
Context Matters

— RESEARCH GRANTS —

2020-2023 Context Matters Awarded Grants (Round 3)

Research title: Equipping Teachers to Champion Gender Equity in Uganda

Principle Investigator: Dr. Lydia Namatende-Sakwa,
Faculty of Education, Kyambogo University, Uganda

Co-researchers:

Betty Ezati, PhD.,
Assoc. Professor, College of Education and External Studies, Makerere University.

Henry Kariisa, PhD.,
Lecturer, College of Education and External Studies, Makerere University

Stephen Ndawula, PhD.,
Senior Lecturer and Head of Department, Department of Curriculum Studies,
Kyambogo University

Research location: Kyambogo University and Makerere University, Uganda

Research dates: June 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022

Dr. Lydia Namatende-Sakwa PhD., is currently a Lecturer and the Research Coordinator in the Department of Curriculum, Instruction, Teaching and Media Studies, at Kyambogo University in Uganda. She teaches courses in curriculum studies and research methodology and supervises research for Master and PhD students. Dr. Namatende-Sakwa has followed a multi-disciplinary trajectory with a background in gender, education, linguistics, and literacy. She is published in numerous journals and presented at national and international conferences on topics related to gender and education. She holds a PhD in Gender and Diversity from Gent University in Belgium. She also holds a Doctorate in Education (Curriculum and Teaching) from the Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, USA.

Summary: Research has enduringly demonstrated that teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and knowledge about gender shape differential treatment of boys and girls. Teacher education is an entry point to addressing gender equality because schools and teachers are key agents in the gender socialization of children through the formal curriculum as well as informal implicit gendered messages. However, teachers are often unaware of the stereotypical beliefs that drive their interactions with male and female students. Despite decades of societal concern about inequities, and the Ugandan government's efforts to mainstream gender equality into education at different levels "gender equity is still in its infancy in teacher education" (Saunders p. 242). The common approach to teacher preparation is often focused on subject knowledge and "appropriate" teaching methods, at the expense of core beliefs, values, and attitudes that shape teacher effectiveness. This has given gender equality "a tenuous and marginal position in a full and time-constrained teacher training curriculum" (Skelton, 2007, p. 676).

The research team will engage with pre-service teachers and teacher educators from the two oldest and largest teacher education institutions in Uganda, the College of Education and External Studies at Makerere University (MaK) and the Faculty of Education at Kyambogo University (KyU). Using a mixed methods approach with quantitative survey and qualitative phenomenological research designs, the research team gather the lived experiences of gender equality in school settings from pre-service teachers and teacher educators; document their perceptions on gender equality; and examine the gaps in the teacher education programs as regards gender equality within both humanities and science programs in Uganda.

The ultimate aim of this study is to strengthen educational opportunities for girls in Uganda and leverage Uganda's efforts at gender mainstreaming in education through the use of teacher education to promote gender equality. By drawing on the teachers' gendered lived school experiences, the research will provide insights into the dominant norms in Ugandan society; contribute to scholarship on teacher stories through integrating "teacher voice" into curriculum development; and, inform best practices for teacher education programs as regard gender equality, within both humanities and science programs in Uganda.