

African Minds Higher Education Dynamics Series Vol. 2

Student Politics in Africa: Representation and Activism

Edited by

Thierry M Luescher, Manja Klemenčič and James Otieno Jowi

**AFRICAN
MINDS**

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CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----|
| Acronyms and abbreviations | v |
| Acknowledgements | x |
| Foreword | xi |
| Chapter 1 Introduction <i>Thierry M Luescher, Manja Klemenčič and James Otieno Jowi</i> | 1 |
| Chapter 2 Student organising in African higher education: Polity, politics and policies <i>Manja Klemenčič, Thierry M Luescher and Taabo Mugume</i> | 9 |
| Chapter 3 Student representation in a context of democratisation and massification in Africa: Analytical approaches, theoretical perspectives and #RhodesMustFall <i>Thierry M Luescher</i> | 27 |
| Chapter 4 The evolving nature of student participation in university governance in Africa: An overview of policies, trends and emerging issues <i>Ibrahim Oanda</i> | 61 |
| Chapter 5 The three ages of student politics in Francophone Africa: Learning from the cases of Senegal and Burkina Faso <i>Pascal Bianchini</i> | 85 |
| Chapter 6 Revisiting student participation in higher education governance at the University of Buea, Cameroon: 2004–2013 <i>Samuel N Fongwa and Godlove N Chifon</i> | 109 |

| | | |
|-------------------|---|-----|
| Chapter 7 | Student participation in the governance of Ethiopian higher education institutions: The case of Addis Ababa University <i>Bekele Workie Ayele</i> | 130 |
| Chapter 8 | Private higher education and student representation in Uganda: A comparative analysis of Makerere University and Uganda Christian University <i>Taabo Mugume and Mesharch W Katusiimeh</i> | 162 |
| Chapter 9 | Student actions against paradoxical post-apartheid higher education policy in South Africa: The case of the University of the Western Cape <i>Mlungisi BG Cele, Thierry M Luescher and Teresa Barnes</i> | 182 |
| Chapter 10 | The University of Burundi and student organisations: Governance system, political development and student representation <i>Gérard Birantamije</i> | 202 |
| Chapter 11 | Politicisation of the National Union of Ghana Students and its effects on student representation <i>Ransford EV Gyampo, Emmanuel Debrah and Evans Aggrey-Darkoh</i> | 224 |
| Chapter 12 | Conclusion <i>James Otieno Jowi</i> | 244 |
| Epilogue | Students, politics and universities: In search of interpretive schemes for the 21st century <i>Lis Lange</i> | 249 |
| | About the authors | 252 |
| | Index | 257 |

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|--------|--|
| AAU | Addis Ababa University |
| AEF | <i>Afrique équatoriale française</i> |
| AEOM | <i>Association des étudiants originaires de Madagascar</i> |
| AESF | <i>Association des étudiants sénégalais en France</i> |
| AEVF | <i>Association des étudiants voltaïques en France</i> |
| AEVO | <i>Association des étudiants voltaïques de Ouagadougou</i> |
| ADDEC | <i>Association pour la défense de droits des étudiants du Cameroon</i> |
| AGED | <i>Association générale des étudiants de Dakar</i> |
| AIDS | Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome |
| AMEAN | <i>Association musulmane des étudiants d'Afrique noire</i> |
| ANC | African National Congress |
| ANEB | <i>Association nationale des étudiants burkinabé</i> |
| AOF | <i>Afrique occidentale française</i> |
| ASSER | <i>Association des étudiants de Rumuri</i> |
| ASV | <i>Association des scolaires voltaïques de Dakar</i> |
| AUC | African Union Commission |
| BA | Bachelor of Arts |
| BAdmin | Bachelor of Administration |
| BCom | Bachelor of Commerce |
| BLib | Bachelor of Library Science |
| BPharm | Bachelor of Pharmacy |
| BSc | Bachelor of Science |
| BIF | Burundian Franc |
| BMD | Bachelor-Master-Doctorate |
| BSU | Botswana Student Union |
| CC | Central Committee |
| CCM | <i>Chama Cha Mapinduzi</i> |
| CCNY | Carnegie Corporation of New York |

| | |
|----------|--|
| CDP | <i>Congrès pour la démocratie et le progress</i> |
| CED | <i>Coordination des étudiants de Dakar</i> |
| CERFOPAX | <i>Centre de recherche et de formation pour la paix</i> |
| CESUP | <i>Centre d'études supérieures</i> |
| CDR | <i>Comité de défense de la Révolution</i> |
| CHET | Centre for Higher Education Trust |
| CFA | Central African Republic Franc |
| CGER | <i>Cercle général des étudiants de Rumuri</i> |
| CGT-B | <i>Confédération générale du travail du Burkina</i> |
| CMPRN | <i>Comité pour le redressement patriotique et le salut national</i> |
| CNTS | <i>Confédération nationale des travailleurs du Sénégal</i> |
| CODESRIA | Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa |
| CODMPP | <i>Collectif des organisations démocratiques de masses et de partis politiques</i> |
| CPP | Convention People's Party |
| CSV | <i>Confédération des syndicats voltaïques</i> |
| CUE | Commission for Universities Education |
| DARUSO | Dar es Salaam University Students' Organization |
| DUSO | Dar es Salaam University Students' Organization |
| ENA | <i>Ecole nationale d'administration</i> |
| ENS | <i>Ecole normale supérieure</i> |
| EPRDF | Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front |
| ESU | European Students' Union |
| FEANF | <i>Fédération des étudiants d'Afrique noire en France</i> |
| FELD | <i>Fédération des étudiants libres de Dakar</i> |
| FER | <i>Fraternité des étudiants de Rumuri</i> |
| FESCI | <i>Fédération des étudiants et scolaires de Côte d'Ivoire</i> |
| FLN | <i>Front de libération nationale</i> |
| FPI | <i>Front populaire Ivoirien</i> |
| GCSU | Gold Coast Students' Union |
| GER | Gross Enrolment Ratio |
| GET Fund | Ghana Education Trust Fund |
| GNSO | Ghana National Students' Organisation |
| GNUPS | Ghana National Union of Polytechnic Students |
| GPA | Grade Point Average |
| GRASAG | Graduate Students Association of Ghana |
| GRC | Guild Representative Council |
| GUPS | Ghana Union of Professional Students |
| HEI | Higher education institution |
| HELP | Higher Education in Africa Leadership Programme |
| HERANA | Higher Education Research and Advocacy Network in Africa |
| ICT | Information and Communication Technology |

| | |
|------------|--|
| IEA | Institute of Economic Affairs |
| IHED | <i>Institute des hautes études de Dakar</i> |
| IMF | International Monetary Fund |
| ISSER | Institute of Statistical Social and Economic Research |
| IUIU | Islamic University in Uganda |
| KUSA | Kenya University Students' Association |
| LLB | Bachelor of Law |
| MAK | Makerere University |
| MBDHP | <i>Mouvement burkinabé des droits de l'homme et des peuples</i> |
| MEEL | <i>Mouvement des étudiants et élèves libéraux</i> |
| MEOCAM | <i>Mouvement des étudiants de l'organisation commune africaine et malgache</i> |
| MLN | <i>Mouvement de libération nationale</i> |
| MoE | Ministry of Education |
| MoFED | Ministry of Finance and Economic Development |
| MUPSA | Makerere University Private Students Association |
| MUWATA | <i>Muungano wa Wanafunzi Tanzania</i> |
| NASSO | National Association of Socialist Students' Organisations |
| NCHE | National Commission on Higher Education |
| NEC | National Executive Committee |
| NDC | National Democratic Congress |
| NPP | New Patriotic Party |
| NPU | Nigerian Progress Union |
| NRM | National Resistance Movement |
| NSFAS | National Students Financial Aid Scheme |
| NUGS | National Union of Ghana Students |
| NUSO | Nairobi University Student Organisation |
| OCAU | <i>Office de coopération et d'accueil universitaire</i> |
| OCV | <i>Organisation communiste voltaïque</i> |
| ODJ | <i>Organisation démocratique de la jeunesse</i> |
| OSPHERA | Observatory of Student Politics and Higher Education Research in Africa |
| OUB | Official University of Bujumbura |
| PAI | <i>Parti africain de l'indépendance</i> |
| PALIPEHUTU | <i>Parti pour la libération du peuple Hutu</i> |
| PCD | Communist Party of Dahomey |
| PCRV | <i>Parti communiste révolutionnaire voltaïque</i> |
| PDS | <i>Parti démocratique sénégalais</i> |
| PRA | <i>Parti du regroupement africain</i> |
| RDA | <i>Rassemblement démocratique africain</i> |
| RDR | <i>Rassemblement des démocrates républicains</i> |
| RNDP | <i>Révolution nationale démocratique et populaire</i> |

| | |
|------------|--|
| RSRCs | Regional SRCs of senior high schools |
| SAP | Structural Adjustment Programme |
| SAPA | South African Press Association |
| SASCO | South African Students Congress |
| SAUS | South African Union of Students |
| SC | Student Council |
| SCM | Student Credit Management |
| SCNC | Southern Cameroons National Council |
| SDF | Social Democratic Front |
| SES | <i>Syndicat des enseignants du Sénégal</i> |
| SET | Science, Engineering and Technology |
| SHE | Studies in Higher Education |
| SLTF | Student Loan Trust Fund |
| SONU | Student Organisation of Nairobi University |
| SRC | Student Representative Council |
| SSNIT | Social Security and National Insurance Trust |
| SU | Student Union |
| SUL | Student Union Legislation |
| SUVESS | <i>Syndicat unique voltaïque de l'enseignement secondaire et supérieur</i> |
| SYNTER | <i>Syndicat des travailleurs de l'enseignement et de la recherche</i> |
| SYNTRAGMIH | <i>Syndicat des travailleurs de la géologie des mines et hydrocarbures</i> |
| SYNTSHA | <i>Syndicat des travailleurs de la santé humaine et animale</i> |
| TANU | Tanganyika African National Union |
| TCU | Tanzania Commission for Universities |
| TEIN | Tertiary Educational Institution Network |
| TESCON | Tertiary Education Students Confederacy |
| TTAG | Teacher Trainees Association of Ghana |
| TYL | Tanzania Youth League |
| UAD | Union of African Descent |
| UB | University of Burundi |
| UB | University of Buea |
| UBSU | University of Buea Student Union |
| UCU | Uganda Christian University |
| UCAA | University College of Addis Ababa |
| UCT | University of Cape Town |
| UDES | <i>Union démocratique des étudiants du Sénégal</i> |
| UDSM | University of Dar es Salaam |
| UED | <i>Union des étudiants de Dakar</i> |
| UGAG | Unemployed Graduates Association of Ghana |
| UGEAO | <i>Union générale des étudiants de l'Afrique de l'Ouest</i> |
| UGEMA | <i>Union générale des étudiants musulmans d'Algérie</i> |

| | |
|--------|--|
| UG | University of Ghana |
| UGER | <i>Union Générale des Etudiants de Rumuri</i> |
| UGEV | <i>Union générale des étudiants voltaïques</i> |
| UK | United Kingdom |
| ULC | <i>Union des luttes communistes</i> |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNAPES | <i>Union nationale patriotique des étudiants du Sénégal</i> |
| UNCHE | Uganda National Council for Higher Education |
| UNEBA | <i>Union Nationale des Etudiants Barundi</i> |
| UNEEM | <i>Union nationale des élèves et des étudiants du Mali</i> |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| UniYao | University of Yaoundé |
| UNTS | <i>Union nationale des travailleurs du Sénégal</i> |
| UON | University of Nairobi |
| UPC | <i>Union des populations du Cameroun</i> |
| UPC | <i>Union pour le changement</i> |
| UPRONA | <i>Union pour le Progrès national</i> |
| UPS | <i>Union progressive sénégalaise</i> |
| USA | United States of America |
| USAG | University Students Association of Ghana |
| USARF | University Students African Revolutionary Front |
| USD | United States Dollar |
| USL | University Senate Legislation |
| USN | <i>Union des scolaires nigériens</i> |
| UWC | University of the Western Cape |
| VC | Vice-chancellor |
| WASU | West African Students' Union |
| ZINASU | Zimbabwe National Students' Union |

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The realisation of the project *Student Representation in Higher Education Governance in Africa*, the related authors' symposium and workshop, and eventually the publication and launch of the book *Student Politics in Africa: Representation and Activism* and its companion publication, the special issue 'Student Power in Africa' of the *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa* (Vol. 3, Issue 1, 2015), would not have been possible without the encouragement, scholarly advice, and funding provided by the Carnegie Corporation of New York (CCNY Grant Number: D 14034) and particularly by Prof. Tade Akin Aina and Ms Claudia Frittelli.

We are also indebted to a good number of higher education experts, workshop facilitators, speakers and presenters who participated in the August 2014 symposium and workshop in Cape Town, which brought the authors together to discuss their proposals and draft papers and to agree on a number of common concepts, perspectives and concerns. Our thanks go to the presenters of special contributions, in particular Dr Leo Zeilig, Ms Eve Gray, Prof. Nico Cloete, Ms Felicity Gallagher and Mr François van Schalkwyk. We would also like to thank Ms Angela Mias for the organisation and administration of the symposium and workshop.

Lastly, our thanks go to the series editors of *African Higher Education Dynamics* and the anonymous reviewers of the book manuscript for their critical comments and support.

This project started with a call for papers in 2013, followed by ongoing extensive collaboration between authors and editors. While the symposium and workshop mentioned above presented an opportunity to meet physically, there was ongoing collaboration using the internet, Dropbox, Skype and email. We are pleased that the project has resulted in a new network of emerging and established African higher education researchers who are working in universities across the continent as well as in the diaspora, and that this network is continuing and expanding in the form of a virtual research centre, the *Observatory of Student Politics and Higher Education Research in Africa* (www.osphera.net).

The Editors

FOREWORD

THE IMPORTANCE AND COMPLEXITY OF STUDENTS IN POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE

*Philip G. Altbach*¹

Universities would not exist without students. Students are at the heart of the academic enterprise. It is worth remembering that some of the earliest universities, in medieval Italy, were established and managed by students. In the 21st century, in the era of massification, students are often seen as burdens, customers, or sources of income, but seldom as the key rationale for the university.

Carefully examining the appropriate role for students in universities is necessary in a period of dramatic and often traumatic change for higher education, but is not an easy task. It is worth noting that in history the concept of ‘student power’ has not been a dominant force. In the medieval period in Europe, the struggle between the idea of the student-run universities in Italy and the faculty-dominated universities in Paris and elsewhere was won decisively by faculty power. Students were simply unable to provide the leadership and long-range perspective needed.

In modern history, ‘student power’ has had a complex international history. Student participation in university governance in Latin America was institutionalised in the Argentine Reform movement of 1918 that eventually affected most of the public universities on the continent. It was only the military dictatorships of the 1960s that weakened Latin American student power in some countries. The student movements of the 1960s in many countries introduced or strengthened student participation in governance – for example in Germany and a number of other continental European nations. Although there were powerful student activist movements in such countries as the United States, the United Kingdom, Japan, and others, there was little impact on governance and students did not gain significant participation. It is also significant that universities in all European countries rolled back the reforms of the 1960s, and today students in general have a voice, but not major power in governance.

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With very few exceptions, students have little, if any, power over basic academic decisions in universities worldwide. In many universities, students have significant control over student life, including organisations that control considerable funds and the power to determine student services.

What is the relevance of this discussion for Africa? As the research in this volume shows, there are a range of traditions of student activism and student participation in governance in Africa, and quite significant involvement in both campus and national politics. In some countries, students have led the overthrow of regimes – and unlike in many other parts of the world, students still have a significant political potential. In parts of Africa, there is also a tradition of providing students not only with free tuition but also very inexpensive access to living accommodation and food. Students often do not give up these perks easily – and yet it is clear that governments can no longer afford to provide these benefits to the growing student body.

Africa is the only region of the world where massification is in its early stages. However, one can already see the ramifications with the expansion of the private higher education sector, deterioration in some countries of quality in the public universities, and financial pressures everywhere. The realities of massification affect students in profound ways – continuing pressures on quality, the introduction or raising of tuition in the public universities, and the continued expansion of an often low-quality private sector. How are students reacting to these changes?

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Thierry M Luescher, Manja Klemenčič and James Otieno Jowi

The purpose of the project *Student Representation in Higher Education Governance in Africa* is to map out and compare across the African continent recent changes in the higher education landscape overall and the different models of how students as a collective body are organised on both institutional and national levels; how their interests are aggregated, articulated and intermediated into institutional and national policy processes; and what the role of political parties and other social groups is in student representation.

This book brings together the work of eighteen scholars working on questions of higher education development, governance, and student politics in Africa. Most are early career African academics who are using the opportunity of this project to network with peers and hone analytical writing and publishing skills. Following an open call for proposals in December 2013, we received over twenty abstracts and eventually draft chapters which we thoroughly reviewed and individually engaged the authors on, making extensive comments, providing access to local and international literature and advising them on conceptual, analytical and methodological approaches to guide their studies. In August 2014, the group of authors and editors met for a three-day symposium and workshop in Cape Town, South Africa, presenting to each other our respective work, reviewing each other's contributions, and discussing the key cross-cutting issues emanating from them to present in this book, as well as its companion publication, the special issue of the *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa* entitled 'Student Power in Africa' (Vol. 3, Issue 1, 2015).

Originally, the core research questions we asked the authors were: First, how has the expansion of higher education in Africa, the massification of existing public institutions, admission of private students and in some institutions the creation of 'parallel' student bodies, as well as the mushrooming of private higher education institutions across the continent, affected student representation in different countries on systemic and institutional level? Second, how do campus-based and national student representative organisations relate to political parties and/or social groups and cleavages in society (e.g. regional, religious, ethnic)? How do they uphold their organisational autonomy and legitimacy to represent the student voice? Who are their members? Where do they get their financial and other resources from? What resources do they have? How do they fare in managing these resources to the benefit of students?

Collectively we have addressed these questions by means of theoretical work, overview chapters on historical developments in student politics in Africa, as well as single-university case studies (as in the chapters on student participation in the University of Buea in Cameroon and the University of Addis Ababa in Ethiopia) and comparative studies (such as the comparative study between Makerere University and the Ugandan Christian University in Uganda). In addition, there are several in-depth studies on national student organisations like the National Union of Ghana Students. The chapters in this book thus represent a combination of collective coordination and discussion and the individual work of their authors; they have been developed from original empirical and theoretical studies, engaging with the core questions individually and collaboratively in their respective ways.

Our work as editors and that of the authors has also been cognisant of and informed by recent empirical and theoretical work conducted in various other projects, including CODESRIA's investigations into higher education governance in east, west and southern Africa, the studies done by the HERANA Network on higher education and democracy and the Centre for Higher Education Transformation on student leadership, student engagement and citizenship competences in Africa (cf. Cloete et al. 2015). We have also been inspired by the publication of recent special issues on student representation of the *European Journal of Higher Education* on student representation in Europe (Vol. 2, Issue 1, 2012) and of *Studies in Higher Education* on student representation in a global perspective (Vol. 39, Issue 3, 2014).

The project is first and foremost an opportunity to produce new knowledge on the politics of students in Africa; a means to empirically investigate student representation in the African context and to further develop key concepts, analytical approaches and theoretical frameworks for studying student representation in the African context and beyond, taking into consideration the different characteristics of higher education systems, institutions, and traditions of student representation in this context. In this respect, it is not only meant to 'document' student representation in African higher education governance at this juncture but also to contribute to the growing body of literature focusing on students' political agency, on the institutionalised forms of student political behaviour, and on key questions confronting higher education in Africa against a context of democratic consolidation and higher education massification.

The book is structured in twelve chapters. The chapter by Manja Klemenčič, Thierry Luescher and Taabo Mugume addresses itself to the key conduits of student organising and representation: student governments and national student organisations. It analyses student organising in relation to higher education polity, the structures and processes of higher education governance and the place of students therein; the politics of student representation, student representative organisations and student leadership, as well as different types of national student representative organisations. The chapter concludes by looking at students' influence in making 'student-friendly' policies, the relation between student protests and formal representation, and finally the policy recommendations from the 2015 African Higher Education Summit and their implication for student politics.

Chapter 3 by Thierry Luescher accounts for key concepts, analytical approaches and theoretical perspectives available to the study of student politics and student representation. It starts with a discussion of the macro-context of an emerging massification of higher education in Africa, analysing the challenges that arise from it for student representation. It then presents the theoretical work of Altbach (1965–2005), Clark (1978), Epstein (1974), Olsen (2005), Trow (2006) and others, on student politics and higher education governance, arguing for a theoretically rich engagement with the topic (cf. Chapter 3). Luescher concludes the chapter with reference to the 2015 #RhodesMustFall protests at the University of Cape Town to illustrate the relevance of this conceptual tool for understanding contemporary student politics in Africa.

The chapter by Ibrahim Oanda analyses trends in the historical evolution of policies and practices for student participation in African universities. It draws on research conducted as part of the CODESRIA Higher Education in Africa Leadership Programme, examining the institutional structures to support student participation in university governance, sources of funding, and influence of students' voice in management decisions across the continent and with specific reference to Ghana, Kenya, and Tanzania. Oanda's analysis covers the historical context within which student participation in university governance in Africa has evolved: the dynamics of student participation in the 1970s when African universities increasingly became national projects; the period from the 1980s and higher education during economic crisis and structural adjustment; and the 1990s as a period of higher education revitalisation, expansion, privatisation and commercialisation. The chapter concludes with analysing the current state of student representation in African universities and challenges to effective student representation in the context of the ongoing expansion and differentiation of higher education in Africa.

Pascal Bianchini's chapter takes a similar longitudinal approach to student politics in Africa, but focuses on student movements and the experience in Francophone Africa, especially in Burkina Faso and Senegal. His analysis issues in three periods which he respectively calls the age of anti-colonialism from the early 1950s to the early 1960s; the age of anti-imperialism from the late 1960s to the early 1980s; and the age of anti-SAP and pro-democracy struggles of the 1990s and beyond, during which student movements in Africa provided inter alia a 'political barometer of a general atmosphere'. The comparative analysis reveals important variation between Senegal and Burkina Faso in terms of student movements' counter-hegemonic action and governmental responses of repression and negotiation – involving efforts to corrupt student leadership as well as the use of authoritarian methods which do not bode well for the 'generative functions' of student politics. With reference to the current context Bianchini argues:

A decade later, the picture remains ambiguous. Students' protests in Francophone sub-Saharan countries are still chronic not to say permanent. No matter what the governmental answers (i.e. repression or negotiation), universities are still battlegrounds for generations coming of age. However these mobilisations seem to have a lesser

impact on political systems than in the previous decades, especially before the era of massification and pauperisation of the student body. (Bianchini 2016: 103)

Chapter 5 concludes the section of overview chapters of the book. Chapters 6–11 provide more in-depth studies of student representation in specific national, institutional or organisational contexts.

The chapter by Sam Fongwa and Godlove Chifon analyses student participation in university governance at the case of the University of Buea, Cameroon. It starts with a broad historical overview of higher education governance and student politics in Cameroon and a review of previous research on student activism in that context. In its core section, the chapter analyses the transition from a central student body to the current form of student representation and its implications for student representation in university governance at the University of Buea in the period from 2004 to 2013. The authors argue that

student participation in university governance continues to be fraught by external factors such as local and national political dynamics as well as ethno-regional battles. [Moreover, there is] a significant lack of cordial dialogue between the students and administration. (Fongwa & Chifon 2016: 125)

Fongwa and Chifon argue that the absence of dialogue between student leadership and university administration, leadership authoritarianism and the use of force, perpetuate a student political culture of violent protest. The chapter also confirms earlier findings that student politics in Cameroon continues to be affected by ethno-regional factionalism – compounded by the Anglophone-Francophone divide in the country. Perhaps it is due to this sensitive political terrain that student leaders at University of Buea seem to have managed to somewhat ‘insulate’ the student union from the influence of political parties.

Chapter 7 by Bekele Workie Ayele presents an in-depth mixed methods study of the participation of the student union in the governance of the Addis Ababa University in Ethiopia. He addresses the questions how the student union participates, how it relates to political parties, and how it upholds its legitimacy by using Olsen’s framework of four ‘visions’ of the university (compare Chapter 3). His study finds a widespread exclusion of students from participation in decision-making. Moreover, student representation at AAU appears to be marred by a practice whereby university authorities ‘select’ the student leadership in such a way as to exclude students who sympathise with opposition parties. Ayele also finds challenges with regard to ethnic divisions in student organising; a lack of communication and internal deliberation; a lack of resources and perceptions of leadership corruption. These and other challenges produce a general ‘deficit of legitimacy’ for the student union to be able to effectively represent students. Thus, overall he concludes that the participation of students in the governance of AAU has been left at the margins, in keeping with Olsen’s governance model of a university as a national instrument.

An insightful comparison of student representation in a well-established African flagship university and a private university is provided in Chapter 8 at the cases of Makerere University and the Uganda Christian University (UCU) in Uganda. Mugume and Katusiimeh show the differences between student representative structures in the two universities; the extent to which a relationship between student leadership and national political parties is either tolerated or suppressed; and the consequences of this relationship for the representation of student interests. Most importantly, the authors examine in detail how the emergence of private (i.e. self-funded rather than government-sponsored) students in public and private higher education has shaped student representation. They find that the politics of private students has indeed affected student representation in various ways: new student organisations were set up by private students (such as the Makerere University Private Students' Association) which have reshaped the structures and the scope of student representation in dialogue with the student guild; student claim-making has become more focused on the interests of private students; political activism has decreased since fee-paying students seem to fear questioning or challenging university management; and therefore, student politics has lost some of its visibility. Mugume and Katusiimeh also show how the re-institution of multi-party politics in Uganda is being handled in the two different institutions and its consequences for student representation. While at Makerere multi-party competition in student guild election is institutionalised, political parties are barred from contesting student elections at UCU which, according to the authors, may be the reason why ethnic-based, so-called 'tribal' student associations have come to play a bigger part in choosing student leaders at UCU.

The chapter by Mlungisi Cele, Thierry Luescher and Terri Barnes applies Cele's analytical framework of four types of student actions to a milestone wave of protests and its aftermath at the University of the Western Cape in South Africa. Cele et al. argue that the simultaneous pursuit of a massive expansion of higher education for black students in post-apartheid South Africa, which in effect meant creating opportunities of access for historically disadvantaged students who came mostly from working class and poor backgrounds, and a government-imposed commitment to fiscal austerity reflected in the rejection of free higher education provision, the continuation of a cost-sharing policy with only limited financial aid provisions, represented a policy paradox which further deepened and compounded challenges of financial sustainability and student affordability at that university in the mid-1990s. They argue that students challenged the effects of the paradox in student life through a range of actions vacillating between collective protest and negotiation, as well as individual 'survivalist' strategies. The authors show how through prolonged engagement between the university leadership and student leaders, an innovative institutional solution was found ahead of the establishment of the South African National Students Financial Aid Scheme.

The next two chapters analyse in detail two student organisations of national significance in Burundi and Ghana. In Chapter 10, Gérard Birantamije investigates student participation in the governance of the University of Burundi and the role that the university's student union, the *Association des Etudiants de Rumuri* (ASSER/Association of Rumuri Students), has played

in national politics in Burundi. Birantamije highlight's ASSER's important role in defending both students' and general Burundian interests with regard to higher education policies and through positions it has taken on public policy. He argues that student representation in decision-making on all levels of the University of Burundi engendered both efficiency and efficacy in governing the university, and established within student organisations the basis for student leadership skills on higher education governance matters. In this way, the student organisation has also provided a privileged space for building a national leadership.

The chapter by Gyampo, Debrah and Aggrey-Darkoh shows that in the case of the National Union of Ghana Students (NUGS) the influence of multiparty politics on the form and content of student interest representation in institutional and national higher education policy-making. They find that the partisan 'politicisation' of student politics in Ghana changed student interest representation in so far as leaders have apparently become more loyal to the interests of political parties than to those of their student constituency. This, they argue, has produced a double-edged effect: on the one hand, it has undermined the radical expression of student interests; on the other hand, it has also fostered a gradual institutionalisation of dialogue, negotiations, collaborations and compromises as an alternative form of achieving student representation in Ghana. Partisanship has thus enhanced student leaders' ability to secure some relief and yielded some favourable policies for students; however, it has also narrowed NUGS' leverage within the political landscape, which in turn has raised questions regarding the legitimacy of the national student organisation to articulate and represent the views and interest of students in Ghana.

Collectively a number of issues emerge as significant for understanding student representation in African higher education governance at this juncture. Firstly, it is quite clear that the topic of student representation is still elusive of a common conceptual or theoretical core. This may be a good thing for growing the scholarly discourse in the field. The diversity of conceptualisation and operationalisation of key issues leaves the field a wide area of interdisciplinary inquiry. There are, however, some common analytical approaches: the understanding of higher education governance as a multi-level system of structures and processes within which student representation operates and related to that the stakeholder approach to analysing student political behaviour and focus on the role of student organisations and their organisational characteristics. Furthermore, it is clear that student politics and its relation with higher education governance needs to be contextualised with even more rigour.

The literature surveys done by the authors show that student representation in higher education governance is an area largely ignored in African higher education studies, hence the timeliness of this book. There are national systems and institutions on which much more is known than others, especially with respect to the extent to which government and institutional policies have been shaped by the influence of students. There are also certain student organisations that have been subject to much more scholarly attention than others. We hope that this book goes some way in addressing these gaps.

There are broad trends discernible from the studies published here. For instance, while

student politics and representation in the earlier years was hinged on ideology, the marketisation of African higher education in the last two decades has apparently led to a ‘dearth of ideology’ in student politics. The two periodisations of student politics in Africa included in Chapters 3 and 4 show similar histories but different transformations, especially after the experience of structural adjustment in the late 1980s and 1990s. Thus, while there appears to be a ‘grand narrative’ of African student political history, the story gets more interesting and diverse in the debates beyond the 1990s. Nonetheless, several chapters bring contemporary developments and shifts in institutional governance to the fore that suggest elements of a common present and future. There are several case studies that show how the marketisation of higher education in Africa, and especially the admission of private (fee-paying) students has brought new dynamics into institutional governance which permeate with stealth student participation in governance. Many chapters also showcase the penetration of national politics and growing influence of dominant political parties in student representation. They will continue shaping student politics in Africa in the coming years. Thus, on the one hand we find a partisan politicisation of student politics on the leadership and organisational level; on the other hand we observe a ‘de-politicisation’ of the student body in general, led perhaps by the growing influence of private students, involving a certain lack of political engagement or even political apathy. Finally, identity politics still plays an important role: issues such as ethnicity and religion come out clearly as having impacts, in most cases negative, on student leadership and governance. How different student representative organisations will respond to these developments is likely to further hone typologies of student representative organisations such as the one proposed by Klemenčič.

Another topic frequently mentioned in the case studies are so-called institutional ‘incentives’ to student leaders – often with the intent to co-opt them rather than to make them more effective representatives of the student interest. We have therefore paid some attention to the organisation of student representation and limitations on autonomy of student representative associations. The book shows that formal provisions for student representation are not always granted by law, but need to be negotiated and therefore result in very different practices across countries and institutions. This is linked to the question whether student representatives are perceived as legitimate intermediators of the student interest and honest brokers in negotiating the future of African higher education. What are we to make of wide-spread perceptions of corruption? Are they based in actual observed corrupt practices or do they precisely arise from the paternalistic, authoritarian relations that curb student leaders’ influence, rendering student leaders ineffective and unresponsive to students’ concerns? Furthermore, several chapters talk to the dynamic interaction between student protest and student representation – on institutional and national levels. To what extent is the former a symptom of the ineffectiveness of the latter? While Cele provides a suggestive heuristic framework of different student actions, Klemenčič shows that there are different ‘modes’ of interest representation at play – are they equally effective?

Further studies will also need to consider influences on student representation that have

not been sufficiently covered here. Among these developments, the most significant is likely the long-term impact of the ICT revolution on politics and higher education in Africa in general, and on student political organising in particular. Smartphones, tablets and laptops have become ubiquitous in student life on African university campuses; even where Wi-Fi is patchy and mobile data bundles are costly, they are both a status symbol and an essential tool for accessing information and networking with classmates and friends. What will happen to African student politics – indeed youth politics – once student organising has caught up with the opportunities for political conscientising and mobilising offered by social networks? Luescher's brief overview of the #RhodesMustFall protests at the University of Cape Town gives an early indication; the subsequent nation-wide protests under the banner of #FeesMustFall have shown that student mobilising in cyberspace – and thus the emergence of internet student movements – have become a reality in Africa. Will the overall outcomes be for the better? It is painful in this respect that we have not managed to get contributions from North Africa which would have shed light on these questions with regard to the 'Arab Spring' revolutions (cf. Castells 2015).

We hope that this book will make an important contribution to our understanding of higher education governance, student politics and student representation in Africa.

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CHAPTER 2

STUDENT ORGANISING IN AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION: POLITY, POLITICS AND POLICIES

Manja Klemenčič, Thierry M Luescher and Taabo Mugume

Introduction

Student representation is typically seen as one of the key aspects of higher education governance across the globe, and it is essential for a full understanding of the higher education polity, politics and policies. Student representative bodies, variably called student associations, councils, guilds, unions or governments have the primary aim to represent and defend the interests of the student body. All of these student organisations are similar in that they organise, aggregate, articulate and intermediate student interests, along with providing various services and organising student activities (Klemenčič 2012). Student governments have historically played a visible role in governance of higher education institutions which has become particularly prominent with the Cordoba revolts in Latin America in the 1910s and since the 1960s revolts in Western Europe and North America. In Africa, they have played an important role in challenging colonial rule and authoritarian governments across the continent (Altbach 1983; Luescher-Mamashela & Mugume 2014; Munene 2003). As a result, the state frequently intervened in student organising by imposing one compulsory national student organisation with a deliberate representational monopoly and fully controlled by the regime (e.g. Bianchini 2016: Chapter 5; Boahen 1994). After Africa's 'second liberation' and the re-introduction of multi-party democracy in a large number of countries in the course of the 1990s, some universities shifted from a government-controlled bureaucratic to a more democratic collegial model of university governance, which naturally accommodates student representation and typically also provides for the existence of representative student associations. In South Africa, for example, this has been conceptualised in post-apartheid higher education policy in terms of a philosophy of 'co-operative governance' (Hall et al. 2004), which ensures that student representation is extended across all institutions on the level of institutional governing bodies

and their committee structures, and on system level in bodies such as the boards of the National Student Financial Aid Scheme and the Higher Education Quality Committee and in the Council on Higher Education.

