

THE DEVELOPMENT AND GROWTH OF THE GENDER STUDIES PROGRAM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA, KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA

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Abstract

In Malaysia, women's studies and gender studies are new fields struggling to be accepted as legitimate academic fields equal to mainstream disciplines. The academic and intellectual validity of women's studies and gender studies was gradually recognized because of the research done by early feminists. Research and studies on women before the seventies were scarce but researchers who welcomed international changes achieved by the global women's movement were prepared to work to localize the need to elevate the position of women in society. Public universities were also urged to look into ways of contributing towards uplifting the status of women. The article outlines the history of the institutionalization of gender studies and its profile since its inception at the University of Malaya.

Keywords: institutionalization of gender studies, doing gender studies, development of gender studies

Introduction¹

In Malaysia, women's studies and gender studies are new fields struggling to be accepted as legitimate academic fields equal to mainstream disciplines. In the early years, women's studies were resisted because of the fear that it would breed anti-men attitudes, and it was also accused of merely imitating western feminism. Despite this resistance, the academic and intellectual validity of women's studies and gender studies was gradually recognized because of the research done by early feminists. It also challenged earlier knowledge that formed mainstream thinking. This new knowledge and awareness brought many changes. For example, amendments were made to existing laws, the government became cognizant of the importance of integrating women in the development process and the women's movements increased their efforts to sensitize society on women and gender issues.² Research and studies on women before the seventies were scarce but it was these Malaysian writers and

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researchers who welcomed international changes achieved by the global women's movement, who were prepared to work to localize the need to elevate the position of women in society.³ Public universities were also urged to look into ways of contributing towards uplifting the status of women.

According to Fan (1981), the number of writings and research on Malaysian women increased substantially after 1970, in the priority area for research on women. We begin to see more work being done on issues relating to women and economic development and women and work.⁴ However, the legal status of women and women's rights⁵ continued to be a popular area of study, followed by anthropological and sociological studies on women and demographic studies mainly focusing on fertility and marriage. These trends continued into the eighties and early nineties with the topic, "Women and Development" receiving most attention from female academics mainly. Health and welfare emerged as a new area of research in that period.⁶

In the following section, the paper outlines the history of the institutionalization of gender studies and its profile since its inception at the University of Malaya.

Background on the Gender Studies Program at the University of Malaya

The Gender Studies Program at the University of Malaya was founded during the 1994/1995 academic session under the Dean's Office of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. It is multi-disciplinary in approach and offers a range of courses from theory to methodology to family, economics, politics, law and religion. Gender studies as a teaching discipline is a novel idea in Malaysia because it requires academics and students to deconstruct and reconstruct traditional values. True to the philosophy of university education, students are expected to rethink and reevaluate their roles in society.

The Program was conceptualized to meet contemporary needs in our fast industrializing nation. The Program train students to be sensitive to gender issues and to be able to apply their training when they enter the job market. Students who benefit from the wide exposure of course offerings are expected to have a better perspective on matters related to gender in society and culture. Given the training, they should have a better perspective on issues related to gender. They could impact existing or future policies or even reformulate policies so that they are gender sensitive.

The Program also provides a platform for academic discourse on gender by organizing forums, seminars, workshops and conferences.

The Gender Studies Program networks with both local and international organizations which support the Program. The local ones are experts from other local universities, The Ministry of Women's Affairs and Family Development and local women's NGOs. The international organizations that have helped the Program in the initial stages of fact finding and the institutionalization of the Program at the University of Malaya are The Canadian Co-operative and Support Office (CIDA) and the Gender and Development Center at APDC. Linkages were also established with the Departments of Sociology, Anthropology and Women's Studies at the

University of Edinburgh through the Committee for International Co-operation in Higher Education (CICHE) under the British Council.

Objectives

The objectives of the Gender Studies Programme are:

- i. teaching and learning the gender perspective and the feminist's standpoint through different subjects and courses.
- ii. to engage in multidisciplinary and inter-disciplinary research from the gender perspective.
- iii. to contribute to community development through the creation of gender awareness at all levels of society.
- iv. to train future academics, policy-makers, activists and others who are committed to the principles of gender equality and social justice.

Course Structure

The Gender Studies Programme currently offers a minor in Gender Studies and is working towards offering a major in the near future. Courses (see Table 1 for a list of courses offered) are also offered as electives for students from within the faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and students from other faculties.

