A Case Study of Makerere University in Uganda

Hand, Christina L.[a*]

a Touro University California, U.S.A.

*Christina L. Hand: Email: chand@touro.edu
Address: 1310 Club Drive, Mare Island, Vallejo, CA U.S.A.

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Abstract

Higher education in sub-Saharan Africa plays a critical role in meeting local and regional challenges yet still reaches a very small subset of the population. This case study focuses on Makerere University, the flagship university of Uganda, which is striving to make a difference locally and globally. It has survived colonialism, dictatorships, and economic disaster and has become one of the leading universities in Africa. Using the conceptual framework of U.S. land-grant higher education, this study seeks to analyze Makerere across the land-grant domains, focusing on tensions, facilitators, and barriers. The study consisted of interviews representing a diversity of stakeholders, field observation, and numerous documents and articles. Six major themes emerged including Makerere's aspiration to be a research-led institution, the impact of neoliberalism, challenges in undergraduate education, the importance of reputation and saga, the role of the Ugandan government, and the continuing effects of colonialism. These findings are discussed in relationship to the land-grant domains, and conclusions are shared.

La formation universitaire en Afrique subsaharienne joue un rôle essentiel pour relever les défis locaux et régionaux, mais ne touche encore qu'un très petit sous-ensemble de la population. Cette étude de cas se concentre sur l'Université de Makerere, l'université phare de l'Ouganda, qui s'efforce de faire la différence localement et mondialement. Elle a survécu au colonialisme, aux dictatures et au désastre économique et est devenue l'une des principales universités d'Afrique. À l'aide du cadre conceptuel de Land Grant Higher Education aux États-Unis, cette étude cherche à analyser Makerere à travers des Land-Grant domaines, en se concentrant sur les tensions, les facilitateurs et les obstacles. L'étude a consisté en des entretiens représentant une diversité d'acteurs, des observations de terrain et de nombreux documents et articles. Six thèmes majeurs ont émergé, notamment l'aspiration de Makerere à être une institution axée sur la recherche, l'impact du néolibéralisme, les défis d'étude de premier cycle, l'importance de la réputation et de la saga, le rôle du gouvernement ougandais et les effets persistants du colonialisme. Ces résultats sont discutés en relation avec les Land-Grant domaines, et les conclusions sont partagées.

Introduction

This is a case study of Makerere University, the flagship university of Uganda and one of the leading universities in Africa, which has survived British colonialism, two brutal dictatorships, and severe government cutbacks leading to

economic crises. Like other major public universities, Makerere is a complex institution which faces challenges on many fronts. Makerere seeks to be relevant to local and regional issues yet is also intent on competing globally. Makerere emerged victorious from its chaotic past, but the consequences of colonialism, neoliberalism, and privatization remain.

To better understand Makerere University and to focus the study, the conceptual framework of the U.S. land-grant idea is used. The land-grant framework is relevant for the following reasons: 1) It represents public, research-oriented, flagship universities which face struggles similar to those encountered by Makerere University, such as balancing local and global priorities, compensating for decreases in state funding, and ensuring education for the public good; 2) Land-grant higher education emerged during the Civil War and has evolved through political, social class, and economic upheavals, similar to Makerere University's experience; and 3) Land-grant universities have a colonial past as beneficiaries of Native American land, and Makerere University is still dealing with its colonial past.

There is a risk in using a U.S. construct to help understand an African institution, particularly when colonialism is one of the very dangers highlighted in the study. However, to shy away from such a comparison also denies the impact of globalism on higher education and focuses on the differences instead of similarities between higher education in the U.S. and in sub-Saharan Africa. Hudzik and Simon (2012), in fact, discuss the world grant idea, encouraging us to expanding the Morrill Act beyond U.S. boundaries. As with any global comparison, though, care must be taken to understand the specific context of the institution.

While there has been considerable scholarship on land-grant higher education and on higher education in sub-Saharan Africa, including Makerere University (see the literature review below for examples), there has been little research to show how these models might inform each other (Leys, 2018). As is evident in Figure 1, the framework is divided into: 1) land-grant ideals, emphasizing the values underlying the creation of the Morrill Act of 1862; 2) the normative model, focusing on the way in which the model has evolved over the past 160 years; and 3) other informing theories of the sub-Saharan African context, African philosophy, and colonialism. These conceptual framework domains provided a focus for the gathering of data, including the selection of stakeholders for interviews, the creation of the interview questions, the analysis of the data, and the final conclusions.