Moreover, in the course of the macro-political developments of the 1990s and early 2000s across the continent, representative student associations in many African nations have had to re-position themselves in relation to liberal-democratic multi-party politics. This occurred either by embracing partisan politics or asserting their autonomy from political parties, be it on the national level and with associate branches at higher education institutions or independently on the institutional level, where especially the student representative councils (SRCs) or guilds of the prestigious national flagship universities¹ continue to have nationwide political appeal and sway. In some countries, multi-party politics occasionally wreaked havoc with student representation so that any expression of partisanship became prohibited, as in Tanzania with the 2005 Universities Act, or in South Africa by means of changes to SRC constitutions in some universities (Luescher-Mamashela & Mugume 2014).

A much varied picture of stipulations in higher education legislation as well as institutional acts and statutes regarding the formal involvement of students in national policy-making is evident. Only in a few African countries are there explicit provisions for a national student representative organisation. Their relation to higher education governance structures, such as a ministerial advisory body, quality assurance agency or student loan board, is often not explicitly legislated, even if there is provision for student representation (Bailey 2015). Similarly, there is much variation across countries in explicit legislation of the extent of involvement of student representatives on institutional and sub-institutional levels of university governance.

Related to the question of the extent of student representation on institutional and national levels is also that of the legitimacy and autonomy of student representative associations, including their resourcing and capacity and the actual influence that student representatives wield in policy-making. While some student representatives may view formal representation in governance structures and committees as a learning opportunity or an ‘opportunity for self-expression’, rubbing shoulders in ‘proximity of adult policy makers’; more activist students may seek more than a ‘voice’ and rather see the task of student organising in ‘making a difference in the world through collective effort’ (Taft & Gordon 2013: 94). The legitimacy of student representation and representative organisations is therefore not only a matter of legislated involvement; it has to contend with substantive outcomes, insisting that formal student participation in higher education governance is more than a means to co-opt and ‘tame’ dissent, but a real opportunity to express student power (Brooks et al. 2015; Taft & Gordon 2013). The dynamic relationship between student representation and student protests – the

1 African flagship universities have several typical characteristics: they are usually the oldest university or ‘mother university’ of a country; they typically are the most prestigious institution historically and have been responsible for the production and reproduction of the political and socio-economic elite, and they aim to be the leading developmental and knowledge-producing institutions in their country (Bunting et al. 2015). The notion of ‘flagship university’ has been elaborated in greater detail beyond the African context in Douglass (2014, 2015).

formal and informal expression of student interests – is precisely symptomatic of the effectiveness of different forms of and the responsiveness of the ‘dominant’ policy-makers to the student voice (e.g. Cele 2014; Luescher 2005).

To start mapping the landscape of student organising in African higher education, this chapter draws on a survey conducted in 2014 with higher education experts in ten countries which has sought to gather their observations and perceptions of student representation in their countries. In keeping with the countries covered in depth in the latter chapters of this book, the focus of the survey has been on Botswana, Burundi, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda, and Zimbabwe.² In particular, we have sought to understand the conditions and practices of student interest representation in different kinds of institutions (especially universities; polytechnics; private institutions) and on the national or system level; how many representative student associations are active on national level, what their organisational characteristics are (in terms of their legal status, resourcing, membership, etc.); the influence of different kinds of groups on student politics (including political parties, ethnic, religious or regionally defined groups, government and university officials); the extent and mode of formal student representation; the role of student representatives and representative organisations; and finally the ways in which students are seen in public policy discourse. In addition, the chapter draws on yet unpublished results from earlier surveys conducted as part of HERANA projects in Kenya, South Africa and Tanzania.³ By providing a comparative perspective, the chapter sets the stage for in-depth studies of national and institutional student representation. The chapter proceeds in three sections respectively focused on the higher education polity and students’ place therein; student politics as part of higher education politics; and finally higher education policy with specific focus on the policy agenda for African higher education and key student issues emanating from that.

Student organising within the higher education polity

Higher education governance operates on various levels: on supra-national or regional level, on national or system level, in federal systems on state and provincial level, and on institutional and sub-institutional levels (e.g. faculty, department and halls of residence). Representing student interests on these different levels may take different forms – ranging from protest action to student representation in formal decision-making structures and reflecting the inherent tension between student activism and representation ‘the first signifying aspiring to

2 No responses were received from Burkina Faso, Senegal and Tanzania, which are also covered in various chapters. The Nigerian chapter was published in the sister publication to this book, the Special Issue ‘Student Power in Africa’, Vol. 3, Issue 1, of the *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa* (www.jsaa.ac.za).

3 HERANA is the Higher Education Research and Advocacy Network in Africa coordinated by the Centre for Higher Education Transformation (CHET) in Cape Town, South Africa. The HERANA network encompasses eight flagship universities across the continent.

change the status quo, the second that of carving a better place within the status quo'.⁴

At institutional level, student representation is typically formally organised in structures of student government such as an SRC, student guild or student union. Members of these bodies may participate in the formal university governance structures: as student representatives in the university council or board of trustees, senate/academic council, various committees and other fora. In addition, they may have a special relationship with the university top management, either directly through consultative meetings or mediated by student affairs officers such as a dean of students. Institutional SRCs, student unions and student guilds may provide student services beyond representation and arrange student activities. The extent of student representation in university governance is often formally stipulated in a higher education Act, a university private Act or charter, an institutional statute and the rules of the university (which may include a student government constitution).

Institutional student governments in many countries associate on the national level into representative structures aiming to represent student interests towards public authorities and other national-level higher education stakeholders. These national student representative associations formalise and institutionalise their organisations to a different degree. Some associate in formal organisations with highly developed joint institutions to which the government confers decision-making and representational powers. Others work more as loose networks, which do not have common institutions in all or only coordinating bodies and execute their representational functions collectively. In some countries, there is not one, but there are several national-level associations which compete with each other for access to policy-making and a representational role. Finally, there are systems where there is no national-level structure, but institutional student governments 'compete' for influence in national-level decision-making, with those from flagship universities typically having most influence. We present below a typology and analysis of national student representative organisations in Africa (Table 1).

National legislation basically in all democratic countries allows freedom of association and students can register non-governmental, non-profit student organisations. Many national associations acquire such status. Unlike student representation in higher education institutions, provisions for the establishment of national student bodies and their representation in national higher education structures and processes is rarely specified in higher education legislation. The existence of such national associations almost universally depends on the collective action of institutional student associations to associate on national level and on negotiations between the governments and student associations, or they arise from pressure from students to their governments to be consulted in national policy-making. Student associations, like interest groups, lobby different national structures, such as ministries responsible for higher education, parliamentary portfolio committees or political parties. Where students have no formal mechanisms of representation they tend to voice their grievances through protests and other forms of activism.

⁴ The authors credit the anonymous review for this insightful quote.

Higher education polity is indeed a complex system of interrelated structures and agents involved in governing the sector. Formally defined, a polity refers to any organised political unit within which politics takes place and political authority is exercised (Heywood 2002). The basic governing structures of the higher education polity, their interrelation and the location of key actors and stakeholders such as students, thus defines the higher education regime as a set of legally codified as well as operational rules. In this section we explore the differences in student organising on national level in the context of the higher education polity of a particular country. Furthermore, we discuss how students are conceived in public discourse which is an important marker of students' position within a national higher education polity.

Student organising on national level

National student representative organisations, which usually take the form of a national association or union, stand out because of their claim to the representation of all students in the country (Klemenčič 2012). While there are undoubtedly commonalities across countries in student organising on national or system level, there are also significant historical differences between countries and broad regions (e.g. Francophone vs. Anglophone Africa; Central, East, North, southern and West Africa). The differences in the characteristics of the national systems of student representation concern questions such as: how many associations compete to represent students on national level; what are their organisational characteristics; and which ones are accepted as representing the general student body in formal sector bodies, government and institutional structures. Furthermore, the structure and processes of the higher education policy processes differ significantly and with them the role and influence of representative student associations. These differences may originate in legislation and in informal norms and practices of state–student relations.

These differences in student representation within national higher education polity can be explored from two analytical perspectives (Klemenčič 2012): the types of national systems of student representation and the types of student interest intermediation into the national public policy processes.

The first analytical perspective examines how student interests are aggregated and articulated on national level. Here we refer to different types of national systems of student representation, whose characteristics are defined in terms of the number of associations and whether the state has granted any representational monopolies. The distinction here is made between corporatist, statist, neo-corporatist and pluralist systems of student representation (Klemenčič 2012).

In the corporatist model, government controls or effectively creates a student representative association. Such student association is granted by the state the right to speak on behalf of all students and to present the interlocutor between the state and the collective student body. At the same time, such association is not autonomous in terms of having the ability to decide on its own political and professional agenda (policy autonomy), on internal structures and processes (governance autonomy) and having discretion over financial, human and other resources

(managerial autonomy) (Klemenčič 2014). In a corporatist system of student representation, the student association depends on the state financially and in terms of access to power, and in turn, the political authorities control student associations by influencing (or outright hand-picking) who the student representatives are. Such domination curbs the student associations' freedom and autonomy, which indeed define its political power (Klemenčič 2014).

In the neo-corporatist model, government formally or informally grants monopoly of student interest intermediation to one or a few student associations by acknowledging these as the representative voice of all students and formally or informally involving them in structures and processes of national higher education policy-making. A neo-corporatist system of student–state relations frequently involves some provisions by the state to support the existence and functioning of student representation; however – and here comes the distinction from the corporate model – while respecting these associations' autonomy. This may be by regulating that higher education institutions collect fees from all students which are then diverted to student representative associations within the institutions (and these institutional associations in turn pay membership fees to their national umbrella associations) or the state provides administrative grants for national student associations (typically along funding the work of other non-profit, non-governmental youth organisations through national youth councils or national youth foundations) or by some other means. Again, for the neo-corporatist model to exist it is not necessary that there exist only one national or system-level ('umbrella') student association. What defines the neo-corporatist model is that there is one association with a privileged status to represent all students or a few which differ functionally (e.g. one representing universities and the other polytechnics, or one representing public institutions and the other private) or territorially (when different institutions represent different regions) or ethnically or religiously.

In contrast, in pluralist systems, the government recognises that there are representative student associations and is willing to involve them in public policy processes – either formally or informally. The state does not grant a monopoly of representation to only one association. There may be several associations, which are similar in their objectives and function and compete with each other for access to public policy processes and resources granted by the state. A variation of the pluralist system can be seen in countries where no national student association exists, but the government interacts with university-based students unions. If the government regularly meets with several such institution-based associations and does not privilege one over the others, such a system would qualify as pluralist.

Finally, statist systems are characterised by the absence of any relations between public authorities and student representatives. Either national student associations exist, but are not recognised and engaged by the government, or there is no national student association and governments do not interact collectively with institutional student unions based at higher education institutions.

The second analytical perspective addresses the question how student interests are intermediated into public policy-making. Here the analysis is concerned with the characteristics

of public policy processes in the areas of higher education and student social welfare, and whether there exist formal mechanisms of student interest intermediation or students approach the public authorities only informally (Klemenčič 2012). Thus, we can distinguish between formalised systems where students have formal seats in higher education bodies on national levels and informal systems of student interest intermediation, where students meet with government representatives only informally.

According to the responses we obtained through the expert survey, the eight African countries we examined paint a diverse picture of student organising on national level (see Table 1).

Table 1 A typology of national systems of student representation and student interest intermediation

| Corporatist | Neo-corporatist | | Pluralist | | Statist |
|-------------|-----------------------------|---|--------------------------|----------|----------|
| | Formalised | Informal | Formalised | Informal | |
| None | Botswana Ghana Uganda | Burundi Cameroon Kenya Nigeria | South Africa Zimbabwe | | Ethiopia |

Of the eight countries, none displayed characteristics of a corporatist system of student representation, although such systems certainly existed in the past. All these countries have at least formally democratised and the democratic norms preclude overt control over representative student associations. However, this is not to say that such control does not exist informally. Autonomy of national and institutional student associations from interference and control of political authorities, political parties or university leaders is one crucial area that calls for further investigation.

Our survey shows that formally there exist several neo-corporatist national systems of student representations: Botswana, Burundi, Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, and Uganda. This means that there exist recognised national student associations that are autonomous – at least formally in terms of legal status, financing and governing structures and processes – in their operations. A neo-corporatist system would also apply in cases of countries where the existing national student association is dormant, or there is no national student association, and the student representatives from one university – typically the national flagship university in the capital – play the representative role for the general student body in the national policy arena. One such case is perhaps Kenya, where the Kenyan National University Students' Union shifts between periods of activity and inactivity and the voice of Kenyan students is heard most often from students in the capital city, at the University of Nairobi and Kenyatta University. The same has been the case in Botswana, where the formation of the Botswana Student Union (BSU) was announced in 2013, but only got off the ground in 2015 with the election of an interim board. BUS is hosted by the flagship University of Botswana's SRC. Similarly in Burundi, a student union has existed since 1964 which currently goes by the name of

fraternité des Etudiants de Rumuri (FER, Brotherhood of Students of Rumuri). It is based at the University of Bujumbura but represents all Burundi students.

In some countries, intermediary bodies, such as a national commission/council on higher education, have been established to carry out certain delegated functions, including regulatory, distributive (funding), monitoring and quality assurance, advisory and coordinating functions (Bailey 2015). In her analysis of national councils and commissions in African higher education systems in eight HERANA countries, Bailey (2015) shows that there is some student representation. For instance, the Uganda National Council for Higher Education has two representatives of students from universities and other tertiary institutions on its board as legislated by the Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act (2001). There are also legal provisions for the inclusion of student representatives in the Tertiary Education Council of Botswana and on board level in national agencies, such as the Ghanaian Student Loans' Trust Fund (Luescher-Mamashela & Mugume 2014).

The two most clearly pluralist systems of national student representation in our sample are South Africa and Zimbabwe. In South Africa, two associations stand out: the South African Union of Students (SAUS) and South African Students Congress (SASCO). Both claim to represent South African students on national level and have the longest sustained history of student representation in the country. In Zimbabwe, there are also two main national associations: the Zimbabwe National Students' Union (ZINASU) and the Zimbabwe Congress of Students' Union (ZICOSU), both of which operate in a partisan movement fashion. In terms of student involvement in national higher education decision-making, student representation is reported in both South Africa's Council on Higher Education and the Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education. In addition, in South Africa, students are represented in various national agencies, including the Higher Education Quality Committee and the National Student Financial Aid Scheme of South Africa. However, attempts in South Africa to move towards a more neo-corporatist form of student interest intermediation are hampered by the fierce independence of statutorily provided, institutional SRCs and the lack of coordination and communication capacity and resources of the voluntary national federation of SRCs, the South African Union of Students (SAUS), which was set up and is operating with the support of the Ministry of Higher Education and Training.

Finally, there are the statist systems of national student representation where either national student associations exist but are not recognised and engaged by the government, or there is no national student association and governments do not interact collectively with institutional students unions. In our survey, only Ethiopia fits this category. Student representation on the national level has become largely absent in Ethiopia, effectively with no national association in operation currently. While there is legislation that provides for institutional student unions and student participation in senates and boards, there are problems with implementation even at that level of student representation (Ayele 2016).

We should add, however, that the relations between state and students in all these countries are highly dynamic and the situation may shift rapidly: from statist system where the government

does not involve students in any way to some informal contacts and from informal contacts between government and student leaders to no contacts at all. This makes attempts at classifying systems of student representation and intermediation on national level difficult and susceptible to errors. The change in the relations is typically conditioned by who comes to power, what political issues are at stake (more or less contentious) and how cooperative or adversary student representatives are or how autonomous and independent or legitimate the student associations are perceived to be. Much more stable relations between the state and student representatives exist in countries where these relations are formalised and students have formal rights in national bodies. For example, even though we have classified here Nigeria as neo-corporate system, our respondent observes that often in Nigeria 'students have no voice in national policy-making, they are just like ordinary electorate during general elections. In national development planning too, they are asked to submit written input: They are only relevant in matters where the ruling Federal Government want to use them to score political points' (survey response). As our respondents stated in the case of Cameroon, 'most of the time students have to strike before they are listened to' (survey response).

Conceptions of students in public discourse

The place of students in higher education governance differs from system to system and often from institution to institution; it is not the least dependent on students' own organisational capacity and leadership, as well as the conceptions of students and attitudes of the 'dominant' actors, chiefly the ministries of higher education and university leaderships. A useful indicator of students' location within the higher education polity is how students are conceived in public discourse (Luescher-Mamashela 2013). This typically is implicit and requires interpretation. Thus, whether students are seen as minors or even children may be indicated by *in loco parentis* rules and other paternalistic student rules and regulations, and this is typically extended into formal governance as an exclusion of student representatives from formal decision-making forums or their treatment as mere observers therein. Conversely, students may be treated as adults and citizens with all the rights and responsibilities that entails. Students may be conceived collectively as a legitimate higher education constituency, an important stakeholder, who has an interest in the development of higher education and experiences and expertise relevant in the making of decisions, or perhaps as mere troublemakers whose youthfulness must be contained and who must either be excluded from formal governing bodies or be included in a manner so as to tame or 'domesticate' the student voice (cf. Brooks et al. 2015). In marketised higher education, students are seen primarily as clients of higher education, consumers of higher education services and facilities, who have only an evanescent interest in the sector and institution but may serve as useful sounding boards for gauging the level of service provision and customer satisfaction; or perhaps they are a special type of client, one with longer-term interests in the reputation of their institution, the quality of education provided, and ultimately the value of their qualifications. Finally, students may be seen quite

akin to childish pupils or, conversely, considered co-responsible for their learning, an integral part of the functioning and success of higher education, and even ‘co-producers of knowledge’ (as conceptualised, for example, by Carey 2013).

Our survey of the ways students are viewed in public policy discourse in the eight African countries included in our study found that the most prevalent conceptions are the traditional ones’ of students as the country’s future elite (cf. Mathieu 1996; Wandira 1977) as well as a new one, introduced on the back of the marketisation, privatisation and commercialisation of African higher education, viewing students as clients. Particularly prevalent is the elite discourse in the prestigious institutions in Cameroon, Ethiopia, South Africa and Zimbabwe, which is curiously often paired with the neo-liberal notion of students as clients prevalent in the same countries, as well as in Burundi and Nigeria. Rather disempowering notions of students as minors and pupils are less prevalent, except in Burundi and to a lesser extent in Uganda. A generalised view of students as troublemakers is only widespread in Ghana. Finally, it is encouraging that perceptions of students as constituency in the higher education sector are quite widespread, especially in Burundi, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Uganda and Zimbabwe, as well as in Cameroon and South Africa.

The overall picture rendered by the survey of conceptions of students in public policy discourse suggests that the governance regimes of most higher education polities are in the course of an uneven transition as far as student representation is concerned: the traditional notion of students as future elite remains widespread, but it has come to be augmented with more democratised views of students as constituency and most widespread, with marketised, neo-liberal notions of students as clients of higher education. As argued by Luescher-Mamashela (2013), conceptions of students in public policy discourse typically coincide with the manner in which student representatives are formally included in decision-making in different domains of governance. Thus, in academic governance, a widespread discursive construction of students as mere pupils would typically exclude them from decisions on curricula, timetabling, assessment, etc.; while a consumerist conception of students may introduce student representation in new areas such as quality assurance. The argument is therefore that the combination of the traditional elitist and neo-liberal consumerist notions of students as clients *and* future elite signifies a regime of higher education governance in transition, both in terms of the implications of a larger transition from elite to mass higher education (see Luescher 2016: Chapter 3) and related notions of higher education shifting from being a privilege and institution for producing the future elite to being a widely available, desirable good for which those who seek to acquire it will pay. By extension, it indicates a likely transition from government-controlled bureaucracy to managerialism (with or without aspects of academic rule and a democratic inclusion of students). The implications for student representation are an uneven regime where student interests and power are likely under-acknowledged, with prospects of more student protests as a common expression of student claim-making while formal decision-making structures fail to accommodate student power and interests adequately.

In the nascent transition from elite to mass higher education (cf. Luescher 2016: Chapter 3),

higher education's contradictory functions need to be assigned to institutions in ways that require greater differentiation in the system (Cloete et al. 2015). In the process, a quite diverse picture of student representation is likely to emerge: while on system level, notions of students as a legitimate constituency with various civic and consumerist interests may come to be dominant, in some institutions paternalistic views may prevail while in others outdated conceptions are discarded in favour of collegial-democratic governance, managerialist governance, or a combination thereof, with their respective implications for student representation (Luescher 2009).

Student politics as part of higher education politics

Students who aspire to become members of an official student representation structure such as an SRC or represent students nationally usually have to be elected into position. In some universities and some national organisations, a potential candidate may need to be a member of a student political organisation to be eligible for election; even where there is no such requirement, the backing of a specific constituency or a student organisation may be a requisite to gain enough votes (Klemenčič 2012). If a student representative organisation is affiliated to a political party, a complex set of relations and mutual expectations may ensue (cf. Luescher-Mamashela & Mugume 2014; Mugume 2015). Similarly, there are student organisations that predominantly (or exclusively) represent a distinct local regional, ethnic or religious group. Unpacking the complex relationships between national political parties and other politically relevant groupings on the one hand, and student representative organisations and student leaders on the other hand, is at the heart of understanding student political organising and representation. These complex relationships are reflected in the autonomy of student associations and in the characteristics of the representational structures and processes that govern the formal relations between higher education institutions (or public authorities) and student representatives.

Autonomy of student associations

One of the key defining characteristics of student representation is autonomy of student associations. Autonomy of student associations can be defined as 'having decision-making competences and as being exempt from constraints on the actual use of such competences' (Klemenčič 2014: 401). The former refers to policy autonomy i.e. the ability to decide on its own political and professional agenda; governance autonomy as the ability to decide on internal structures and processes, and managerial autonomy in terms of their discretion over financial matters, human and other resources. The latter includes financial autonomy i.e. the conditions imposed through funding, legal autonomy with respect to their legal status and 'symbolic' autonomy which is indicated, for instance in terms of their relation to political parties (Klemenčič 2014: 401). Autonomy is essential for student governments' internal legitimacy in the sense of how student representatives are perceived by their constituency as

being able to foster and represent student interests effectively and truthfully. The less autonomy, the easier it is for elected university officials or political parties or government to ‘domesticate’ the student voice, and student representatives have often been blamed for being co-opted by university officials or politicians.

We have compared the eight African countries on several aspects of autonomy of representative student governments. We found that in a number of countries governance autonomy is limited. In Kenya, Nigeria and in private universities in Uganda, candidates for student representatives are vetted by university officials. In Ethiopia, student representatives are appointed by university officials rather than being subject to the democratic election process from the student body. Countries where student governments at universities are fairly autonomous in their governance, policy and management decisions include Cameroon, Ghana, Nigeria and South Africa.

Legitimacy of student representatives also depends on whether they follow the principles of good governance: are they maintaining democratic structures and observing transparent and democratic procedures? Corrupt student representatives who use their political power in exchange for material goods or symbolic favours present an acute problem in a number of countries and undermine the legitimacy of student representation.⁵ The most typical examples are when student representatives endorse, affiliate to, or otherwise offer political support to a specific political party in elections in exchange for personal favours such as study bursaries and the promise of jobs after graduation. Such practices are most notable in Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria and Uganda. Corrupt practices of various kinds are not only characteristic of student governments, but, as perceived by our respondents, are also characteristic of university operations in general. Furthermore, corruption occurs also between university administrators and student representatives. As stated by one of our respondents:

Student representatives sometimes receive financial and academic favours and promises of future job prospects at the institutions to buy their compliance with the university management. (survey response)

Indeed, one of the most pervasive problems with autonomy of student governments stems from relations to and interference from political parties. Such practices are present in the majority of surveyed countries: Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda and Zimbabwe. Particularly strong influence from government itself on student representation is perceived in Burundi, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Nigeria and Zimbabwe. Some of these countries are also those where student representatives fear expulsion or sanctions for their activities (Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Uganda and Zimbabwe).

An earlier study conducted among three HERANA institutions, the University of Dar es

⁵ An insightful in-depth study on this topic was recently conducted by Mugume (2015) with student leaders and political parties operating in Makerere University, Uganda.

Salaam (UDSM), Tanzania; the University of Cape Town (UCT), South Africa and the University of Nairobi (UON), Kenya, only corroborates our findings. Representative surveys conducted at these three institutions with undergraduate students found fairly widespread perceptions that some or all student leaders in their institution were involved in corrupt practices. Moreover, students at all three institutions considered their leaders more corrupt than, for instance, academics or university managers. These perceptions were further confirmed by student leaders' own perceptions of student leader corruption! The study further found that the levels of students' trust in student leadership and their perception of student leaders' responsiveness were moderately positively correlated and moderately negatively correlated with perceptions of student leader corruption (Luescher-Mamashela et al. 2011). These findings provide some clues as to the possible origin of, and ways of addressing, perceptions of political corruption in Africa arising as early as on the level of student leadership.

Relations between institutions and student representatives: Representational structures and influence

The other key defining characteristics of student representation are the intermediating structures and processes through which student governments represent student interests in institutional and national decision-making (Klemenčič 2014). These are often, but not in all countries, defined and regulated through legislation or only some aspects of the relationship between student governments and their home institutions and student governments and national governments are regulated. The key question here is whether students have formal powers to influence decision-making in institutions or on national level, or whether they can do so only informally. At the institutional level, this question concerns the existence of legal provisions which would guarantee student representatives seats and voting rights in governing bodies of universities such as a university council, senate, faculty boards, etc., and the system of committees that typically cascade from them. Another question concerns the existence of legal provisions that grant students the right to organise into representative student associations and receive some financial support (from universities or through membership fees or otherwise), training, office facilities etc., to ensure an existence and adequate capacitating and resourcing of these associations.

According to the findings of our survey, student participation in university governing bodies (e.g. university councils, senates, faculty boards, student services committees as well as disciplinary courts for students) is statutorily granted in legislation in Burundi, Cameroon, Ghana, South Africa and Uganda, but not in Ethiopia and Nigeria. The absence of such provisions in legislation does not preclude institutions to regulate student representation in their internal statutory documents and rules, but it also does not ensure that student representation exists across all institutions within the national higher education systems. Accordingly, there are significant differences between countries in terms of the mode of student participation in institutional decision-making. Co-decision whereby student representatives

have full voting rights on all or some issues in governing bodies is practiced only in Burundi, Ghana and South Africa. Minimal participation as observers without voting rights is a common practice in the remaining countries. For example, as reported by our respondents, in Ethiopia, students 'get involved in such lower level decisions as disposal of academic and routine orders. They also have some minimal roles in commenting on cafeteria services and clinical services' (Survey response). Furthermore, in Nigeria,

[students] are not usually considered for participation in the university governing and decision making process; they are only invited for dialogue when they revolt or protest against student policies by the university management. (survey response)

Moreover, among the examined countries student organising into representative associations is specifically stipulated in national legislation only in Cameroon, Ghana and Uganda. The other countries (Burundi, Ethiopia, Nigeria and South Africa) do not entail such provisions in the national legislation. It also varies across countries whether student governments within institutions have independent legal identity, own property and have independent bank accounts, or whether they are integrated into the structure of the university. Similarly, the funding sources vary significantly with respect to whether funding for student representation comes from membership fees directly to student government or via the university of which they are part. In several countries, student governments at universities tend to have commercial outlets (such as restaurants, student travel agencies and publishing presses). This is common in Burundi, Kenya and Uganda.

Towards student-friendly higher education policy in Africa?

The primary objective of student organising is to aggregate, articulate, and intermediate student interests. While the structures and processes of higher education governance more or less effectively facilitate the articulation and intermediation of student interests, the preferred output of the policy process may be termed student-friendly policies that respond to specific student interests. Correspondingly, student protests are often a direct response to student-unfriendly policies; they frequently serve as indicator of the (lack of) responsiveness of dominant policy-makers to student interests and bear testimony to a lack of effective student representation in formal decision-making.

Student representation in Africa's higher education policy agenda

The African Union Commission (AUC) adopted in 2014 a continental development plan termed *Agenda 2063* designed to guide the African Union, its regional economic communities and member states, to coordinate development together for the next 50 years. Higher education

access, quality and equity are outlined as very important issues to attend to in order for the vision and aspirations of *Agenda 2063* to be achieved. The role of students in supporting and shaping this development is, however, never mentioned, except perhaps implicitly in terms of African youth participation (African Union Commission 2014).

The African Higher Education Summit of 2015 has aimed to ‘create a continental multi-stakeholder platform to identify strategies for transforming the African higher education sector’ (Trust Africa 2015: 2). Student associations with regard to their participation in the formulation and implementation of goals and policies will be a crucial part in steering the sector towards achieving its aspirations. In this respect, it was encouraging to see that student associations, such as the All Africa Students’ Union (AASU), were invited to the summit. Moreover, student initiatives such as the submission of a Students’ Charter to the summit are pioneering. A group of student leaders⁶ therein declared that

Our role as students and student leaders in universities must be recognised for who we are, and our role in the governance of the institutions must be acknowledged. In this respect, we have developed this charter to declare that:

- *Students must be recognised as **adults**, as **citizens**, and as **equal members and stakeholders** of the academic community and accordingly be involved in the decision-making affecting students’ social lives (e.g. in halls of residence; sports and recreation) as well as our academic lives. [...]*
- *Students’ opinions should be heard, respected and taken into account in decision-making, and **student representation** in all sectors and on all levels of university decision-making should be encouraged.*
- *The **diversity** of the student body must be accommodated in the institutions.*

(Recommendations from the African Student Leaders in Community Engagement to National and Institutional Higher Education Policy-makers 2015: 1, emphasis in original)

Overall the student leaders made a list of twenty detailed recommendations to the summit coordinating committee, covering teaching and learning, problem-oriented, student-engaging pedagogies, community-based research and engagement, entrepreneurship and social leadership; asking for the right to higher education to be recognised, for wide access to be facilitated with funding for needy students and academic support for under-prepared students; matters of credit transfer, articulation between academic programmes and qualifications; and inter-university

⁶ The charter of declarations and recommendations was developed as a contribution into the African Higher Education Summit 2015 by student leaders from across the African continent who attended the Talloires Network Leaders’ Conference in South Africa in December 2014.

and international mobility; and finally demographic equity and respect for diversity, non-discrimination and a right to privacy in on-campus student life.

Both, *Agenda 2063* and the summit's *Draft Declaration* of 2015 predict a massive growth and diversification of the student body with further increase in demand for higher education. What the documents do not consider, however, is the extent to which students will be represented in the whole process of elaborating and implementing the agenda on regional, national and institutional levels.

By means of conclusion: Challenges ahead

Our analysis in this chapter points to at least four main challenges to student organising on the continent. First is the legal ambiguity in terms of existence, legal status and financing of national and institutional student representative organisations. When any of these three provisions are not included in higher education legislation, the terms of student organising have to be negotiated at each individual institution and on the national level. Such negotiations result in varying arrangements with possibly less than optimal conditions for students to organise and thus contribute to higher education decision-making; or no student organising at all. The existing student associations ought to work together with their governments and parliaments to develop legislative provisions (perhaps a national framework) on student organising which will affirm the rights of students to organise and specify the overall purpose of student associations, their membership (automatic or voluntary) and funding (through membership fees or from budgets of hosting institutions or otherwise). Institutional student associations also need to work together to overcome their differences and collectively form or strengthen their national umbrella associations. Such cooperation is important for capacity building of institutional associations as much it is for influencing national policy-making.

Second, and following from above, there is ample scope for improvement in terms of student participation in national higher education policy-making, on institutional and sub-institutional levels, and in relation to the continental agenda for higher education in Africa. National level student participation appears to be particularly weak and there are very few formal representational structures in place to provide for such participation. When African governments are embarking on substantial reforms of their higher education systems the contributions from students are vital both for effective policy-making and for the implementation of these reforms. Again, it is the task of institutional associations to work with their governments and parliaments to develop legislative provisions (perhaps a national framework) on terms of student representation in institutional and national structures and processes.

National student associations within Africa also need to act collectively to develop joint policies and positions regarding the future of African higher education and to intermediate their positions towards the African Union Commission and other supranational bodies and processes focused on higher education. The All Africa Students' Union presents an existing

structure of cooperation among African national student associations which either needs to be strengthened (or reformed) to better serve the national student associations in influencing the African higher education agenda. There are ample possibilities for collaboration between national associations individually or collectively within AASU or otherwise with national student associations in other countries and world regions. Such cooperation can lead to exchange of practices, shared learning and thus capacity building of student associations, but also towards rejuvenating global student cooperation to defend student interests toward international organisations and institutions.

The third challenge is interference from political parties through political party youth wings and student branches. At different stages of most recent history, national (and institutional) student associations have been blamed for not defending student interests, but serving the interests of the political parties to which different elected student representatives belong. Autonomy from party interference is vital for internal and external legitimacy of student representatives and student associations. Students will be disincentivised to engage with their representatives and in the activities of student associations if these are perceived to lack legitimacy. Equally, university leaders and governments will dismiss student participation in decision-processes if these representatives are perceived to lack legitimacy.

Finally, as elsewhere in the world, African student organising and student representation is facing an increasingly depoliticised student body. The marketisation of African higher education is increasingly 'economising' politics and students have turned their focus away from national politics to 'getting in, through, and out', attain a qualification and find employment. Thus, capacity building of the student associations necessarily means reaching out to individual students and student groups, raising awareness about student welfare issues before they explode, creating an interest in the quality of higher education and broader issues of democracy and social justice, and about the democratic means and processes of influencing decisions within the higher education context and in society at large.