Table 1 List of courses offered by the Gender Studies Programme

Code	Title of Course
First Year	
AZEA 1101*	Introduction to Gender Studies
AZEA 1102*	Gender, Culture and Society
AZEA 1103*	Theories in Gender Studies
AZEA 1104*	Gender and Development
Second Year	
AZEA 2182*	Gender Research Methodology
AZEA 2302	Gender and the Environment
AZEA 2303	Gender and Malaysian Politics
AZEA 2304	Gender and the Family
AZEA 2305	Gender Issues in Non-Governmental Organisations
AZEA 2306	Gender, Science and Technology
AZEA 2307	Gender and Citizenship
AZEA 2308	Understanding Childhood and Research with Children
AZEA2190	Practicum

Third Year	
AZEA 3301	Gender and Law
AZEA 3302	Gender and Work
AZEA 3303	Gender, Religion, <i>Adat</i> and Social Change
AZEA 3304	Gender Issues in the Media
AZEA 3305	Gender, Peace and Conflict
AZEA 3306	Gender and Sexuality
AZEA 3307	Gender and Social Work
AZEA3308	Gender and Masculinity
AZEA3281	Project Paper (based on the practicum)

* Compulsory courses for minor students

The Minor Package requires the student to take 33 credit hours and a minimum of 11 courses.

Student and Academic Staff Profile of the Gender Studies Program, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Malaya

Undergraduate Enrolment Profile - Table 2 shows courses offered by the Gender Studies Program as both core and elective courses. Students need to obtain at least 33 credit hours to minor in Gender Studies; each course is 3 credit hours. The bold font indicates the highest number of enrolment in a year since the program commenced.

Table 2 Student Enrolment since the Inception of the Gender Studies Programme

Year I	AZEA1101	AZEA1102	AZEA 1103	AZEA1104				
1996/1997	8	6	2	3				
1997/1998	28	28	28	38				
1998/1999	50	50	50	65				
1999/2000	116	99	95	125				
2000/2001	101	54	99	97				
2001/2002	109	44	41	51				
2002/2003	41	40	37	83				
2003/2004	71	79	60	55				
2004/2005	87	87	67	75				
2005/2006	59	56	47	70				
2006/2007	62	66	53	52				
2007/2008	79	63	52	50				
2008/2009	29	22	10	35				
2009/2010	55	37	41	33				
Year II	AZEA2182	AZEA2190	AZEA2302	AZEA2303	AZEA2304	AZEA2305	AZEA2306	AZEA2307
1996/1997	n.d.	n.d.	-	-	44	-	-	-
1997/1998	n.d.	n.d.	8	11	n.d.	-	-	-
1998/1999	11	n.d.	9	8	3	-	-	-
1999/2000	30	3	n.d.	34	13	12	13	-
2000/2001	80	6	n.d.	n.d.	76	38	36	-
2001/2002	62	4	-	67	95	32	30	-
2002/2003	22	3	-	95	-	47	-	-
2003/2004	40	-	-	44	109	55	-	54

2004/2005	43	-	-	41	72	42	-	22
2005/2006	46	-	-	53	79	31	-	33
2006/2007	34	-	13	-	50	41	-	32
2007/2008	36	-	19	51	-	26	15	41
2008/2009	23	-	47	32	63	34	-	-
2009/2010	23	-	13	-	27	8	-	-
Year III	AZEA3301	AZEA3302	AZEA3303	AZEA3304	AZEA3305	AZEA3306	AZEA3281	AZEA3308
1996/1997	-	-	n.d.	24	-	-	n.d.	
1997/1998	-	-	n.d.	-	-	-	n.d.	
1998/1999	-	2	2	-	-	-	n.d.	
1999/2000	2	10	14	2	-	-	4	
2000/2001	15	51	43	14	-	-	2	
2001/2002	44	50	57	60	-	-	6	
2002/2003	70	71	58	69	-	-	3	
2003/2004	-	57	24	48	-	-	3	
2004/2005	-	56	40	29	3	-	-	
2005/2006	10	51	-	37	7	18	-	
2006/2007	24	51	-	22	35	-	-	
2007/2008	27	52	-	49	19	-	-	
2008/2009	-	54	-	44	-	22	-	-
2009/2010	-	18	24	16	3	-	-	2

Note: n.d. - no data available, (-) indicates not offered and/or suspended because the lecturer teaching the course is on study leave etc.

The decline in the number of students enrolled in courses offered by the Gender Studies Program and the decline in the number of minoring students is not due to a decline in interest but because of several changes that have taken place in the University (see Table 3). One of the major changes is the reduction in the number of students taken into the Arts and Social Science Faculty (see Table 4). The reduction in intake is due to the policy to convert University of Malaya from an Undergraduate teaching University to a Research University. Furthermore, it is government policy to reduce the number of Social Science graduates and to increase the number of students in the Sciences.