Figure 1

U.S. Land-Grant Conceptual Framework
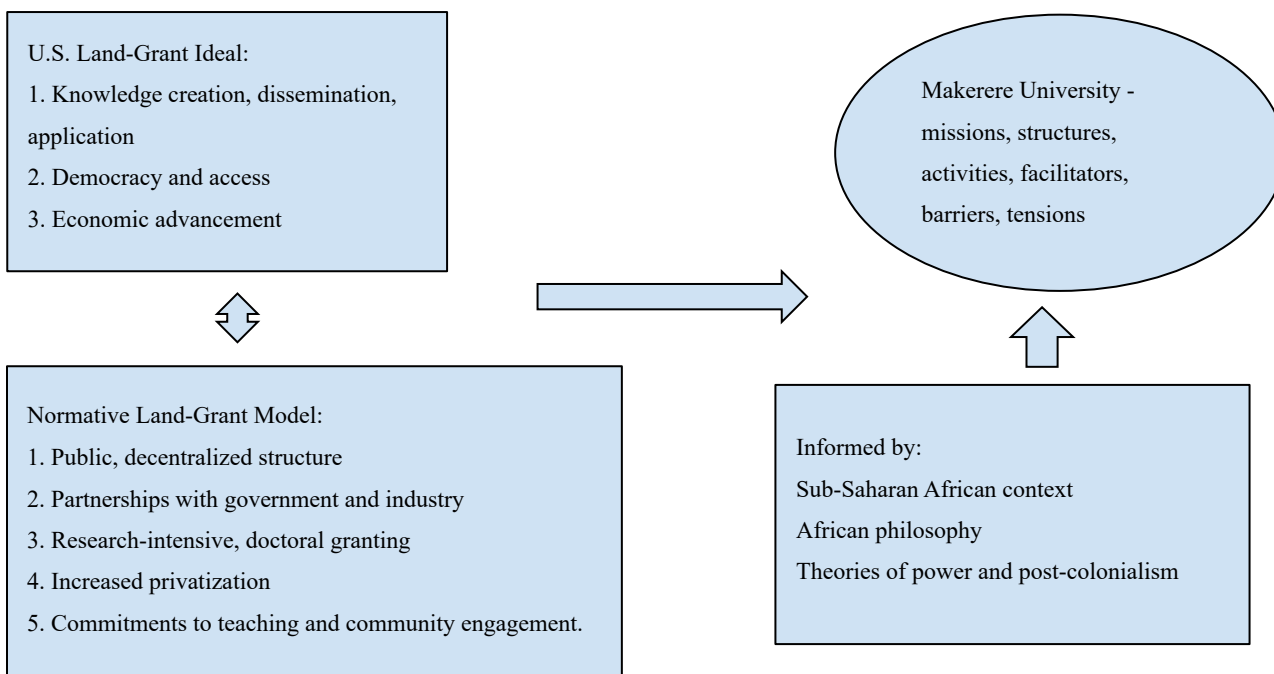
<h1 style="text-align:center">Research Questions</h1>

1. How do the mission, structures, and activities at Makerere University align or diverge across different domains of the land-grant framework?
2. What are the facilitators, barriers, and tensions that affect Makerere University engagement across different domains of the land-grant framework?

<h1 style="text-align:center">Literature Review</h1>

U.S. Land-Grant Higher Education

The Morrill Act, which was signed by Abraham Lincoln on July 2, 1862, gave 30,000 acres of federal land (or land scrip) per congressional representative to each U.S. state for the establishment of a college that would teach the "agricultural and mechanical arts" to the "industrial classes" in order to increase U.S. productivity. While this has been idealized as democratizing higher education and providing access to the rural population, Morrill's intent was economic, to compete with the more research-oriented European universities. This created tensions between vocational interests of farmers who wanted their sons to learn better farming techniques and the emphasis on science-based research which was to be the backbone of these land-grant colleges. Eventually, the vocational mission of the land-grant act was upheld by the Hatch Act of 1887, appropriating federal funds for agricultural experiment stations and the Smith-Lever Act of 1914, creating cooperative extension services at all land-grant colleges (Sorber, 2018).

Clark Kerr referred to land-grant institutions as having evolved into large, public "multiversities" (Furco & Kent, 2021; Marginson, 2016). Most are now major research institutions with a decentralized structure containing numerous departments, research programs, and degrees. Land grant universities now consist of the original universities designated by the 1862 Act, Historically Black Colleges and Universities designated by the 1890 Act, and tribal colleges designated by the 1994 Act (National Institute of Food and Agriculture, 2020).

Public universities, many of them land-grant universities, are responsible for 72% of doctoral degrees in science and engineering as well as 62% of U.S. academic research (Bound et al., 2019; Duderstadt, 2012). Additional legislation, such as the Bayh Dole Act of 1980, allowing universities to patent government-funded inventions, have encouraged partnerships with industry and contributed to the commercialization of research and academic capitalism (Berman, 2012; Slaughter and Rhoades, 2009). Economist Henry Etzkowitz refers to these partnerships as the "Triple Helix" of university-industry-government collaboration (Crow & Debars, 2012, p. 135). As federal and state funding have decreased, the privatization and commercialization of higher education have become even more acute (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2009; Sober, 2020). Even as land-grant institutions have taken on rigorous research agendas, they seek to maintain the commitment to teaching and community engagement. A hallmark of land-grant institutions continues to be Cooperative Extension Services (Gavazzi & Gee, 2018).

Land-grant institutions are only now recognizing their complicity in the tragic past of settler colonialism and the forceful removal of Native Americans from their land (Nash, 2019). The disturbing origins of U.S. land-grant higher education compel us to examine the impact of colonialism on institutions in sub-Saharan African countries, most of which have been independent for only 60 years. Thus, the inclusion of the sub-Saharan African context and the theories of colonialism in the conceptual framework is so critical.