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CHAPTER 3

STUDENT REPRESENTATION IN A CONTEXT OF DEMOCRATISATION AND MASSIFICATION IN AFRICA: ANALYTICAL APPROACHES, THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES AND #RHODESMUSTFALL

Thierry M Luescher

Introduction

The ongoing process of higher education expansion in Africa has involved an increasing commodification and privatisation of higher education including the establishment of new public institutions and the mushrooming of private institutions, the introduction of fee-paying (private) students in large numbers in existing public universities, and the related phenomenon of 'institutional massification' (Mamdani 2007; Mohamedbhai 2014). Student politics confronts this common context of higher education systems and institutions that undergo early stages of massification; a process which arises within particular institutional and national contexts; and one accompanied by changes in the institutional cultures, student bodies, and cultures of student politics; by varying degrees and levels of including students in steering the process and finding mitigating solutions to its accompanying challenges; by the increasing influence of democratic multi-party politics in student representation; and related dynamics of national politics and different stages of national political and economic development.

Against this, the study of student representation in African higher education is beginning to mature albeit it remains under-theorised. There exists a good knowledge base on student politics in Africa, made up of studies that typically focus on the national dimension of student

organising and its broader social and political impact, and especially on student activism. It rarely includes the formal, national, institutional and sub-institutional dimensions of student representation in decisions that affect them, even though the study of student representation in higher education governance is receiving increasing attention internationally¹ in its own right and in relation to the burgeoning literature on student engagement.

The African context of democratisation and higher education massification prompts a new analysis of the contribution of students to the transformation of higher education and society. There are several interrelated tasks involved. Firstly, we need high-level authoritative syntheses of existing works (of the kind that Altbach has provided in his ‘encyclopaedic chapters’ on student politics, cf. Luescher-Mamashela 2015) to discern from the stock of typically qualitative, empirical, national and institutional case studies of African student politics, knowledge relevant to understanding student representation contextualised within its historical trajectory, periodised to illuminate its contemporary expression at this juncture. A good number of publications have taken on this task using a historical narrative approach to synthesising and periodising the existing knowledge on African student politics (e.g. Bianchini 2016: Chapter 5; Luescher-Mamashela & Mugume 2014; Munene 2003; Oanda 2016: Chapter 4). Secondly, it requires us to consider the key concepts, analytical approaches and theoretical perspectives that have been developed in different geographical and historical contexts, such as those from the hey-days of massification and university democratisation in North America and Europe, which account for the first surge in literature on student politics. And finally, we will need to bring into dialogue the historical, contextualised accounts and theoretical perspectives in the process of doing new empirical work.

The main task of this chapter is outlining existing concepts, analytical approaches and theoretical perspectives relevant to the study of student representation. It provides an overview of existing international literature that may be used to enrich our analytical and theoretical tools to analyse common and unique concerns that arise at the present juncture of African higher education development for higher education governance in general and student representation in particular.

The starting point is that challenges confronting student representation in the African higher education context are both universal and particular. On the one hand, they can be seen as typical issues confronting student politics in higher education systems that undergo early stages of massification; on the other hand, they arise within particular institutional and national contexts. The chapter proceeds in three sections. The first section discusses massification and democratisation in conceptual and empirical terms as they apply to African higher education with specific reference to the work of Scott (1995), Trow (2006) and Mohamedbhai (2014). The second section outlines various analytical and theoretical frameworks drawing mainly on the work of Cele (2015), Altbach (1964 to 2006), Klemenčič (2012; 2014), Clark (1978;

¹ See, for example, recent special journal issues of *Tertiary Education and Management*, *European Journal of Higher Education* and *Studies in Higher Education* on student representation.

1983), Epstein (1974), Luescher-Mamashela (2013), Olsen (2007) and others, as part of the existing international knowledge base of student politics, implicitly raising the question as to their relevance for understanding the present conjuncture of African higher education development and its implications for student representation in African higher education governance. This task is concluded in the final section by considering some key learnings with reference to the South African context and particularly the 2015 #RhodesMustFall protests at the University of Cape Town which aptly illustrates the argument by Altbach and Klemenčič (2014) that ‘student activism remains a potent force worldwide’, registering successes especially in education reforms and combining protest, debates, sit-ins and teach-ins with new ways of student mobilisation and interest aggregation and articulation in social media and through online petitions.

Massification and democratisation in African higher education

The massive expansion of higher education has been a world-wide trend in the 20th and 21st centuries, starting in the United States after World War II, followed by other OECD countries in the 1970s through to the 1990s, East Asia in the 1990s and 2000s as well as the emerging economies of Eastern Europe, North America, South East Asia, and some North African and Arab countries, and in the last decade in sub-Saharan Africa (Mohamedbhai 2014). While the ‘global academic revolution’ (Altbach et al. 2010) has been dramatic in most of the developing world over the last two decades, higher education expansion in sub-Saharan Africa has only picked up against other world regions in terms of the gross enrolment rates (GER) in the last decade, largely due to the long-lasting economic and political crises of the 1980s and early 1990s, disinvestment from higher education in Africa on the back of structural adjustment conditionalities, a focus on the expansion and universalisation of primary and secondary school participation, and masked by population growth (Altbach 1999; Mohamedbhai 2014).

In 1973, Martin Trow divided higher education systems worldwide into three categories based on their GER. Elite higher education systems enrol less than 15% of the typical youth age cohort, mass higher education systems enrol between 16% and 50% of the age group, and universal higher education systems enrol over 50% (Trow 2006).² Against this classification, massification may be defined as the rapid increase in student enrolment in the transition from elite to mass higher education. Trow’s classification involves characteristics not only related to enrolment but more especially to attitudes to access, as well as criteria of access and selectivity, the functions of higher education in society, institutional characteristics, the student career, and features of academic governance and administration, amongst others (see Table 1).

In terms of Trow’s classification, most higher education systems in Africa are elite systems.

² The GER is calculated as the percentage of students enrolled in higher education as a proportion of the population of a defined five-year age cohort (typically 18–24 year olds). Trow’s original classification set the threshold for universal higher education systems at 30% in 1973; in his revised classification (2006) the new threshold was set at over 50% of age cohort.

Table 1 Trow's characteristics of elite, mass and universal higher education systems

| | Elite (0–15%) | Mass (16–50%) | Universal (over 50%) |
|------------------------------------|--|--|--|
| Attitudes to access | A privilege of birth or talent or both | A right for those with certain qualifications | An obligation for the middle and upper classes |
| Access and selection | Meritocratic achievement based on school performance | Meritocratic plus 'compensatory programmes' to achieve equality of opportunity | 'Open', emphasis on 'equality of group achievement' (class, ethnic) |
| Functions of higher education | Shaping mind and character of ruling class; preparation for elite roles | Transmission of skills; preparation for broader range of technical and economic elite roles | Adaptation of 'whole population' to rapid social and technological change |
| Academic standards | Broadly shared and relatively high (in meritocratic phase) | Variable; system/ institution become holding companies for different kinds of academic enterprises | Criterion shifts from 'standards' to 'value added' |
| Institutional characteristics | Homogenous with high and common standards; small residential communities; clear and impermeable boundaries | Comprehensive with more diverse standards; 'cities of intellect' – mixed residential/commuting; boundaries fuzzy and permeable | Great diversity with no common standards; aggregates of people enrolled, some of whom are rarely or never on campus. Boundaries are weak or non-existent |
| The student 'career' | 'Sponsored' after secondary school; studies uninterruptedly until gains degree | Increasing numbers delay entry; more drop out | Much postponement of entry, softening of boundaries between formal education and other aspects of life; term-time working |
| Locus of power and decision-making | 'The Athenaeum' – small elite group, shared values and assumptions | Ordinary political processes of interest groups and party programmes | 'Mass publics' question special privileges and immunities of academe |
| Internal governance | Senior professors | Professors and junior staff with increasing influence from students | Breakdown of consensus making; institutional governance insoluble; decision-making flows into hands of political authority |
| Forms of academic administration | Part-time academics who are 'amateurs at administration'; elected/ appointed for limited periods | Former academics now full-time administrators plus large and growing bureaucracy | More specialist full-time professionals. Managerial techniques imported from outside academe |

Source: Adapted and shortened from Trow (2006: 244)

At the time that Trow first proposed it, the classification was not applicable to African higher education; most African nations had only just started establishing higher education systems (Mohamedbhai 2014). Currently the global GER is staked at 32%; it is at about 8% for sub-Saharan Africa even though some African systems have increased their GER to the level

of mass higher education systems, for example Mauritius (26%) and South Africa (18%); and the GER of Arab states (including those outside of North Africa) is at 26% (Mohamedbhai 2014; Trust Africa 2015).³

Conversely, the GER in some sub-Saharan African countries remains very low at around 2% or less, thus testifying to the elite nature of higher education in those countries even if actual expansion may be masked by population growth. Hence, Goolam Mohamedbhai (2014) prefers to account for the expansion of higher education in African countries and key institutions in the last decade in terms of actual student numbers, and conceptualises the implications of the latter as ‘institutional massification’. He defines institutional massification as an average annual increase in enrolment of about 15% to 25% over a decade, making allowance for different baselines of institutional student bodies (Mohamedbhai 2014). The extent of massification at system and institutional levels is illustrated in selected countries and flagship universities in Tables 2 and 3.

Table 2 System expansion in selected countries (since 1999)

| | Tertiary Enrolment | | | % annual increase |
|--------------|--------------------|-----------|------------------|----------------------|
| | 1999 | 2005 | 2011 or latest | |
| Burkina Faso | 9 878 | 27 942 | 60 998 | 20% p.a. (2005–2011) |
| Burundi | 5 037 | 16 889 | 25 000 (2013) | 6% p.a. (2005–2013) |
| Cameroon | 65 697* | 99 864 | 244 233 | 24% p.a. (2005–2011) |
| Ghana | n/a | n/a | 261 962 | n/a |
| Ethiopia | 52 305 | 191 212 | 632 344 | 38% p.a. (2005–2011) |
| Kenya | 47 254 | 93 341 | 324 560 (2013) | 31% p.a. (2005–2013) |
| Mauritius | 7 559 | 16 852 | 36 053 (2013) | 14% p.a. (2005–2013) |
| Nigeria | n/a | 1 463 690 | 1 691 141 (2010) | 3% p.a. (2005–2010) |
| Senegal | 29 303 | 59 127 | 94 000 (2009) | 15% p.a. (2005–2009) |
| South Africa | 632 911 | 735 073 | 1 050 851 (2012) | 6% p.a. (2005–2012) |
| Tanzania | 18 867 | 51 080 | 135 367 (2010) | 33% p.a. (2005–2010) |
| Uganda | 60 000 | 124 313 | 201 376 (2013) | 8% p.a. (2005–2013) |

Sources: see References at the end of this chapter

*Enrolment for 2010

3 Individual country percentages are based on tertiary enrolment, and thus include non-degree higher education enrolments.

Table 3 Institutional massification in selected flagship universities (1986–2006)

| | Student Enrolment in Year | | | | | % annual increase |
|---|---------------------------|--------|--------|--------|---------------|-------------------|
| | 1986 | 1996 | 2001 | 2006 | 2013 | |
| Kenyatta University, Kenya | n/a | n/a | 7 057 | 21 150 | 70 006 | 33% |
| Makerere University, Uganda | n/a | 9 861 | n/a | 34 376 | 45 132 | 4% |
| University of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia | 10 511 | n/a | n/a | n/a | 48 673 | n/a |
| University of Buea, Cameroon | n/a | 4 029 | 6 519 | 10 203 | 12 000 | 3% |
| University Cheikh Anta Diop, Senegal | 12 721 | 17 810 | 24 776 | 55 850 | 60 000 | 1% |
| University of Ibadan, Nigeria | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | 33 481 | 27%* |
| University of Ghana | 3 462 | 4 017 | 14,674 | 28 482 | 38 562 | 5% |
| University of Nairobi, Kenya | 6 506 | 14 606 | 13 772 | 32 305 | 79 000 | 21% |
| University of Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso | n/a | n/a | 11 824 | 23 780 | 40 000 (2010) | 17% |

Sources: see References at the end of this chapter

*Enrolments for 2011 totalled 21 636

Table 2 shows that institutional massification (since 2005 until latest figures) has occurred in the cases of Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Kenya, Mauritius, Senegal and Tanzania with annual rates of growth of about 15% and above. Indeed, most systems surveyed here show remarkable growth. Table 3 indicates the massive expansion at certain institutions such as Kenyatta University and the University of Nairobi in Kenya as well as Ibadan University, Nigeria and the University of Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, with annual increases of up to 33%. These figures illustrate the argument by Nico Cloete and Peter Maassen that most national higher education systems in Africa are in fact ‘overcrowded elite systems’ (Cloete & Maassen 2015: 6).

The expansion of African higher education continent-wide is predicted to continue over the next decades to mass and eventually to universal higher education by 2063 (Trust Africa 2015). The implications of massification are manifold: while in the first place it involves an increase in absolute student numbers and in the case of system massification an increase in GER to above 15%, massification involves changes in the composition, character and aspirations of students (including increasing gender parity and admission of greater numbers of lower middle class and working class students); changes in the size of institutions and new institutional types including private providers; pressures on the infrastructure and financial and human resources of existing public higher education institutions; changes in curriculum and modes of delivery; changes in higher education funding typically involving the introduction of some form of cost-sharing (in some cases the emergence of ‘parallel’ – publicly versus privately funded – student

bodies); and changes in the academic workforce such as an increasing casualisation of teaching staff (Mohamedbhai 2014; also see Table 1 above).

Moreover, massification involves changes in higher education governance. With reference to the British experience, Peter Scott (1995) distinguishes different phases in university governance linked to the expansion of higher education. The 'donnish phase' is characterised by a system of governance where the professorial chair represents the definitive seat of academic authority. This donnish system of governance is typical for elite systems; it may be extended through a collegial system to the faculty and institutional levels of governance, or it may be subject to strong state and bureaucratic authority as evident in the continental European mode of university governance for much of the 20th century (Clark 1978). The 'democratic phase' is characterised by a system of collegial-democratic governance at all levels of university governance and includes prominently non-professorial academics, students, as well as other members of the extended university community in a constituency-based system of representative university governance. A democratic phase of university governance was initiated in the aftermath of the 1960s student rebellions in many universities in Europe and North America through a process of 'university democratisation' (see below). Since the 1980s, higher education has seen the emergence of a 'managerial phase', which has brought new public management practices into the university administration and where academics and researchers have increasingly become accountable for their performance to line-managers (Scott 1995, in NCHE 1996). Both Scott and Trow show that the different governance phases are intertwined with the expansion of higher education, even if features of governance characteristic of one phase may endure in certain institutions even in a different phase (Luescher 2008).

The massification of higher education involves 'a parallel process of democratisation of knowledge, in terms of both teaching and research' (Scott 1998: 126); it implies a democratisation of access to higher education insofar as it opens up participation beyond a narrow elite to lower middle class and working class students and women. It transforms higher education from a privilege of the few to a right of many (compare Table 1; Trow 2006). Increased pressures on the public purse, which are often mitigated by the introduction of cost-sharing mechanisms, produce demands for accountability, relevance and responsiveness, both within institutions as well as at system level. Governance changes at the system level are signified, for instance, by the establishment of external monitoring and quality assurance mechanisms; at institutional level, massification has seen the demise or transformation of donnish governance through processes of university democratisation as well as the introduction of managerial tools and practices (e.g. Luescher 2008; Scott 1995 in NCHE 1996; Trow 2006). In the American and European contexts, massification has gone hand-in-hand with high levels of student activism in the 1960s and eventually a process of university democratisation in the 1970s (Epstein 1974; Habermas 1971; Moodie & Eustace 1974). University democratisation has therefore been defined as 'a reconstitution of internal decision-making in universities with reference to democratic principles, inter alia, by making decision-making processes more representative of internal constituencies such as students' (Luescher-Mamashela 2010: 260). While in some

contexts, university democratisation and the introduction of managerial practices into the administration of universities has been seen as sequential following respective earlier phases (Scott 1995, in NCHE 1996), managerialism does not need to be incompatible with democratised forms of university governance as well as remnants of donnish governance in the core functions of universities (Luescher 2008). Thus, in the South African context, the National Commission on Higher Education's (1996) proposals for the post-apartheid expansion of black higher education and massification were complemented by a call for a democratisation of university governance along with the introduction of more modern management practices. In this respect, the democratisation of higher education enrolment and governance can be seen as a typical, if not necessary, development accompanying the deepening of democracy in state and society. This argument traces its origins back to the work of Habermas (1971) on university democratisation; it is also suggested by evidence showing a strong (yet ambiguous) correlation between democracy and socio-economic development (Haerpfer et al. 2009).

Democratisation and the changing student body

The current context of African higher education and future prospect of a continent-wide massification and eventually a universalisation of higher education in Africa is important for the study of student representation in university governance, because student politics can neither be abstracted from the student body itself nor from the larger institutional and macro socio-economic and political conditions. The student body refers to the collective of students of a university (Badat 1999: 23). As noted by Trow (2006) and others, as a higher education system democratises from elite into mass higher education, the student body changes in its absolute size and in the proportion of the relevant age group enrolled in higher education, along with other changes at systemic and national levels of higher education. Especially in the early stages of massification, this tends to produce higher levels of student discontent, along with three pressures directly exerted on the student body and its politics (compare Mohamedbhai 2014; Trow 2006):

- First, the democratic and egalitarian basis for massification tends to bring into sharper focus persisting inequalities in access and success, thus producing more rather than less pressures for further democratisation and social justice.
- Second, the increasing diversity in the student body comes to reflect social cleavages on campus based on socio-economic backgrounds, such as class, race, gender, sexual orientation, ability, ethnicity, nationality, religion, ideology, and so forth, thus introducing greater dissensus and 'identity politics' into student politics and university politics.
- Third, as higher education as an allocator of life chances becomes increasingly important, the quality of credentials and relevance of qualifications in the labour

market also increases. Graduate unemployment may become a serious concern (cf. Trow 2006).

The first two pressures tend to transform the student movement from a focus on broader national and social issues to foreground academic and day-to-day concerns of students. This has been described recently as a 'domestication of the student voice' (Brooks et al. 2015) and may be conceptualised in terms of a general re-orientation of the student movement to become more 'etudialist' (Altbach 1989). The latter pressure, however, is likely to increase competition among students, heighten youth discontent, and may also produce an incentive for students to extend their university career to become 'permanent students'. Mugume (2015) has shown the huge pressure on student leaders who aspire to become politicians to profile themselves and be credentialed as student leaders to qualify as political leaders. Student politics may thus become 'captive' to multi-party competition on campus, extreme partisanship and problematic clientelist relations, all of which have various adverse effects on student representation (Luescher-Mamashela & Mugume 2014; Mugume 2015). The following tentative proposition is therefore suggested: a lack of consistency between democratisation in state and society and at university level (in terms of enrolment and governance) produces the kind of contradictions that give rise to high levels of student discontent and activism.

Student politics: Activism and representation

Student politics is typically used as an umbrella concept to refer to all political activities of students in higher education. Numerous scholars attest to the typically oppositional nature of student politics; they therefore tend to use the terms 'student activism' and 'student political activism' to refer more specifically to oppositional and emancipatory student political protest (e.g. Altbach 1989, 1991; Badat 1999; Munene 2003). The distinction between student politics and student activism is, however, not a rigorous one in the literature.

Students tend to organise their politics by means of various kinds of student organisations of an explicitly political or even partisan nature whereby the latter may be official branches, or student or youth wings of national political parties. Students also organise on the basis of regional, ethnic or religious groups, and as discipline-specific groups, sport codes, advocacy and developmental groups and so forth, all of which may be national, inter-institutional or institutional. Student organisations are usually voluntary membership organisations within the student body. Compulsory or statutory affiliation of the student body to a student organisation is only typical for institutional student unions/student guilds and some national student associations or national student unions. A very specific type of student organisation is student government which refers to the formal structure of student governance organised by students. Student governments typically are officially recognised and mandated by a higher education act or institutional charter or statute. They have the dual purpose of exercising authority over

the student body, especially with respect to on-campus organising and extra-curricular activities of students; and to represent the student voice vis-à-vis national and institutional authorities, and the public.

Different forms of the representation of student interests invoke a distinction between formal student representation and informal student activism. While the former refers to the 'ordinary' or 'boardroom'-type politics of student involvement in governance structures and committees, the latter refers to a broad spectrum of informal or 'extraordinary' protest action (Pabian & Minksová 2011). As a way of conceptualising different kinds of student action, Cele (2015) established a basic typology for the study of student politics.

Cele's conceptualisation of student actions

Mlungisi Cele's analysis of student action is set within the broader context of the democratisation of state and higher education in South Africa's first decade of democracy. As a means to analyse the paradoxical nature of government policy and its effects on student politics, he adapts a framework originally proposed by Wright et al. (1990) which consists of a typology of four ideal types of student action: normative collective student action (Type 1), non-normative collective student action (Type 2), normative individual student action (Type 3) and non-normative individual student action (Type 4). The typology thus distinguishes on the one axis between normative and non-normative action; and on the other axis between collective and individual forms of action. Normative collective action could be conceptualised as 'formal student representation'; while non-normative collective action may serve as an analytic conception of student activism.⁴

As Cele (2015) has shown, the four different types of student action tend to be employed by student leaders in a complementary fashion in pursuit of their interests. His study further shows the importance of the national macro-political context, the institutional context and the history and traditions of student politics for understanding student action. It also implies a strong argument for the inclusion of students in university governance, both as a 'politically-realist response' to student organising (Luescher-Mamashela 2013) as well as for the positive contribution that student leadership can make in suggesting institutional conditions and mechanisms that provide for ways to mitigate the adverse effects of institutional massification in a context of strained public resources for working class students.

Altbach's theory of student activism⁵

Philip Altbach's work on student activism spans over a half a century of scholarship that has

⁴ For an application of the framework see Cele et al. (2016: Chapter 9).

⁵ This section draws extensively on Luescher-Mamashela (2015).

produced a comparative theoretical understanding of student activism (Luescher-Mamashela 2015). His theoretical insights may be summarised in relation to four questions:

- Under what conditions does student activism emerge?
- What are the typical characteristics of student organisations/movements?
- What are the typical characteristics of student activists?
- What are the effects of student activism?

Altbach's responses to these questions involve a complex multi-level system of categorical classification; he suggests propositions regarding the emergence, outcomes and impact of student activism, the response to student activism, and the characteristic features of student organisations and movements and of student activists.

Firstly, Altbach emphasises the need for sensitivity to different national and institutional contexts, the characteristics of higher education, the backgrounds of student activists, and the features characteristic of student organisations and movements. At the macro-political level, the stage of political development, regime legitimacy and responsiveness of the political system to political demands matters in understanding the emergence, nature, role and impact of student activism. At the system level of higher education, certain characteristics inherent in different national higher education systems and types of universities matter in understanding student activism. At the level of the student community, typical characteristics of studentship, such as its transient nature, are responsible for the peculiar features of student organisations and movements. Furthermore, who the likely student activists are – and who are not – can in part be explained by generalisations concerning the academic, socio-economic, political and familial backgrounds of students. Altogether, these varied features need to be taken into account when seeking to understand student activism.

Under what conditions does student activism emerge and succeed?

A crucial variable in the effectiveness and impact of student activism on society is the level of legitimacy of the macro-political system compared to that of the student movement. This argument emerges from Altbach's analysis of the dramatic differences in the effect and success of student activism in the late 1960s and early 1970s between industrialised 'Western' countries and the 'Third World' (Altbach 1991: 256). One part of the argument is, as Altbach (1991: 250) put it, that 'where student activism is traditionally accepted as a legitimate element of the political system it is more likely to have an impact on society'. Thus, where regimes are facing a legitimacy deficit – 'such as in much of Eastern Europe, and in several western countries during the 1960s' – student activism can be significant and influential (1992: 142). In contrast, student efforts to overturn the government seem both difficult and unnecessary in countries with open and pluralistic systems of government (Moodie 1999).

Altbach's analysis of the importance of the higher education context starts with the

observation that academic life both permits and hinders student activism. On the one hand, it provides considerable free time for students to live life at their own pace, build close-knit communities with like-minded peers, and explore, debate and mobilise for new ideas. On the other hand, studies also regulate life and follow a timetable, and exam periods can be all consuming and make activism more difficult. At the system level of higher education, one can say Altbach (1991) agrees with Trow that there is no conclusive argument whether student activism is more typically a phenomenon characteristic of elite, mass or universal higher education; student activism has been observed in all types even if its meaning may vary (Trow 2006; also see below). However, there are certain characteristics inherent in different national higher education systems, types of universities and disciplines of study that matter in understanding student activism. Finally, the transient nature of the student population and rapid turnover in student leadership make student movements difficult to sustain and create a tendency for students to be impatient to see change. The proposition here is that the less regulated (or more *laissez-faire*) the academic life of students, the more likely it is that student movements will emerge and be sustained across several student generations, whereby traditions of activism can be developed and maintained.

The extent to which a student movement can have nationwide reach depends on the size and heterogeneity of the higher education system. In the large and heterogeneous American (national) or European (supranational) system, organising a coherent student movement is extraordinarily difficult (Moodie 1999). While this has improved with the creation of large student federations such as the European Students' Union (ESU), in very small national systems made up of a handful of institutions, such as found in many developing countries, organising a student movement of national impact is much easier.

Moreover, universities are inherently part of the activist equation in that politics is an integral part of the creation and dissemination of knowledge. However, the type, size, prestige and location of universities matters greatly. More prestigious institutions tend to attract students from well-educated, urban families who are wealthier and more privileged than the average student, and who frequently become student activists (Altbach 1992). In the same institutions, they are also likely to come into contact with cosmopolitan, activist professors (Altbach 1992). Moreover, studying in a university that is located close to the country's capital or major cities 'gives students a sense that they are at the centre of power' (Altbach 1991: 257); it makes access to information and decision-makers easier and demonstrations are more likely to receive national media coverage (which is very important in terms of getting a response).

In addition, students from some faculties and disciplines are more inclined towards activism than others. Student activists tend to come from the social sciences and humanities as well as from mathematics; least inclined towards activism are students from applied and professional fields like commerce, engineering and agriculture (Altbach 1991, 1992; Lipset & Altbach 1969). The reason for this pattern may be that (1) student activists self-select into the social sciences because these disciplines focus on the study of society and social problems; (2) the subject matter actually affects students and produces more radical views and a more activist inclination; and

(3) the course of studies for regulated professions tends to be more structured and thus makes it more difficult for students to ‘take a year off’ and come back to their studies (Altbach 1991).

This argument regarding the disciplinary specialisation of student activists may be extrapolated to the institutional level to propose that the more vocationally or professionally oriented the institution (e.g. a university of technology, a polytechnic), the less likely are student movements to emerge from within it. This may further extend to system level, whereby the related proposition would be that from the professionally oriented side of a binary system of higher education, student activism is less likely to emerge. Similar questions arise with regard to the question of student activism in private higher education which in the African context tends to be vocationally oriented and often established by a religious institution.

What are the typical characteristics of student activists?

Many of the typical characteristics of student activists have already been mentioned; they are part of Altbach’s sociological generalisations concerning the identity of ‘typical activists’. What matters are: (1) the familial, socio-economic and political background, whereby in the US in the 1960s student activists tended to come from more well-off, well-educated, urban families that were supportive of activism; (2) minority groups tend to be overrepresented among student activists; and (3) they tend to come from a small number of academic disciplines and are among the academically best-performing students (Altbach 1991). Thus, the typical student rebel is not representative of the student body; she or he is more likely part of a small minority of the total student community. The transferability of these generalisations to the African context will, of course, require empirical testing.

What are the typical characteristics of student organisations/movements?

The emergence of virtually mobilised youth and student movements observed, for example, during the Arab Spring or more recently in the 2015 #RhodesMustFall protests at the University of Cape Town and the South Africa-wide #FeesMustFall movement, and thus the impact of ICTs and social networks like Facebook and Twitter on student activism post-date Altbach’s work and offer useful new material for theorising student movements. In Altbach’s terms, the dynamics of student movements are not unlike those of other social movements although the specific aspects of campus life, e.g. an age-graded population, a fairly close community, common social class backgrounds and other elements, make student movements somewhat unusual (Altbach 1991). Foremost among the unique characteristics of student movements is the transient nature of studentship, which has a powerful impact. Given the short life cycle of student generations, lasting typically from three to five years only, student movements tend to be short-lived and sporadic. This ‘fluidity’ makes their rise and demise difficult to predict. Moreover, given the typical oppositional nature of student activism, student movements tend to be reformist if not revolutionary in outlook, and in their ideological orientation reflect

the commitments of the activists involved.

In his early writings, Altbach distinguished between different types of student movements based on their ideological alignment, focus and orientation. In terms of topical focus, orientation and scope of activity, Altbach distinguishes between 'etudialist' and 'society-oriented' student movements. Etudialist movements are inward-oriented, primarily towards higher education and student-related concerns. Conversely, society-oriented movements are concerned with societal issues – political, social or cultural (Altbach 1964: 184). A second distinction is between norm and value-based student movements which is important when considering current concerns regarding the role of political parties in student politics in Africa. According to Altbach (1964: 184), 'student groups affiliated to political parties usually have a value orientation and are often concerned with broader political issues'. Correspondingly, recent studies in the African context show that party politics tend to introduce a complex dynamic into student politics, which may compromise the representation of student-specific interests (Luescher-Mamashela & Mugume 2014; also see Mugume & Katusiimeh 2016: Chapter 8).

Finally, Altbach makes an important point in his discussion of the classifications, arguing that there is a great deal of correspondence between the two classifications, in that 'there are similarities between the norm-value distinction and the 'etudialist'-society orientation of the student movement' (Altbach 1966: 184). The study by Jungblut and Weber (2012) on the transformations of the German national student union over almost two decades suggests that these distinctions and Altbach's related proposition continue to be relevant. Altbach's groundwork can also be seen in the structural axis of Gill and De Fronzo's (2009) classification of student movements. Moreover, given that there are quite specific properties to each of Altbach's classifications, they offer good material for comparative analysis and systematic empirical testing.

What are the effects of student activism?

Altbach is somewhat ambiguous as to the effectiveness of student activism, even if he affirms that its overall cultural and political impact on higher education and society has been highly significant (albeit more so in developing countries than in Europe and North America). Altbach's ambiguity may be understood in terms of his often-stated proposition that the effectiveness of student activism is not so much determined by factors directly related to the issues raised by students or the type of activism employed but determined to a large extent by the response of other social groups in and outside the university and/or the response a student movement receives from government (Altbach 1991; Altbach & Klemenčič 2014). To provoke a response, the message of the activists must be disseminated which brings into sharp focus the role of mass media (Altbach 1991; Lipset & Altbach 1966; Moodie 1999), and one may want to add that of social media these days.

There is a range of typical responses to student activism on the part of government or institutional managements: ignoring student activists, engaging and negotiating with them, or

repressing activism to various degrees (Altbach 1991). According to Altbach (1991: 249–251), the violent repression of student activism is often a factor in ‘increasing both the size and the militancy’ of activist movements. As a short-term strategy, repression may work well; for the long term, however, it may prove counterproductive by sowing ‘the seeds of later unrest’. In this regard, it is proposed that the ways activists articulate their concerns may be conditioned by the response they expect. A related and more general proposition is therefore that the pattern of response to student activism determines the nature of future activism and ultimately student political culture.

A key insight that may be derived from Altbach’s work on student activism is that a lack of channels to pursue cooperative tactics and/or a lack of responsiveness to the use of cooperative tactics may give rise to the pursuit of increasingly more confrontational ones. Studies on student activism from various contexts therefore recommend the establishment of formal structures for communicating and negotiating with student leaders as an appropriate response by university authorities to reduce disruptive student activism on campus (Luescher-Mamashela 2013). In this regard, Cele’s work on student politics (above) and Klemenčič’s analysis of student organising (below) provide further insight. Moreover, Altbach’s meta-analytical framework for studying student politics, anticipates Clark’s work on analytical perspectives in higher education governance (see below).

Klemenčič’s framework for investigating student organising

Manja Klemenčič’s theoretical framework for investigating student political agency builds on Altbach’s pioneering work while also taking into account more recent theoretical insights into the organisational dynamics of interest representation in policy networks, i.e. how ‘collective student interests are aggregated and intermediated to other political actors within the higher education or wider political context’ (Klemenčič 2014: 396). The framework has been elaborated in the course of her analysis of three types of student organising: national student associations, student movements, and institutional student governments (Klemenčič 2012, 2014). With reference to national student associations, Klemenčič distinguishes between two key types: interest group-type associations and student movement-type organisations. While the former conception implies the existence of ‘[an] – implicit or explicit – exchange relationship between the state and intermediary student associations’ (2014: 8), the conception of national student associations as student movements/civil society organisations testifies to ‘a tendency toward conflictual politics and non-institutionalised forms of claim-making, such as protests, boycotts and campaigns’ (2014: 9). The two types are characterised in Table 4.

Klemenčič’s typology is theoretically founded in a framework originally developed by Schmitter and Streek (1999) which proposes that the organisational characteristics of interest representation organisations are affected by two sets of independent variables or ‘logics’, i.e. the logic of membership and the logic of influence. According to Klemenčič (2012), representatives

of national student associations have to operate on a ‘two-level game’ whereby they have to simultaneously serve their members (i.e. the students or student organisations they represent) in keeping with a logic of membership, as well as ensure that they represent them effectively in relation to public authorities which, in turn, involves a process of adapting their modus operandi in accordance with a logic of influence. The typology therefore provides not only a way of classifying the complex and heterogeneous landscape of national student associations; it also proposes ways of understanding how contemporary student organisations operate, and why and how they change.⁶ The same framework may also be applied to the special case of student governments. Here, Klemenčič suggests three sets of questions as a starting point for an investigation: How do student governments operate? How do student governments change? How do student governments matter in the context of higher education politics? (Klemenčič 2014).