Table 3 Gender Studies Graduate Profile Since Inception

Graduates (minoring students)	University of Malaya		
	Female	Male	Total
Undergraduate degree			
1998/1999	10	1	11
1999/2000	29	1	30
2000/2001	76	4	80
2001/2002	51	1	52
2002/2003	17	5	22
2003/2004	37	3	40
2004/2005	45	6	51
2005/2006	24	12	36
2006/2007	30	6	36
2007/2008	27	9	36
2008/2009	30	6	36
2009/2010	30	8	38

Table 4 Student Intake, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Malaya 2000-2010

Year	Student numbers
1999/2000	964
2000/2001	780
2001/2002	548
2002/2003	501
2003/2004	606
2004/2005	626
2005/2006	514
2006/2007	514
2007/2008	478
2008/2009	412
2009/2010	354

Current Faculty Profile.

The full time academic staffs of the Gender Studies Programme are:

Associate Professor Dr. Shanthi Thambiah, *M.Phil (Cambridge), PhD (Hull)*
 Dr. Welyn Jeffery Jehom M. A. (*Australian National University*), *Phd (University of Bonn)*
 Ms. Lai Suat Yan, *M.A. (ISS -Hague), (PhD candidate Claremont Graduate School, California)*
 Ms. Ruhana Padzil, *M.A (Limerich), (PhD Candidate University of Malaya)*
 Ms. Maimuna Hamid Merican, *LLM (Utrecht), MBA (Glamorgan), (PhD candidate University of Malaya)*

Our part time academic staff are:

Dr. Judith Ennew (Senior Visiting Fellow)
 Associate Professor Dr. Raihana Abdullah
 Ms. Raiha Ahmad

Table 5 shows that about 50% of the teaching staff have PhD and by the year 2012 100% of its cademic staff will have their PhDs.

Table 5 : Qualification and Number of Academic Staff

Qualifications	Number of Staff Teaching Women's/Gender Studies
Full-time staff ⁷	
PhD	2
Masters (all are currently doing their PhD)	3
Bachelors	-
Part time and/or visiting staff⁸	
PhD	2
Masters	1
Bachelors	-
Total teaching staff	8

Programmes and Activities

Teaching and Learning

Gender studies as a teaching discipline is a novel idea in Malaysia because it requires academics and students to deconstruct and reconstruct traditional values of gender relations at every level within the family, society and institutions. It embraces feminists' principles and strives for social justice, democracy and diversity. The following are brief descriptions of the courses offered:

1. AZEA1101 Introduction to Gender Studies

This course will serve as an important introduction to gender studies in various aspects. Emphasis is given to understanding the difference between gender and sex, the meaning of patriarchy, similarity and differences between women studies and gender studies, the importance of differences and diversity in the gender perspective, sexist symbols and images, social control of women, women's invisibility at both the personal and public levels and how it is experienced by women as a muted group, issues of violence against women, the formation of gender differences, gender ideology, manifestation of gender differences and gender division of labour. This course will also discuss the institution of gender inequality and the different approaches to equality besides also critically evaluating the contribution of men studies towards gender studies.

2. AZEA1102 Gender, Culture and Society

"Gender, Culture and Society" will begin with a conceptual and theoretical explanation on gender in a multi-cultural society. This course will analyze the relationship between gender and culture in the context of diversity, focusing on Malay, Chinese, Indian and indigenous societies in Malaysia. Students will be exposed to the different forms of gender relations and women's positions in each society.

3. AZEA1103 Theories in Gender Studies

This course examines the position of women/gender studies in Social Science. It will also critique traditional theories and clarify the need for formulating theories which are gender sensitive. Emphasis will be given to understanding the origin of feminism in Asia, liberal feminism, marxist feminism, radical feminism, modernization theory and Third World women, post-modern feminism and post-colonial feminism. This course will also focus on women's challenge to globalization, the influence of various feminist theories to the women's movement in Malaysia and the contribution of men and men studies to gender studies.

4. AZEA1104 Gender and Development

This course starts with a general introduction to the basic theories relating to gender and development. It also explains gender issues in the development process, such as economic participation, political consciousness, education opportunities and policy making in Malaysia. It will also look into the roles played by government agencies and NGO's from the gender perspective. Students will also be exposed to the problems encountered by women in the process of development by using gender analyses and gender perspectives.

5. AZEA2182 Gender and Research Methodology

This course is an introduction to research methodology and discusses Social Science research methods from a gender perspective. This course will further expose students to gender approaches in quantitative and qualitative methods that will be discussed in topics which includes sexism in research, ethnography, content analysis, interviews, oral history and survey method. Students are required to write a research proposal and decide on methods that they will use in their proposed research project. The importance of ethical issues in conducting research will be highlighted.

6. AZEA2302 Gender and the Environment

Analysis on theories and issues related to gender and environment will comprise the first part of the course. The question of gender and the environment will be explored from a sustainable development point of view. Next, the roles and involvement of women in natural resource management will be deliberated upon using relevant past research and case studies. Lastly, the topic of research politics in gender and environment, as well as the subsequent roles and responsibilities of government agencies and NGO's shall be studied from a gender and sustainable development perspective.