Higher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa

Higher education was not homogenous across sub-Saharan Africa during the colonial era – universities evolved according to the British, French, or Lusophone systems depending on the colonizer. There were, however, the common realities of poverty, disease, colonial control, and lack of access and equality (Bekele & Ofoyuru, 2021). The purpose of higher education during the colonial era was to educate Africans to be better civil servants in the colonial government and to discourage African independent thinking. Higgs (2012) said that "colonialism in Africa provided the framework for the organized subjugation of the cultural, scientific and economic life of many on the African continent" (p. 1). The curriculum

of the colonizing country (particularly Britain or France) was taught, and little was done to incorporate indigenous knowledge or to increase access. Only the elite benefitted from higher education. Cloete and Maassen (2015) assert that at independence the primary purpose of universities transitioned from recruiting the social elites for the colonial governments to recruiting elites for the newly independent governments. They say that "In reality, nowhere on the continent is there a differentiated and massified system; there are only overcrowded elite systems" (p. 6).

The Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs) of the World Bank were particularly disastrous for higher education as they focused on the rate-of-return (ROR) on investments for loans. It was determined that primary education offered a higher return on investment than higher education, resulting in extreme reductions in spending for higher education in the 1980s (Cloete & Maassen, 2015; Collins, 2011; Darvas et al., 2017). However, in the mid-1990s, policymakers and World Bank economists began to see weaknesses in these ROR analyses and concluded that the benefits of higher education included the more nuanced and intangible benefits to society (World Bank, 2000). International recognition of the relevance of higher education in meeting societal challenges is still evolving. The United Nations Millennium Development Goals overlooked higher education altogether, emphasizing only primary education; the Sustainable Development Goals, which took over in 2015, fall short of acknowledging higher education's "rightful role" in reducing poverty but at least advocate "lifelong learning opportunities for all" (Teferra, 2020, p. 1)

Makerere University

Uganda Technical College was established in 1922 on Makerere Hill in Kampala, the largest city in Uganda. It soon changed to Makerere College, a vocational school focusing on medical, veterinary, engineering, agricultural and teacher training for the British East African colonies. It was considered an elite education as students received full scholarships and few were admitted. By 1935, there were only 400 graduates and "nearly all entered the civil service as clerks or medical assistants or became teachers in missionary schools" (Sicherman, 2005, p. 11). The 1950s and 1960s were considered the Glory Years as new infrastructure was built and "students were free to cultivate the life of the mind" (p. 40). Uganda gained independence from Britain on October 9, 1962, and in 1963, Makerere College merged with the Royal Technical College in Nairobi and the University College of Dar es Salaam to become the University of East Africa (Jacob et al, 2009). This lasted only until 1970 when the UEA was separated back into the independent universities of Makerere, Nairobi, and Dar es Salaam. Sicherman (2005) states that the UEA was "doomed by its foreign origins," especially the "very high level of American interest" (p. 72).

Idi Amin became president of Uganda in January 1971 after defeating Milton Obote in a coup. Amin launched his brutal dictatorship which would have a devastating effect on Uganda and on Makerere University. Meredith (2011) states that "Amin's rule had left Uganda ravaged, lawless, and bankrupt with a death toll put at 250,000 people (p. 238). Obote overthrew Amin in 1980, reclaiming power. He ruled with catastrophic brutality until 1985 when he was overthrown again. By then, Makerere University had lost most of its intellectual talent and donor support and was barely functioning (Sicherman, 2005). In 1986, Yowere Musevini became president, a position that he holds to this day. Kyangulanyi (as cited in Sicherman, 2005) described the era of 1986 to 1992 as one of "hardship and hope (p. 127). In addition to recovering from the devastation caused by the dictators, Uganda and Makerere University faced the World Bank's Structural Adjustment Policies of the 1980s, reducing government support of higher education.

Court (1999) describes the dramatic recovery of Makerere in his World Bank publication Financing Higher Education in Africa: Makerere, the Quiet Revolution: "In the past seven years, Makerere had moved from the brink of collapse to the point where it can become one of the preeminent intellectual and capacity building resources in Uganda and the wider region" (p. i). He describes the innovative ways in which Makerere compensated for lack of government support, such as decentralizing management, privately funding students, commercializing university service units, and adding demand-driven degrees (such as nursing and tourism). While Court describes "moving the cathedral" in glowing terms (p. 17), Mamdani (2007) warns against an all-encompassing move to neoliberalism. His book, Scholars in the Marketplace, is a scathing indictment against neoliberal reform, carefully documenting that such a shift changes the purpose of the university from one of public good to that of private good. He attributes the reforms of fee-paying students (privatization), financial

and administrative decentralization, and demand-driven courses (vocationalization) to a decrease in quality and a neoliberal, market focus.