Table 4 Klemenčič’s typology of national student associations

| | National student associations | |
|---|--|--|
| Qualifying factors | Student associations as social movement organisations | Student associations as interest groups |
| Organisational structure | Network-like; loosely integrated; limited functional differentiation | Hierarchically ordered with strong centralised coordination; highly functionally differentiated |
| Internal resources | Fluctuating administrative funding; volunteers | Secure administrative funding; professionalised administration |
| Political agenda | Transversal: next to sectorial also broader political issues (solidarity, human rights, social justice, egalitarian values, democratisation, anti-globalisation) | Sectorial: focusing on organisation, substance and processes of education and student welfare issues |
| Mode of action | Non-institutionalised forms of claim-making: protests, boycotts, campaigns | Lobbying and political advocacy, services |
| Outputs | Mobilisation capacity, expertise and information | Representativeness (legitimisation capacity), expertise and information, implementation capacity |
| Examples of national student associations [in Europe] | UDU Italy; UNEF France; Fage France; CREUP Spain | NSO Norway; NUS-UK; fzs Germany |

Source: Klemenčič (2012: 8)

Clark’s analytical perspectives in higher education governance

Many studies of student representation draw on concepts developed in higher education studies and especially the sociology of higher education that focus on understanding power

⁶ An application of the framework to the African higher education context is presented in Chapter 2 of this book.

and authority in universities and systems of higher education. Burton Clark (1978) proposes that studying academic authority involves taking account of

- the multilevel nature of the organisation of knowledge production and, concomitantly, the multilevel nature of authority in the sector;
- the different stakeholders or role-players and their various interests, including the public and national government, other social role-players, the professoriate and academic staff, the university management, students, as well as non-academic staff;
- the maze of formal arrangements and informal relations that simultaneously enable and diffuse authority; and
- the historical dimension and development of a particular university or system of higher education.

Many studies of higher education governance apply Clark's analytic perspectives along with a governance perspective to higher education politics that may be called 'institutionalist' by providing in-depth accounts of governance structures and processes, often with the purpose of identifying and explaining shifts in governance. In keeping with theories developed in the study of public management and political ethics, governance studies are often normative in so far as they apply or seek to develop notions of 'good governance'. They therefore also include an interest in questions of political ethics and corruption. One of the most authoritative studies of higher education governance in South Africa proposed that good university governance involves an appropriate balance between representation and delegation, with strong implementation capacity (Hall et al. 2004). Governance studies can also result in guidelines to practitioners on how to conduct themselves as members of governing bodies.

Studying student representation involves taking account of the multiple levels of higher education governance – from the classroom and student residence level to institutional governance, and from national higher education policy-making to the international politics of higher education funding, harmonisation, and development; it takes into account the identity of different groups involved in governance and their respective power and authority in decision-making; it studies the maze of formal arrangements and informal relations and dynamics that characterise university governance and the participation of students therein; and ultimately it is concerned with the nature of the rule systems that govern higher education and students in particular.

Epstein's forms of authority in governing the university

In the analysis of university governance, Leon Epstein distinguishes four sources of authority in the American university. Authority is typically defined as legitimate power, whereby the legitimacy is derived from different sources which in one of the first definitions thereof,

Max Weber proposed as personal charisma, tradition and the law. The latter ‘rational-legal’ authority, he argued, would eventually become the dominant source of legitimating power and domination as, for instance, in the democratic selection of leaders in modern democracies. In the academic realm, the various role-players in governance claim authority from different sources.

In Epstein’s (1974) terms, the source of the authority of academics is their expertise and position, which he refers to as academic ‘professorialism’. Clark adds a distinction between the personal-professorial authority of academics; collegial-professorial authority; and a guild or collective academic-professional authority of academics (Clark 1983). Epstein’s authority of academics in higher education is complemented (and contested) by the collective bargaining power of unionised academics, which is more typically employed by junior academics.

Furthermore, Epstein defines ‘managerialism’ as university administrators’ source of authority independent from that which they may derive from the authority of the university council or board of trustees and that of the senate or academic board (1974). Rather, managerial authority arises from ‘the public belief that administrators *should* have some university policymaking responsibility’, from administrators’ expertise and their specialised ‘access to information’, and ‘their dual responsibilities to external and internal constituents’ which involves that university administrators ‘often act creatively both to mediate and to formulate institutional policies’ (1974: 100). Moreover, ‘trusteeship’ is Epstein’s term for the source of authority that members of university councils or boards of trustees have; and in a national system of higher education, government derives its authority from the law, both in terms of a democratic mandate and as governmental or bureaucratic authority.

In this maze of claims to power, the question is what power (if any) do students have? Where does it derive from and how may it be employed? According to Epstein (1974), student power arises primarily from ‘consumerism’ and may be employed in two ways: as the individual consumer power of students (in terms of selecting and deselecting an institution, programme or course) and the organised power of students. Luescher-Mamashela (2013) elaborated and expanded on the different sources of student power with reference to four distinct claims and various related arguments for, and against, student representation.

Luescher’s justifications for student representation⁷

Students’ claim to representation in decisions on higher education has been conceptualised by Luescher-Mamashela (2013) in relation to different conceptions of ‘students’ and the student–university relationship. The first way in which the case for student representation in university decision-making is made focuses on the modern origins of student representation in student activism. Students can be thought of as a (political) group or constituency on campus whose

⁷ This section draws extensively on Luescher-Mamashela (2013).

demands and concerns must be addressed due to their ability to organise as a collective and disrupt the academic functioning of the university by means of various kinds of protest action. This ability to disrupt the academic process prompts a politically realist response of seeking accommodation with an actual or potential adversary by formalising the expression of student interests by means of an inclusion of student representatives in formal structures and committees at various levels of governance.

A second claim for student representation is found in the consumerist case. It is based on the argument that students are a special kind of client or consumer of educational products and services whose claim for representation may be justified with reference to their immediate and long-term interests in the price and quality of provision, and thus as a way of protecting students' interests in higher education. Representation is therefore justified as a means to safeguard 'affected interests'; this claim thus relates to Epstein's (1974) notion of 'consumerism'.

Thirdly, conceiving of students as members of the academic community – however junior and transient – is at the heart of the communitarian claim to student representation. Here, emphasis is put on the notion of a 'learning community', and the learning process as a collaborative activity, recognising that 'both students and university bring resources to the educational process, and that both make demands and levy expectations on each other during that process' (McCulloch 2009: 178). The communitarian case for student representation in higher education governance is further reinforced with reference to democratic norms and values.

Fourthly, in democratic societies, higher education is not only a means to prepare young people to perform specialist roles in the labour market; it is also an opportunity for developing high-level citizenship competences such as critical thinking skills, leadership skills, diversity and social skills (Bergan 2004; Luescher-Mamashela et al. 2015). Thus, student representation may be justified in terms of broader and long-term perspectives of the social impact of higher education, whereby students are seen as members of the broader political community of citizens, and student participation in higher education politics in terms of political socialisation, as 'an important opportunity to practice and nurture the habits of democratic life' (Boland 2005: 214). This democratic case for student representation is frequently intertwined with other consequentialist arguments regarding the benefits of student representation accruing to the participating students themselves, the university and society.

All four cases or justifications involve good reasons for and against student representation that do not need to be rehearsed here in detail⁸; taken together, they provide a 'high-level normative, complex set of criteria that can be applied at different organisational levels and in the different domains of governance as part of an analytical framework' (Luescher-Mamashela 2013: 11). In this regard the study of the changing role of student unions by Brooks et al. (2015) shows ways of applying the framework to the study of the UK national student union. Brooks et al. argue:

8 For a complete exposition of the different arguments, see Luescher-Mamashela (2013).

It seems that a higher education sector that is market-based and consumer oriented would tend to promote both a consumerist case for representation and a politically-realist one – as, within highly competitive and consumer-led markets, disgruntled and vociferous students can inflict significant harm to institutional reputation and recruitment. [...] [Moreover,] it seems likely that when students' unions become subject to the same managerialist techniques as HEIs, it becomes less likely that they will be motivated to act in a questioning and potentially critical manner. (Brooks et al. 2015: 178–179)

Thus, Brooks et al. (2015: 179) conclude that ‘if representation is conceptualised through “consumerist” and “political-realist” lenses, it can be seen as entirely consonant with the marketised nature of contemporary higher education’. Provided that the different claims are based on different conceptions of ‘students’, they also imply different conceptions of the student–university relationship and therefore a typology of universities and university governance.

Olsen’s visions of the university, university governance and student politics⁹

There is no shortage of different models of university governance in the higher education literature. For instance, Grant Harman (in Clark & Neave 1992: 1282) distinguishes between four main models of university governance:

1. the *collegial model* – emphasises non-hierarchical cooperative decision-making, and a significant degree of self-determination by academic staff;
2. the *bureaucratic model* – emphasises legal-rational authority and formal hierarchies;
3. the *professional model* – emphasises the authority of experts and the importance of horizontally differentiated units linked in loose confederations; and
4. the *political model* – conceptualises governance in terms of political conflict among interest groups with competing views and values.

More recently Johan Olsen (2007: 28–33) elaborated four suggestive ‘visions’ or models of university organisation and governance, based on different constitutive logics. They are the university as ‘a rule-governed community of scholars’ which is characterised by shared norms and objectives among key actors and governed by internal factors; the university as ‘an instrument for shifting national political agendas’, where, in a context of shared norms and objectives, external factors dominate the operations and dynamics of the university; the university as ‘a representative democracy’, where internal factors and conflicting norms and objectives

⁹ This section draws extensively on Luescher (2008).

amongst key actors dominate the governance of the university; and the university as ‘a service enterprise embedded in competitive markets’, which is characterised by conflicting norms and objectives among key actors and a predominance of external factors in the governance of the operations and dynamics of the university (see also Luescher 2008). Olsen’s conceptualisation of the four visions is outlined in detail in Table 5.¹⁰

Table 5 Four visions of university organisation and governance

| Autonomy: Conflict: | University operations and dynamics are governed by internal factors | University operations and dynamics are governed by environmental factors |
|---|--|--|
| Actors have shared norms and objectives | <p>The University is a rule-governed community of scholars</p> <p><i>Constitutive logic:</i> Identity based on free inquiry, truth finding, rationality and expertise.</p> <p><i>Criteria of assessment:</i> Scientific quality.</p> <p><i>Reasons for autonomy:</i> Constitutive principle of the University as an institution: authority to the best qualified.</p> <p><i>Change:</i> Driven by the internal dynamics of science. Slow reinterpretation of institutional identity. Rapid and radical change only with performance crises.</p> | <p>The University is an instrument for national political agendas</p> <p><i>Constitutive logic:</i> Administrative: Implementing predetermined political objectives.</p> <p><i>Criteria of assessment:</i> Effective and efficient achievement of national purposes.</p> <p><i>Reasons for autonomy:</i> Delegated and based on relative efficiency.</p> <p><i>Change:</i> Political decisions, priorities, designs as a function of elections, coalition formation and breakdowns and changing political leadership.</p> |
| Actors have conflicting norms and objectives | <p>The University is a representative democracy</p> <p><i>Constitutive logic:</i> Interest representation, elections, bargaining and majority decisions.</p> <p><i>Criteria of assessment:</i> Who gets what: Accommodating internal interests.</p> <p><i>Reasons for autonomy:</i> Mixed (work-place democracy, functional competence, real politik).</p> <p><i>Change:</i> Depends on bargaining and conflict resolution and changes in power, interests, and alliances.</p> | <p>The University is a service enterprise embedded in competitive markets</p> <p><i>Constitutive logic:</i> Community service. Part of a system of market exchange and price systems.</p> <p><i>Criteria of assessment:</i> Meeting community demands. Economy, efficiency, flexibility, survival.</p> <p><i>Reasons for autonomy:</i> Responsiveness to ‘stakeholders’ and external exigencies, survival.</p> <p><i>Change:</i> Competitive selection or rational learning. Entrepreneurship and adaptation to changing circumstances and sovereign customers.</p> |

Source: Olsen (2007: 30)

¹⁰ An application of Olsen’s model to the study of student representation in Ethiopia is presented by Ayele (2016, in Chapter 7 of this book).

For the study of student representation, the limitation of Olsen's and other typologies is that the place of students in university governance seldom figures as a topic. However, several recent adaptations and applications of Olsen's visions to the study of student politics have produced theoretical frameworks from which it is possible to generate hypotheses related to student politics. Among them are the application by Minksová and Pabian (2011) and adaptation by Luescher (2008) and Luescher-Mamashela (2010). The latter relates the four visions to respective conceptions of 'students' (such as those involved in different justifications for student representation outlined above) and modifies them to suit a study in the South African context. The resulting typology is presented in Table 6.¹¹

Table 6 Visions of the university and student governance

| University vision | Regime type | Source of legitimacy | Regime orientation | Definition of governors | Conception of students | Mode of student politics |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|--|--|--|--|---|
| The Community of Scholars | Donnish-professional | Authority (based on academic expertise and commitment) | Mainly internal to peers and discipline | Academic community stratified by rank and office | Minors and junior members in the academic community | Very limited formal student participation; student political activism is largely absent |
| The Prestigious National University | Bureaucratic-nationalistic | Trust (and compliance with external guidelines) | Mainly external to national or community interests | Senior bureaucrats and complicit academics | Beneficiaries and future elite of the community/nation | Limited formal participation of students; officially sanctioned forms of student activism |
| The Stakeholder University | Corporatist-democratic | Accountability (to key internal groups) | Mainly internal to constituency interests | Constituency representatives | A constituent group within the university | Extensive political involvement of student leadership; high levels of student activism |
| The Market-Oriented University | Managerial-professional | Reciprocity (based on a long-term view of value for money) | Mainly external to the market | Senior managers | Clients and users | Formal provisions for participation focused on service delivery and student rights; very limited political activism; political apathy |

Source: Luescher (2008: 58)

¹¹ The following sections are based on Luescher (2008) and Luescher-Mamashela (2010).

The community of scholars

The traditional vision of the university as a community of scholars is institutionalised in terms of governance in the disciplinary chair-based authority of professors which extends in diverse practices of ‘academic rule’ (Moodie 1996) to the governance of the core academic business of the university as well as related matters, especially by means of the constitution of the academic Senate. Hierarchies of academic seniority and rank define hierarchies of authority. In the community of scholars, the university administration is deliberately staffed with ‘amateurs’ and kept small and subordinate to the professoriate. The university’s board of trustees or council acts as a buffer between the self-governing academic community and its external environment. Internally, the academic community is highly stratified with students conceived of as ‘apprentice-scholars’ and ‘junior members of the community’. The educational function of the community of scholars is primarily intellectual formation and moral education. Hence, academic authority typically extends to the student domain and over students’ private affairs. In the academic process, students as ‘novices’ or ‘apprentices’ are subject to the instruction and academic authority of the professor; in their private lives students as ‘minors’ are subject to the university’s moral instruction and responsibility *in loco parentis*. Thus, in terms of this vision of the university, student demands for representation in university decision-making – if they arise – are disqualified by students’ lack of academic expertise and maturity. This is an ‘aristocracy of competence’ (Wolff 1969: 114) in which student representation runs contrary to the principle of professional competence and academic authority.

The prestigious national university

The university as an instrument for national political agendas’ source of governance legitimacy is compliance with national directives. This is the prestigious national university; an instrument for the nation and training ground for the future cultural, political and professional elite of the nation or a specific group within a nation, e.g. an ethnic or religious group. Thus, not a critical and disinterested distance from the national project but rather a whole-hearted embracing of its ideological character and programme defines the university’s role among a range of instruments to be coordinated and directed by the nation-state and its embeddedness in its political and cultural dynamics. Considerable variations in the fashioning of the alignment between university and nation-state may be evident; yet governance of the prestigious national university is based on a logic of trust. Accordingly, the faculty and the university administration are to be screened, appointed by, and answerable to, the nation-state. Formally constituted university governing bodies serve to ensure the university’s compliance with national directives facilitated by close ties with, and allegiance to, the dominant political elite. Students of the prestigious national university are supposed to comply voluntarily and uncritically with received rules administered in a traditional manner. Successful university education guarantees upward social mobility. Student leaders (especially those from elite backgrounds) may be

co-opted into a limited number of governance forums; yet, real decision-making happens elsewhere. The purpose of student representation in such bodies is to socialise students into the way ‘we’ do things. Thus, student life is embedded in national life; it is directed in a paternalistic manner and embraces every aspect of the person. Students may be encouraged to involve themselves in national youth organisations (including officially sanctioned political organisations) which operate branches on campus. Student activism is therefore limited, albeit certain student groupings or national youth movements with a close relationship with national leadership orchestrate officially sanctioned forms of activism; conversely, oppositional and excluded groups may occasionally stage protests. University oversight of student affairs is justified with reference to the *in loco parentis* rule whereby ‘elders’ take on the responsibility of guiding students towards their future role in the nation.

The university as representative democracy

The ideal-type model of the university as a representative democracy co-governed by key constituencies – i.e. the stakeholder university – envisions the university as composed of, and accountable to, a range of internal constituencies, including senior faculty, junior academic staff, students, non-academic staff, management and unions. The governance regime of the stakeholder university derives its legitimacy from accountability to these various internal constituencies.¹² They all seek to participate and predominate in a culture of decision-making that is characterised by negotiation and bargaining. The stakeholder model of university governance actively facilitates various forms of student representation in university decision-making. To the extent that students are recognised as a key constituent group of the university, student leaders and representatives are entitled to participate in almost every forum, board, and committee as equal members. The corporatist orientation of the stakeholder university provides extensive scope for student self-government in the extra-curricular student domain. Moreover, the importance that is afforded to the involvement of student representatives has a number of structuring effects on the organisation of student politics. Firstly, the stakeholder university is characterised by a highly politicised student body. There is fierce political competition between different student groups to obtain a leadership mandate from the student body. Secondly, students in general tend to have a high sense of entitlement, and the official student representatives enjoy many perks and incentives. This can deteriorate and take on the character of patron–client relationships between university leaders and student leaders, student leaders and political parties, and student leaders and key members of the student body at another level. Thirdly, student government is highly centralised to ensure the coordination of student groupings and organisations in a union-like fashion. The university’s student organisations tend to include a disproportionate number of student political organisations

12 The notion of ‘stakeholder’ employed here draws on Morrow’s (1998) work on stakeholder political theory in the context of higher education governance.

which compete amongst each other to obtain the leadership mandate from the student body, making for high levels of student political activism.

The market-oriented university

Finally, the ideal-type of a market-oriented university – or service enterprise as Olsen would have it – envisions the university as a commercial educational service provider that competes in the local and international higher education market. Scholarly traditions, academic hierarchies and discipline-based organisation are replaced by a corporate mission that commits the university to entrepreneurialism and identifies the market-niche for the higher educational and research services. The teaching services and research services and outputs are conceived as commodities to be branded with the reputation of the university and marketed to appeal to the specific demands of the particular client segments that the institution targets. The market-oriented university must be attuned to the market's perception of value for money for its products, that is a perception linked to the university's reputation and global ranking (Salerno 2007). Governance of the market-oriented university needs above all to be able to respond swiftly and effectively to new demands in the market. Accordingly, the university needs to be run on the principles of efficient management as a tight business operation. Senior professional managers form the core of the university and ensure institutional survival and growth in an environment of competition and great flux; other staff, both academic and administrative, are accountable to senior management via their line managers. Efficiency and effectiveness, performance management, productivity and marketability are the key principles that ensure the financial viability or even profitability of the enterprise. Traditional committee systems are done away with or re-fashioned to serve as trial audiences for product innovations proposed by the management and as advisory bodies inter alia to provide feedback on service levels and customer satisfaction. The executive management of the market-oriented university functions as the equivalent of a board of directors; it directs an appointed senior management with a staff complement engaged in various educational core and non-core services. Academic programmes managers are in charge of teaching provision and coordinate the deployment of contracted teachers. Within this management structure, there is little place for traditional discipline-based departments; teaching is programme-related and research is project-based. Teachers and researchers are predominantly contract-based employees with only a small proportion of accomplished full-time academics as members of educational programmes or research-oriented institutes which have a life span as long as their financial viability extends. There is no need for any real sense of an academic community; this is a firm and the relationship of academic staff to the corporation is determined by the employment contract. Students as clients understand the university as a service provider. They seek credentials ahead of entering the labour market or qualifying for a professional career; there is little space for social or political activism, lest it is motivated by the incentive of adding value to educational credentials. There may be little or extensive formal provision for student representation; yet, this tends in

practice to be limited to representation on immediate concerns. The student body is a heterogeneous aggregate of individuals and highly fragmented. Student clubs and societies (where they exist) are typically part of the university's service palette and may be part of the strategic marketing of the institution or to enhance rapid student throughput (e.g. with a focus on student engagement). Student political activism is very limited and ad hoc; students are typically politically apathetic and focused on achieving their qualification in minimum time.

Heuristic frameworks based on typologies such as Olsen's and its adaptation and extension by Luescher offer lenses suitable for the interpretation of the diversity of empirical forms of student representation and changes in university governance as well as material for the development of related testable hypotheses.

Trow: Institutional diversity and the meanings of student representation

Martin Trow's perspective on massification and its implications was discussed in the first section of this chapter. What remains to be considered is his discussion of the *meanings* of student representation in different systems and institutions, specifically in the light of Mohamedbhai's comment that 'a system that has achieved a mass or universal status can still have, within it, an elite sub-system [...] in which elite and so-called world-class universities exist as separate entities within an overall mass or universal higher education system' (2014: 63).

Correspondingly, Cloete et al. (2015) argue that in a massified but differentiated higher education system, the diversity of HEIs can – or even should – include elite-type 'flagship' universities because the contradictory functions of higher education cannot be served by a single university alone but require a diversity of institutions. The key learning is that understanding the meaning of student representation in a differentiated and diverse system of higher education requires sensitivity to the complexities of institutional functions, histories and context. More generally Trow notes in this regard that

'student participation' in the governance of a small elite institution marked by high value consensus may in fact be merely the participation of the most junior members of a genuine academic community, held together by shared values regarding academic life. By contrast, 'student participation' in a large mass institution, marked by value dissensus may heighten the kind of interest in ideological conflicts that academic institutions, whatever their size or character, have great difficulty in containing or resolving. (Trow 2006: 262)

Thus, arguments based on the experience of a small number of elite institutions should not be applied indiscriminately across a whole system because student representation in university governance 'may have very different meaning and consequences in different kinds and phases of higher education' (Trow 2006: 262).

#RhodesMustFall and the analysis of contemporary student politics in Africa

The #RhodesMustFall protests at the University of Cape Town (UCT) in March/April 2015 can serve as a contemporary case for illustrating the relevance of key concepts, analytical approaches and theoretical perspectives available to the study of student politics. In the course of March 2015 calls amongst student groups at UCT became increasingly stronger for the removal of the statue of Cecil John Rhodes¹³ that towered as a centre piece on the famous Jameson Steps of the Upper Campus, from where it oversaw – contemplating – the ‘African hinterland’. The statue became the focal point of black student protests against the legacy of British imperialism, apartheid, capitalist exploitation of Africans and lack of transformation evident in contemporary institutional commemoration, the institutional culture and ‘whiteness’ of the university, as well as the demographic make-up of UCT staff and the content of the curriculum. Media coverage of the protests on a national and international scale started with a student soiling the Rhodes statue with human waste on 9 March. A #RhodesMustFall Facebook page was set up, YouTube clips of the protests and related Twitter handles went viral, and within a few days, open lectures, dialogues and so forth culminated in a protest movement that gained enough momentum that UCT’s vice-chancellor declared under some duress on 18 March that he had come to believe that the statue should be removed (Legg & Bester 2015). Following more protest action in support of the removal of the statue at the university’s main management building on 20 March, the SRC and other students and staff groupings of the university occupied parts of the Bremner Building (renamed ‘Azania House’) and started a sit-in that lasted over 20 days. During that period, the senate of the university met and recommended the removal of the statue, which, in addition to support from staff, student bodies, alumni and convocation, and the institutional forum, persuaded the university council at a special meeting on 8 April, to resolve unanimously

as an expression of Council’s renewed commitment to the project of transformation at UCT, to (a) apply to Heritage Western Cape for the permanent removal of the statue and (b) authorise the administration to arrange for the temporary removal of the statue for safe keeping. (Price 2015: 2)

The vice-chancellor subsequently committed to create a forum for setting the agenda for transformation and action; concluding a review of all symbols and names on the campus by the end of 2015; create a space for black academic staff to address issues of staff transformation; and expand the university’s curriculum review task team to include students and address the demands for an ‘Africanisation’ of the curriculum (Price 2015). Support for the protest was

13 Cecil John Rhodes’ association with the University of Cape Town and the former Cape Colony is a very close one and interlaced with the role he played on the continent. UCT acquired the site of its upper campus on the slopes of Table Mountain from Rhodes’ estate along with large bequests granted to the university.

forthcoming even from the national minister of higher education and training who viewed it as an opportunity to engage in frank discussions on race and transformation (and subsequently, in October 2015, convened a national higher education summit to discuss these and related matters). Eventually, the dynamic protests spread to other university campuses where related questions of institutional culture came into sharp focus (e.g. the language policy of Afrikaans/English dual-medium universities such as the University of Stellenbosch and the University of the Free State), while also sparking isolated incidents of vandalism towards some statues in the public sphere along with encouraging nation-wide discussions on the ‘unfinished business’ of the South African post-apartheid transition (cf. Haffajee 2015). #RhodesMustFall also became an inspiration to the nation-wide student protests of October 2015 against the cost of higher education and for free higher education for the poor, coined #FeesMustFall.

An analysis of the #RhodesMustFall activism at UCT in terms of the conditions of its emergence, the characteristics of the protest movement and protesters, and its outcomes and wider impact, can usefully be informed by analytical frameworks that can account for the multi-levelled nature of higher education policy-making in the context of South African society, the present context of higher education development and the University of Cape Town as a ‘flagship’ elite institution on the continent. Why did the formal governance structures of the university require to be moved into action by protests? Were formal interest aggregation and intermediation mechanisms ineffective?

The role of leadership both on the side of students (and supportive staff) as well as the university management seems crucial in both escalating and containing the protests. There were ongoing conversations between the university’s top management and the SRC as noted in vice-chancellor Max Price’s statement that there had been agreements between the university management and SRC on, for instance, the occupation of the Bremner Building and the end of the occupation once the statue had been removed (Price 2015). Even when the first agreement was breached, the university leadership decided not to escalate the conflict by calling police onto campus to remove the students. Rather:

Although the terms of agreement were breached, the protests remained generally peaceful and dignified, with numerous educational activities taking place in the Mafeje Room [i.e. the senate chamber in the Bremner Building] at all hours of the day and night. [...] Our task has been to defend the idea of a university as a space of debate [...]. We believe that this deliberative process to engage UCT stakeholders on the issue of the Rhodes statue and on wider issues of transformation at UCT was successful. [...] The sufficient consensus that we eventually achieved across the many races, class, generational, and professional divides, is a vindication of the process and of the university as a space for rational discussion. (Price 2015: 1)

Altbach’s work, as discussed above, provides suggestive answers to the question why it would be the University of Cape Town rather than, for instance, the University of Zululand, which

became the hotbed of student activism on matters of institutional culture and educational transformation in 2015. What is the place of sociological characteristics of protesters – #RhodesMustFall as a movement of mostly middle-class, black ‘born frees’? – in trying to understand the activism; the significance of this generation’s disillusion with the current conjuncture of stalled macro-economic development, a regressive macro-political democratisation process and the realisation that the ‘economic benefits’ of democracy continue to be unequally distributed in this highly unequal society plagued by high levels of poverty, inequality and unemployment; the higher education context itself, the inadequacy of public funding for universities and the student financial aid scheme in the process of an ongoing expansion of higher education to include more black and female students: its massification and the diversification of the student body; and then the key issue of institutional culture and its transformation to reflect a new African reality even at UCT. Finally, we would want to analyse the (lack of) responsiveness of institutional governance structures to student demands, the effectiveness of student representatives’ articulation and intermediation of the student voice in formal UCT governance, and the dynamics of vacillating between formal decision-making structures and protest action in Cele’s terms. What will be the wider impact and legacy of the protests? Moreover, unlike on other African university campuses where student protests quickly turn violent, lead to harm to persons and the destruction of property, marred by police incursion, resulting in student rustication, expulsions, criminal proceedings and even student deaths, how is it that at the University of Cape Town a protest on such a large scale and so disruptive to the institutional management was conducted without escalating into violence (albeit there were eventually police incursions, some student and staff arrests and disciplinary proceedings against some protest participants), and it issued in a fairly acceptable and speedy outcome, a reassertion of the authority of formal governance structures, that is the UCT senate, SRC, the institutional forum, the university council, and the senior management, and a national Minister, who rather than seeking to take control of it, used the protests to emphasise his government’s broader agenda for transformation? What roles did political parties and their student organisations play, some of which rallied to be associated with it or even take ownership of it? And how can we understand the interplay between cyberspace mobilising and the local protests and student organising? Raising these questions alone illustrates the potential of conducting theoretically informed analyses of student activism and representation.

Conclusion

Students are and act as a discernible yet internally diverse political group (or groups) in academic life and in the political life of the higher education polity and beyond; they are the largest constituency in higher education and, albeit transient and in qualification and expertise junior to academics and managers, higher education is for and of students. Harold Perkin showed that the first model of the renaissance university – the University of Bologna of

13th-century Italy – was a ‘student university’ in which students controlled the institution, including the organisation of their studies (Perkin 2006). This archetype of university organisation and governance is certainly a long time past, and the global success that the university represents as one of the most enduring institutions of society has come along with many transformations. Nonetheless, unless students have ownership of their higher education and are acknowledged as co-responsible for learning and indeed ‘co-producers of knowledge’ (Carey 2013) learning remains surface and evanescent. Studies of student engagement show precisely that the more students are in control of their own learning, actively engaged, collaboratively involved and interacting with their lecturers, the more we see higher education succeed (Luescher-Mamashela et al. 2015; Strydom & Mentz 2010). It is not accidental that the freedoms of all involved in academic activity – universally known as academic freedom – encompasses not only a high degree of self-control over one’s scholarly work in a narrow sense but also academic rule, known variably as ‘shared governance’ or ‘co-operative governance’, which ought to involve students meaningfully in governing higher education (Moodie 1996). Moreover, student politics and student representation are also about citizenship and democracy in the academic polity and beyond. The study of democratisation shows that democracy has many positive outcomes and attributes: it improves the lives of people in various ways, including a better protection and respect for human rights, higher levels of socio-economic development, lower levels of inequality and a reduction in extreme levels of poverty, more ecologically responsible behaviour, and increased levels of happiness and life satisfaction (Haerpfer et al. 2009: 1)¹⁴ Recent studies conducted by the HERANA network into the relationship between student representation, student engagement and citizenship competences show precisely that there is a ‘democratic dividend’ to engaging students politically on campus (Luescher-Mamashela et al. 2015).

The purpose of this chapter has been to invite thinking about the participation of students in higher education governance by outlining key concepts, analytical perspectives and theoretical frameworks and concerns that may be relevant to understanding student politics in the context of democratisation and the massification of higher education in Africa. The chapter has shown that there is a rich set of conceptual tools available for theoretically pertinent empirical analyses of student politics in Africa. In the bigger picture, the implicit argument is that the traditional historical-narrative approach to African social science so evident also in the study of student politics is not enough. The approach of creating periodised accounts of messy history may provide retrospective insights that allow us to discern the factors at play for understanding social phenomena in a particular period of history; yet, as much as good contextualisation and the discernment of continuities and discontinuities is necessary, it is not a sufficient task of social science. Several theorists on matters of higher education governance

¹⁴ It must be noted that there is some scepticism with respect to a number of these long-term statistical findings. While democracies tend to perform better than dictatorships in many dimensions, it is not so clear, for example, whether democracy promotes economic development or whether economic development promotes democracy, and what the exact relationship is between democracy, economic equality and poverty levels (Haerpfer et al. 2009).

and student politics insist on good contextualisation as a starting point; social science provides and creates conceptual tools at the levels of classification and analysis, as well as theoretical and explanatory frameworks that, however preliminary, make suggestion for a deeper conceptual understanding and for explaining and even tentatively anticipating social reality. Taking the study of higher education governance and student politics in Africa seriously will require an ongoing dialogue with various disciplinary perspectives and the analytical approaches and theoretical frameworks they offer.

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CHAPTER 4

THE EVOLVING NATURE OF STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN UNIVERSITY GOVERNANCE IN AFRICA: AN OVERVIEW OF POLICIES, TRENDS AND EMERGING ISSUES

Ibrahim Oanda

Background and introduction

In 2010, the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) commissioned studies in Ghana, Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, examining, among other themes, the participation of students in the governance processes of universities, and what the level of participation means for the quality and academic mission of the universities. This chapter summarises the findings of the studies, augmented by findings of other studies in this area.¹

A discussion on the nature of student representation in African universities has to be approached from two facets, based on historical and contemporary trajectories. The first is to look at how the whole body of students as elite, has constituted itself to be the conscience of society, and the greater social good in their engagement both with the universities and the political system. The second is to examine the organisational spaces provided to students to organise and protect their interests, both welfare and academic, within the institutions. Both these two notions of student representation are replete in the literature and will be explored in this chapter.

¹ The author has undertaken research in this area, including *Implications of Privatisation and Private Higher Education on Access and Knowledge Production in Kenya* (CODESRIA 2008); Management and governance reforms in public universities in East Africa and the challenges to nurturing and sustaining academic leadership (on-going research); and Comparing the Nature and Implications of Corporatisation Trends in Public Universities in East Africa (CODESRIA, in press).

Universities in Africa have gone through three phases of transformation that have had implications for the nature and quality of student participation in university governance. The first phase revolves around the time when the institutions were set up during the period of late colonialism as institutions affiliated to universities in Europe. The second phase starts from the 1970s, when after independence most African countries transformed the institutions into national universities. This transformation, actualised through Acts of parliament, entailed a redefinition of the relationship between university governance organs and the state and the role of student representation in such structures. The third phase begins around the 1980s; a period of increased demand and expansion of university education amid economic austerity, the gradual privatisation of public universities and the establishment of private universities. This phase has also entailed a change in the overall governance frameworks that established most of the universities in the 1960s and 1970s as national institutions, to a new regime where universities operate within charters under the overall oversight of higher education councils. Both these trends have changed the terrain of governance cultures in the institutions, especially the place of students and their representatives in influencing governance and management decisions. Of particular interest have been the redefinition of students in universities within an entrepreneurial frame and the renunciation of student politics as activism and framing the same as part of the problems affecting higher education institutions. Hence, for transformation related to the entrenchment of entrepreneurial cultures to succeed, the old political model of university governance that provided much space for student input into the governance process has had to be dismantled.

