



Integrating ACT Training into post-graduate psychology programs at Makerere University, Uganda

About Me

My name is Rosco Kasujja, and I am from Kampala, Uganda. I am currently employed by Makerere University School of Psychology with the Department of Mental Health & Community Psychology. The school of Psychology has four post-graduate programs including the:

- Post-graduate Diploma in Counseling and Guidance
- M. A. Counseling Psychology
- Master of Science in Clinical Psychology (All three being hosted in the Mental Health Department), and
- Masters in Organizational Psychology.

Makerere University is the oldest and biggest training institution in East Africa, and has been a source of education to so many African scholars. In fact, Makerere continues to attract many scholars from East Africa and beyond. It currently ranks amongst the top universities in Africa.

Uganda



The republic of Uganda is a landlocked country in East Africa. It is bordered to the east by Kenya, to the north by South Sudan, to the west by the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to the southwest by Rwanda, and to the south by Tanzania. The southern part of the country includes a substantial portion of Lake Victoria, shared with Kenya and Tanzania, situating the country in the African Great Lakes region. Uganda takes its name from the Buganda kingdom, which encompasses a large portion of the south of the country including the capital Kampala. Beginning in the late 1800s, the area was ruled as a protectorate by the British, who established administrative law across the territory. Uganda gained independence from Britain on 9 October 1962. The period since then has been marked by intermittent conflicts, most recently a lengthy civil war against the Lord's Resistance Army, which has caused tens of thousands of casualties and displaced more than a million people. The official languages are Swahili and English. Luganda, a central language, is widely spoken across the country. Uganda's population is currently at 38 million with 56% of the population being adolescents

At the 2002 census, Uganda had a literacy rate of 66.8% (76.8% male and 57.7% female). The system of education in Uganda has a structure of 7 years of primary education, 6 years of secondary education (divided into 4 years of lower secondary and 2 years of upper secondary school), and 3 to 5 years of post-secondary education. There are state exams that must be taken at every level of education. Uganda has both private and public universities. The largest university in Uganda is Makerere University, located in Kampala.



Role at Makerere University



I have been involved with the department since 2009. I work as a lecturer while I also coordinate activities for the masters programs especially internships and practicum placements. I am also involved in curriculum development within the department. In my position at the university I have noticed that most of the text-books and resources that we utilize were written by North America or European authors which limits students from having context specific references while learning.

While I am fully employed by Makerere University, I also undertake psychosocial work in formerly war-affected areas of Northern Uganda where the Lord's Resistance Army rebels disrupted life. I am actively involved in training and supervising local counselors there. The ACBS Developing Nations Scholarship and the opportunities that it has provided to learn more about Contextual Behavioral Science will hopefully serve to benefit the wide range of practitioners within and around Uganda that I am networked with.

Training Opportunities for Students in Uganda

The M.A counseling & MSc. Clinical Psychology students at Makerere University are expected to learn and practice psychotherapy. However, most of the approaches passed onto them strictly follow text from Europe and North America. In August 2015, I organized a 1-day 'Introduction to Acceptance and Commitment Therapy' workshop at Makerere University that was facilitated by Dr Ross White, University of Glasgow. The workshop was attended by over 70 people and there is great demand for further training to be offered. Students and professionals working in the area of mental health want to learn more about the approach so that they can use it to promote mental health and wellbeing in Uganda. I am keen to explore opportunities to integrate Contextual Behavioral Science approaches (such as ACT) into the teaching curriculum at Makerere University.

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