Today Makerere University is the flagship university of Uganda, one of 36 universities, 10 of which are public and 26 private (these numbers vary slightly according to the source). Makerere was founded in 1922 and all the other universities were founded after 1987 except for the public Uganda Management Institute, founded in 1969 (Bisaso, 2017). Until 2000, the university was strictly controlled by the national government; however, the Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act of 2021 gave universities more autonomy. Higher education in Uganda is supervised by the Ministry of Education and Sports and regulated by the National Council for Higher Education. The university is comprised of nine colleges and the School of Law. In 2015, Makerere enrolled 35,995 undergraduate students, 1,994 master's students, and 680 doctoral students (Cloete & Bunting, 2018, p. 239). Makerere fared better than the other Ugandan universities during the COVID pandemic because of continued government and donor support and the development of an online platform. However, the quality of learning and enrollment diminished (Nawangwe et al., 2021). As of 2022, total enrollment was about 35,000 (Civis, n.d.).

Methodology

The case study methodology was used as it enables the researcher to conduct an in-depth analysis of a specific case while maintaining a "holistic and real-world perspective" (Yin, 2018, p. 5). Flyvbjerg (2011) expounds on the value of a case study methodology as the cultivation of context-dependent knowledge, based on" the closeness of the case study to real-life situations and its multiple wealth of details" (p. 303).

The land-grant domains of the conceptual framework were used throughout the study's different phases. The domains informed the type of data to gather, particularly the interviewees needed, guided the design of interview questions and the analysis of the data, and provided a useful comparison for the final conclusions. Without this conceptual framework, the case study would have lacked essential parameters.

Data Gathering

Yin (2018) describes the many varied types of data which can be incorporated into a case study, including interviews, focus groups, documents, archival records, physical artifacts, and observation. This case study used the following sources of data:

- 22 semi-structured interviews with university stakeholders (current students, alumni, university administrators, faculty, staff, and NGO leaders) – most during a two-week field visit in April/May 2022.
- Official documents and legislation (Strategic Plan, Visitation Report, annual reports, USAID report, Makerere Act, Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act, and National Council for Higher Education report)
- University policies and records
- Course syllabi
- Twitter feeds (especially Vice Chancellor) and website articles
- News articles
- Video recordings of events
- Participation in events during field visit in April/May 2022.

Before beginning the data collection process, I underwent a rigorous ethical review process including West Virginia University's Institutional Review Board, Makerere University's School of Social Science Research Ethics Committee (MAKSSREC), and the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST). The process began in March 2021 and concluded in December 2021 with approval of the UNCST. It was complicated by COVID and by the need to interact with Ugandan offices from a distance.

Analysis

The data analysis process primarily followed strategies outlined by Saldaña (2021). Of the 30 first-cycle coding methods that he proposes, In-Vivo and Versus coding were the most useful. In-Vivo coding focuses on the words and phrases in the participant's own language (direct quotes), and Versus coding uses binary terms to describe relationships and phenomena (such as private vs. public students). While the NVivo software was helpful in analyzing Twitter feeds, I found manual coding on printed transcripts followed by analysis using Excel spreadsheets to be the most efficient and illuminating. Spreadsheets allowed me to list codes, categorize according to theme, and then to group these categories into "mega" categories or "categories of categories."

The collection of diverse types of data enabled the triangulation of data which Yin (2018) describes as "converging lines of inquiry" (p. 129). Creswell (2018) also emphasizes the importance of triangulation in ensuring the validity of qualitative research. Additionally, I verified some of the data with a couple follow-up interactions with study participants. Finally, it is important to acknowledge my own positionality in this research: I am a white American woman who had not been to Uganda prior to my field visit in April/May 2022. In the 1990s, I lived for five years in Cameroon and more recently have worked with many graduate students from sub-Saharan Africa, including Ugandan alumni of Makerere University. These relationships inspired me to pursue the study of higher education in sub-Saharan Africa, particularly Makerere University. I recognize, however, that others, particularly Ugandans, may be far better qualified to carry out this research. I look forward to their input.

Results

My findings can be divided into the following six major themes: 1) Research-led institution; 2) Neoliberalism and market influences; 3) Undergraduate education: 4) Reputation and saga; 5) Ugandan government; and 6) Colonialism.

Finding 1: Research-Led Institution

The first goal of Makerere's 2020-2030 Strategic Plan is to "transform Makerere into a research-led university, responding to national, regional and global development challenges, as well contributing to global knowledge generation" (Makerere University, n.d.). The way that Makerere leadership is carrying out this ambitious goal is through partnerships and collaboration with institutions both locally and abroad. The Vice Chancellor signed MOUs with institutions such as Karolinska Institute in Sweden, Gothenburg University in Sweden, University of Padovoa in Italy, Strathmore University in Kenya, Somali National University in Somalia, and University of Pretoria in South Africa. Some of the most significant partnerships are with large foundations including Rockefeller Foundation, Carnegie Foundation, USAID, Sida (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency), and the Norwegian government. Despite the importance of these partnerships, the Vice Chancellor admits the drawbacks saying, "When you're getting funds from these institutions, every institution puts up an advert, and they have their own conditions for the research."

To ensure that research benefits Ugandans, in 2019, the Ugandan government initiated the Research and Innovations Fund (RIF), committing 30 billion Ugandan shillings (UGX) (about 8 million U.S. dollars) per year for three years to Makerere research. The Vice Chancellor said that this has "drastically changed the research environment." This funding encourages cross-disciplinary projects across the university to help address some of the most pressing needs of Uganda.