This chapter analyses trends in the historical evolution of policies and practices for student participation in African universities. An examination of the institutional structures that have been provided to support student participation in university governance, including sources of funding, the influence of students' voice in management decisions and overall implications is conducted. It is important in this regard to reflect on the internal organisation of student councils, especially with regard to participation and representation in student structures and internal procedures. How student representatives are identified and elected and how students politics is regulated within the institutions will form an important component of this section. Lastly, the current state of student representation in Africa, including legal frameworks and other provisions and how they influence the quality of student representation is discussed, especially in the context of the increasing growth and differentiation of higher education institutions.

The chapter is presented in three parts. Part one looks at the historical context within which student participation in university governance in Africa has evolved, tracing this to the establishment of universities in Africa during the period of late colonialism, as overseas colleges of universities in Europe. Part two analyses the dynamics of student participation, from the 1970s with the increasing establishment of universities as national projects. Part three looks at the period from the 1980s, and the economic crisis that faced African states, leading to the imposition of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) and the subsequent introduction of user fees in higher education institutions. It further explores the 1990s period, which saw the

establishment of more public universities, the establishment of private universities and the subsequent segmentation of the student body into public and private students.

Lastly, the current state of student representation in African universities is discussed. These phases and developments have contributed to reshape the nature of student participation in ways that have often brought to fore the question as to the real beneficiaries of the engagements: the state, the universities and their academic missions, or the student population.

Establishment of universities in Africa and the nature of student representation

There is some historical documentation to show that even before the formal establishment of higher education institutions in Africa student politics formed an important component of Africans' agitation for independence and for increased higher education. The earliest known student organisations however seem to have started not in Africa, but in the metropolitan capitals of European countries, among African students who had had the privilege of travelling abroad for higher education. The focus of these earlier forms of student politics was the issue of student welfare. For example, in London, there emerged the Union of African Descent (UAD) founded in 1917, the Gold Coast Students' Union (GCSU) in 1924, the Nigerian Progress Union (NPU) in 1924, and finally the West African Students' Union (WASU), the most important of all, in 1925 (Boahen 1994). WASU's prominence as a student union emanated from the fact that the organisation was able to weave its student activities into the anti-colonial struggles. Most of the leaders of the Union, such as Kwame Nkrumah, later became political leaders of their countries. As WASU spread throughout West Africa, the link between the diaspora and the African continent became essential as an axis of anti-colonial activism, and thus, perhaps, prepared the ground for the involvement of student leaders in politics in Africa.

The quest for representation from these early student movements was mainly focused on pursuing social and cultural rather than political objectives (Boahen 1994) and agitating for better conditions for students and quality education; the kind of welfare issues that have come to be dismissed as parochial by neo-liberal higher education politics. The issues that have come to define student politics, and for which their representation in university governance or management to date is rationalised, still featured then. For example, African students in Europe were concerned with welfare issues such as the acquisition of hostels and accommodation, the organisation of holiday camps, employment, scholarships, and student welfare and, above all, the ending of racial discrimination and the education of Europeans in African history and culture to counteract prevailing racist views about the inferiority of the African (Boahen 1994).

The number of African student movements increased rapidly after the Second World War, owing mostly to the increased number of students who were able to access higher education abroad and the increasing establishment of university colleges in the colonies. In British

colonial Africa, the Phelps-stokes, De La Warr, Channon, Elliot and Asquith commissions recommended and finally resulted in a number of university colleges being established in Africa. The University College of Ghana started in October 1948 with 92 students using the one million pounds sterling from the funds of the Cocoa Marketing Board. The University College of Ibadan opened in January 1948 with 148 students, the Khartoum University College opened in 1947, while the University College of Makerere opened in 1949 for East Africa, complemented by the Royal Technical College, Nairobi (Mngomezulu 2010).

The Asquith Commission had recommended that the elevation to university status in the British colonies, which produced the university colleges of Ghana, Makerere, Ibadan, and Khartoum, should be in a scheme of special relation with the University of London, in order to ensure the quality of the degrees granted, and ascertain that they achieved academic standards equal to those of universities and university colleges in Britain (Montani 1979). This meant that the new university colleges had to have almost the same standards of governance as in Britain and the University of London had the responsibility to oversee that such standards were maintained. To this end, while the University College of London accepted this responsibility, one of the conditions it laid down was that the constitution of the governing bodies of the institutions, their charters and statutes or other instruments of government had to be such that an appropriate and autonomous university capable of controlling the development of its academic policy was envisaged, for example, through encouragement of corporate and social life among students (*Report of the Working Party on Higher Education in East Africa* 1955). The idea was that the qualifications available at the university colleges and nature of student life were to be in no way inferior to the best obtainable abroad. It can then be argued that from their inception in Africa, at least during their nascent stage, universities and colleges provided some space for student activities to keep in tune with the culture of universities in Europe to which they had been linked. Chilver (1957), in commenting on the student conditions at Makerere College Uganda noted that certain features peculiar to English university life had been replicated, such as the allocation of each student to a hall of residence under a resident warden, who was concerned with the students' moral welfare, and to an academic tutor responsible for reporting on their progress. He also noted the existence of an active students' council, the Makerere College Guild, to which numerous student societies and clubs were affiliated, among them political, musical and historical societies, and an Inter-tribal Society which sought to break down tribal prejudices. He observed that the college had several playing fields for football, hockey, cricket and other sports, organised by the students themselves. Boahen (1994) finds that nearly all the British colonies in Africa saw the emergence of one or two student movements or unions by students of the new university colleges that were created at the time, such as the Tanganyika African Welfare Society founded by the students of Makerere College in Uganda and the National Union of Ghana Students (NUGS) formed in 1959.

The issues that student movements engaged with then were both welfare-related and political. Byaruhanga (1996) shows that the first significant protest by students of Makerere

College in 1952 was triggered by food-related complaints. Later, students engaged in political and ideologically inspired protests focusing on broader anti-colonial and pan-African struggles taking place on the continent in the 1960s. It can be generally observed from the literature available that most student organisations in Africa before the 1960s were established and organised around the broader nationalist programme of decolonisation and nation-building; a linkage which gave the organisations especially within the first decade of independence a legacy of strong student unionism, student political activism and idealistic radicalism (Olugbade 1990).

Beyond this engagement with welfare and broader pan-Africanist issues, Boahen (1994) notes that from 1960 to 1970 when most African countries gained independence, student movements in British colonial Africa (Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda and Sierra Leone) were marked by a low degree of politicisation or lack of political activism. Generally during this period, the number of university institutions was comparatively low and colonial relations dominated students' engagements at the pan-African level. At the end of the 1960s student ideology became increasingly inspired by Marxism-Leninism and Maoism as well as leftist politics. For example in 1967, university students at the then University College of Dar es Salaam formed the University Students African Revolutionary Front (USARF), an internationalist group that called for reforms within the university to meet national development goals (Douglas 2007). The USARF criticised the university system, the largely expatriate faculty, and the exclusion of socialist thought in the curriculum. They maintained that as long as neo-colonialist, Western professors dominated the teaching staff and controlled the education of Africa's future leaders, Tanzania would never truly be liberated from Western imperialism. University officials responded by mandating that all political activity in which the youth were involved go through the existing institution of the Tanzania Youth League (TYL), an affiliate of the ruling party which was later renamed CCM Youth League (2007). The group, which engaged in study and activism and held regular meetings on Sundays, featured many students who would go on to become influential politicians. USARF was composed of students from the eastern and central African countries, who articulated their views through a magazine, *Cheche*. As if to signal the strained relations between students and the political establishment that would evolve in the subsequent decades, the government of Tanzania, led by Nyerere, banned both USARF and the magazine in 1970, due to what was seen as the organisation's and magazine's left leanings (Priya & Mhajida 2012).

The 1970s: Era of institutional nationalisation and student radicalisation

The character of student representation and engagement with university governance started to change dramatically from the 1970s. Arguably, there was a departure from the collaboration that had been witnessed between student organisations and political leadership in the struggle for independence in Africa, to increased antagonism from the 1970s, when universities were

established as national institutions. Henceforth, and as Balsvik (1998) documents, relations between the student leadership and university management deteriorated and led to constant closure of institutions. This radicalisation of the student movement and severance of relations with the political leadership mostly emanated from the push from the students to constitute themselves as the vanguard of the dreams of political independence for the new states. Hence the quest for political spaces by students within the institutions was not welcome by university management who saw themselves as representatives of the new political class. When most African countries attained political independence, a decision was made by the new African leaders to use the universities as developmental institutions in pursuit of economic and political progress. Of immediate focus was the use of the universities to catalyse the process of workforce production to aid in the Africanisation of the civil service. Hence from 1970, an increasing number of middle-level institutions were established as national institutions through Acts of parliament. This was the case for example, with the University of East Africa that was de-established to found national universities in Nairobi, Dar es Salaam and Makerere. This institutional nationalisation also involved a severance of the 'special relationship' with the University of London, together with the governance cultures this entailed, including spaces for student representation. This focus on 'development' in most instances altered the relationship between university students and the political elite from what it had previously been.

A common feature of the new institutions throughout Africa was their close relationship with the political establishment, with the countries' presidents being installed as chancellors of the universities, and therefore having a direct role in determining the level of autonomy that the institutions enjoyed. In universities such as Dar es Salaam, the youth league of the ruling party TANU became part of the governance structure of the institution and had a more prominent role than independent student organisations (Ngonyani 2000; Omari & Mihiyo 1991). A review of the Acts of parliament that established the institutions does not reveal any provisions made expressly for student representation. Henceforth, and although the Acts of the new universities allowed for student representation, the close association between the new university management with the political elite constrained students' organisational spaces in what would be interpreted as elite competition to control the spoils of independence, with students seen as a new elite in the making, taking perspectives different from those of the ruling elite.

The University of Dar es Salaam Act 1970, for example, defined a student organisation to mean 'an organisation approved by the Chancellor as being an organisation representative of the students of the University' (University of Dar es Salaam Act 1970: 5). The Act allowed the student organisation to elect five members to represent them in the university council and faculty boards and three student representatives to senate. However, given that the chancellor of the university, who was also the country's president, had to approve how the student organisation was constituted, political considerations in such processes prevailed to the detriment of true student representation and engagement. The same efforts at political containment of student activities have been chronicled with respect to Makerere University in the 1970s,

during the Obote and Amin presidencies (Mills 2006). With such political meddling and limitations, the nascent period of the national universities witnessed constant pressures from students making a case for genuine student representation in the governance of the universities. Three examples of what happened to student representation and organising in Ghana (University of Ghana), Tanzania (University of Dar es Salaam) and Kenya (University of Nairobi) in the period 1970 to 1980 illustrate this position.

Ghana was the first country in Africa to achieve independence and had the University of Ghana established as a national institution in 1961. Boahen asserts that unlike other parts of the British Commonwealth that witnessed a lot of student activism just before and after independence, in Ghana only one movement was formed in the 1960s, the National Association of Socialist Students' Organisations (NASSO). This organisation was the student branch of the ruling Convention People's Party (CPP), in opposition to the National Union of Ghana Students (NUGS). The first confrontation between the students of the university and the government came shortly after independence when NUGS passed resolutions condemning the dismissal of the chief justice and protesting against the deportation of six members of the academic staff of the University of Ghana (Amoa 1979; Boahen 1994). The government of Kwame Nkrumah responded by closing the three universities in Ghana for seventeen days and by forming a rival student association, the Ghana National Students' Organisation (GNSO) to replace NUGS. The swift and harsh reaction from government over student activities led to apathy among students regarding questioning the quality of their representation in university governance. This apathy continued until 1971, when there was a further direct clash between the students and the government caused by NUGS' demand that members of parliament should declare their assets as provided for in the constitution (Boahen 1994), a scenario similar to what happened in Dar es Salaam, when students questioned the higher salaries awarded to ministers, as we shall shortly discuss. Amoa (1979) finds that at no time did the students come out openly to challenge the whole political system due to the failure on the part of Ghanaian students to become actively involved in national politics as a consequence of their low degree of politicisation occasioned by government repression. From 1971 onwards, however, Ghanaian students became increasingly politicised and certainly played a greater role in the overthrow of Busia's civilian government in 1971 and Acheampong's military government in 1978 (Amoa 1979).

In Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and although the Act that established the university provided for student representation, genuine representation had to be negotiated over a long period of time. Following presentations made by students to the presidential commission that had been tasked to explore the possibilities of setting up the university, student participation in the university council, senate and academic boards was incorporated in the 1970 Act (UNESCO 1972). Before then, there was an unwritten 'gentleman's agreement' in the university college that had allowed limited student participation in departmental meetings and faculty boards (UNESCO 1972). However, both UNESCO (1972) and Douglas (2007) aver that student participation in the University of Dar es Salaam as contained in the 1970 Act was not

comprehensive. Students were, for example, not allowed to participate in such bodies as the appointments committee, disciplinary committee, and appeals committee or in processes entailing curricular design and examinations. In terms of actual structure, the 1970 Act created the following offices for students:

- The student council called 'Baraza' which was composed of all students of the university and was the supreme student policy-making body.
- The representative council, which was the student parliament elected directly by students with the halls of residence acting as electoral constituencies. The representative council, once elected, would then elect five members to the university council, senate and other university committees.
- Hall committees elected by their respective hall residents automatically became members of the student representative council. Hall committees were responsible for the welfare issues of students such as room allocation and the organisation of sports and entertainment.
- The president of the Dar es Salaam University Students' Organization (DUSO) was directly elected by all students. Any member of the student community could contest and winning was by simple majority.
- The DUSO cabinet comprised the DUSO president, the vice-president and the ministers, who were picked by the president from among the elected members of the students' representative council.
- Finally, the cabinet operated through committees appointed by ministers from among the student body to advise them on matters related to their ministry.

Despite this detailed structure which was meant to facilitate student representation, it would seem that during most of the 1970s, the university administration which was appointed based on their allegiance to the political structure tried to manipulate and limit students' space for organising. Douglas (2007) finds that although Dar es Salaam University had impressive policies in place to facilitate student representation and give students the opportunity to learn about social issues that were directly related to their lives and interests, the students noticed increasingly oppressive administrative policies. The first manifestation of this was that the first university administrators appointed after the institution was established as a national university were party functionaries. A manifestation of the students' frustration was that the new administration seemed to favour the Tanzania Youth League (TYL), and this caused continued friction on who from DUSO and TYL would serve as the voice of the student body. Many students took issue with this, with most students asserting that TYL could not be considered the voice of the students at all (Douglas 2007; UNESCO 1972). This tension culminated in what is known as the Akivaga crisis. The Akivaga crisis refers to the closure of the University of Dar es Salaam that followed a letter written by students to the university administration expressing reservations over certain proclamations by the vice-chancellor without the input of students. The chairperson of DUSO, Symonds Akivaga, a Kenyan student, and the DUSO

cabinet were summoned by the university disciplinary committee, which expelled Akivaga and repatriated him to Kenya. DUSO reacted to this action with the resignation of the student cabinet and all student representatives on the council, senate and faculty boards, leading to a stalemate as students ceased to be represented in any of the university committees. This eventually led to the closure of the university and the expulsion of more student leaders, leaving the party affiliated to TYL in charge of student representation.

The Akivaga crisis triggered a long period of conflict between students and management at the university. Matters came to a head on 5 March 1978 when students from the University of Dar es Salaam, Ardhi Institute, that is the college for land and survey studies, and the Water Resources Institute, tried to march to the offices of the government newspaper, *Daily News*, to protest an increase in the salaries of ministers and members of parliament that they saw as a departure from the socialist ideals (Douglas 2007; Nyonyani 2000). The government reacted to this protest by banning DUSO, and placing student affairs under the CCM Youth League in an attempt to control students through the centralisation of power in the party (Peter & Sengondo 1985). Subsequently, and in attempt to deconstruct what the government saw as DUSO's subversive politics, the president of the republic as the chancellor of the university, entrusted the youth league of the ruling party to run student affairs and subsequently facilitated through university management the formation of a splinter organisation, *Muungano wa Wanafunzi Tanzania* (MUWATA), meaning Tanzania Students' Union, by the youth wing to oversee all student governments in colleges and universities (Ngonyani 2000). Nominations for leadership positions were conducted by the youth wing which vetted all candidates aspiring to positions in the student body, throwing out those who did not show strong allegiance to the party (Ngonyani 2000). Thus, student representation was placed in the hands of an organisation incapable of solving problems the student community was facing, especially problems related to resources and representation. The ban on DUSO remained until 1990, when MUWATA was abandoned and a new organisation, the Dar es Salaam University Students' Organization (DARUSO) was formed.

In Kenya, student representation followed similar paths of confrontation with the political establishment and university management after the founding of the University of Nairobi in 1970. The initial confrontation stemmed from students' opposition to *Sessional Paper No. 10 of 1965*, for which they expressed contempt, as it supported the capitalist system as a strategy for development (Balsvik 1998). Instead, the students preferred and showed enthusiasm for the Tanzanian brand of socialism and the strategy of self-reliance espoused by Nyerere. This opposition was led by the then student organisation, Nairobi University Student Organisation (NUSO). In 1972, the student newspaper *University Platform* was banned and its editors arrested for criticising the ruling party KANU (Kiai 1992). During most of the 1970s, student opposition featured as an emerging culture of political repression that was extended to university academic staff by limiting the exercise of academic freedom (Kiai 1992). The relationship between the students and the political establishment deteriorated when a new president, Daniel Arap Moi came to power in 1978. The new administration started on a

wrong footing. While the student leadership expected a change in attitude from the political system, the new president demonstrated in word and deed that he expected uncritical support and loyalty from the university. In October 1979, Nairobi University students demonstrated against Moi's one-year-old government which they accused of having barred opposition politicians from taking part in that year's general election and demanded the reinstatement of Ngugi wa Thiong'o as their professor of literature (Kiai 1992). Six university student leaders were expelled and the student representative body, the Nairobi University Student Organisation, was proscribed as the university was closed for a purported 'early Christmas vacation'. The banning of NUSO, as had happened in Dar es Salaam and the University of Ghana, gave rise to the Students Interim Committee, which stepped up the challenge to the Moi dictatorship. Henceforth, public speeches at the university had to be cleared by the Special Branch (i.e. the Kenyan intelligence police) who also attended any lectures held. The banning of NUSO stayed in force until 1982 when a new organisation, the Student Organisation of Nairobi University (SONU) was formed as the central body representing students, with Tito Adungosi as its first chairperson. His reign as the chair of SONU was, however, short-lived. Titus Adungosi, a third-year student in the Faculty of Architecture, Design and Development at the University of Nairobi was arrested and sentenced to ten years of imprisonment for sedition on 24 September 1982, after the failed Kenyan military coup of 1 August 1982 against Moi's regime. He died in prison under mysterious circumstances on 27 December 1988.

The narratives on the fate of student leadership and representation in Ghana, Kenya and Tanzania, could be told of many African universities during the 1960s and 1970s. While, during the 1960s, the nascent universities witnessed student organisations crystallising around greater pan-African issues, shaping the direction of academic and public services, championing decolonisation courses and student welfare issues, the period of 1970 to 1980 saw the growth of radical student movements to resist internal descent into the authoritarianism of the new states. Two forces shaped the nature of student organisation and representation. The first was a move by the political establishment to decolonise, at least in terms of structure, the universities in Africa, by de-establishing the 'Asquith' college system in preference for national universities. The subsequent attempts by the political establishment to manipulate the new universities for political ends and curtail the academic freedom that had blossomed under the University of London tutelage seem to have caused the conflicts between university student leadership and the political establishment in the 1970s. For example, Ajayi et al. (1996) aver that in the 1970s and 1980s four-fifths of the African states had a one-man, a one-party or a military government, with the presidents doubling up as chancellors of the new universities. The academic autonomy which was such an important part of the imported university model was exceedingly vulnerable under these arrangements. One way that the political leadership therefore tried to contain criticism from university students and academics was by limiting organisational space through limiting elected student and academic leadership. Usually, the administration and academic leadership of universities were appointed by the government and imposed on the university community (Ajayi et al. 1996; Cheater 1991). The manifestations of this move in universities

was in the form of government attempts to influence and control student organisations by either manipulating their leadership, banning them outright, infiltrating them, or replacing them with party youth wingers (Omari & Mihiyo 1991).

The 1980s and 1990s: The era of conflict and structural decay

From the 1980s, student leadership and representation in African universities entered a new phase. The radicalisation in student activities that had been witnessed in the 1970s started to ebb, although this did not in any way lead to reduced conflicts with university management. Rather, manipulations from the university management and the political system to control the direction of student activities intensified. Besides, the 1980s saw new developments that sucked student leadership into new zones of conflict both with the wider political establishment and university management. The confrontations between student organisations and state security agents due to the resistance of students to economic reforms that affected their welfare have been variously documented. University closures were more frequent as governments bowed to the dictates of international financial institutions by liberalising their economies and introducing anti-welfare policies as part of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs). Accompanying the implementation of SAPs was the emergence of a new narrative that cast the public university as inefficient and that needed to be changed with the promotion of private universities, and the emergence of a private university sector as one that focused on more academic work, compared to the destructive student activism of public universities. Student leadership in many African universities got involved in mass coalitions with civil society and participated in governance as an oppositional force, to protest the dire economic conditions and to press for political liberalisation (Byaruhanga 2006). African students were among the forces that brought about Africa's second liberation in the 1990s (Mazrui 1995).

Most universities that were intellectually vibrant in the 1960s and 1970s became characterised by the collapse of infrastructure, such as libraries, bookstores and research facilities, serious shortages of books, laboratory equipment and research funds, inadequate teaching personnel and poor staff development and motivation. This had an adverse effect on student organising as governments sought to implement reforms that affected students' welfare, while at the same time ensuring that their political legitimacy was not eroded. In what has been described variously as 'student survival politics' (Byaruhanga 2006) or 'student acquiescence' (Mawuko-Yevugah 2013), governments used stick-and-carrot policies to weaken student organisations and minimise their representation in key university organisations in a manner that turned student organisations in most universities into either disenfranchised pressure groups or an integral component of university management. While in the 1960s and 1970s, students portrayed their organisations as the vanguard of the revolution and the common good, in the 1980s, what emerged was a strong focus on narrow welfare issues.

Ghana and Kenya provide examples where there was more use of the carrot than the stick

approach. In Ghana, some students, lecturers and workers supported the regime, which amended the composition of university councils to allow student and worker participation. For one year, universities were closed to allow students to help move cocoa from the countryside to the ports (Sawyer 1994). Tensions between the regime and the universities caused the committee of vice-chancellors to begin to play an increasingly important role in government–university relations, as the heads of public universities developed common positions when negotiating with the government (Sawyer 1994). In Kenya, the then ruling party KANU tried to establish party branches throughout the universities, balkanised national student organisations by creating and strengthening district-based student associations, and addressed the welfare issues of students by increasing their loan allowances while at the same time, gradually privatising university education (Chege 2009; Oanda 2013). Those student leaders who refused to abide by this state-crafted student leadership architecture were expelled from the institutions, arrested, tortured and forced into exile. The persecution of students and particularly student leaders was the order of the day.

In Uganda, besides demands for improved welfare conditions, the student guild leaders were at the forefront in opposing student constitutions that were drafted by the ministry of education to regulate student activities without any input from the student leadership (Byaruhanga 2006). The same situation prevailed in Tanzania where the ban that had been placed on DUSO in 1978 continued for most of the 1980s. Student representation continued to be under TANU Youth League (TYL) which also became the caretaker of the student government (Mwollo-Ntallima 2011). By 1979, another government-created student organisation, MUWATA, replaced TYL, and was in charge of student leadership in the university, colleges, and secondary and primary schools until 1991 when DARUSO was launched (Mkumbo 2002).

As Ajayi et al. (1996) document, the 1980s saw in almost all African countries the dislike for any manifestation of academic freedom by the political class. This resulted in a growing sense of militancy from students, which forced many governments to react violently. The 1980s also witnessed the implementation of SAPs in Africa, which in part reduced funding to higher education institutions, thus seriously affecting the welfare, material and learning conditions of students. Implementation of these policies forced student leadership in most African universities to organise resistance against the dismantling of public education and in defence of academic freedom and the right to study (Federici et al. 2000). Federici et al. (2000) aver that the struggles of African students in the 1980s and early 1990s were particularly intense because students realised that the drastic university budget cuts, which the World Bank's SAPs demanded, signalled the end of the 'social contract' that had shaped their relation to the state in the post-independence period, which had made education the key to social advancement and participatory citizenship. They argue that students' struggles also led to the development of new pan-African student movements (Federici et al. 2000).

Because the political leadership and university management were united in enforcing SAPs, force, manipulation and outright suppression were used to limit student representation and undermine their leadership. In Kenya for example, towards the end of the 1980s, centralised

student leadership organised in SONU was once again undermined in preference for faculty and district-based student representation (Klopp & Orina 2002). A presidential decree issued in 1981 and which required that student organisations wishing to hold meetings on campus apply for permits from the office of the president, was enforced by university management throughout the 1980s, such that apart from representation on faculty boards, there was no independent and democratically elected student body to articulate student interests (*Africa Watch* 1990). The University of Nairobi had also adopted a policy of divide and rule. By 1987, the Student Organisation of Nairobi University was again banned and students remained without any representation until 1992 (Kiai 1992). With the vacuum in student representation and leadership, the government and university management promoted ethnic-based welfare associations in place of a central students' body. The district organisations ostensibly representing students from various districts were characterised by a patronage system stemming from local politicians closely associated with the president, who was still the chancellor of all public universities (Kiai 1992). The student leaders of the district-based associations had direct access to the president and other politicians, and frequently led well-publicised trips to pay homage to the president, who in return rewarded them financially in exchange for declarations of loyalty to the president and the government.

While, in effect, the government took direct control of the university and student autonomy to organise was completely eroded (Savage 1990), the structure of the university was reconstituted into six constituent colleges, i.e. Arts, Business, Health, Agriculture, Science, and Education. This compartmentalisation and regimentation further weakened student representation and made it easy to diffuse opposition. The monitoring and administration of student activities at faculty level made top-down tracking of 'trouble makers' possible. A report by a team that had visited universities in Kenya, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Ghana and Nigeria towards the end of the 1980s observed that during the time of study for the report all these universities were either closed or had recently been closed due to student unrest (Coombe 1991). The University of Nairobi probably had the highest incident of crises, about 25 by 1990 (Omari & Mihyo 1992).

Reflecting on the conditions of student representation in African universities during the 1980s and 1990s, Byaruhanga (2006) notes that one consequence of this had been the de-ideologisation of student activism. The period had been characterised by diminishing state funding for education in the face of rapidly growing enrolment rates, a massive brain drain and overstretching of facilities. This in turn made the university leadership increasingly participate in manipulating student elections and leadership to the extent that most student representatives now appear as an extension of management and not the representative of students.

Increasingly, the gap between student leaders and the general student body in terms of opulence appears to be wide; students leaders are increasingly offered jobs either in the universities or other state apparatuses after graduation; and in the face of increasing youth unemployment, this has become the bait that has undermined student representation and its ideological leaning.

The nature of student representation post-1990: The era of fragmentation

While up to the 1990s, student representation and quality of participation were influenced by the wider political climate outside the universities, the post-1990 period has witnessed developments that have altered this relationship. First, in almost all African universities, the economic crisis of the state and underfunding that was occasioned by the adoption of SAPs led, towards the end of the 1990s, to the introduction of 'a commercial stream' of self-funded, 'private' students. This has meant that in some of the universities, student representation has come to be structured along the lines of the different modes of admission and study – government-funded vs. private students – which has seen student organisation subverted in place of narrow and short-term interests. For example, in Kenya, module two students in full-time and part-time programmes have their own small organisations even within the large student organisation as they perceive their interests to be different from those of the full-time students on government sponsorship. Within the large national student body, the Kenya University Students' Association (KUSA), parallels are often drawn in the media between the activism of student representatives from public universities and the non-confrontational approach of those student representatives from private universities. The net effect has been to balkanise students' organisational spaces and therefore undermine the effectiveness of the structures of representation. The constitution of SONU in Kenya, for example, clarifies the distinction between the two groups of students and their different membership fees. Article 5 on membership groups ordinary members into two groups: the first are government-sponsored students duly admitted by the senate (otherwise known as 'module one') who are required to pay an annual subscription fee of five per cent (5%) of tuition fees or five hundred Kenya shillings (Ksh. 500, USD 6). The second group are the self-sponsored students duly admitted by senate (otherwise known as 'module two') who are required to pay an annual subscription fee of five per cent (5%) of tuition fees or one thousand Kenya shillings (Ksh. 1 000, USD 12). Since tuition fees for the module two students are higher compared to those paid by government-sponsored students, this second group of students ends up paying more as membership fees, yet these differential payments have no implication on the quality of welfare services that either group of students enjoys.

The private student scheme, initially intended to be an opportunity to extend access to students who are able to finance their own university education, was not subjected to any regulatory structures. The management of the admissions system became out of hand as student numbers soon outstripped the available teaching and research facilities and manpower. Admissions were driven by the quest for more and more funds. Central administration and council lost their grip over the money-generating units, which claimed full ownership and authority over resources generated at unit level. Whereas in Kenya, as Sifuna (1998) discloses, the 1990s university planning debacles can be attributed to directives from above, at Makerere University in Uganda they were bred at the decentralised units. The parallel admissions have occasioned students with very different needs, who therefore seek to organise along the lines

of their mode of admission in a manner that subverts useful engagement with the institution for academic or welfare matters. In a majority of these institutions, it is apparent that the era of increased and deepening neo-liberal policies has resulted in the collapse of the student common voice and the deterioration of academic standards and the relationship between the students and society. In Ghana, reforms undertaken between 1990 and 1998 regarding funding higher education to achieve equity and quality never produced the expected outcomes. As Girdwood (1999) argues, part of the reforms in higher education in Ghana targeted reforming the student loan scheme to achieve equity and quality of higher education. This included designing the loan scheme to introduce the principle of cost-sharing, without any costs to students. However, rapid change in the external economic and policy environments which had underpinned the scheme's financial viability (including in particular the numbers of eligible students), and subsequent failure to reassess its sustainability, resulted in a substantial indirect subsidy to tertiary education. The subsidy represented a significant additional contribution to sectoral expenditure which did not contribute in any way to improving the quality of the education available to students. Quality had obviously been compromised by a lack of resources. Girdwood shows that overall, student numbers increased more rapidly than had originally been planned, but participation never broadened, and female enrolment at times decreased.

A student from one of the universities in Kenya, lamenting about the disintegration of student unity and the implications on academic standards noted:

We were not able to raise issues with the administration because we lack unity. There are issues to be addressed but many people are just not bothered and prefer to go about their businesses. In the event that they are raised by students, it takes time to be addressed. (student interview, 13 May 2014)

Besides the dichotomisation of the student body into government-sponsored and self-sponsored students (as discussed above), new legal frameworks have been designed in most of the universities to move the institutions away from the narrowly conceived Acts of parliament by which they were established in the 1970s. Thus, in East Africa, Tanzania started this reform process with the formation of the institutional transformation programme in 1994, which culminated in the enactment of the new Universities Act in 2005, which also established the Tanzania Commission for Universities (TCU). In Uganda, the University and Other Tertiary Institutions Act of 2001 established the Uganda National Council for Higher Education (UNCHE), and in Kenya the Universities Act of 2012 created the Commission for Universities Education (CUE). The new national councils and commissions were supposed to expand the autonomy of higher education institutions by, for example, removing political influence and meddling in the governance of the institutions. Broad provisions have also been made for the strengthening of student governance through student representation in institutional councils, senates and faculty boards. Generally the Acts provide for at least two members elected by the institutional

student organisation as representatives in council and six students elected by the student organisation of the university to be representatives in senate. The provisions in the Acts have two limitations regarding student representation, however. One is that the Acts provide that representatives of student organisations are not entitled to attend deliberations of the senate on matters which are considered by the chairperson of the senate to be confidential and which relate to the general discipline of students, examination results, the academic performance of students and other related matters. This has left student representation in senate and even council to the discretion of the chairpersons of these organs. The second limitation is that while student elections are provided for, the process of elections and the rules governing who should contest in the elections are decided by university-appointed officers, especially deans in charge of student affairs. Such deans obviously do not carry the mandate of the students and could be used to ensure that students who are not favourable to the university administration are not cleared to contest.

According to the Act of one public university in Kenya, the dean of students shall be appointed by the vice-chancellor from among staff of the rank of senior lecturer and above. The dean of students shall hold office for a period of two years renewable, subject to satisfactory performance. The conditions of appointment of the dean of students shall be set out in the university terms of service. The dean of students reports to the deputy vice-chancellor (academic, research and student affairs) and shall exercise such powers and perform such duties in respect to the students, which shall include welfare organisation, discipline, counselling, accommodation, recreation, sports and job placement. At no point are students' views accommodated in the manner that such an office is constituted. Placing the responsibility to oversee student affairs on someone appointed by the university administration can limit students' space to organise in several respects. A circular to the student community, by one dean of student affairs in one of the universities detailing guidelines for students to invite speakers to attend student activities in the university, illustrates how such officers encroach on student space. The guidelines warn patrons and officials of registered student clubs and associations to observe four conditions. These are:

1. No student or group of students, in whatever capacity, has the authority to invite an outsider or outsiders for functions on the campus before consulting with the director of student affairs;
2. Invitation of outsiders who are public figures will be done by the association/club patron, or dean of school, or director of the relevant centre as may be appropriate in consultation with the director, student affairs;
3. Inviting some of the outsiders who may be a senior government or corporate figure will be done in consultation with the office of the vice-chancellor; and
4. Invitations *will* have to be approved not less than two weeks before the activity/function.

To put it differently, the circular reads that any person invited by the students to address them

or discuss a matter with them on campus has to be vetted by a university official, who therefore can decide what opinions are appropriate for students to listen to, or who is an appropriate public figure to talk to them.

The circular which we quote here does not indicate if these are resolutions that were jointly arrived at between the students and the director of student affairs. It would seem that the director on his own decided that a university organ, which does not have any student representation, would decide for students whom they could invite to their public meetings and what kind of issues are appropriate for the student community to listen to.