7. AZEA2303 Gender and Politics in Malaysia

This course gives a general exposition on feminist criticisms and approaches towards political theory and concepts. It will discuss women's roles, contributions, challenges and strategies in their political participation in Malaysia. It discusses how women's participation in politics can improve the democratic system in Malaysia. Finally, this course provides a platform for students to analyze the implementation and application of principles of CEDAW within the domestic law and policy in Malaysia with regard to women's political participation.

8. AZEA2304 Gender and the Family

Analysis on theories and issues related to gender and the family and the effect of the political economy of the family on gender relations will be the focus of this course. This course will analyze the meaning of the family and marriage

from a gender perspective and the factors contributing to marital quality will be discussed. The course will also focus on redefining parenting, intimacy, divorce and problems related to divorce from a gender perspective. Finally, the course evaluates both direct and in-direct family policies.

9. AZEA2305 Gender Issues in Non-governmental Organizations

This course will discuss the main issues in the women's movement and also the role of NGO's in enhancing the status of women. Emphasis will be given to understanding the struggles of women NGOs before and after the global women's conferences and the relationship of government machineries and NGOs to implement important international instruments and documents. There will also be discussions on women organizing, campaigns against violence against women, coalition building, women's movement in Malaysia and its relationship to the state, issues relating to women's NGOs in Malaysia and at the regional and international levels with an emphasis on the South-South states.

10. AZEA2306 Gender, Science and Technology

This course begins with a definition of science and technology and its pivotal interrelationship with society. Perspectives dealing with the impact of science and technology on women will be discussed particularly from the angle of technology application in areas such as health, reproductive technology, information technology and everyday science. Differences in perception regarding the means and ends of science and technology between men and women are also brought into discussion. Lastly, a critique of science and technology will be done from a feminist perspective taking particular account of the contributions of women in the progressive development of science and technology.

11. AZEA2307 Gender and Citizenship.

This course will give an exposition to gender and citizenship theories and approaches/alternatives being adopted by feminist. It further explains the principles of democracy and human rights with an assessment of these practices within the context of Malaysia. Students will be exposed to the relationship between the concept and theory of citizenship with political participation, human rights, civil society, minority rights and issues of refugees. Finally, this course will explore the national and international laws which address citizenship rights.

12. AZEA2308 Understanding Childhood and Research with Children

The course brings children and childhood into focus in the context of the social sciences, with particular emphasis on the implications of global changes in research with children since 1980 for social research in Malaysia. The new sociology of childhood, ethnographies of childhood, discourses on the human rights of children, children's participation, globalization of childhood and histories of childhood will be critically examined through lectures, guided

readings and practical exercises. Students will learn about the particular ethical and practical issues raised by children-focused research and will have practical opportunities to develop a variety of skills appropriate to research with children.

13. AZEA3301 Gender and Law

This course gives a general exposition on feminist criticism on legal theories. It provides the opportunity for students to understand the Malaysian legal system, the sources of laws, the mechanism of law making and finally the practice of democracy in Malaysia. This course provides the platform for engendering the interpretation of domestic laws on issues of violence against women, family relations, work and citizenship. Finally, it provides a good foundation for the understanding of international human rights treaties (especially CEDAW) and analysis of its implementation and application within the domestic law and policy in Malaysia.

14. AZEA3302 Gender and Work

This course will focus on issues and concepts in gender and work, such as definition of work, gender division of labour, patriarchy and its relationship with the organization of work, gender gaps and gender imbalances. Emphasis will also be given to the important issues related to women and work, analyse women's economic participation and women's role in development. This course will also be discussing women's work in the formal and informal sectors and the impact of globalization on women and work.

15. AZEA3303 Gender, Religion, Adat and Social Change

The course will examine the status and role of women in the major world religions. The socio-cultural influences in the interpretation of the teachings of these world religions and its impact on gender relations will be discussed. Related current issues will be analyzed. There will also be an emphasis on women as agents of change in interpreting the teachings of these religious traditions for gender justice. In addition, the course will examine the internal contradiction that exists between the role of women as cultural carriers and their status in these religions.

16. AZEA3304 Gender Issues in the Media

The course's objective is to give an exposition of gender issues in the media through the participation, achievement and the projection of women's images. This course also will explain how the empowerment approach transforms the position and roles of women in the media.