The purpose of Makerere research is to create a better society. A few of the innovations which have been funded by the RIF include the first public human tissue and biobank in Uganda (College of Health Sciences), recovery of nutrients from pineapple waste (College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences), and the design of an improved cooking stove (College of Natural Sciences). The Resilient Africa Network, originally a USAID-funded network of 20 African universities with its secretariat at Makerere, is also committed to research and innovative solutions to development issues in the categories of health, agriculture, and gender-based violence. A few of these innovations were a malaria diagnostic kit, a pediatric nebulizer, a maize thresher, and a mobile phone platform to report gender-based violence. Similarly, the Regional Universities Forum (RUFORUM), is a partnership of 147 universities in 38 African countries with its secretariat at Makerere. RUFORUM is dedicated to research and innovations in the agricultural sector. One professor in the College of

Agricultural and Environmental Sciences has partnered with RUFORUM on different crop initiatives and laments that farmers aren't getting enough knowledge. He is familiar with land-grant extension services (in fact is an alumnus The Ohio State University, a U.S. land-grant institution) and would like to see a more systematic approach to extension at Makerere. At this point, he says community-based outreach is only "piecemeal."

Finally, the emphasis on research has a great impact on graduate education at Makerere. Makerere leadership and the Ugandan government see Makerere as best positioned among all Uganda's universities to focus on master's and doctoral education. Some scholars have called for eliminating the undergraduate population all together at Makerere in favor of graduate students, indicating that there are many other universities in Uganda prepared to teach undergraduates. Most, however, including the Vice-Chancellor, call for a shift to approximately 60% undergraduate (i.e., 15,000 students) and 40% graduate (i.e., 10,000 students). The 2016 Visitation report also included in its recommendations that "Makerere University should leverage her premier position in the higher education ecosystem to focus on graduate training and research…" (2017, p. 145).

Finding 2: Neoliberalism and Market Influences

David Court (1999) referred to Makerere's dramatic comeback after the years of Uganda's dictatorships as the "quiet revolution" when Makerere "moved from the brink of collapse" (i). Makerere achieved this through market-driven innovation: Admitting private, fee-paying students; contracting out university services; offering demand-driven courses, such as tourism and business administration; and moving to a more decentralized structure. Clark (2004) includes Makerere in his analyses of entrepreneurial universities because of the dramatic transformation. Mamdani (2007), however, views these neoliberal solutions as a direct threat to higher education for the public good and to the university's research agenda.

The Dean of East African Studies of Higher Education and Development described the problem as being not one of privatization but of unregulated privatization. He said, "The Deans would sit together in the committee chaired by the Vice-Chancellor and say, 'Okay, we are coming up with this and this and this. Can we have 300%? People are teaching extra hours in the night.' 'Yes, let's do it – we will give you the money.'" However, when the Universities and Other Tertiaries Act of 2001 passed (which among other things, made the President of Uganda a Visitor and not the Chancellor of the university) and the National Council for Higher Education was formed, better regulatory controls were put into place.

Despite the improvements with increased regulation, neoliberalism continues to negatively impact on students and faculty at Makerere. Most of the student body is now private (they pay tuition) and many have trouble finding the money. One student said "tuition is hard because not everyone is coming from the same background and same life. Some people can afford the tuition in one day, some people take years to afford the same tuition." Another student said, "The bad thing about the university is that they are not patient, especially with tuition." If students don't pay tuition, they are not allowed to sit for the end-of-semester exams. At this point, only STEM students, not social science students, are eligible for government loans. One history lecturer I interviewed sees neoliberalism as the biggest threat to the university, saying "neoliberalism guts public institutions and makes it difficult for there to be a space that scholars can speak without having to market their research."

Much of the discontent has been expressed through both student and faculty strikes. The Ugandan president as the Visitor, ordered a Visitation Committee in 2016 to investigate these "endemic strikes" (The Visitation Committee, 2017, p. 12). Faculty members interviewed, however, said that things have been better recently with the Ugandan government's increased support through the Research and Innovations Fund and commitment to faculty salary raises.

Finding 3: Undergraduate Education

Makerere University experiences significant challenges regarding undergraduate access, critical thinking, adequate resources, and job preparation. This falls at a time when undergraduate education seems to be devalued compared to graduate education. Rather than increasing access, the goal of the university leaders is to decrease undergraduate enrollment in order to focus on graduate students. Tuition is already a significant obstacle for many students. One undergraduate said that

Makerere "doesn't neglect anyone" but, when pressed, admitted that poor students from rural areas don't have the same opportunity as others. In addition, government loans are only open to STEM students.

One lecturer is particularly concerned about the lack of critical thinking. In fact, he and one of his colleagues co-authored a book on critical thinking which they make available to students. He said, "We have to find creative ways to generate critical thought when students feel overwhelmed and just want the answers for the exam." Some of the students he teaches take as many as ten classes at a time to receive their credential more quickly. Most of the final exams are worth 70% of the class, so there is little time to absorb the material; they just want answers. In an analysis of the learning objectives of six course syllabi, only three used verbs consistent with the upper levels of Bloom's Taxonomy (Analyze, Evaluate, and Create).