Uneasiness with having universities appoint student affairs officers for students is reflected in a detailed report by a visitation committee to the University of Ghana. The report notes in various sections the conflict that a dean of students appointed by the administration faces. The dean is required to act in a disciplinary capacity, a welfare capacity and as an intermediary between the university and the Students' Representative Council (SRC) (University of Ghana 2007). The committee advised against the role of the dean of students in formally representing the interests of students to the university administration; and proposed a situation where students or their representatives represent student interests in discussions with the university authorities, instead of using an official as intermediary. This is because, as the committee noted, students are not well represented on the governance of the university, particularly in areas where academic matters are discussed. They are not satisfied with the constitutional role of the dean of students and wish to represent themselves in discussions with the university authorities. There needs to be a formal channel of communication between the SRC and the central university authorities where information can be exchanged, complaints registered, and commitments to remedial action recorded (University of Ghana 2007). The committee's report recommended that the university should have training programmes to foster and develop student representative skills to aid their integration into corporate and academic structures.

A worrisome trend that affects the quality of student leadership and the extent to which they represent student issues has been the increased penetration of national political cultures and university management interests in the manner in which student leadership is constituted and managed. In Kenyan universities, for example, an emerging trend is one where those vying for student leadership positions present a contest between the interests of politicians who fund their costly campaigns and university management who want a student leadership that can easily be manipulated (*The Star*, 24 October 2014). Student campaigns are usually well funded by one of the national political parties with interests. Some political leaders support students with the genuine intention of helping them start their political careers; others have ulterior motives such as obtaining personal favours from students or seeking an outlet for their criminal intent such as distributing drugs on campus or pushing some tribal agenda depending on the leadership of the institutions. Tribalism is then bred at the universities, especially where it becomes obvious that the leaders are mostly, or only, of a certain tribe. The members of the 'special' tribes then become the university's 'untouchables', and things can only go downhill from there (*The Star*, 24 October 2014). As one student revealed:

*A politician sent word that he wanted to sponsor a strong candidate's run for the presidency of the student union. I did not want to miss the chance and the only thing that qualified me for the sponsorship was my tribe. Someone organised a meeting with the mheshimiwa and I was slapped with a Sh 500 000 cheque (USD 5 800) to start my campaign. He told me that that he was willing to do everything so long as the college presidency did not go to the 'other tribe'. (cited in *The Star*, 24 October 2014)*

External political interference and manipulation of student elections have had destabilising effects on the quality of student representation and the management of the academic calendar of the affected institutions. In Kenya, at the University of Nairobi, the 2010 student elections were marred by fracas and the elections were aborted after a fiercely contested election; a replication of the 2007 national presidential elections that gave birth to the post-election violence in the country. These elections were characterised by violence that has never been witnessed before with cases of rigging, vote buying, bullying, threats and what was seen as interference by politicians (*News from Africa* May 2011). The institution was paralyzed by the rampage and consequently closed down indefinitely for investigations. SONU was disbanded for a year by the senate of the institution following the chaos. Besides political influence, part of the contest for student leadership emanates from the privileges that university management extends to student leaders to buy their compliance; it is not based on any desire to serve students and promote academic standards. Student leaders earn a salary, are housed in special rooms that are not only larger but have television sets and in some cases satellite television, and are given free meals and attend numerous seminars and conferences where they earn allowances (*News from Africa* May 2011). It is these privileges (as well as political manipulation) attuned to the individualistic neo-liberal cultures that have led to decay in the quality of student representation and alienation of student representatives from fellow students. A report by a Kenyan parliamentary committee that looked into cases of university riots in 2010 confirmed that what was happening in the universities was a reflection of the rot in Kenya's political system, which is torn along tribal lines; it involves a trend of tribal differences and political divisions that threatened to tear the institution apart. The committee observed the deep entrenchment of negative ethnicity and a politicised student fraternity which both threatened the stability of Kenya's universities (Nganga 2010).

A similar situation exists at Makerere University, Uganda, where elections for the student guild are conducted along national political party lines. Student campaigns for guild elections are mounted on the platform of the leading political parties in Uganda and the parties wield a lot of influence because most students at Makerere have just attained the national voting age, above 18 years, and are excited about national political parties (Natamba 2012). Most are left-leaning radicals opposed to incumbency which explains why the ruling NRM party is often a loser in guild elections, despite its heavy investment of influence and money. Besides political party affiliation, campaigns for student leadership are also heavily monetised. Guild campaign

candidates are expected to dress up, drive fancy cars, and be accompanied by a convoy of equally ostentatious-looking vehicles as they move from hall to hall to campaign. They are expected to provide music at the venues, print posters, and provide beverages and alcohol to their supporters. All these cost a lot of money. Consequently, students who have the potential to be good leaders do not offer themselves for election because they lack the kind of money that political parties pump into the campaigns. Political involvement in electing student leadership and the kind of money involved also fuels violence and chaos during rallies. Some candidates pay non-university youths to campaign for them and these hired hands reportedly cause most of the chaos during the rallies. The end result has been a situation where those elected to the student guild connect more with their sponsoring parties than the Makerere University students. Private universities, such as the Uganda Christian University in Mukono, have tried to enforce a strict ban on campaigning in national party colours during their student elections, a situation that Makerere University has not managed to contain despite several attempts (Mugume & Katusiimeh 2016; Natamba 2012).

The last development that has occurred in the post-1990 period has to do with the increased establishment of private universities on the continent. This has had implications on how student representation is conceived and operationalised. One effect that public university students' participation in wider political struggles outside the universities had was the constant closure of universities and the continued lamentation from the political elite that this was a waste of resources by students who were privileged. This was not necessarily the case as the causes of the conflicts revolved around what the students saw as a betrayal of the ideals of independence by the political class. However, given the resources that the political class had, it was easy to manipulate public opinion against students in public universities, and this worked. This explains the favour with which private universities, and private programmes in public universities, were received in the 1990s and the 2000s (e.g. Mwirira 2007). Students in the nascent private universities were portrayed as apolitical, focused on their academic work and able to complete their studies on time and transit to the labour market. These perceptions, however, have meant that student representation in the private universities is highly restricted even when the legal frameworks for the institutions provide for this. This apolitical trend is also slowly creeping into public universities which have private students, and may eventually attenuate the status of student representation as an important organ of governance in both private and public universities.

Data emerging from East Africa by studies commissioned by CODESRIA (Mulinge et al. 2012) indicate that the more the privatisation, the less the engagement of students in governance issues. Statutes exist that legalise and regulate the activities of student governance bodies. But such bodies do not seem to have any overriding power in the decisions taken by university organs such as senate and management. Generally, the data point to the lack of genuine student representation in governing bodies, especially with the increased privatisation of public universities. The reason for this, as the studies indicate, is that the governance reforms were partly a response to an era when student activism was seen as part of the problems affecting

higher education institutions. Hence, for the reforms to succeed, the old political model of university leadership that provided much space for student input into the governance process had to be dismantled.

Conversely, the studies also note positive aspects associated with the reform process such as the strengthening of institutions in charge of student welfare by universities, for example the student deanery and other welfare authorities. The studies point out the following as positive developments regarding the governance of student activities in the universities:

- National and institutional policies and charters establishing private universities and the Acts governing public universities have sections specifically focusing on student involvement in governance. However, a large percentage of the students in private universities are not aware of facilitative institutional policies. There is no evidence showing that student governance issues are mainstreamed into other important university policy documents (such as strategic plans) or into key statements such as the university vision and mission statements. Furthermore, student leadership is not a priority focus of the strategic plans of the public and private universities analysed for the CODESRIA study.
- Data from key informants and focus group discussants suggest that in both public and private universities, support systems have a major bearing on the level and quality of student participation in governance, both among students as a whole and particularly among student leaders. The data reveal differences between public and private universities in terms of support systems for enhancing students' involvement in governance. While facilities such as office space, equipment and leadership training are universal to the public and private universities studied, albeit in varying qualities and proportions, public universities are found to have numerous support systems for student leaders that are not found in private universities.
- A key avenue for student participation in university governance is student self-governance structures such as student councils and/or associations (i.e. the Students Affairs Council at USIU and the Kenyatta University Students Association) and academic and extra-curricular clubs and student societies (e.g. academic discipline-related and sporting clubs, associations or societies). The study finds that other than student governments/councils/associations/unions, a host of other organisations or structures for student self-governance exist in both public and private universities in Kenya.
- National politics and political parties wield tremendous influence on student self-governance structures and processes. This is particularly so for student government councils/associations/unions. A high proportion of respondents affirmed that all of the eleven areas of influence analysed by the study were greatly impacted on by national politics and political parties.

At the broad institutional level, diversity policies exist, designed by the institutions to ensure

that those elected to student governance councils represent the diversity of the student body in terms of age, gender, disability, ethnicity, nationality, study programme and year of study representation during elections. Thus, in principle, universities have diversity policies governing student representation in the governance process. However, the proportion of respondents (58.5 per cent) who agree that the election of student representatives to university governance structures caters for the diversity of the student body suggests that the observance of such a policies may be problematic.

Data from interviews and focus group discussions suggest that the impediments to effective student participation in governance differ from public to private universities. In private universities, the challenges revolve around the following issues:

- Although the charter is specific that students should be involved in governance, the universities do not implement this in practice;
- Student leadership does not have a direct linkage to management structures; proxy representation is widespread;
- Apathy among students is evident in poor student attendance at meetings; and indifference to governance processes makes it difficult for student leaders to gather issues from different students and to give feedback to the students;
- There is a lack of adequate support systems e.g. facilities and incentives for student leaders; and
- There is a fear of victimisation of student leaders who become too vocal.

In public universities, the following were identified as impediments:

- Large student numbers make it impossible to mobilise and represent everyone's needs;
- The diversity of students' views and needs is too large to harmonise and represent effectively;
- There is a tendency for student leaders to be compromised by management; some of the support systems identified earlier are viewed as bribes by other students; and
- Infiltration of leadership by national politics often leads to the balkanisation of the student body by creating partisan camps.

Conclusion

An analysis of trends in the quality of student representation in African universities reveals three phases. The first phase revolves around the period during which universities were set up in Africa as colleges of universities in Europe. During this phase, although representation was restricted, student organisations emerged to be part of the agitation for political independence and increased higher education for Africans. The character of student organisations at this

time tended to be more radical, activist and nationalistic, often espousing broader ideas of nationalism and pan-Africanism. Some of the leaders of these earlier student movements later became political leaders of their countries. The second phase began in the 1970s, when most of the universities in Africa were established as national institutions. With Acts that allowed students limited space to organise, we see student organisations engaging both the national political leadership and university management in wider political and academic issues. The conflict between student organisations and the political elite stemmed from what the student body saw as the relapsing of the political elite from the broader national project. What is most interesting about this period is that student organisations, continuing with their activist legacy, came into direct confrontation with former student leaders who had now taken over the political leadership of their countries. During this period, and well into the 1990s, governance in most African universities was problematic. During the first three decades of independence, university governance became closely linked to the governance (or mal-governance) of the state. The aborted governance project at the institutional level could therefore not midwife the emergence of broad-based systems for student participation. In other words, bad governance both at the institutional and national level subverted the emergence of strong student governance systems. The last phase is what can be seen as the era of fragmentation from the 1990s. This phase has been accompanied by the collapse of the 'national university' project, the deepening of neo-liberal tendencies, the deepening of ethnic cleavages in exercising political power and the lack of ideological leaning in student politics. Unfortunately, the ethnicisation of national politics has permeated universities and student organisations to the extent that representation and organisation of student unions are articulated through the prism of narrow ethnic interests. Students campaign for student leadership, often with the support of ethnically inclined politicians, not to serve the student body, but to join the ranks of those balkanising whatever is remaining of the nationalist project. At the institutional level, student organisations, especially with the rough economic conditions occasioned by the implementation of neo-liberal policies, are often co-opted by university management, based on their ethnic background. University vice-chancellors often manipulate student elections to have those from their ethnic communities elected as student leaders. Both the ethnic inclinations of the national political leadership and that of university management have come to define the character of student organisations and representation, often to the detriment of the quality of student welfare services and academic programmes.

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CHAPTER 5

THE THREE AGES OF STUDENT POLITICS IN FRANCOPHONE AFRICA: LEARNING FROM THE CASES OF SENEGAL AND BURKINA FASO

Pascal Bianchini

Introduction

In sub-Saharan African countries, universities have experienced several decades of student unrest. Student strikes are obvious and chronic realities. However, detailed accounts of their complex history are frequently missing. The archives are not always easy to reach and when it is the case they need to be used carefully as they reflect the viewpoints of committed actors, whether it is those of student protesters contained in leaflets, interviews, autobiographies, etc., or those of officials as reflected in public statements, police reports, court rulings, etc. Moreover, these 'facts' are to be contextualised and related to other dimensions, such as the main features of the higher education system at the time, the job prospects of graduates, students' social backgrounds, and the political system (or more accurately the 'political field') to mention but a few. Until recently, the research focus on student movements in sub-Saharan Africa has been uneven: more visible Anglophone literature (cf. Altbach 1984; Hanna 1971, 1975; Munene in Altbach & Teferra 2003; Nkinyangi 1991; Zeilig 2005) than in the French African Studies where it has been neglected, not to say ignored (Bianchini 2004).¹ It is all the more

¹ The conference Students Movements in French-speaking Africa from the Independence to the Present Day held in Paris in July 2014, has been a first important step in investigating the topic in this geographical area.

regrettable as student politics is not limited to university campuses but has a deep connection with African politics and even has international dimensions.

Francophone African universities were not created before the late 1950s due to the paternalistic colonial policy that prioritised basic education for Africans. The newly created institutions were not only mirror images of the French universities, they were also ruled by the French and most of the university teachers were expatriates sent from the metropolis. This situation carried on during the 1960s and was further perpetuated by means of asymmetrical 'cooperation agreements'.² Among the features that were inherited from the French universities was the absence of formal student representation in institutional decision-making; thus, relations between the university authorities and student organisations were not institutionally formalised.

This chapter investigates the peculiar relationship between student movements and the political field. It employs a socio-historical approach drawing on the available historiography along with sociological theories of mobilisation, especially the notion of 'political opportunity structures' (McAdam et al. 1996; Tarrow 1994). Political opportunity structures may be defined as 'the dimensions of the political environment that provide incentives for people to undertake collective action by affecting their expectations for success or failure' (Tarrow 1994: 85). The related analytical framework is inspired by a synthetic approach (McAdam et al. 1996).³ Moreover, an important source of data derives from successive fieldwork during 1984, 1985, 1987 and 1995 in Senegal, and 1995 and 2001 in Burkina Faso, as well as from the perusal of newspaper articles. The latter have become an abundant supply of information nowadays with the burgeoning of a free press in Africa, in contrast to the official (or semi-official⁴) monopoly over press coverage in the decades from independence to the 1980s.

The chapter is structured as follows: the first part summarises the successive 'ages' of student politics (essentially from the 1950s to the 1990s) in sub-Saharan Africa, focusing especially on Francophone countries, and tries to link this periodisation to a theoretical framework offered by the concept of 'political opportunities structure'. In its second part, the chapter will show how the path followed by the respective student movements of Senegal and Burkina Faso have branched off to an extent that the two cases now epitomise two different patterns of students politics. The counter-hegemonic action of students has historically produced generations of political opponents; yet, this is less the case in a context where political alternating occurs such as in Senegal; in Burkina Faso, in contrast, this counter-hegemonic role has become a permanent feature with a long-standing student organisation in a context where authoritarian

2 Such relationships were ambiguous and can be analysed in different ways: in the 1970s, they were dubbed as neocolonialism (De Negroni 1977; Domenach & Goussault 1970), whereas nowadays the experience of the '*coopérants*' appears more complex if we consider their influence on African students and colleagues (Goerg & Raison-Jourde 2013; Raison-Jourde & Roy 2010).

3 A summary of the related analytical framework can be found in Bianchini (2014). A detailed analysis is appended in the annex to this chapter.

4 In the 1960s in Senegal, the only daily was *Dakar-Matin* a privately owned newspaper. In 1970, it was replaced by the state-owned *Le Soleil*. In Upper Volta, in 1973 was launched *L'Observateur* with Edouard Ouedraogo. This newspaper, issued three times a week, had to stop its activity during the Sankarist revolution (Bianchini 2002).

rule has been maintained behind a democratic facade. Nonetheless, in both cases the level of conflict between the students and the authorities has not declined.

A three-age system in student politics in sub-Saharan Africa

The analysis of student politics in the second half of the 20th century produces a historical sequence of three periods or ‘ages’ during which student movements originating in former French African territories have played an important socio-political role. African francophone students had in common several features, not only at the linguistic and cultural level but also at a political one. The following three periods are discussed here:⁵

- The age of anti-colonialism: from the early 1950s to the early 1960s;
- The age of anti-imperialism: from the late 1960s to the early 1980s; and
- The age of anti-SAP and pro-democracy struggles: the 1990s and beyond.⁶

The age of anti-colonialism

The creation of the *Fédération des Etudiants d’Afrique noire en France* (FEANF) in 1950 is to be considered a landmark in the history of African student politics in Francophone countries. Although we can find precedents in the existence of associations gathering some African students, they have not really been influential and also avoided open confrontation with the authorities (Dieng 2011a). At its birth during a congress held in Bordeaux, France, the FEANF was officially established as an ‘apolitical’ organisation (Dieng 2003). From then, it evolved rapidly in 1952/1953: the Fédération established relations with the International Union of Students in Prague and a prominent militant, Mahjmouth Diop⁷, stated that ‘immediate independence’ for African territories under French rule was the federation’s only motto. In 1956, FEANF students denounced the law setting up territorial self-governments as a strategy to lead to the balkanisation of the *Afrique équatoriale française* (AEF, i.e. French Equatorial Africa) and of the *Afrique occidentale française* (AOF, i.e. French West Africa). Two years later, the FEANF maintained momentum when it rejected the project of a French Commonwealth (i.e. the *Communauté franco-africaine*) because it did not grant full sovereignty to African states. At last, when they gained independence in 1960, African states retained close links with the

5 A previous periodisation of the history of student movements is to be found for Senegal (cf. Bathily et al. 1995). The point of view in this chapter is, however, different as it argues that before the 1950s student politics cannot be defined in sociological terms as a social movement of students.

6 This periodisation is based upon the ‘targets’ that the African student movements used to aim for. The denomination ‘anti-imperialist period’ is to be found in Bathily et al. in Mamdani and Wamba-dia-Wamba (1995: 392).

7 Mahjmouth Diop founded the *Parti africain de l’indépendance* (PAI) in 1957 which claimed for independence and advocated for a socialist model inspired by the Soviet Union. When he died in 2007, President Wade acknowledged that ‘Mahj’ was his mentor when he was a student though he did not join the PAI.

French state through cooperation programmes. Diametrically opposed to colonialism, the militants of FEANF denounced these programmes as yet another form of French neo-colonialism.

Their commitment to claim immediate independence contrasted with the domestication of African members of parliament in French politics during the 1950s, especially since the *Rassemblement démocratique africain* (RDA) put an end to its alliance with the French Communist Party in 1950 and took part in various coalitions in power during the Fourth Republic. Conversely, the students chose to retain strong links with the Communist Party in France (Benot 1989; Dieng 2009). They also collaborated with student organisations from other French colonial territories such as the *Association des étudiants originaires de Madagascar* (AEOM) and the *Union générale des étudiants musulmans d'Algérie* (UGEMA). But the prestige of the Fédération culminated when its delegates were invited to international events such as the Youth and Student World Festival in Moscow, the All African Peoples Conference in Accra in 1958, and to an official trip to Maoist China in 1959 (Dieng 2009).

However, militants in FEANF were not only active as an ideological vanguard. They were also trade unionists defending student interests, especially with regard to student access to scholarships and housing. Until 1960, they had representatives in the *Office de coopération et d'accueil universitaire* (OCAU) in Paris, where these resources were allocated to students (Dieng 2009; Guimont 1997). They also developed cultural and sport activities, and tried to launch teaching activities, which were known as *Université populaire*, the people's university (Dieng 2009). In this respect, Abdou Moumouni from Niger is to be remembered as a figurehead (Smirnova 2015). He was a leading member of FEANF at its creation and the treasurer of the Fédération between 1950 and 1953. A few years later, he wrote an essay containing an exhaustive critique of the colonial school and suggested a decolonising agenda on this issue, announcing the projects experienced in the 1970s with UNESCO in Africa.⁸ More generally, the FEANF made an important contribution on the path to cultural decolonisation in Africa (Kotchy in Boahen et al. 1993). Though it was difficult to describe FEANF as a real mass organisation, its influence was important in several ways. It acted at different levels: it would be a mistake to oppose its role as a radical intelligentsia (e.g. by urging its members to be 'technically competent and politically conscious') from its corporatist activity when the Fédération tackled bread-and-butter issues of importance to students, such as scholarships and housing. Its double structure, with both academic sections according to French geographical location and territorial sections reflected the African diversity and was efficient to maintain a federal unity (Diane 1990; Traoré 1973).⁹

A strange paradox occurred during the first age of student politics: whereas students were not in large numbers and as a consequence, their means of action were limited, many observers

8 The original edition was published as *L'éducation en Afrique* in Paris by Maspero (1964).

9 The leadership of FEANF was under the control of the PAI and under the influence of the French Communist Party though locally this hegemony could be contested by other forces such as the national liberation movement (MLN) whose leader was Joseph Ki-Zerbo, who was influenced by progressive Catholic ideas.

consider it the most glorious period of the FEANF.¹⁰ This may be explained by the ideological context of the 1950s in which the Third World and pan-Africanist tendencies were in vogue. At the same time, from a socio-political point of view, students appeared as the future elite, not to say potential rulers of the newly independent states. During the late 1950s, the leaders of FEANF were treated as ‘guest stars’ as at the same time Marxist-Leninist ideas became dominant among the militant students.¹¹ As they became more radicalised, they argued that African politicians had betrayed their peoples, especially when Houphouët-Boigny, and most leaders of the RDA, chose to abandon their alliance with the French Communist Party in 1950 and then accepted the political frame of the French Fourth Republic and the *Union française*. As a consequence, they did not advocate for independence even just before it became a reality. Thus, the FEANF rather backed liberation movements who had chosen guerrilla warfare such as the *Front de libération nationale* (FLN) in Algeria or the *Union des populations du Cameroun* (UPC). This is the reason why FEANF came under close police surveillance and suffered several publication bans (Guimont 1997).

The age of anti-imperialism

In 1960, as the new African states began their existence – even though the FEANF denounced them ‘neo-colonial’ states – radical students had lost ‘the alpha and omega’ of their political struggle, in favour of ‘immediate independence’ (Blum 2014). Moreover, in the 1950s ideological disputes were downplayed by the working consensus against colonialism and the attraction that the Eastern bloc exerted on African students. This significant tendency had developed because the Soviet bloc and some non-aligned countries were seen as a counter-alliance to defeat colonialism and as offering an alternative socio-economic development model. However, especially after the Sino-Soviet split, the debate became passionate between various ideological lines and these disputes contributed to the decline of FEANF. Furthermore, contrasting political contexts in the various states stemming from the balkanisation of AOF and AEF caused dissent among the militants. The pro-Soviet *Parti africain de l’indépendance* (PAI) launched in Senegal in 1957 had the ambition to be a federal party (for the AOF) and even a pan-Africanist one. After independence, however, the territorial sections of PAI turned into national organisations. During the two decades, different factions (PAI at first, then others) took and lost control over the FEANF, which was reflected in congresses when new resolutions were adopted. For instance in 1966, the directive for student activists ‘to integrate the masses’ reflected the victory of the rising Maoist tendency over the pro-Soviet one, which was dubbed as ‘revisionist’ (Dieng 2011b).¹²

10 The collective action repertoire during the 1950s consisted mostly in editing newspapers and leaflets, and organising conferences and summer camps.

11 They would have deserved to be qualified as ‘rooted cosmopolitans’ (Tarrow 2005: 1).

12 In 1973, the watch-word of the *Révolution nationale démocratique et populaire* (RNDP) enabled the Maoists to stand against the pro-Soviet tendency that used the expression of *Révolution nationale démocratique*.

In addition, after independence repression came from two sides: the French state and the new African states whose respective security services were working hand in hand. On French soil, when they appeared too 'subversive', the militants of FEANF risked expulsion, and back in their home countries, they risked jail when they chose to maintain their political commitment. During the 1960s, the African governments together with the French authorities tried to set up an alternative organisation to the FEANF called *Mouvement des étudiants de l'Organisation commune africaine et malgache* (MEOCAM) (Traoré 1973). However, it proved to be a failure because the 'puppet' militancy of the MEOCAM was unable to gain legitimacy among students compared to the convinced activists of the FEANF and its national branches (Dieng 2011b). The most effective weapon in the hands of the governments were the scholarships: the threat of scholarship cuts was a sword of Damocles hanging over the heads of many student activists.

Nonetheless, the FEANF as a militant structure went on for two decades. In France, its activities continued, although more limited to some symbolic spaces: the *Maison de la France d'Outremer* or *Maison de l'Afrique de l'Ouest* (Blum 2014). Though on the wane, the FEANF retained an ideological influence on national associations which were still involved in the federal structure, among them the Voltan and the Dahomean (today: Burkina Faso and Benin).

Rather, a new impetus came from the newly-built African university campuses. The universal wave of student protests of 1968 reached Dakar and was followed next year by Kinshasa and Abidjan. The repression of student protests was severe even if it differed between the young African states. However, whereas activism was on the wane on Western campuses, there was growing unrest in most African universities during the 1970s.

The student movements found allies among the pupils from secondary schools and in some trade unionists who were reluctant to accept the one-party system and the subordination of trade unions to this system. During the 1970s, they were able to organise mass protests in the streets of countries such as Mali with the *Union nationale des élèves et des étudiants du Mali* (UNEEM) and Niger with the *Union des scolaires nigériens* (USN) where university students joined high school pupils who created the organisation. In the context of the one-party system, student activism was crucial. They were in fact the heart of the opposition to the regime. They blamed the ruling class for being corrupt, incompetent, authoritarian and dependent on the French *coopération*, standing as the essential counter-hegemonic actor of the period. The bread-and-butter issues were crucial for the mobilisation of students but demonstrations were also organised in keeping with an anti-imperialist agenda, for instance, against official visits of 'imperialist' heads of states, or *coups d'états* (or attempted coups) against 'anti-imperialist' leaders.¹³

In some cases, the political order was overthrown by the wave of protests led by the student vanguard (as, for example, in Dahomey/Benin and Madagascar in 1972). In other cases, pro-Western regimes that had already been overthrown by a coalition of protesters (typically workers, pupils or even the 'lumpenproletariat') in the 1960s (as in Brazzaville in Congo, and

13 In some other states such as Mali and Niger during the 1970s, the emergent student movement in higher education had been preceded by secondary school students so that they joined a single organisation that was able to challenge the one-party state order with street demonstrations creating a subversive atmosphere and in reaction harsh repression (see for instance, Smirnova 2015).

in Ouagadougou in Upper Volta/Burkina Faso¹⁴) were replaced by progressive military regimes that experienced a process of political radicalisation under the pressure of student activists or trade unionists. In the latter cases, some of the student activists or former student activists became part of a revolutionary intelligentsia who backed the new regimes with the aim to radicalise the political process. However, the alliances concluded with progressive or revolutionary officers would typically not last very long. Student activism was soon back to its traditional counter-hegemonic stance, opting for a more radical ideology inside the galaxy of Marxism that was much in evidence in the decade. Correspondingly, the African governments fearing the subversive potential of the student movements used various repressive means to curb their rebellion: eviction from campuses, recruitment into the army, banning organisations, etc. When foreign students were involved in the protests (or allegedly involved), they were expelled to their home country. As a consequence, the regional universities especially Dakar lost the pan-African atmosphere of the 1960s. African governments had no choice but to build national universities and [...] to face unrest from their own national students. The latter became all the more the case as job opportunities for graduates declined and French *coopération* remained an enduring presence into the 1980s.

The age of anti-SAP and pro-democracy struggles

The struggles spearheaded by the students had already shown that the African states were idols with feet of clay. But three decades after independence, the obvious weakness of African state bureaucracies laid also in its poor economic performance. The result of the debt crisis was a new road to dependency. After colonial rule, and its extension with French *coopération*, a new transnational power appeared with the World Bank and its structural adjustment programmes (SAPs). This 'intellectual/financial complex of foreign aid' (Samoff 1992: 60–75) tried to reshape higher education in Africa by implementing so-called cost-sharing policies. In practice, this meant that the students had to pay higher fees and could no longer access scholarships. As a consequence, the World Bank 'reforms' of African higher education prevented students from poor socio-economic backgrounds obtaining a post-secondary education; the result was collective resistance for many years as scholarship has always been a key issue to students.

Moreover, another political incentive for student mobilisation was students' opposition to the one-party system. The opening of the Iron Curtain, collapse of the Soviet Empire, and end of the Cold War was the key external factor that precipitated the mass protests against monopolistic African regimes that had already been weakened for years. Neither could they rely on geopolitical support from the West against the Soviet threat which had waned in the early 1990s. The French head of state, Francois Mitterrand, in a speech in La Baule in 1990, announced that the time for multi-party systems had come. However, French African policy remained ambiguous to say the least: in practice, the French government carried on

¹⁴ The name of the country was changed from Upper Volta to Burkina Faso in 1984 by the Sankarist regime.

to back its more prominent vassals in *Françafrique* (e.g. in Gabon, Togo, Cameroun, Burkina Faso) despite the initial statement of principles in Mitterrand's La Baule speech.

Students were at the forefront of the demonstrators. This was particularly the case in Benin, where the Marxist-Leninist Kerekou regime had to accept a national conference where the regime was questioned and castigated; leading eventually to free elections that enabled the opposition to seize power. However, the radical student union under the influence of the Communist Party of Dahomey (PCD) had another political agenda (Bierschenk 2009). In similar situations in Mali and Niger, for instance, the student movement was party to the pro-democracy movement against the one-party regime and remained a counter-hegemonic force. Thus, student strikes did not stop after the wave of democratic transitions in Africa in the course of the 1990s. Students continued with the aim of a more radical change, especially when the new governments carried on with SAPs. The result was that student strikes became a chronic feature and many campuses were paralysed by 'blank years' i.e. annulled academic years, due to strike action.

Another important issue was violence. In several countries, security forces demonstrated sheer brutality (including murders, rapes, defenestration, material destruction, etc.) to suppress the student rebellions (as, for example, in Lubumbashi in 1990 and in Yopougon in 1991). In response to this violence, the students organised their own security forces. But what was formerly a counter-violence sometimes turned into more permanent coercion, especially when the campus came under the control of a student organisation or still more so when opposing factions struggled for control of a campus. The evolution of the *Fédération des étudiants et scolaires de Côte d'Ivoire* (FESCI) in the 1990s is a case in point. Student political cleavages echoed the divisions inside the opposition to the Ivorian regime of Houphouët-Boigny, in particular between the *Front Populaire Ivoirien* (FPI) and the *Rassemblement des démocrates républicains* (RDR) in Côte d'Ivoire. The use of violence in this context, symbolised by the wielding of machetes not only against the police but also other students and the teachers, struck the mind and brought FESCI into disrepute so that its initial contribution to the democratisation process has now been overshadowed (Adjagbe et al. 2014; Konate 2003; Théodore 2011).

As the student mobilisation has received more attention in this last period, a debate about its contribution to the democratisation processes of the 1990s has divided scholars. Radical and progressive scholars have generally considered that student movements have played an important part in this process (see, for instance, N'Da 1993). The students were not only an ideological vanguard as in the previous ages. Their 'proletarianisation' caused by the effect of SAPs in higher education set their social position closer to the popular masses (Alidou et al. 2008; Zeilig 2009). On the opposite side, other scholars have argued that the high level of one-upmanship in students' claims would prevent the consolidation of democratic institutions (Diouf & Mamdani 1993). They have also rejected an extensive conception of academic freedom that would 'sanctuarise' the university campus to become a 'state in the state' (Ajayi et al. 1996).

It is not intended in this chapter to go further into this controversy; the scholarly debate rather brings to mind that permanent unrest in African universities has caused adverse effects which have weakened the position of student unions to become targeted as ‘troublemakers’ while also pointing out that these generations of students have all the more reason to revolt than previous ones. The important point is the longer-term impact of student activism on the political field in sub-Saharan Africa in general and in particular in the Francophone countries. Elsewhere, I have termed this aspect the ‘generative function’ of student movements (Bianchini 2004: 67). It includes two different effects that must be distinguished.

Firstly, it is obvious to the well-informed observer that many African political leaders have cut their teeth on student unions. This is certainly the case with several national political leaders that became figureheads with the end of the one-party system in the early 1990s. Many of them were student activists during the late 1960s and 1970s. Among many others, several heads of state are good cases in point: Laurent Gbagbo of Côte d’Ivoire, Alpha Condé of Guinea, Mahamane Issoufou of Niger. Elsewhere, especially as the political system became unstable, the reconversion of student leadership in politics was accelerated, as in Côte d’Ivoire where all the leaders of the FESCI from the early 1990s to the early 2000s became politicians with contrasting opinions in relation to the different political forces struggling for power (Adjagbe et al. 2014).

Another aspect of the generative function relates to the history of organisations. Several political parties that rose up in the 1990s were not coming from nowhere. Some of them, especially those we can qualify as progressive or social-democratic, originated from clandestine Marxist-Leninist groups who have mellowed their ideology. This dimension does not relate only to the political organisations but also to organisations of civil society such as trade unions, human rights organisations, the independent press, etc., and the strategies of reconversion from student militants who used the skills they had gained from their experience as student leaders, to embrace the whole reality of the generative function of student activism in French-speaking Africa.

The theoretical framework hinged on the concept of political opportunity structure thus provides a conduit to understand the constraints on the collective action of students and to summarise the main features of the different historical periods of the student movement in Francophone Africa. And yet, this general view remains merely an approximation. The comparison between the student movements in Senegal and Burkina Faso will provide a complementary approach, especially to show the ‘degrees of freedom’ in every singular case.¹⁵

15 In contrast to other polities, Senegal and Burkina Faso have the characteristics of a relative openness and a more selective use of violence against student protesters, and thus differ from other cases such as Cameroon (cf. Konings 2002) or Zaïre/DRC (e.g. Lututala 2012).

