RESEARCHING AND WRITING WOMEN, GENDER AND SOCIETY IN HIGHER EDUCATION: A MALAYSIAN EXPERIENCE THROUGH THE LENS OF KANITA

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The beginning of gender research in Malaysian universities

- 1970s industrialisation and modernisation policies; large numbers of young women migrated for work from rural areas to the designated free trade zones in urbanised centres
- Women seen as increasingly important human resources in the drive towards balancing family, community and national development
- International demands for diversity and inclusiveness lead to the recognition of the relevance of the gender lens in labour market discourses
- Increased awareness of the importance of gender framework in interrogating conventional social sciences
Historical timelines of gender research/studies programmes in Malaysian higher education

- 1975: KANITA, USM
- 1980: GSRC, UNIMAS
- 1985: SAMA
- 1990: WSU, UPM
- 1995: GSP, UM
- 2000: CGR, UKM
- 2005: TFHWLC/ WLC, UKM, WPRU, IIUM
- 2010: GADREC, UPM
- 2015: WinSET, UNMC
### Location of gender research programmes in universities

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Gender studies programme</th>
<th>Location within institution</th>
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| KANITA, USM              | School of Social Sciences (1978-2001)  
Autonomous research centre (since April 2001) |
| WSU, UPM                 | Centre for Extension and Continuing Education  
Faculty of Educational Studies |
| GADREC, UPM              | Faculty of Human Ecology |
| GSP, UM                  | Dean’s Office, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences |
| CGR, UKM                 | Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities |
| WPRU, IIUM               | (Virtual and multidisciplinary – originally coordinated from Kuliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences) |
| TFHWLC, UKM              | Autonomous research centre (with initial funding from the MWFCD) (CGR defunct) |
| WinSET, UNMC             | Multidisciplinary Committee (initially coordinated from Department of Chemical and Environmental Engineering) |
## ToR and activities of gender studies programmes

<table>
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<th>GS Programme</th>
<th>ToR and Activities</th>
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<tr>
<td>KANITA, USM</td>
<td>Research and postgraduate programmes; advocacy (training, community engagement and consultancy)</td>
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<tr>
<td>WSU, UPM</td>
<td>Postgraduate programme, research; extension services to rural development agencies</td>
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<tr>
<td>GADREC, UPM</td>
<td>Conducting elective courses for undergraduate Human Development Programme, MSc in Gender and Development (for family and community development practitioners)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GSP, UM</td>
<td>Minor programme for undergraduates (and gender-focused research by academic members)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CGR, UKM</td>
<td>Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WPRU, IIUM</td>
<td>Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TFHWLC, UKM</td>
<td>Research and postgraduate programmes; consultancy and training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WinSET, UNMC</td>
<td>Policy and practice development and monitoring</td>
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Challenges: mainstreaming gender research in higher education

• Getting a foot in in conventional research structure
  – Challenging and negotiating deeply patriarchal structures
  – Separate from or integrated with other fields?
  – Studies of women or gender?

• Encouraging pursuit of postgraduate studies by research in women and gender issues
Challenges: mainstreaming gender research in higher education

- Priority areas and funding issues
  - Who wants to fund? What do they want to fund?
- Methodological philosophy: stakeholders v subjects; feminist/ gender lens comprehension
Translational research

• At the core of feminist epistemology and methodology

• BUT
  – Higher education policy on translational research: what is the desired outcome?
    • Product development v theory of change?
    • Is advocacy seen as an integral part of research?
  – Fulfilling high impact publication requirement (at the expense of consciousness raising and advocacy?)
Gender research in 4IR

Opportunities:

• Wider engagement with different constituencies
  – Interconnecting knowledge and lived experiences
• Accessibility of information sharing and funding options
• Diversified modes of publication of research outcome
• Diversified modes of advocacy
Emerging areas of research with the digital era and advent of 4IR

- Voices of women in sciences and technology
- Women mobilising through technology
- Presentation of gender issues in disruptive technological era
- Crowdfunding for women’s causes?
Emerging areas of research with the digital era and advent of 4IR

• Digital divide between groups of women
• Women going back into the homes: working from home and its implications
• Implications of technology to work-life balance?
• Technology facilitating VAW
Co-creating knowledge and change through research and engagement with stakeholders

• University- and nationwide advocacy on elimination of sexual harassment on campus
  – Engaging with the university governance for the adoption of a policy and procedure against sexual harassment (policy and procedure in place since 2009)
  – Obtaining a research grant to conduct a study on SH on campus (2007-2011)
  – awareness and training programmes at university-wide and departmental levels
  – Awareness and training programmes through collaboration with other universities and agencies
• Community engagement that aims at empowering women in different aspects of their lives
  – Programmes with single mothers’ groups that build capacity for women to help/support other women
  – Empowering staff and students with knowledge and practice of gender equality through academic and non-academic activities (capacity building workshops)
  – Always including research elements and discourses and development of knowledge products in conjunction with engagements
We lead
Research, publication and advocacy for an ASEAN Community

- KANITA is increasingly focusing on sharing and engaging with researchers and advocates from ASEAN and Asian countries to understand comparable experiences
  - Publication with Indonesian partners
  - Workshop on developing research proposals on common gender issues in ASEAN (with Indonesia, Thailand, Brunei, Philippines, Singapore, Japan)
  - Research and publication collaboration with European and Asian partners (Norwegian Research Council Project)
  - Capacity building projects with international partners focusing on ASEAN (Harpswell Women’s Leadership Programme for ASEAN; Erasmus Capacity Building: MOOC for Marginalised Groups in ASEAN)
KANITA’S recent publication
Recent publications with KANITA’s contributions
Terima kasih