Inadequate infrastructure and a lack of resources and student support continue to be a challenge. A common complaint was that women make up 51% of the student body but only have three residence halls compared to the six for men. Some infrastructure needs are being met, though. In May 2022, Hon. Janet Museveni, the Minister of Education and Sports and Uganda's First Lady, laid the foundation stones for the new School of Law and the reconstruction of the Main Building, which burned in September 2020, as well as opening two new Central Teaching Facilities and the Dental Hospital. Faculty members provide most of the academic support for students as there are few services. In addition, students rely on small copy centers around campus for course resources rather than texts at the library or purchasing books. One lecturer said, "If we required students to buy a lot of books, we would have fewer students because they are on a very limited budget."

Finally, students have little hope of getting a job after graduation. The Assistant Commissioner said that there is a youth bulge in the country with 75-80% of the population below the age of 30. One of the lecturers said that 80% of Ugandan youth are unemployed. Many students are, therefore, entrepreneurial, looking to "side hustles" or the informal sector. One female student said, "Jobs are very scarce, so for me, I want to be self-employed. I want to sell clothes, shoes, until I get my own money." The university understands the challenge and is trying to facilitate internships for each student as well as incorporating "practicals" into each course to link the world of work with academics.

Finding 4: Reputation and Saga

Burton Clark (1972) discusses saga as a collective understanding of exploits and accomplishments which creates bonds inside and outside the organization. This organizational saga has protected and guided Makerere University throughout decades of upheaval. In 2022, Makerere marked its centenary with numerous Mak@100 celebrations including memorial public lectures, an Alumni Homecoming banquet on campus and other alumni events abroad, Twitter space events online, and a grand finale celebration with President Museveni as the honored guest. In each of these events, individuals important to the history of Makerere were honored, some of whom even gave their lives for the university. Stories were told which reaffirmed Makerere's ability to overcome tragedy and build a thriving institution. The Makerere University Anthem was sung at each event, emphasizing the refrain:

> Makerere, Makerere, we build for the future, the great Makerere.
> Great, great and mighty, the walls around thee.
> Great, great and mighty,
> The gates beside thee

At the Alumni Homecoming Dinner, the Chairperson of the University Council said, "If walls and vegetation could speak, countless stories would be told of friendships nurtured, dreams birthed, and destinies set on course."

Makerere University is known as a University of Excellence throughout Uganda. One student said, "So, when you are coming from Makerere University, there are certain things that are expected of you." Referring to his being admitted to the university, an alumnus said, "It's considered a very big opportunity for a Ugandan student to even appear on the admission's list." A faculty member from the School of Public Health said, "Even the person who has never gone to school

knows about Makerere. Makerere is the university that every parent and student desires to go to." The Assistant Commissioner for Higher Education and Training referred to Makerere as the "premier institution of higher learning in Uganda" and added that many government administrators and Members of Parliament are Makerere alumni.

Finding 5: Ugandan Government

The Ugandan government and Makerere University have a symbiotic relationship; they benefit from each other but must still navigate complex realities. Makerere needs the government for its financial survival and legitimacy, and the government depends on Makerere for human resource development and for research-led progress. Makerere, however, as an institution of higher education, must also be autonomous to ensure freedom of speech and expression. Before the Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act of 2001, Makerere was essentially an extension of the government as the president of the country was also the university chancellor. Article 30 of the Act, however, now states that the president appoints the chancellor of each public university and retains the title of Visitor. The same Act established the National Council for Higher Education which brought more stability and accountability to higher education in Uganda.

The Visitation Committee report (2017) differentiates between the "state-control" model typical of the 1970s and 80s when the government dictated what universities did and the "state-supervision" model more typical of the 1990s with the turn to neoliberalism and privatization. Some feel that the state still exercises too much control. The Executive Director of the Centre for Constitutional Governance sees only a state of corruption and Makerere leadership as complicit in trying to appease the regime. She said that Makerere used to be "more vibrant in terms of public debates… nurturing students to express themselves and be outspoken." Now, though, she tells of debates cancelled at the last minute and a "police state" on campus. For the first five years, her organization was located on the Makerere campus, but she said the police presence became intolerable, so they moved elsewhere in Kampala.

Uganda is a democratic country with regular elections, but Yoweri Museveni has been president for 38 years and political opponents are severely restricted. Many feel the government is out of touch with the rest of the country. One of the undergraduates spoke of the privileged life of government ministers, saying "How are those ministers supposed to solve problems they don't face? They don't face muddy roads, they don't face the bad transport… when they get up, the money is there." Although people are free to criticize the government even on national television, the university is reluctant to criticize the hand that feeds them. President Museveni is the honored guest at events, and university leadership goes out of its way to express gratitude for recent government support particularly in research and infrastructure.