A comparison between the student movements in Senegal and in Burkina Faso¹⁶

In keeping with the foregoing section, the same pattern of the three ages of student politics is employed in the analysis of the cases of Senegal and Burkina Faso, even though the chronological periodisation is uncertain and the historical importance of each period is unequal.

The anti-colonialist era

The Senegalese students: Pioneers of student radicalism

After the Second World War, Senegalese students played a leading role in the birth of African student associations, especially the FEANF (Dieng 2009). They were the more important group represented on the various boards of the FEANF in the 1950s, not only in quantitative terms but also in a more qualitative sense. Important figureheads that influenced the student movement in the 1950s were Senegalese: Amadou Mahtar M'Bow who was the first general secretary of FEANF; Cheikh Anta Diop, as the general secretary of the Association of the RDA students; Mahjmouth Diop, a founding member of the Fédération; and also, Amadi Aly Dieng, who was at the head of FEANF in 1960 when independence was granted to the new African states of the AOF and the AEF.

Alongside this the *Association générale des étudiants de Dakar* (AGED) was created in 1950 when the *Institute des hautes études de Dakar* (IHED) opened as an embryonic higher education institution. The student body was still tiny and students' claims limited to some material or pedagogical aspects. Though, after AGED, the students in Dakar became more radicalised with the emergence of the *Union générale des étudiants de l'Afrique de l'Ouest* (UGEO) in 1956, whose orientation was consistent with that of the FEANF and also controlled by militants of PAI. They too try to provide education with the *Université populaire* (UPA). In 1958, the union campaigned for immediate independence and against the idea of a commonwealth (*communauté*) with metropolitan France. In Senegal, another student organisation took part in the anti-colonial struggle: the *Association musulmane des étudiants d'Afrique noire* (AMEAN) founded in 1952 by Ciré Ly who was a medical student (Camara 2010; Faye 2008).

The limited contribution in the anti-colonial age of students from Upper Volta

Volcan students created in 1950 the *Association des étudiants voltaïques en France* (AEVF) which was also a territorial section of the FEANF. The first president of the AEVF was Joseph Ki-Zerbo who later became a historian and politician. Ki-Zerbo wrote in the newspaper *Tam Tam* where Catholic students expressed their views, claiming independence along the way of the FEANF. In 1957, Ki-Zerbo and former student militants such as Albert Tevoedjré of Dahomey and Amadou Dicko from Upper Volta founded the *Mouvement de libération*

¹⁶ For a more detailed socio-historical study of the student movement in Senegal, please see a precedent paper (Bianchini 2002), as well as Diop in Diop (1992) and Bathily et al. in Mamdani and Wamba-dia-Wamba (1995). With reference to the student movement in Burkina Faso also refer to the article by Bianchini and Korbeogo (2008).

nationale (MLN), which favoured independence and socialism and appeared as the main challenger to the PAI among the Francophone African student body. The Voltan student movement not only had its centre in France but also in Senegal, with the creation in Dakar in 1956 of the *Association des scolaires voltaïques de Dakar* (ASV). Whereas the associations were dominated by the MLN, some of the students were influenced by Senegalese students from PAI and were to become the founders of the party in Upper Volta including Amirou Thiombiano and later Adama Touré (Touré 2001). In 1960, the *Union générale des étudiants voltaïques* (UGEV) was created as an umbrella organisation encompassing the already existing associations in France and in Senegal. Although in moderate terms, the students chose to condemn the system of one-party rule instituted by the first president Maurice Yameogo. In consequence, the UGEV could only operate clandestinely or from abroad.

The age of anti-imperialism

May 68 in Dakar: An earthquake and its aftershocks

In the early 1960s under Senghor's rule, the Senegalese regime shifted to a one-party system. The last stage in this process occurred in 1966, when the *Union progressive sénégalaise* (UPS) merged with its only remaining opposition party, the *Parti du regroupement africain* (PRA). The radical student organisation, UGEAO had been banned in 1964 and the government fostered the creation of pro-governmental associations such as the *Fédération des étudiants libres de Dakar* (FELD). However, in 1966, the students were radicalised and strong enough to launch new counter-hegemonic organisations: the *Union des étudiants de Dakar* (UED) and the *Union démocratique des étudiants du Sénégal* (UDES). Student mobilisation started the same year when a march was organised to denounce the coup against Nkrumah in Ghana (Thioub in d'Almeida-Topor et al. 1992).

In 1968, the government decided on a reform that granted only partial scholarship to some students. In opposition to this reform, protests started in March. Then, in the course of May, a student strike started and the students' claims turned openly revolutionary, advocating for the liquidation of Senghor's regime. This threat went to loom over the government when the national workers' union, the *Union nationale des travailleurs du Sénégal* (UNTS) called a strike in solidarity with the students after the police raided the university campus. Senghor's regime survived the crisis thanks to ongoing support from the Muslim brotherhoods and the army headquarters, but the ruling party UPS had been strangely absent when the regime was under pressure from its radical opponents¹⁷ (Bathily 1992; Blum 2012; Gueye 2014). The government used both repression and compromise according to the moment but its main strategy was to break the alliance between the students and the workers. Senghor chose to negotiate at first with the workers' union, then with the students. Among the students, the government chose to negotiate only with the Senegalese students represented by UDES. The militants of UED

¹⁷ The UPS tried to launch '*comités de vigilance*' (vigilance committees), but their action especially in the capital was not decisive.

from neighbouring countries who had been previously expelled were excluded from this process of negotiation (Bathily 1992; Gueye 2001).

In the following year, in 1969, history repeated itself but this time, the government was ready to take prompt action: a state of emergency was declared and to prevent an alliance between the workers and the students, a new trade union confederation was launched in the form of the *Confédération nationale des travailleurs du Sénégal* (CNTS) to replace the UNTS which was suspected of supporting the student protesters (Lo 1987).

Through these mobilisations, which were followed by new events in 1971 and 1973, the students came to play a key role in the radical opposition to the regime, in line with the prevailing international climate of protest.¹⁸ This had a paradoxical effect on both the regime and the opposition. The regime chose to ban its radical opponents. In 1971, UDES was made illegal as was the teachers' union, the *Syndicat des enseignants du Sénégal* (SES). However, in educational matters, the government had no choice but to 'Africanise' the university and to reform the school system. At a political level, Senghor chose to 'open' its regime with the creation of the *Club Nation et développement* in 1969, and later on in 1974, with the *Parti démocratique sénégalais* (PDS) led by Abdoulaye Wade. For its part, the student leadership of 1968 had shown its political agency. A new political generation arose and clandestine political organisations were burgeoning in the early 1970s. Among these, two appeared more significant: the *Ligue démocratique* with former members of the student organisation of PAI such as Abdoulaye Bathily, the general secretary of the UDES, and *And-Jéf*, the Maoist tendency led by Landing Savane, the leader of the *Association des étudiants sénégalais en France* (AESF). The Maoists chose in the late 1970s and the 1980s to focus on cultural issues, especially the national languages (AESF 1979). They tried to promote a national memory of anti-colonial heroes that were forgotten by the official Senghorian ideology of 'negritude'.

During the late seventies, *And-Jéf* was on the rise. Their influence on the student body enabled them to rebuild the organisational structure of the movement, with the *Union nationale patriotique des étudiants du Sénégal* (UNAPES) born in 1979. However, unity did not last very long. The other leftist tendencies (especially *PAI-Sénégal* and the *Ligue démocratique*) chose to split from the UNAPES to create their own unions. This fragmentation did not help student mobilisation. It explains why in the early 1980s, the students remained relatively quiescent, with the exception of a long strike in 1984 (Bianchini in Diop 2002; Diop in Diop 1992).

The radicalisation of the UGEV through the 1970s

With the opening of the *Centre d'études supérieures* (CESUP) in Upper Volta in 1965, a new section of the UGEV was created: the *Association des étudiants voltaïques de Ouagadougou* (AEVO). However, it was not until 1974 with the official creation of the University of

¹⁸ In opposition to Senghor's views on the student protest as 'designed abroad and orchestrated abroad', Bathily (1992: 15–57) insists on the endogenous causes of the events of May 1969. However, this interpretation can be questioned as it isolates May 1968 in Senegal from the international context (see for instance Blum 2012; Hendrickson 2013).

Ouagadougou, that a real mobilisation of students would take place inside the country. In the late 1960s and even the 1970s, the UGEV members experienced a high level of militant activity abroad. In Senegal, Voltan students took part in the events of Dakar in 1968. In the 1970s, their militancy was well-known. Thus, on several occasions not only in Senegal in 1968, Voltan students were expelled in their masses from neighbouring African countries: Côte d'Ivoire, Niger and Togo. In France, Voltan students were very involved in the activities of FEANF and influenced its ideology. The establishment of the University of Ouagadougou was in some way a response to the activism of Voltan students who were considered subversive by other African governments (Sanou 1981).

In this context, the UGEV became more and more politicised in a radical sense. Until 1971, the MLN was still able to control the UGEV but its leadership was challenged by the PAI. Then the PAI took control over the UGEV up to 1975. Afterwards, they were superseded by the Maoists who were already ruling the FEANF. In Upper Volta, they launched a new organisation, the *Organisation communiste voltaïque* (OCV). However, later on the organisation split in two factions: the *Union des luttes communistes* (ULC) lead by Valère Somé¹⁹ and the *Parti communiste révolutionnaire voltaïque* (PCRv) lead by Drissa Touré created in 1978.²⁰ In the following year, the conflict shifted to the student union as the UGEV split into two factions: the majority of sections, especially AEFV and AEVO were controlled by the PCRv, while the pro-ULC tendency was influential elsewhere (in Dakar especially) (Sissao in d'Almeida-Topor et al. 1992; Bianchini & Korbeogo 2008; Maertens 1989). To summarise what occurred in the Voltan student union between 1971 and 1978, it was a process of radicalisation but mostly ideological as no effective struggle was waged except abroad where Voltan students participated in collective actions on university campuses in Africa and even in France.

The mobilisation of students at the University of Ouagadougou started in 1978/1979 due to late payment of scholarships and of the selectivity of exams. In 1981, the students were the first to defy the authority of the military governments of the *Comité pour le redressement patriotique et le salut national* (CMPRN). During the Sankarist revolution (1983–1987), the pro-Sankara militants tried to infiltrate the UGEV but failed. The 'real' power in the university lay in the *Comité de défense de la Révolution* (CDR) led by Sankarist students and the UGEV militants following the PCRv line criticised the regime, were targeted and had to go into hiding. The CDR of the university also had its political stake in the power struggle between the various factions inside the revolutionary regime (Bianchini & Korbeogo 2008).

A significant aspect of the generative function of student militancy in Burkina Faso is to be seen in the trade unions. Since the 1960s, several former student members of PAI had been active in trade unions. In 1974, they were able to launch a new trade union confederation, the *Confédération des syndicats voltaïques* (CSV) whose general secretary, Soumane Touré, was a

19 Valère Somé was a childhood friend of Thomas Sankara. They maintained close links when Somé became a student leader. After the Revolution du 4 août, Somé was to become the ideologue of the revolutionary regime. He is the alleged author of the Discours d'orientation politique of the Sankarist revolution (personal communication).

20 At its creation, the PCRv referred to the Albanian version of Marxism-Leninism, considering the USSR and China as both 'revisionists'.

student leader in Dakar where he joined the PAI. A similar process occurred later with the next political generation linked to the PCRV: in 1981, some of the pro-PCRV expelled from the teacher's union, the *Syndicat unique voltaïque de l'enseignement secondaire et supérieur* (SUVESS) created a new federation, the *Syndicat des travailleurs de l'enseignement et de la recherche* (SYNTER). Then, after the revolution in 1988, a new confederation referring to revolutionary unionism came into existence, the *Confédération générale du travail du Burkina* (CGT-B), including the SYNTER and other trade unions such as the *Syndicat des Travailleurs de la Géologie des Mines et Hydrocarbures* (SYNTRAGMIH) and the *Syndicat des Travailleurs de la Santé Humaine et Animale* (SYNTSHA). Moreover, a further noticeable initiative was the creation of a human rights movement of Burkina Faso in the *Mouvement burkinabé des droits de l'homme et des peuples* (MBDHP) with Aimé Nikiema and Halidou Ouedraogo. These organisations, which appeared in the 1980s, were to be called upon to play a key role in the following decades.

The age of mobilisation against adjustment policies and one-party rule

*The role of students in Senegal's 'passive revolution' and the way to 'sopi'*²¹

During the 1980s, the Marxist organisations that had been dominant on the university campus in the 1960s and the 1970s were already on the wane. In contrast, religious influence began to fill the ideological vacuum, with the burgeoning activities of Islamic student associations (so-called 'dahiras'). At a more political level, Abdoulaye Wade, leader of the PDS, which was affiliated to the Liberal International, became more and more popular and embodied change.²² Whereas the clandestine Marxist organisations were made legal, their electoral weight appeared really weak compared to the PDS. Twenty years after May 1968, in 1988 came the turning point of this evolution.²³ As the results of the presidential elections in favour of Abdou Diouf were made official, a wave of protest swept the country. Students and pupils were at the forefront of the mobilisation. The government declared a state of emergency. Abdoulaye Wade, Landing Savane and other leaders from the opposition were jailed. The short-term issue was a 'blank year' (or '*année blanche*', where the academic year was cancelled and the university remained closed) but more importantly, the PDS became the hegemonic political force on the campus. One of the long-term consequences of this turning point in student politics has been that the *Mouvement des étudiants et élèves libéraux* (MEEL) linked to the PDS recruited a new political generation who eventually came into office with the electoral victory of the opposition in 2000.

21 The concept of 'passive revolution' coined by Gramsci has been used to analyse the political opening of the Senegalese institutions in the 1980s (Fattou 1987). The word '*sopi*' means change in Wolof and was used as a motto by Wade and his followers.

22 Abdoulaye Wade was nicknamed 'Pope Sopi', or in French '*le pape du Sopi*'.

23 In January 1987, a new strike occurred on the everlasting issue of scholarships and the police raided the campus. The same year, the national student unions (i.e. the unions nationales) were dissolved and a new unitary organisation appeared in the *Coordination des étudiants de Dakar* (CED), which claimed to be autonomous from political parties.

But before in 1991, the socialist government, facing political weakness and economic crisis, chose to open its government to the opposition forces. Since the late 1980s, the University of Dakar was in a cycle of unrest where strikes occurred every year followed by agreements that were not implemented by the government. In 1992, the World Bank started to launch an 'adjustment' reform. The main idea was to reduce the cost of the social expenses (targeting the 'social campus' as against the 'academic campus' of the university). They tried to disguise this policy agenda through a so-called 'concertation' between the government and the academics but conflict with the students was unavoidable. At last the CED, politically weakened by several years of academic unrest without concrete results, lost its last battle in 1994 when the government closed the campus and expelled the students (Bianchini 2000).

In 2000, Abdoulaye Wade, supported by the whole opposition – including leftist parties such as the *Ligue démocratique* and *Ande-Jéf* as well as some of the barons of the *Parti socialiste* who had fallen from grace, including Moustapha Niasse and Djibo Ka²⁴, defeated Abdou Diouf. The year before the election, the student movement whose leadership belonged to the PDS had campaigned to increase the number of scholarship holders.²⁵ The strike turned openly political as the election approached. Thus, it is fair to say that the students made a decisive contribution to the shift in power in Senegal at the time (Zeilig 2004). Nonetheless, student support for the new government did not last very long. The context of SAP policies remained. In 2001, the new government declared its intention to restrict the number of students at the university and to increase the fees. The reaction of the students was to go on strike. Then, in a demonstration, a student was shot dead. In an awkward position, the government made an important concession: every student admitted to the university would be eligible for a scholarship. Wade chose to pay a high price to buy social peace in higher education. However, during his second and last presidential term (2007–2012), his popularity declined. Many students joined the protests to prevent him from being re-elected and changing the Constitution in order to enable his son Karim to come to power.²⁶ The election won by Macky Sall in 2012 has not changed the issue. The crisis in Senegalese higher education is deeper than ever. The decentralisation of the system with the establishment of regional universities in Saint Louis, Ziguichor, Thiès and Bambey, is still more of a mirage than a reality, since 90% of students in public universities are still to be found at the overcrowded Cheikh Anta Diop University of Dakar (Gomis 2013). All these universities have experienced turmoil, especially since the government has chosen to increase fees in keeping with the recommendations of the Assises de l'enseignement supérieur in 2013.²⁷

24 Both of them were former student leaders from the ruling party UPS, during the late 1960s and the early 1970s who used to fight against the leftist UDES where the bulk of the student body gathered.

25 A new organisation appeared this year named after its predecessor that had been famous in 1968: the UED.

26 The role of students in this recent shift in power appears, however, less decisive. The counter-hegemonic role of the students is now taken by other socio-political actors, such as in 2012 by the rappers of Y'en a marre.

27 Another cause of unrest has been the late payment of scholarships. The death of a student, Bassirou Faye, shot by the police on 14 August 2014 is a dramatic confirmation of the deadlock situation at the University of Dakar.

The return of student mobilisation and the permanence of the student organisation as a socio-political actor in Burkina Faso since 1990

In October 1987, Thomas Sankara and some of his followers were killed in a coup led by a rival faction. The new 'strong man' in Burkina Faso was his brother in arms, Blaise Compaoré, who was to remain in power for 27 years. During his first years, Compaoré's leadership faced a volatile situation. The opposition grew as direct coercion from the CDR, now replaced by the *comités révolutionnaires* (CR), was less effective. The students in Burkina Faso as in other countries again played a vanguard role. In May 1990, the *Association nationale des étudiants burkinabé* (ANEB), which had replaced AEVO, felt it was strong enough to mobilise the students against the regime as the CR of the university was on the wane. During previous years, power conflicts had been settled through military violence. This was also the case in 1990. In reaction to this, the government sent in the Presidential Guard which raided the campus of the university. Several militants were captured and brought to the headquarters of the Guard (i.e. the *Conseil de l'entente*) where they were tortured. The leader of the ANEB, Dabo Boukary, died in these circumstances. Justice has never been done and the students are still asking the government to shed light on the death of Dabo Boukary on 16 May 1990, a day that is commemorated every year by the militants of ANEB (Bianchini & Korbeogo 2008; UGEB-ANEB 1991).

The events at the University of Ouagadougou in 1990 were the precursor to larger demonstrations led by the opposition claiming for a national conference and the end of the rule by state of emergency which had prevailed for more than a decade in a succession of military governments. In fact, the military regime became a civilian one, but the group in power, not to say its authoritarian habitus, has survived.²⁸

In the early nineties, several student organisations were created, some of which were instigated by the opposition, and others by the government using the policy of divide and rule. The authorities chose to organise elections of student delegates with the ulterior motive to weaken the leadership of the ANEB over the students. However, the ANEB has remained the most representative organisation by far.²⁹

In 1996/1997, the longest strike in the history of the university took place. The main cause was the implementation of a lending system to replace the scholarships, which had sharply decreased since 1990 in accordance with structural adjustment policies. The main claim of the ANEB was to go back to the scholarship system which the government rejected. A compromise was found when the government promised to give a grant-in-aid for the non-scholarship students (Wise 1997). In the process, the ANEB leadership occupied a middle ground, appearing far less radical than what was suggested by its public image as a 'sock puppet' in the hands of the clandestine PCR.V.

²⁸ A new constitution was adopted in 1991 ushering in the fourth republic of the post-independence era.

²⁹ In 1998, the ANEB won the elections for delegates of faculties with about three-quarters of the votes. In 2005, the candidates of the ANEB were the only ones to stand for the elections (Ouedraogo 2005).

Nonetheless, in December 1998, the regime was shaken by a new crisis. Norbert Zongo, a prominent journalist well known for his investigative talent on issues sensitive to the men in power, was found together with his driver and two passengers burnt in his car. Facing a huge protest, the regime had to accept an independent committee of enquiry.³⁰ The students were the first to react to this political murder thinly disguised as a car accident. For several months, mass demonstrations were organised by a democratic mass movement known as the *Collectif des organisations démocratiques de masses et de partis politiques* (CODMPP), which put the government under heavy pressure. The students of ANEB were at the forefront of the struggle in which the trade unionists of the CGT-B and human rights militants of the MBDHP were also very active. However, the regime which seemed to be dying in the first half of 1999, managed to survive. Later on, when it became able to take things in hand, the ruling class chose to retaliate in keeping with its authoritarian habitus. Under the pretext of reforming the university according to a structural adjustment agenda, the government and the ruling party, the *Congrès pour la démocratie et le progrès* (CDP) chose to castigate the students and the academics who had joined or even organised the protests. The *refondation* (or restructuring) enabled the regime to close the university for several months and to reorganise its structures in a top-down process (Bianchini, 2002).³¹

In the following decade, although a feeling of disappointment and disorientation could be observed among the students (Mazzochetti 2009), the student body continued to challenge Compaoré's regime. In 2008, a new strike that concerned only two faculties of the UO gave the government an opportunity to quell the rebel students. In a conflict that originated initially from corporatist claims about fees and scholarships, two points were also at stake: the creation of a special police force and the building of a wall surrounding the university. This reflected the security-based approach of the authorities dealing with student politics (Chouli 2009). But such a hard line proved to be short-sighted. In February 2011, the death of a secondary school student in Koudougou after having been beaten in custody by policemen triggered a cycle of mobilisation in various segments of society. The ANEB also played a key role in the event by organising a march in Ouagadougou on 11 March which was an important step in this process. The military mutinies that broke out in the end also demonstrated the real weakness of an authoritarian regime whose survival was again at stake in this crisis (Chouli 2012).

At last, in the aftermath of 2011, the opposition that used to be very weak on the electoral ground became stronger, especially with a new opposition party, the *Union pour le changement* (UPC) led by a technocrat, Zéphyrin Diabré, who has made a career in international institutions and now advocates for neoliberalism. The Compaoré regime has lost the support of prominent figureheads of the regime like the former mayor of Ouagadougou, Simon Compaoré, and the former Minister of Agriculture, Salif Diallo. As the political debate focused on the creation of

30 The Commission *d'enquête indépendante* pointed fingers at some members of the presidential guard as 'serious suspects'; however, no justice was served.

31 For instance, the government decided to appoint academics at the head of departments or faculties when they were formerly elected.

a senate and a constitutional amendment that would entitle Blaise Compaoré to stand for a new presidential term, a popular insurrection occurring in the last days of October 2014 was strong enough to overthrow Compaoré's autocratic regime which had imagined itself to be everlasting.

Conclusion: The long history of student movements in Francophone Africa

Throughout the different ages of student politics in Francophone Africa, student movements have played a significant socio-political role. They were not only a political barometer of a general atmosphere and an ideological vanguard. Student mobilisation was a crucial factor in the genesis and the transformation of the political field of the post-colonial era.³²

The different waves of student protests recalled in this chapter have occurred in objectively and subjectively different contexts: the age of anti-colonial struggles was also the period where pan-Africanist and pro-Soviet tendencies were well-spread among students; the age of anti-imperialist struggles corresponded to a period where the spirit of May 1968 was blowing across the world and when various revolutionary models were in competition; meanwhile the last epoch was one of struggles for democracy and resistance to structural adjustment policies.³³

However, the general picture conveyed by periodisation of the three ages of student movements in Francophone African countries can hide genuine differences between African student movements that have followed different historic directions. The comparative analysis of the cases of Senegal and Burkina Faso is especially revealing in this regard. In both cases, the student movements have stood as counter-hegemonic actors in a context where the authorities have used a policy-mix of repression and negotiation; conversely long-standing and institutionalised compromise proved not effective.

Furthermore, if we consider the influence of the student movement on the polity, the generative functions of student politics are obvious in the cases of Senegal and Burkina Faso even if they have taken different paths. During the anti-colonial age, the Senegalese appeared as the founders of student associations in France with the FEANF and have paved the way to student politics in Francophone Africa. Their Voltan fellows have followed their footsteps. In May 1968, at the beginning of the second age, the Senegalese student movement played a

32 These aspects are not taken into account when they are categorised as 'corporatist' social movements (Sylla 2014). If the corporatist dimension has always existed in student mobilisations, their ability to challenge political power appears also as a major characteristic of African student movements.

33 A question to be raised is what will follow these three ages. Nowadays, one argument is that in a post-SAP age where democratisation is more established in sub-Saharan Africa, student claims would be more institutionalised (Luescher-Mamashela & Mugume 2014). However, the prospects of this are not clear in many sub-Saharan countries: in Senegal in 2011–2012 as in Burkina Faso in 2014, recent events have proved that the political arena is still not pacified. In these conditions, street mobilisation remains decisive. Moreover, structural adjustment policies are still effective for the student body and related student mobilisations are chronic even if the ideological context is not in favour of radical politics. As a consequence, the issue of 'public policies' in higher education is still determined by 'contentious politics' opposing the government and the students. As the conflict repeats without real compromise, African campuses (especially the University of Dakar) appear more and more 'entropic' with a 'merry-go-round' of collective actions from different actors (not only the students) that paralyse the academic institutions... even if such an assessment sounds pessimistic.

vanguard role as their action was able to shake Senghor's regime. Thus it is not surprising that the campus of Dakar has led many Voltan students to a more radical politicisation. In its wake, the former experienced various successive organisations that did not last very long; whereas the latter were more able to maintain organisational structures (despite the harsh conditions of repression by military regimes). As the Senegalese student movement navigated a more volatile situation it also proved unable to resist the 'divide and rule' strategies of the ruling class.

Moreover, although it is true that the Burkina Faso case demonstrates a more frequent use of authoritarian methods (Chouli 2009; Sory 2012) and, in the Senegalese case, the regime has made systematic efforts to 'corrupt' student leaders by giving them scholarships to study abroad (Diop in Diop 1992), the different trajectories followed by the student movements in the two countries could also be explained in terms of different strategic options. As Senegalese students of the 1970s realised that a 'general assault' against the regime would not occur so soon, they chose to focus their activities mainly on the aim of struggling for a national culture by promoting African languages and anti-colonial forgotten heroes; conversely, the Voltan student movement which experienced various spells of military rule from 1966 took a different option in setting up counterweights to the politically dominant system in the form of trade unions, human rights organisations, etc.³⁴ which have been influential in the struggle against SAPs and political authoritarianism in a context where the political opposition was left without space to manoeuvre by the military regimes and the long-lasting Compaoré regime.

After a decade of turmoil during the 1990s, one could observe that African higher education systems were at a 'turning point' between crisis and renaissance (Teferra & Altbach 2004). A decade later, the picture remains ambiguous. Students' protests in Francophone sub-Saharan countries are still chronic, not to say permanent. No matter what the governmental answers (i.e. repression or negotiation), universities are still battlegrounds for generations coming of age. However these mobilisations seem to have a lesser impact on political systems than in the previous decades especially before the era of massification and pauperisation of the student body. Conversely, another reason to invoke is the growing diversity of the social movements nowadays (Sylla 2014). In consequence, student movements no longer play a vanguard role as they used to do. At last, maybe in the future, beyond general trends, contrasting situations inherited from national/local history will become more and more obvious, as suggested in the comparison we made between Senegal and Burkina Faso.

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³⁴ More recently a youth organisation was established in the *Organisation démocratique de la jeunesse* (ODJ), whose president is André Tibiri, a former leader of the ANEB.

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Annex: Model of political opportunity structure

| | Anti-colonialist age (1950–1960) | Anti-imperialist age (1960–1970) | Anti-SAP and pro-democracy age (1980–1990) |
|---|---|---|--|
| Geopolitical context and external influences (ideologies, organisational models etc.) | Emergence of the Third World (Bandung, 1955). Anti-colonialist and pan-Africanist claims opposed to the 'balkanisation' of Africa. Socialist countries under the leadership of USSR viewed as allies and as models for development in the context of decolonisation (rising influence of Marxism on a young generation of African intellectuals). | Anti-establishment atmosphere in various countries (still more visible on campuses) culminating with the global wave of protest in 1968. Ideological splits inside the 'socialist camp' (especially with the opposition between USSR and Maoist China that will determine political cleavages in student movements). | Emerging pattern of global governance downgrading the 'Françafrique' established between the French state and its former colonies. However, the rotting 'Françafrique' is deeply rooted and has survived here and there. End of the East-West dividing line after the split of the Soviet bloc. Third World ideology in decline with the internal differentiation between 'emerging countries' and 'less advanced countries'. |
| Environmental and geographic contexts for mobilisation | Establishment of African universities but the bulk of students was sent to the metropolises. Most of the militants and the organisational structures remained also in the metropolises (especially FEANF). | Diasporic militancy maintained but in decline. Importance of African 'flagship universities' (as Dakar) where students from different countries gathered. Then during the decade of the 1970s, establishment of national universities including a national 'arena' for student mobilisation. Urbanisation process around the campuses so that their spatial location becomes more central. | Student mobilisation is a key issue on the national agenda. Establishment of private or public universities outside the capital (and outside the urban space) but the historic national university remains even more overcrowded than ever. Strikes are now common and extend to other campuses inside the country. |
| Openness or closure of the polity | Emerging political arenas with the Union française and the elections for territorial assemblies. Political freedom in the metropolis though restrained for radicals supporting armed liberation movements. Closure of most of the African polities with one-party regimes backed by the French state within the 'Françafrique' system. | Maintained political closure with one-party or military regimes. In this context, student mobilisation when it occurs has a strong political impact even when it originates from 'bread-and-butter' issues. | Disappearance of one-party system but the former autocratic system persists. Some heads of state reject democratic alternating and even try to establish a dynasty. Moreover, when they are elected the new leaders can use autocratic methods. At last, coups or military interventions are not excluded. |
| Unity or fragmentation of the political élites | Main political cleavage between political forces accepting the reformed colonial system (FDA after 1950, traditional chiefs) and dissident voices claiming immediate independence (e.g. trade unionists, students). Creation of 'radical' nationalist and anticolonial organisations (e.g. PAI). | One-party system supposed to transcend all the political and ethnic cleavages in the name of 'nation-building' and 'development'. But in reality, a competition for power between factions (or even ethnic groups). Underground opposition (more or less according to state repression) denouncing the regime as 'neo-colonial'. However, this underground opposition is limited to intellectuals and affected by 'theological' disputes (between pro-Soviet and pro-Chinese or even pro-Albanese). | Ideological disorientation and fragmentation of the political arena. Leftist revolutionary organisations linked to student movements are lost in chaos of numerous burgeoning political parties. However, several student leaders of the former decades have become major actors during the political transition; sometimes, former anti-imperialist organisations with 'Marxist-Leninist' credentials have turned into 'democratic' or 'social-democratic' parties, with electoral success. |

Annex: Model of political opportunity structure (continued)

| | | | |
|--|---|--|---|
| <p>Hegemony and coercion in the exercise of state power</p> | <p>Anti-colonialist age (1950-1960)</p> <p>Weak legitimacy of the ruling class in African states in the first years of independence due to its allegiance to the colonial and neo-colonial powers. Subsequently, the political order is maintained by coercion backed by the French diplomatic and military presence (with the experience of 'revolutionary wars' in Algeria and Cameroon).</p> | <p>Anti-imperialist age (1960-1970)</p> <p>The students (and the university) are a specific target for the state repression that can take various forms (political, economic, policing methods or sometimes military).</p> <p>The African regimes proved unable to find effective support among students apart from using 'policies of the belly'.</p> <p>Clientelist practices developed in the ordinary exercise of power face strong opposition from counter-hegemonic forces (especially student movements)</p> | <p>Anti-SAP and pro-democracy age (1980-1990)</p> <p>Erosion of one-party regimes that appeared as 'paper tigers' when the masses joined the demonstrations. Their collapse reveals the lack of hegemony. Staging national reconciliation (in so-called 'conférences nationales') has coexisted with harsh repression. One more time, campuses have been targeted. As a reaction, violence has spread as a mean of action for the students in movements so that campuses can experience a 'culture of violence'.</p> |
| <p>Social status of the students as a group and relationships with other social groups</p> | <p>Students considered as an élite (or a would-be élite).</p> <p>Prestigious status that enables them to gain consideration in their society and also at the international level, where they can be seen as future leaders.</p> <p>However, two major weaknesses: distance from local realities (students as a diaspora) and limited representativeness from the population (students as a privileged group).</p> | <p>Influence of student protests extended to secondary schools and sometimes trade unions (especially when trade unionists were former students as in teachers' organisations). Sometimes, the ideological influence of students movements was felt in the army (with young 'progressive' or 'revolutionary' officers opposed to the neo-colonial order).</p> | <p>Proletarianisation of students since the 1980s due to the SAP which jeopardised their status. Downgrading of the social image of students, who struggled with limited success against the steamroller of adjustment.</p> <p>However, students were also at the vanguard during the protests against the one party-system. But their political contribution is also questioned as the strikes are repeated and the universities appears as in a state of permanent crisis ('années blanches').</p> <p>Moreover, the really privileged youth can avoid this turmoil with private institutions or studies abroad.</p> |

CHAPTER 6

REVISITING STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION GOVERNANCE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BUEA, CAMEROON: 2004–2013

Samuel N Fongwa and Godlove N Chifon

Background and introduction

Research on student participation in university governance, especially in Africa, continues to gain currency in the higher education landscape. Either as members of a scholarly community, or as clients, or to ensure democratic representation, the inclusion of students in university governance has been discussed by scholars in terms of various theoretical arguments. However, the inclusion of students in university governance is not as straightforward as sometimes argued due to a number of inherent challenges in democratic governance as well as contextual challenges within countries and institutions of higher education. Especially in African countries, student participation in university governance has most often faced numerous challenges leading rather to student activism than to actual democratic engagement and representation.

At the case of the University of Buea (UB), Cameroon, this chapter analyses the process of student participation in university governance during the last ten years. It uses a blend of secondary and primary data to explore how student participation in university governance at the UB has unfolded. Primary data collected support in many ways previous research which proposes that student participation in university governance at the UB is either non-existent or entangled in a mix of broader socio-political issues such as ethno-regional and political factionalism. Using interviews with former and current student leaders and university administrators, it can be argued that student participation continues to be blurred by other internal and external stakeholders.

