, andragogy, learners and educational leaders in technology-mediated learning environments.

It explores the theories and processes of instructional design in the development of face-to-face instruction, web-based instruction, and the use of other instructional media.

Students also get to examine the capabilities and constraints of traditional and emergent media.

The MIDT programme seeks to enhance new, emerging technological skills, attitudes and values required in the contemporary world of work.

The target group for the programme include potential and practicing educators, corporate trainers, e-learning personnel and heads-of-department responsible for technology in curriculum implementation, teachers, online designers, government officials and administrators responsible for ICT in education.



Dr Aguti

The comprehensive and multidisciplinary nature of the programme opens it up to multimedia designers, trainers, academics engaged in pre-service and in-service teacher training, researchers, educators in other tertiary institutions, electronic publishers, web developers, online/blended learning specialists, software developers, bankers, business and medical personnel with a training responsibility in their docket.

Also, entrepreneurs interested in setting up consultancies, or Web-based businesses adaptive to the 21st Century authentic learning environments are eligible.

Learning outcomes

At the end of the course, the learners will have acquired knowledge and skills in management, research professional and business career in e-education (m-learning, e-learning, distance education, online education and blended education).

Mode of delivery

This programme shall be delivered using a combination of limited face to face sessions together with home study sessions supported by specially designed online study materials and activities.

● Bachelor of youth development work (BYDW)

BYDW is a multidisciplinary programme that delicately balances social science, psychology, sociology, management and applied science-related courses throughout the programme to achieve a unique blend.

This programme covers community work and development highlighting the national concern with poverty eradication and it includes computer applications and communication skills.

The programme seeks to inculcate a developmental mind-set in the graduates.

The main objective of the programme is to develop professional youth workers who will steer the energies of the masses of youth towards contributing to development in Uganda and the region.

The programme targets individuals and groups such as local government employees that work with youth, employees of NGOs and private sector agencies who specialise in youth-related work, A'level leavers, who wish to enter youth work as professions and diploma and degree holders who are interested in working with the youth or to change profession.

Teaching

The programme will be delivered through blended online distance education. As such, it will be delivered through multiple media.

The programme will blend the use of independent online and offline course study materials, independent study sessions, limited face-to-face tutorials, study groups, e-learning and orchestrated distance learner support services.

● Master of education (early childhood care and education)

The early childhood education (ECE) programme is aimed at meeting the developing professional needs of the early years and childcare workforce for children of 0-6 years. The programme takes a work-based learning approach.

The Education Act 2008 recognises pre-primary as the first level of education intended to prepare children for formal schooling.

However, there is shortage of graduate and post-graduate well trained teachers and trainers to provide quality child care, education and research in early childhood care and education.

The programme will target people who are interested in acquiring advanced knowledge and skills in ECD such as ECE managers, supervisors and advisory teachers, Non-governmental organisation personnel involved in ECD, ECE teacher educators and researchers.

Admission criteria will be bachelor of education either in early childhood development, primary education or even secondary education, but want to specialise in ECD related fields. This is a new programme launched in 2018.

● Master of higher education with specialisation in leadership and management, teaching and learning or research and innovation

This programme is designed to prepare graduates with theoretical and practical knowledge in higher education with a focus on critical issues in the local, regional and global contexts.

It covers higher education foundations, policy, governance, leadership, management, legal and ethical issues, financing, teaching and learning, research, innovations, quality assurance, internationalisation, marketing and the socio-economic dynamics.

The fulfilment of the requirements for the award could be through continuous attendance of the four semesters or through accumulation of credits from any of the module(s) done by a student. It will be offered through flexible delivery approaches such as blended learning supported by self-study materials and activities.

The programme targets current or prospective employees of higher education institutions or the higher education sub-sector such as research co-ordinators, quality assurance officers/directors, teachers/lecturers, leaders, managers, administrators and researchers with scholarly interest in studies on higher education as a field.