Finding 6: Colonialism

Uganda was officially under British control for 68 years, from 1894 to 1962. However, Uganda didn't magically rid itself of colonial influences at independence. The impact remains in all aspects of society including higher education. Professor Joy Kwesiga, current Vice-Chancellor at Kabale University in Uganda gave one of the Mak@100 Memorial Lectures. She recounted the history of Makerere including its "special relationship" with the University of London saying, "the major concern… was that this did not provide the independence required for the growth of an independent African University of the future." Curricular questions had to be vetted through London. Makerere had to live up to the British "Gold Standard" and became cut off from Uganda. When the university tried to "Africanize," there was a fear of lowering standards. A question to ponder then is if Makerere is a university "in" Africa or "of" Africa (Sicherman, 2005).

Colonialism is felt in the creation, dissemination, and application of knowledge. While Makerere benefits from its many international research partnerships, these partners often come with their own agendas, so the research is not necessarily relevant to the needs of Uganda. In addition, Makerere faculty must publish in Western peer-reviewed journals, in English, for their research to count towards promotion. As a result, there is little incentive to conduct or disseminate research in topics of indigenous knowledge. One senior lecturer also addressed the issues of needing to be relevant both to Uganda and the wider world for students who study abroad, saying "We cannot have a Ugandan university that just focuses on Uganda." A PhD student in computer science noted the risk of using foreign data to prototype solutions relevant to Uganda. He gave the example of a Uganda farmer purchasing sensors from a Chinese company to attach to the ears of his cows, so he could

use his smart phone to see which ones were sick. Unfortunately, these were calibrated using Chinese weather patterns so weren't accurate. When they were recalibrated using local data, the results were "amazing."

Finally, the World Bank Structural Adjustment Policies have been viewed as an extension of colonialism: Foreign powers, in this case, international banks, dictated the priorities of countries receiving loans. Professors expressed the detrimental impact of the SAPs in terms of privatization and neoliberalism, where the university was forced to look to private sources, largely abroad, for support since the government's hands were tied.

Discussion

This case study employed the U.S. land-grant higher education model as the conceptual framework, using the land-grant domains to guide data collection, the selection of stakeholders, creation of interview questions, and data analysis. The research questions focused on how Makerere University functions as a public university in Uganda across the different domains of the land-grant framework, both in the ideal and normative models.

Domains under Land-Grant Ideals

The U.S. land-grant ideals include the creation, dissemination, and application of knowledge; democracy and access; and economic advancement.

Johnson and Mbah (2021) conducted a study focusing on the role of Indigenous knowledge in African higher education, concluding that academics are often in the best position to "unsubjugate" knowledge through their proximity to communities. As evident in its Strategic Plan, discussions with leaders, and government funding, Makerere is intent on being a globally competitive research university. This ambition, however, carries the risk that knowledge becomes subjugated to outside interests and priorities and is no longer relevant to Uganda. When research must be published in Western journals (in English), when funding comes from abroad, when data for local innovations come from foreign sources, and when faculty themselves are educated abroad, there is little incentive to pursue Indigenous knowledge. In this scenario, colonialism continues to dominate. Fortunately, however, even while creating global partnerships, Makerere emphasizes innovations which solve local real-world problems, using, for example, the government-funded Research and Innovations Fund to address Ugandan challenges. There are also some on campus who would like to see a more systematic approach to community engagement and outreach, like land-grant extension services.

Trow (2007) discusses the democratization of higher education through increased access with his three stages of participation: Elite (under 15%), mass (15-50%), and universal (over 50%). Sub-Saharan African higher education is still in the elite stage with only 9% participation in tertiary education (as a percentage of the relevant age group). Uganda is at 5% tertiary participation (World Bank, 2024). Makerere's response to low participation rates seems somewhat paradoxical. On one hand, the university wants to be relevant to local communities and distance itself from colonial elitism; on the other hand, increasing access does not seem to be a priority as university leadership is in fact proposing to decrease undergraduate access in order to accommodate more graduate students.

According to Ugandan President Museveni, economic advancement is best achieved through scientific research and innovation. This is the motivation behind the Research and Innovation Fund as well as the government's commitment to offering loans to STEM students but not social science students. The government also depends on Makerere University for capacity development and training. Many government, business, and industry leaders are Makerere alumni, and during the country's decentralization efforts, Makerere provided training for leaders at the local levels. Unfortunately, however, the university is still struggling to align the university education with the labor needs of the country as unemployment among undergraduate alumni is a common complaint causing graduates to doubt job prospects.

Domains under Land-Grant Normative Model

The U.S. land-grant normative model includes the domains of a public, decentralized structure; partnerships with government and industry; research-intensive, doctoral granting; increased privatization; and commitments to teaching and community engagement.

Makerere University is a large, public "multiversity" as described by Clark Kerr (Marginson, 2016) with a decentralized structure composed of colleges and schools. Mamdani (2007) was critical of decentralization during recovery years of the 1990s as it led to privatization and a "gradual dismantling of the public university" (p. 35). He lamented the fact that individual faculties took advantage of their independence and created a market-oriented, demand-driven curriculum. Mamdani's book Scholars in the Marketplace was viewed as a warning which resulted in an increase in government support of the university. Nevertheless, neoliberalism, with its private (tuition-paying) students, research consultancies, and market-driven incentives is not going away. As the history lecturer described it, "neoliberalism guts public institutions." Bisaso (2013) studied the impact of academic capitalism on four science units at Makerere University, acknowledging that "academic units within institutions, which choose to ignore the market paradigm and stick to the traditional paradigm, find it difficult to attract external funding" (p. 47). However, an over-reliance on external funding through Western organizations threatens the mission of university for the public good, particularly the African public good.