17. AZEA3305 Gender, Conflict and Peace

This course will discuss issues relating to peace, the military, and war from the gender perspective. In the beginning of this course, attention will be given to

the theories and the concept of feminism and its role towards the shaping and building of human values and peace. This course also includes discussions on issues and obstacles faced by women in countries facing conflict and wars, apart from their struggle to gain justice. The course focuses on ways of promoting peace without being bias against women for it is vital for international organizations to recruit gender experts or women's organizations in every peace operation including reanalysing the conflict resolution program and peace building initiatives. Finally, the course emphasizes the importance of women's involvement in building peace and in protecting women's rights from the crimes and violence of war.

18. AZEA3306 Gender and Sexuality

In the 19th and 20th centuries, the relationship between gender and sexuality has undergone many transformations due to industrial processes, colonization, post-colonialism, modernization, and globalization. In particular, during the 20th century, gender and sexuality has established itself as an intellectual field of academic study with extensive knowledge and theory construction. This course introduces students to inter-disciplinary frameworks that aim to increase the understanding and awareness of how gender intersects with sexuality within any given society as well as at the global level. The conceptual and theoretical thoughts introduced within this course provide discussions of various perspectives that are offered in sexology, psychoanalysis, feminism as well as queer theory. These discussions are linked with issues such as contexts and relevant historical developments in order to offer comprehensive insights into the complexities in the analysis of gender and sexuality.

19. AZEA3307 Gender and Social Work

This course focuses on personal and professional development toward social work practice for social justice, focusing on gender and feminist social work practice. The course employs critical self-reflection and experiential learning to engage students to explore personal meaning systems and narratives in the context of professional values of social justice, multiculturalism, and empowerment. Such exploration through intensive involvement is geared to helping students develop a strong foundation for understanding and applying social work principles in the service of social change for social justice.

20. AZEA3308 Gender and Masculinity

The purpose of the course is to expose students to the new field of masculinity studies. The study of masculinity has become increasingly influential in the social sciences and is now a burgeoning field in its own right. Scholars now recognize that masculinity is also socially and culturally constructed and in need of further academic investigation. Hence with this in mind the aim of the course is to introduce students to a variety of interdisciplinary approaches to the study of masculinity. Examples from different parts of the world are drawn upon in

order to illustrate the breadth and complexity of culturally-based and class-based expressions of masculinity.

Research 1999-2010

The GSP is able to supervise postgraduate students at Masters and PhD levels in the fields of Gender and Development, Gender and Work, Gender and Politics, Gender and Religion, Gender and Law, Gender, Peace and Conflict, Gendered Violence, Gender and Media, Gender and Citizenship, Gender and Migration, Gender and Social Policy, Gender and the Environment, Gender and Governance, Gender and Political History.

The numbers of postgraduate students enrolled at the Gender Studies Program (by research and not course work) are increasing. We have also of late seen an increase in the number of foreign students undertaking their PhD and Masters at the Gender Studies Program. Table 6 below shows some of the research topics of our postgraduate students and academic staff.

Table 6 A Selection of Research Conducted by Postgraduate Students & Staffs

Gender Studies Postgraduate Students - Completed	
Year	Topic
1999	Prostitution among Malay Women from Kelantan, Malaysia from 1900 to 1941 - written in Malay (M.A.)
2000	Semai Women in Transition: A Case Study in Kampung Chang Sungai Gepai, Bidor, Perak - written in English (M.Phil.)
2001	Resettlement, Development and Gender: The Case of the Kadazandusun of Kampung Tampasak, Penampang, Sabah - written in English (M.Phil.)
2001	The Role of Adat in the Formation of Indigenous Culture: The Kadazandusun of Sabah - written in Malay (M.A.)
2002	Gender and Politics: A Study of Women's Role and Participation in Two Political Parties (UMNO and PAS) - written in Malay (M.A.)
2002	Chinese Women in Industrial Home-Based Subcontracting in the Garment Industry in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: Neither Valued nor Costed - written in English (Phd)
2005	Positioning Iban Women: A Study of Changes, Activism and Personalities in Sarawak, Malaysia - written in English (M.A.)
2005	Maternal Influence on Daughters' Gender Role Attitudes among Women from Three Ethnic Groups in Malaysia - written in English (M.A.)
2006	Gender Ideologies, Resources and Marital Power: A study of the Sikh Community in Perak, Malaysia - written in English (Phd)
2009	Women and Poverty: A Case Study of Several Low Cost Housing Estates in the Klang Valley (M.A. written in Malay)
Gender Studies Postgraduate Students - On-going	
	Peranan dan Keberkesanan NGO Wanita dalam Menangani Isu Penceraian: satu Kajian di kalangan Masyarakat Melayu di Kuala Lumpur (M.A.)
	Gender Equality in Sports: A Study of a Selection of Schools in the Klang Valley, Malaysia (Phd)
	Women in Village Governance in Minangkabau, West Sumatra, Indonesia: A Gender Perspective (Phd)
	Changing Gender Roles: Bangladeshi Migrant Workers in Malaysia (M.A.)
	Behind Bars: An Exploratory Study of Women Prisoners and the Gender Dimensions of Crime in Sindh, Pakistan (Phd)
	Investigating Gender Disparity of Academic Achievement in Higher Education and Its Impact on the Human Capital Development of Malaysia (PhD)
	Women's Political Movement in Malaya Prior to Independence (1929-1957)