Makerere depends on partnerships with both the government and industry to get necessary funding. This university-industry-government collaboration is referred to as the "Triple Helix" and is essential for university growth (Crow & Debars, 2012, p. 135). Carayannis et al. (2016) in their analysis of knowledge systems and innovation also discuss the Quadruple Helix, incorporating civil society, culture-based systems, and even democracy, as well as the Quintuple Helix, incorporating the natural environment. The computer science PhD student talked about Makerere innovation hubs (such as Innovation Village and Outbox), as places for collaboration with industry and across disciplines, recognizing the importance of engaging all types of stakeholders and skills. This type of innovation results in the application of knowledge and is used to solve local problems.

Makerere faculty admit that community outreach is not systematic enough, such as the Cooperative Extension Services at many U.S. land-grant universities. Community service activities are also not recognized toward faculty promotion. Despite a lack of systemization, however, outreach happens through research and innovation efforts designed to meet local challenges. In their analysis of university strategic plans in sub-Saharan Africa, Bekele and Ofoyuru (2021) concluded that universities are attempting to meet the needs of society but that "instead of having a third mission dedicated for community service, the academic core (teaching, learning and research) is conceived to embody societal goals" (p. 174). Indeed, the Makerere Strategic Plan incorporates community relevance into the goals of research, teaching, and learning.

Tensions, Facilitators, and Barriers

Sorber and Geiger (2014) use the phrase "welding of opposite views" to discuss the tensons in the land-grant ideal as the practical, vocational mission conflicted with the sciences and liberal arts. Likewise, several tensions emerge from Makerere data, as described here using Saldaña's (2021) versus coding.

Table 1

Makerere University Tensions

Privatization/Neoliberalism vs. University for public good	The introduction of privately sponsored students and demand-driven courses helped transform Makerere after devastating dictatorships. However, a culture of neoliberalism resulted, threatening the mission of public good. Mitigating influences are increased regulation and more support from the Ugandan government.

Research-led vs. Undergraduate	Makerere's ambition is to be a globally recognized research-led university. To accomplish this, the university needs to considerably increase the graduate student population and accordingly decrease the undergraduate population because of already stretched resources.
University in Africa vs. University of Africa	Sicherman (2005) questions if Makerere is a university in Africa or of Africa because of the continued colonial influences. Makerere depends on foreign support, enters into global agreements, and its faculty get degrees abroad and publish in Western journals. Yet, the university also engages in partnerships within Africa and pursues research and innovation projects which are relevant to local challenges.
Dependence on government vs. Academic autonomy	Makerere depends on the Ugandan government for financial support and legitimacy. Until 2001, the president of Uganda was also the university chancellor. However, Makerere must also maintain academic autonomy in order to practice freedom of thought and expression.

Facilitators and barriers to university engagement become more apparent with the analysis of tensions. Facilitators in one of the land-grant domains can be a barrier in another. The creation, dissemination, and application of knowledge are facilitated by global partnerships, government funding, innovation hubs, emphasis on STEM subjects, and an increase in the graduate student population. Global partnerships, however, are a barrier to Africanizing the university and pursuing Indigenous knowledge. Likewise, emphasizing STEM subjects and increasing the graduate student numbers are barriers to increasing undergraduate access. Increasing government support, while a facilitator to university functions in general, including research, teaching, and infrastructure, can be a barrier to academic freedom. As Makerere pushes forward as a research-led institution, care needs to be taken to mitigate the negative consequences of increased colonialism (from global partnerships and funding), increased neoliberalism (from privatization and outside funding), and decreased undergraduate emphasis. University leaders need to critically weigh these trade-offs between facilitators and barriers in their decision-making.

Conclusion

The U.S. land-grant ideals and normative model have provided a framework for studying Makerere University. Makerere, just like every university, faces tensions and trade-offs as resources are scarce and global and local contexts change. Just recently, West Virginia University (major land-grant university and my alma mater) cut major programs due to budget constraints, attracting widespread criticism (Petit, 2024; Svruluga & Anderson, 2023). The geographic context may be different, but many of the threats to higher education are the same. Makerere has overcome tremendous obstacles through its sense of saga, entrepreneurialism, and the deep commitment of its stakeholders. Through collaborative initiatives, Makerere is prioritizing research and creating innovations which are relevant to Uganda. There remain, however, the threats of colonialism, neoliberalism, and a controlling government. Makerere University needs to face these threats courageously as it builds for a future as a globally competitive yet also locally relevant institution in Uganda.

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Christina L. Hand, PhD. Christina Hand earned her PhD in Higher Education from West Virginia University. This submission is based on her dissertation. She lives in Coalinga, CA, and works at Touro University California in a master's program which helps prepare students for medical school and other health professions. chand@touro.edu
ORCID iD# 0009-0002-4892-8265