Outcomes for Children of Working Indian Mothers in the Klang Valley	
A Study of the Process of Social Participation of Rural Women in Local Groups in Malaysia	
A Selection of Research Conducted By Gender Studies full-time academic staff	
Year	Topic
1997	Household Formation and Egalitarian Gender Relations among the Buhket of Central Borneo
1998	Achievements and Challenges in the Struggle Against Violence Against Women in Malaysia
1999	Orang Asli Women and Men in Transition: A Study in Male and Female Adaptation to Development
1999	Transcending Gender Roles in the Domestic Realm: Some Emerging Trends among Malaysian Families
1999	Women and Work in the Information Age: Leveling the Playing Field in Malaysia?
2000	The Devolution of Egalitarian Gender Culture and its Consequences on Orang Asli Children's Gender Typing in the Urban Fringes.
2001	Mothers Matter: Orang Asli Maternal Health and the Future of the Next Generation
2001	A Study of Malay Women in Politics
2001	Juvenile Delinquency: A Study Report, Malaysia
2002	The Domestic Violence Act: Current Challenges to Malaysian Women
2002	The Rape Report - Malaysia
2002	The Women's Movement in Malaysia: A Historical Analysis
2002	Nyenang, the Ungendered Semai Supreme Being: Reclaiming the Eclipsed Feminine in the Sacred
2002	Single Mothers, Survivors of Domestic Violence: A Needs Assessment Survey
2003	The Inter-play of Gender, Development and Population Dynamics: Its Implications on Malaysian Women
2003	Work, Family and Gender in Malaysia: Women's Employment and its Consequences for the Economy and Family
2005	Boys Underachieving in Malaysia
2006	A Study on the Impact of Polygamy on the Quality of Family Life Among Muslims in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor, Malaysia
2006	National Research Project : A Study on the Impact of Polygamy on the Quality of Family Life Among Muslims, Malaysia
2007	Foreign Domestic Workers: Impact on Malaysian Families and Gender Relations
2007	A Study of Poverty, Economic Activities and Livelihood Strategies from a Gender Perspective in the Loagan Bunut National Park, Sarawak.
2007	The Impact of Gender Studies on Work, Life and Relationships: A Study of the Graduates of the Gender Studies Programme, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Malaya
2008	Fertility Decline and Transformation of Intimacy: A Comparative Study of Japan and Malaysia
2008/2010	Foreign Domestic Workers in Malaysia: Exploring the Intersections of Gender, Migration and Health
2008/2010	Obstacles to, Meaning and Implications of Full Ordination for Women in the Buddhist Theravadin Tradition in Malaysia
2009/2011	When Home is Networked for Work: A Study of ICT Enabled Home-based Work among Women in Malaysia
2009/2011	Migration and Social Change: A Comparative Study of Indian Plantation Workers In Malaysia and Mauritius.
2009/2011	Life History of Women Leaders

It is clear from the above that the Gender Studies Programme engages in multidisciplinary and inter-disciplinary research from the gender perspective. Most research projects are team-based with researchers coming from different disciplinary background. Both young and senior researchers are also involved in most of the research projects bringing diverse experiences and perspectives into the research they do.

Besides teaching and post-graduate supervision the Gender Studies Program also organizes seminars. The seminars organized by the GSP is a platform to bring together academics, undergraduate and postgraduate students, activists, civil servants and other interested parties to discuss, critique, and disseminate information on gender issues, democracy, globalization, politics, economics, social and cultural issues. Speakers at the Seminar Series are visiting professors, staff members, researches and postgraduate students. It is also used as a platform to present research findings and work in progress.

Networking and Linkages

International and Professional Organisations

The GSP networks with both local and international organizations that are tapped regularly for support. The international agencies that have supported GSP are Canadian Cooperative and Support Office (CIDA), Gender and Development Centre (APDC) and the Committee for International Co-operation in Higher Education (CICHE) under the British Council. The GSP networks with the Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLUML), ASEAN Gender Studies Network, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES). The local networks are the Joint-Action Group for Gender Equality (JAG), Bar Council, Centre for Poverty and Development Studies, Health Research Unit, Faculty of Medicine, UM (HERDU), National Network for Gender/Women's Studies (SAMA).

Community Activities

GSP provides training, seminars, workshops; it is involved in drafting memorandums, conducting gender analysis of national policies for the community and writing pre-budget dialogue session memorandums for non-governmental organizations. GSP has been invited to conduct training for the National Council of Women's Organisations (NCWO), Women's Aid Organisation (WAO), Empower, Women's Development Collective (WDC), National Youth Consultation (Bar Council and Youth for Change), INTAN and for the NAM Institute for the Empowerment of Women (NIEW) under the Ministry of Women, family and Community Development. There is a continuous need for gender training in the community and GSP is committed by engaging with the community and the state at every level.

Fiesta Feminista

A well-received, vibrant conference organized by the Joint-Action Group for Gender Equality (JAG) and GSP in 2007. This conference provided a platform for academics, students and activists to discuss issues ranging from patriarchy, human rights, development, neo-liberal globalization, fundamentalisms, democracy and ethnocentrism/xenophobia/racism. It was able to draw a large number of young volunteers and participants from various sectors of Malaysian society.

Student Activities

Gender Studies Club (GSC) is an initiative of students of GSP within the University of Malaya. The objective of this informal club is to build linkages, develop solidarity and a sense of community within the campus to discuss and exchange ideas pertaining to gender equality. The club organises Faculty "Hop", i.e. visits to other faculties to promote and share the gender perspective. GSC also organizes visits, get-togethers, fundraising and community work.

Some International Collaboration in Academic/Research Related Activities/Projects

1. JSPS-NRCT 2007 Core University Exchange Program, Centre for South East Asian Studies, University of Kyoto - Joint Research project 8 "The Changing Family" (February 2008) (Prof Yoko Hayami and Prof Junko Koizumi)
2. Foreign Domestic Workers in Malaysia: Exploring the Intersections of Gender, Migration and Health - Institute of Women's Studies & Institute of Population Health, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ottawa, Institute of Health Behavioral Research, Ministry of Health, Government of Malaysia, National University of Singapore
3. Fertility Decline and Transformation of Intimacy in Malaysia and Japan: A Comparative Study - The Nippon Foundation Fellowship for Asian Public Intellectuals, University of Kyoto and University of Tokyo

Policy Intervention and Impact

The Gender Studies Program at the University of Malaya does address national and regional women/gender in development issues in the curriculum especially in courses such as Gender and Development, Gender Issues in Non-governmental Organizations, Gender and Citizenship and Gender and the Law. The program will also contribute a course (Gender and Public Policy) towards the Masters in Public Policy Program offered by the Institute of Public Policy, University of Malaya and this course will also address national women/gender in development issues. The topics covered in the other courses encourage critical reflection on gender issues across a wide range of key aspects of our society, culture and everyday life.

For the last 5 years we have seen an increase in the interaction between the academic community, government and non-governmental organizations through consultations, seminars, workshops and student placements. The Gender Studies Program sits in three technical working committees. The Gender Studies Programme is a member of the Technical Working Group for the project "Towards Achieving at Least 30 per cent Participation of Women at Decision Making Levels in Malaysia" (Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development and UNDP, August 2007-November 2008), member of the Technical Working Committee of the NAM Institute

for the Empowerment of Women, Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development and member of the Technical and Steering Committee of the National Action Plan to Empower Single Mothers (Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development and UNDP, 2008-2009).

Besides that it also participated in the Expert Group Committee formed by the National Institute of Public Administration. This committee looks into preparing, coordinating and teaching courses designed by them for the training of members of the civil service and others in the gender perspective. The committee has developed two courses, one on "Managing Gender Issues in Economic Development" for international participants and "Gender Perspectives in Development Planning and Management" for national participants. Academic staffs of the program were also involved in the preparation of the draft document for the government report on the CEDAW.

The Gender Studies Program has also been involved in the writing of the Pre-Budget Dialogue Session Memorandum for the National Council of Women's Organizations (NCWO) that represented the women's Non-governmental organizations in the Pre-Budget Dialogue with the government. In addition, the Gender Studies Program was also involved in the writing of the CEDAW shadow report (article 11 and 13) and has been invited by NCWO to be in the civil society committee working on the next CEDAW shadow report. NCWO also commissioned the Gender Studies Programme to write a memorandum on Extending Maternity Leave from 60 days to 84 days in July 2007. In 2010 the Gender Studies Program was involved in the writing of the Millennium Development Goal (Goal 3 on Gender Equality and Empowering Women) for the UNDP and the Economic Planning Unit.

Challenges

Our greatest challenge has been the lack of human resources. This has been the Gender Studies Programme's greatest challenge since its inception. Without adequate human resources it has not been possible for the program to upgrade itself to the status of a department. However, applications for more staffs have been made and it is hoped that with adequate human resource the Gender Studies Programme will be upgraded to a department or an institute.

Another challenge faced by the programme is the lack of appreciation for the multidisciplinary nature of the programme. Although multidisciplinary research is welcomed but undergraduate teaching is still very much based on disciplines. Students and academics still hold strong to this position. This is in contrast to the encouragement other international universities offer for multidisciplinary programs.

Conclusion

The Gender Studies Program at the University of Malaya is the only Gender Studies Program in Malaysia that offers a comprehensive undergraduate teaching program

with the possibility of students obtaining a minor in Gender Studies. All other Women's/Gender Studies Programs are mostly Research Centers and Units that focuses on research while offering a few courses on women. The other universities in Malaysia that has women's studies programs are University Science Malaysia (USM),⁹ University Putra Malaysia (UPM),¹⁰ National University of Malaysia (UKM).

All these programs are approaching the institutionalization of the teaching of women's studies and gender studies differently. University Sciences Malaysia has adopted the integrationist model of women's studies and the teaching of women related courses are scattered in various departments. Women's studies was started in 1978 through the Kanita Project (Women and Children) and eventually became a centre. The Centre is focused on research. The approach adopted by University Putra Malaysia was to offer women's studies by linking it with applied research and was based in the Centre for Extension and Continuing Education, which was involved in teaching, research and community services, and the unit inevitably, had a more applied orientation. This approach allowed for the growth of post-graduate work in the area of women's studies. However, since 1997/1998 due to the restructuring of the university the Women's Studies Unit was downsized and moved to the Department of Professional Development and Continuing Education which offers only one course on Gender and Human Resource Development. The National University of Malaysia has recently started a Women's Study Unit and it is focused on research with some level of teaching. The University of Malaya offers gender studies as a minor option for students and it adopted the autonomous model, whereby academics from different disciplines offer courses under the gender studies banner. This autonomy has allowed multi and inter-disciplinary courses to flourish. This approach allows for gender studies to be recognized as an academic field in its own right, equal to other disciplines.¹¹ As a result, both students and academics have benefited.

Regardless of the approaches taken, it is the incorporation of women's experiences and the gender perspective in the university curriculum and research agenda that should be of central concern. This will provide knowledge that can be applied by individuals at the personal level, by policy makers, government, development agencies and others.

In spite of the difficulties and obstacles, Malaysian women and men have made progress in starting research projects, dialogues, initiatives and teaching programs on women's studies and gender studies by mobilizing their internal resource capability and by taking advantage of the opportunities provided by both international and national agencies.

Women's studies and gender studies in Malaysia has made headway slowly but steadily. As the number of women's studies and gender studies programs have proliferated, the number of courses offered at both the undergraduate and postgraduate levels have also expanded. While the future of women's studies and gender studies in Malaysia may look promising, it will continue to need the steadfast support and collaborative efforts of scholars and students to overcome the structural constraints that limit its due recognition in the Malaysian academy and society.

Academics, both women and men, need to continue to struggle to incorporate feminism and gender perspectives into their mainstream courses, which largely still remain impervious to this highly valuable knowledge and perspective.

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Notes

- ¹ The introduction to this paper is drawn from Thambiah (2000) p 86-87 and a large part of this paper is an updated version of Thambiah (2004).
- ² See the introduction to Rokiah Talib and Shanthi Thambiah (1998) p. viii
- ³ Jamilah Ariffin (1984) has discussed the impact of the International Women's Decade on the volume of research and studies on women since the 1970s. See also Nik Safiah Karim (1985a, 1985b)
- ⁴ Some of these writings are Amarjit Kaur 1989; Heyzer 1987, 1988; Hing Ai Yun 1984; Hing Ai Yun & Rokiah Talib 1986; Hong 1983; Maznah 1989; Ng Choon Sim 1987
- ⁵ See Mehrun (1989) for work on the legal status of women. On women's rights see Ng Choon Sim & Maznah (1986)
- ⁶ See Chee Heng Leng (1988) and Lee Siew Hoon (1984). See Jamilah Ariffin's reference bibliography (1991) for a more detailed account of writings and research on women and gender issues in Malaysia
- ⁷ Staff who teach only Women's/Gender Studies courses, full time.
- ⁸ Staff who teach Women's/Gender Studies as well as courses in other program, or who are employed part-time to teach Women's/Gender Studies courses.
- ⁹ See Wazir (1998) for more on the establishment of Women's Studies at Universiti Sains Malaysia
- ¹⁰ For further information on the history of women's studies at Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) formally known as Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Agricultural University of Malaysia) see Maimunah Ismail (1998).
- ¹¹ For more on this see Thambiah, Shanthi (2000). "Trends in Women's Studies and Gender Studies in Malaysia", *Journal of Asian Women's Studies, Kitakyushu Forum on Asian Women*. December 2000 Vol 9. pg 86-93