In its first part, the chapter provides a broad overview of higher education governance and student politics during the early years of higher education in Cameroon. The next section focuses on a review of previous research on student activism at the University of Buea. The third section provides a ten-year review of student participation in the UB, from 2004 to 2013. It analyses the transition from a central student body to the current form of student representation and its implications for student representation in university governance at the UB. The last section provides a summing up discussion and conclusion, pulling out lessons learnt from the last decade of participatory governance between students and institutional leadership.

Student politics in the earlier years of higher education in Africa

African students and student movements have played an important role in the struggle for African independence, both in the universities located in the metropolitan countries as well as in the colonial territories (Adams et al. 1991, Bundy 1989, Luescher & Mugume 2014). Post-independence, the provision of higher education on the African continent expanded rapidly in keeping with the promise that the new African universities would contribute significantly to national development (Sawyer 2004; Yesufu 1973). University students were part of a privileged and transitory social group following independence, and played a core role in providing the work force in top-government positions of the newly independent states. In most African countries, students, during this era, lived in affluence and had access to adequate academic facilities, with financial support from governments in the form of generous monthly stipends and comfortably subsidised university accommodation (Zeilig 2008).

However, this good life was not very long lived as most African economies came under severe strain resulting in financial difficulties of the state to maintain its higher education budget. At the same time, there were rising costs related to the expanded provision for social needs in basic health and education and increasing enrolments in higher education while World Bank research provided the justification for requesting African governments to shrink investment in higher education, which was considered more of a luxury than a need in developing countries (Brock-Utne 2000; Psacharopoulos & Patrinos 2002). Some countries responded to these demands by cutting student scholarships and instituting different forms of cost-sharing, such as student tuition and registration fees (Wangenge-Ouma 2008, 2012).

Seeing their status as a privileged group collapse, there was an unprecedented 'convergence of forces' between students and the popular classes (Seddon 2002). Clashes between students and governments over Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) started in the mid-to-late 1980s, and spread with severity across the African continent. Countries that experienced the most recorded incidents of student protests between 1985 and 1995 were Nigeria, Kenya, Sudan, Benin, Zimbabwe, Ivory Coast, Ghana and Tunisia (Luescher & Mugume 2014). In Francophone Africa, including Cameroon, student activism against SAPs escalated particularly after the devaluation of the CFA franc in 1994 (Federici 2000; Luescher & Mugume 2014).

Students inadvertently turned universities into sites of struggle against economic hardship and political and economic mismanagement, while also reaching out and aligning themselves with other civil organisations such as trade unions and women's groups, in their demands for better life and transparent democracy (Badat 1999; Munene 2003). Student participation in university governance as pointed out by Luescher and Mugume (2014) became more of activism than a mutual dialogue for democratic governance.

In the case of Cameroon in particular, student politics in the early years of higher education took a different dimension. With the country having only one university at the time – the University of Yaoundé (UniYao) – student activism operated predominantly along politico-ethno-regional lines (Konings 2005). While students at the UniYao shared most of the grievances expressed by their counterparts in other African countries, the manifestation of these grievances soon became the target for external socio-political agendas by various political and social bodies (Nyamnjoh 1999). Although political liberation offered students the opportunity to organise themselves in defence of their interests, it also tended to divide them along ethno-regional lines. This led to an upsurge of tensions between what later became two distinct groups of students. The one group was the 'autochthonous' mainly Beti¹ students who tended to support the ruling party, the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement; the other group were the Anglophone and Bamilike, students from the grassland, and later referred to as 'strangers', who were more inclined to support the major opposition party, the Social Democratic Front (SDF). With the University of Yaoundé in Beti territory, Beti students with the support of university and government officials claimed control of student politics in 'their' university and were determined to combat any organisation by 'strangers'. The growing divergence between these two groups of students, fuelled by the regime, ethnic entrepreneurs, and the press, gave rise to an explosion of violence and the emergence of a Beti militia on campus, which was engaged in various forms of ethnic exclusion (Konings 2002).

It was in this context of growing tension on campus and the gradual opening of space for organisations during the broader political liberalisation process of the early 1990s that the National Coordination of Cameroon Students was formed under the leadership of Benjamin Senfo Tonkam. According to Konings (2011: 217), the organisation's first public activity under the leadership of Benjamin Tonkam was 'on 15 August 1990, when it addressed an open letter to the head of state stressing that higher education in Cameroon was sick and without repairs, and characterised by inadequate infrastructure, anachronism and arbitrariness'. It also appealed to the president to reform the university so that it would become a school of tolerance and dialogue and regain its lost credibility (Konings 2002, 2009). In response, the president warned the students to remain aloof from politics, insisting that politics was for politicians and academic institutions for scholars; a slogan that became popular in higher education discourse at the time: '*La politique aux politiciens, l'école aux écoliers*' (Konings 2002: 190).

1 Beti is the local tribe around the Central Region of Cameroon.

With increasing student enrolments at the only public university at the time, which resulted in huge limits in available teaching and learning facilities, part of the response from the president was to decentralise higher education provision to other provinces. In 1992, five new state universities were created as part of higher education reforms across the higher education landscape (Njeuma et al. 1999). Four of the universities were to be bilingual, namely the UniYao which now became the University of Yaoundé I and the University of Yaoundé II both in the Central Region, the University of Douala in the Littoral Region and the University of Dschang in the West Region. Of the two remaining universities, the University of Ngaoundéré in the North (Adamawa Region) was to be a purely French-speaking institution while the University of Buea (South-West Region) was to be the lone Anglophone institution.

The University of Buea in Cameroon

The University of Buea (UB) conceived in the Anglo-Saxon university tradition started in 1993 with an initial population of approximately 2 048 students. According to the 2007 *Higher Education Statistical Year Book*, the UB student body grew to about 11 866 students by the 2006/2007 academic year (Ministry of Higher Education 2007). The university is composed of six faculties: the Faculties of Arts, Education, Health Sciences, Sciences, Social and Management Sciences and the newly created Faculty of Agricultural and Veterinary Science. Three higher schools of professional training: the Advanced School of Translation and Interpretation, the College of Technology and the recently created Higher Technical Teachers Training College with Campus in a neighbouring town, Kumba also make up the university academic profile.

Created during a period of tough socio-economic conditions such as a dire economic crisis and the start of a multi-party system in Cameroon, as well as the scrapping of student scholarships and the introduction of student fees, the UB administration had the difficult task of steering the new institution through the early stages. Some of the main characteristics of the early years were staff dissatisfaction with conditions of work, students' protests and the need for university officials to align with national politics of the time. Besides a heavy student workload from a fast-increasing student population, lecturers were confronted with financial difficulties characterised by delays in the payment of their salaries, compounded by a drastic 60–70% cut in civil servants' salaries across the country, and worsened by a 50 per cent devaluation of the currency, the CFA, in January 1994 (Konings 2002). Hence the UB started in a much-stressed atmosphere in which parents, students and even staff themselves were going through socio-economic challenges in various ways.

Student participation and activism at the UB during the first decade: 1993 to 2003

Barely three months after the University of Buea became a fully-fledged university, it experienced its first student strike. News had circulated on campus that students in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences would pay CFA 150 000 (USD 600 by then), while their counterparts in the Faculty of Sciences would pay CFA 200 000 (USD 800 by then). This angered the students who decided to go on a strike on 20 August 1993 (Fokwang 2009). Students refused to write their exams unless the university administration overturned its plans to increase fees. Students also presented a list of demands to university leadership, which included, inter alia, that they meet with landlords to broker a cap on private student accommodation. However, all of the demands were not met. While the student leaders and the university authorities remained at loggerheads, the minister of higher education intervened and denied the fact that the government had any plans to introduce tuition fees at UB.

At the beginning of the 1995/1996 academic year, the revived University of Buea Student Union (UBSU) effectively went operational. One of its objectives was to open and run a student canteen which provided photocopy services at reduced rates to students, but they would soon get into trouble with the administration over a range of issues, the most critical being the administration's reluctance to give access to student funds. The student union leader accused the university administration of not collaborating with them over the budgetary and constitutional requirements. UBSU submitted a memorandum to the vice-chancellor and registrar on 24 November 1995, enumerating student grievances, inter alia, the administration's reluctance to give union leaders access to the students' union account; the urgent need of funds to run the student canteen for the welfare of students; the university's refusal to grant permission to UBSU to publish its newsletter, *UBSU Time*, and the exclusion of union leaders from the decision-making process in matters affecting students (Fokwang 2009).

The registrar upon receiving the memorandum immediately sealed off the student canteen and requested the student leaders to vacate their offices without further delay. The UBSU president and secretary-general were shortly thereafter served with a letter from the vice-chancellor suspending them indefinitely. The student leaders were suspended – according to the VC – for 'gross indiscipline', disrespect for authorities and inciting of students to engage in protest. They were consequently barred from entering the UB campus and from any services offered by the institution until further notice (Fokwang 2009). The university campus was subsequently turned into a state of turmoil as students came to protest against the dismissal of their leaders. Their goal was the immediate reversal of the VC's decision, failing which they would continue to boycott classes until their demands were met.

A crisis that started timidly as a standoff between students and the university administration soon became violent, with the registrar's car set alight followed by other acts of vandalism by angry students. The strike further degenerated into an ethnic conflict as members of the Bakweri ethnic group who are the autochthonous or the indigenes of Buea, soon began to

attack the ‘strangers’, mostly the North-Westerners from the Bamenda Region, accusing them of being the cause of the unrest (Fokwang 2009). This is in spite of the fact that the UBSU president, Mr Valentine Nti, was a member of an ethnic group in the North-West Province while the vice-president and the secretary-general respectively were from the South-West Province. The strike was, however, interpreted as a rebellion of the North-West students against the Bakweri-dominated authorities of the university administration.

The University of Buea Student Union was ruthlessly abolished after the 1995 strike action with the administration using a hard stance against any form of activism. A new system of student representation was unilaterally imposed on the students and all they could do was to comply with the ‘dictates of the university administration’ (Fokwang 2009: 19). Instead of a common students’ union as is a practice in most universities around the world, the university authorities devised a new system of student government whose power and functions were restricted to individual faculties. Each faculty elected its own executive whose prerogative was limited to the faculty, and as such was unable to speak on behalf of the entire student body. The five faculties of the time constituted what was known as the ‘college of presidents’. While this structure conveyed the idea of the existence of a form of central student government, many students felt that the many faculty student governments were simply ‘toothless bulldogs’ since their powers were extremely limited (Fokwang 2009: 19).

In a nutshell, the autochthony-allochthony conflict in Cameroon as in other parts of Africa has come to represent the claims of indigenous ethnic citizens against domination by so-called ethnic strangers (Geschiera & Nyamnjoh 2000; Bayart et al. 2001). In Cameroon and particularly the Anglophone South-West Region of Cameroon, local elites and politicians have assisted in fuelling these discourses for political gain by depicting their Anglophone counterparts of the North-West Region as ‘dominating and exploitative’ (Konings & Nyamnjoh 2003). The fact that student politics has been interpreted along prevailing political and regional lines is indicative of the continuous intersection between the constituency of student activism and socio-political development within broader politics (Fokwang 2009).

Student participation and activism during the second decade: 2004 to 2013

The Vice-Chancellor of the University of Buea, Dr Dorothy Njeuma, succeeded in establishing, to an extent, a measure of control over the university community for a considerable period of time (1995–2003) by effectively using ‘carrot and stick’ methods. Nevertheless, 2005 saw the dawn of a new era as a new University of Buea Student Union was born. The birth of the Union came in the wake of a nationally coordinated university students’ strike action which was called for by the Association for the Defence of the Rights of Cameroonian Students, known by its French acronym as ADDEC (*Association pour la defense de droits des étudiants du Cameroun*). ADDEC initially presented a laundry list of eleven demands to the minister of

higher education which covered all state universities. With the absence of a central student body to coordinate the strike, there was need for some form of coordinated front in engaging in any form of productive dialogue with the university administration; hence the creation of a situational leadership not only to delegate the highly motivated students but also to manage the student efforts in a more structured manner (Heskey et al. 2001). This leadership came in the form of the reviving of the University of Buea Student Union which was disbanded in 1995. As stated by one of the founding leaders:

The University of Buea Student Union (UBSU) today was actually re-born in 2005 during a student rising that seem uncontrollable. We took an advantage of the fact that there was no leadership of the strike and decided to come up with something formal that we could use to pursue dialogue with the administration. (interview with former UBSU leadership member A, 17 June 2014)

According to Heskey et al. (2001), leadership in which students or followers exhibit high commitment to a cause but low competency in negotiating their path to achieving that cause, requires good directing abilities. However, this was somewhat lacking as the UBSU went on to experience a rather frosty relationship with the university administration due to a number of factors which are discussed in the next section. Before looking at the ten-year relationship between the newly created UBSU and the UB management, we present a brief structure of the UBSU leadership and its functions.

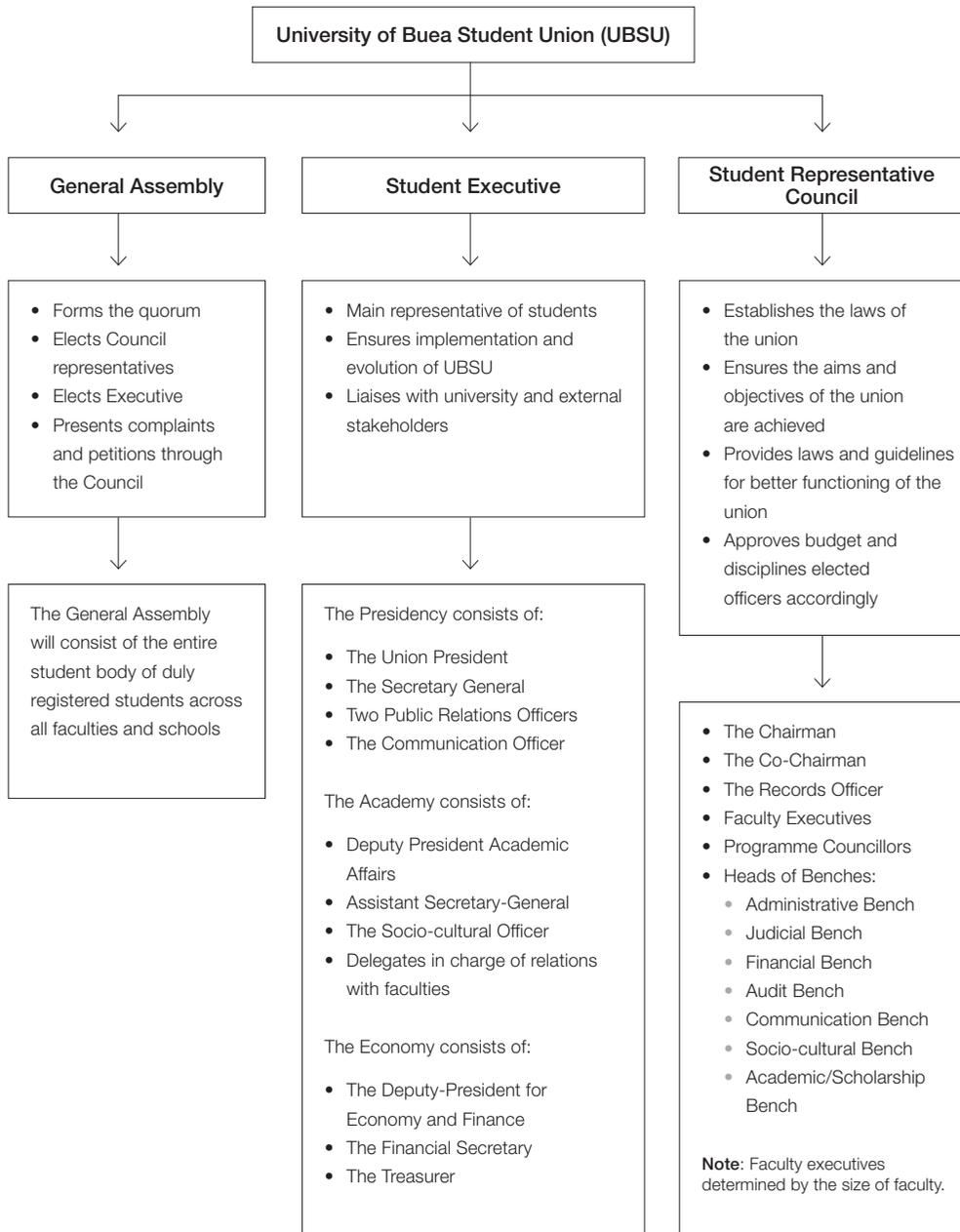
As illustrated in Figure 1 the UBSU is divided into three main arms: the General Assembly, the Representative Council and the Executive Arm. The illustrative diagram indicates the different arms, their respective duties or functions as well as their constituencies.

The next section provides a narrative account of some of the salient aspects which characterised the relationship between UBSU and the university leadership. Four features have been identified: the lack of adequate and mutual dialogue, ethno-regional politics, infighting within the union and the besieging of the union.

Authoritarian governance, shallow dialogue and student confrontations

While Konings (2009) argues that the rise in violence was due to the lack of coordinated leadership which should have controlled the students, an even more important cause of the violence was the lack of recognition of the student union by the administration that had banned the same union about a decade ago. Konings (2009), however, goes on to recognise that the failure of one of the deputy vice-chancellors, Dr Endeley, to negotiate any dialogue with the students (in the absence of the VC who was away on an official visit), and the request of the forces of law and order to bring the strike under control, escalated the violence and shattered any hopes for meaningful dialogue. On her return, the VC further vehemently refused to broker any form of dialogue with the union leaders, arguing that the leadership was

Figure 1 University of Buea Student Union organogram



Source: Developed by authors from the UBSU Constitution (2005)

not elected but rather self-proclaimed and thus did not represent the student body; that it violated the university regulations which forbade students from engaging in any form of protest as had been signed during the early years of the university.

In the face of this hostility towards the 'situational leadership' as described by one of the former leaders, the leadership decided to seek some form of immunity from the authoritarian administration by including two points on the 11 point list, which was initially provided by ADDEC. These were first the recognition of the re-birth of the UB student union that had been banned since 1995 as the only representation of the entire student body, and secondly that all university courses be available for re-sit examination sessions. In reaction to the VC's refusal to recognise the student leadership, her authoritarian behaviour, and continued police violence, the UBSU leadership added new demands, calling for the immediate replacement and transfer of the long-serving VC, the recognition by the university authorities of the revived student union, an immediate government report on the killing of the two UB students during the strike, the release of all detained students, and the immediate withdrawal of the forces of law and order from the campus as well as the removal of an allegedly dreadful 'shrine' that was strategically located near the university's entrance (Tanch 2005). The above scenario between the student leadership and university administration continued to display aspects of shallow dialogue which resulted in violent confrontations between students, administration and the forces of law and order.

Another manifestation of the authoritarian and non-dialogue approach towards student demands was also perceived by many in the appointment of Prof. Peter Agbor Tabi, a former Minister of Higher Education, as president of the newly created administrative council at UB. As former Minister of Higher Education, Agbor Tabi was renowned for his extreme authoritarian and brutal repression of student revolts during the early 1990s at the then University of Yaoundé (Konings 2002). His appointment was made in September in the wake of the student protest about a contested list of successful medical students; wherein the VC initially published a list of 127 students, all of whom were Anglophones. This was later overturned by the minister of higher education as he included 26 names on the list with all the added names being from the French part of the country. Even though the minister backed his actions as an attempt to provide a more regionally representative list, the students never accepted the reason and went on to violent reaction (cf. Azoro 2006; Sumelong 2006). While most senior administrators within the university perceived some of the student demands as '*unacceptable pre-conditions*' (senior faculty official), the appointment of the UB administrative council president was also perceived in many quarters as an attempt to reinforce political control over the university. To this end the council president was expected to establish peace and serenity at the UB campus on the terms of the university and national government, with little or no input from the student leadership who are supposed to contribute in decisions concerning students.

In early 2013, the UB witnessed more student protests and confrontation with the university authorities. One such confrontation occurred in February when the VC was locked in her car

under very hostile conditions for close to four hours by protesting students. According to the students, the UB administration had not recognised and responded to a number of student demands which included, inter alia, providing photocopies on campus for students, allowing students to read on campus through the night, facilitating the process of applying and obtaining transcripts and increasing premiums for students taking part in 11 February celebrations. However, the UB administration reiterated that the approach through which the demands were made was improper and did not follow the appropriate channel (Sako 2013). Another protest was in May when the students presented a number of demands from the university administration. There were four demands that students had put forward: firstly that the VC allows the UBSU Central Executive elections to be conducted as per its constitution; secondly, the VC should drop all the charges and allegations brought against the student union in a pending court case post the February protest. Thirdly, that an enabling environment be created for all UBSU leaders to write their first semester exams since they had missed the February exams; and finally that UBSU leaders have an inclusive dialogue between the university authorities and the student union (Mulango 2013b). However, most of these demands were not yielded to as the administration opted for a different route in addressing the crisis.

One of the former leaders also confirmed this by observing that during most of the negotiations with the administration,

The administration neglected so many things in student governance because they wanted UBSU to function the way they wanted it to function. There was that direct control of UBSU activities without taking into consideration [the fact that] their constitution stipulated another thing... they want to impose all the time on UBSU. (interview with former UBSU leadership member B and current faculty president, 17 June 2014)

However, comments from one of senior management staff on campus emphasised that the main point of contention between the administration and student union was that the union had never accepted the amendments to the UBSU constitution which were proposed by the administration (interview with senior UB administrator, 10 June 2014). One such amendment according to a former leader was the dissolving of the parliament or council which the administration perceived as even stronger than the executive arm. Furthermore, the use of the name parliament, as proposed by a former student leader, reminded some of the academics of *Le Parlement* (The Parliament), namely a student protest wing which had existed at the then University of Yaoundé and which was renowned for its violent protest.

Yet, following the failure of the VC's cabinet to respond favourably to the students' demands, there grew a sense of distrust as well as passive and active aggression between the two structures. In her response, the VC also emphasised the fact that students needed to be patient with certain demands. This failure of adequate dialogue between the student union and university administration could only usher in an aggressive reaction from the students and a

further authoritarian response from the university administration. This aspect is also echoed by Altbach (2006) who argues that students in their demands from university administration tend to be impatient, wanting change quickly, due in part to the brevity of the change in student generations and also due to a certain impatience common to young people.

The ethno-regional political tensions affecting student politics

Since the onset of the creation of the student union, especially in its rebirth phase, most of the UBSU leaders came from the North-West Region. In fact with the first four UBSU leaders all hailing from the North-West, some administrators within the university as well as external stakeholders began to perceive the union as a political arm of other political movements founded by North-West politicians. They described the student union as the face of a disgruntled few from the North-West created to instigate unrest at the university. A former UBSU president describes the way the union was labelled right from its early years:

We, however, had problems of ethnicity as we were first branded as North-Westerners who worked for the SDF and were there to discredit the state and bring down the UB. We were [described as] North Westerners who because we did not have a university for all these years were there to kill the UB. At some point the South West elites decided to rally South West youths to march against the UBSU leaders, but some of the youths noticed that this was involving them in the external politics of the country and refused to get involved. At some point within the university, some Bakwerians decided to rally South West students to form another student union to compete with us, but the union never took off as expected. (interview with former UBSU president, 16 June 2014)

This perception was enforced by the perceived dominance by students from the North-West Region within the first four leadership terms. However, as described by one of the former UBSU leaders the picture was rather different.

Coming from the North-West, and being a new association and born in a strike, it was a situational leadership structure and out of the five of us, myself from the North-West, the secretary from the North-West, the vice president a Bakwerian (from South-West), the faculty delegate a South Westerner and the fifth person a francophone from the Western region. We made sure that the five of us who decided to stake our heads were representative of the whole country. (interview with former UBSU President, 16 June 2014)

The above statement reveals a conscious effort to ensure a balance in regional or geographical representation of the student leaders. However, looking at the majority and influence of those

from the North-West, there were still accusations that the union was an agent of the political opposition party to destroy the university, since the North-West Region had no state university at the time.

Tribalism was never a topic among us. We never based our decision on whether one student came from this region or not. Rumours about students from the North-West trying to unseat South-West Vice-Chancellors and South-West students trying to unseat Vice-Chancellors from North-West [were not true at all]. I think when people fail they blame it on other issues or tribalism. (interview with former UBSU leadership member A, 17 June 2014)

The above observations have also been captured by previous research, which describes this ethno-regional and political divide that affected the student union. Feko (2005) observes that especially in government circles, there were claims that the student union was not working on its own but that either the main opposition party, the SDF, with its headquarters in the North-West or the secessionist movement, the Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC), were influencing the strike in some way. According to the South West elite, North-Westerners formed the majority of the student population and teaching staff at the UB, and were using the strike to establish North-West hegemony at the university (Konings 2009). The local Bakweri elite, who dominated the UB administration, were particularly shocked when they discovered that the vice-president and also spokesperson of UBSU, Alain Martin Nako was a Bakwerian. The UBSU leadership dismissed any allegations that the strike was politically motivated. One of the leaders went further to insist that even during negotiations during the month-long strike in April/May 2005, union leaders at the time made particular efforts to avoid all forms of engagement with the opposition party or the SCNC.

In terms of that [external influence] I think during the days of UBSU's creation, we tried as much as possible to prevent external influence. After the union was proclaimed, the UB immediately aligned us to the [national] opposition party. Hence we tried as much to avoid external influence from other political parties and in the dialogue process we spoke only to people in the [CPDM] regime. We never got any political party involved; if we did that, I am not sure I would be talking to you today; I would be somewhere behind bars. (interview with former UBSU president, 16 June 2014)

Hence it can be argued that at least during the early years of the student union, the leadership tried to steer clear of all external influence both from within and out of the university and in many ways kept students' demands as the priority on their agenda. However, as with many political organisations, as the years went by, the student union was 'hijacked' by selfish interests from within the union, which resulted in some core members being manipulated by external stakeholders for their own ends.

A besieged UBSU

From interviews with former and current student leaders as well as with some senior administrative staff, it can be argued that UBSU was constantly under siege and made to serve other purposes than that for which it was established. From the data, it can be observed that three distinct groups of shareholders were involved. Two were external to the union; the first consisting of former leaders who had graduated but still had some hegemonic power over the subsequent leaders. The second group of stakeholders were some academic and administrative staff within the institution, including the VC's cabinet who used the union to achieve selfish ends. The third group was from within the union itself and manifested itself through the greed and selfishness of some of the student leaders who used the UBSU office and finances for selfish ends.

Starting with the internal issues, one of the former leaders of the union, who had served in the 2005 student leadership as well as during the 2008 to 2011 leadership observed that the UBSU that was formed during the 2005 strike had been there to represent the needs of the students. The leadership was committed to ensuring that students had better conditions of studies and living on and off campus. This respondent goes further to bemoan the extent to which UBSU had derailed from those virtues in pursuit of selfish agendas and exposing themselves to be used by external stakeholders who had interests other than those of students. Asked if UBSU actually represented the needs of the students, he reasoned as follows:

Not to a very great extent as many people will say UBSU was successful. UBSU was for students but they did not always fight for the good of the students. During the early years, UBSU fought strictly for the rights of the students. You can look at the points on [its] first memorandum. Later, that [commitment] dwindled. I think as the years went by, good leaders leave and new ones come with other ideas and there were other issues. (interview with former UBSU leadership member A, 17 June 2014)

One of the senior management administrators who commented on the leadership change in the UBSU administration over time also observed the shift in the level of dialogue and engagement with the administration, which initially had showed a more responsible leadership with the good of the students at the centre of all dialogue. He observes that subsequent student leadership became more violent and selfish in their dealings:

Initially during the years (2007–2008) we had the superstructure but the students were more responsible, we argued and agreed to disagree and we made jokes, but towards 2009–2011 the group of students were terrible in their actions. They kidnapped students, beat students up and did horrible things. I don't think they had the students at heart but they used some of the issues as pretexts. (interview with senior UB administrator B, 10 June 2014)

Another student leader who served in the union before its disbanding and currently serves as a faculty representative and who had first-hand experience in the running of the student union activities confirmed the above findings arguing that the latter version of the union was mostly geared towards selfish ends:

UBSU did not to a larger extent satisfy the needs of students who voted them in power. But [if you] ask some of the students, they will actually tell you they were fighting for the needs of the students. But I will tell you as a member of UBSU, as a faculty president and as a student in the UB, UBSU was not really fighting for the interest of the students. I think it was more of personal interest. (interview with former UBSU leadership member B and current faculty president, 17 June 2014)

The mandate and purpose of the UBSU was also misused and abused by some members in the university administration. Considering the fact that the long-serving VC was replaced in 2005 after the month-long strike by the reborn student union, as well as the replacement of her successor on 14 December 2006 after the Medical School debacle, which led to another violent strike less than 18 months after his appointment, some senior administrators within the institution assumed that there would be a major administrative change by the presidency after a major strike. Considering the fact that with each VC appointment, there were a number of other appointments within the university as well as promotions and transfers. Some student leaders and observers reported that some power hungry administrators used the student leadership to ignite various forms of unrest and violence with the hope that there could be another managerial reshuffling in which they could gain some form of promotion. A former student leader describes this as follows:

The issue of external stakeholders [involves] especially [some members] within the university administration who used UBSU strikes to unsettle the university hoping to get the VC changed along with other senior members and hence gain some form of promotion. Most of the students confessed that there were other individuals who gave them money to cause problems and unsettled the university. The first VC was supposed to rule for 8 years instead of the 12 years she did. Since she was ousted during the strike and her successor was replaced during a strike, most administrators hoped to buy some of the union members to cause strike in order to forge a strike and then hope [for the VC] to be replaced. (interview with former UBSU president, 16 June 2014)

A senior administrative staff, while not refuting the above claims of the role of external stakeholders within the university in influencing the activities of the student union, insists that if a student allows him/herself to be used by any person, he or she must take responsibility of his/her actions rather than blaming someone else. Another former UBSU leader and current

faculty officer agreed that even though there was no documented evidence of the meddling of university administration staff in the activities of the union, there were cases in which administrators in various ways tried to destabilise the university through the activities of the student union in order to achieve selfish aims.

Even though there is no evidence, scientific justification, to pinpoint somebody aligning with UBSU, but I will tell you that they were because most of the time we did see some administration who want to create destabilisation in UB so that they will be appointed in the top management system in the University of Buea. When UBSU wants to publish a memo they will pass through these administrators to help them edit the memo and then will educate them on how to go about their issue. So, in the long run, they were some external stakeholders who manipulated or used UBSU in order to achieve their agenda. (interview with former UBSU leadership member B and current faculty president, 17 June 2014)

Lastly, the student union activities were also perceived to be besieged by former student leaders who had graduated but still had some hold over the union. A current faculty officer who was also part of the student union leadership thinks that one reason for the disbanding of the union was, among other things, the fact that the union leadership in many ways became subject to the guiles and ideas of former student leaders who, despite having graduated from the university, still had a selfish interest in the running of the union.

The fact that UBSU had lost confidence in students, the in-house fighting, UBSU divided into factions, the fact that they allowed people who have graduated about five or six years to interfere into the affairs of UBSU of present students, made UBSU to be very weak because it boils down to the fact [that] they cannot take decisions without consulting people who have graduated. They call them their 'godfathers', and the people will tell them what to do on campus, although they are not part of the campus. (interview with former UBSU leadership member B and current faculty president, 17 June 2014)

Some of these interests of former students were in the management of student union membership dues, which students were compelled to pay before registration of their subjects at the start of the academic year. Even though the administration proposed that student payment of the UBSU membership fee should be optional, the union leaders obliged all students to pay the fee. Yet, there were no records of accountability of the student membership fees and even during the handing over of offices from one leadership to another, it was always a problem to get the outgoing members present to hand over the documents and bank account details to the incoming leadership. In another case, there was evidence from the office of the deputy vice-chancellor in charge of research and cooperation with the business world of how UBSU

members harassed business proprietors on campus, collecting rents and leasing out university property without the knowledge of the university administration. One of the documents revealed an agreement between the union and an outside business, leasing out university land to the value of about USD 3 000 without any form of authorisation from the university management. Some people believe that some of these actions were in partnership with former UBSU leaders who served as advisers to the leadership at the time.

Infighting within the student union itself

As with many political setups, especially with increasing power being wielded by the student union, some of the student leaders began looking for ways to satisfy their personal agendas and selfish interests. This first manifested itself in the emergence of different wings of the student union, all challenging student union elections. Distinguished by their party colours, the Red, White and Yellow parties were initially aimed at strengthening the campaign process and ensuring a more democratic election process. The winning party would remain while the other parties were to be dissolved and integrated into the parliament and council. However, the parties continued to function unofficially even after losing the elections. The presence of more than one governing party within the union started confusion of leadership within the union and ushered in infighting. Even within the union itself, there was increasing fighting between the executive arm and the legislative. As observed by one of the former UBSU leaders, who currently serves as a student leader, factionalism between different camps was a major factor that led to discredit the union and its subsequent disbanding. Different camps were supported by different sections of or individuals within the administration for selfish purposes who used their financial influence to control the various factions of the student union (interview with former UBSU leadership member and current faculty president, 17 June 2014). When asked about the relationship between the student union and the students, another senior administrator commented:

It was not cordial because each time they conducted elections, they had many party factions [yellow, white, red]... and then after the elections if one group won, the other ones now became hostile. So they did not want to see the other group succeed. Whereas the idea of forming those groups was that after the elections, those were dissolved but you find that after the result they persisted and made it difficult for the elected group to operate. (interview with UB senior administrator A, 10 June 2014)

While the integration of some members of opposing factions into the council and parliament of the student union was meant to broker some form of peace and cooperation between the various contesting factions, rumours of infighting as well as counter-fighting within and across the factions continued to divide the student body and even the student leadership. One such instance was during the build up to the Youth Day celebration of 11 February 2013, when the

union was demanding an increase in the daily stipend paid to students for participating in the Day's activities. One former leader described the debacle as follows:

There was camp faction. The white party and the yellow party agreed that students will not march during 11 February [i.e. Youth Day celebration], but we received rumours that the yellow party has received money from the administration to encourage students to march. So when the white party said the yellow party has received money from the administration to encourage them to march, they became very angry, and made it clear that the yellow party has boycotted the agreement that no student will march during 11 February. However, rumours also emerged that the white party has also collected money from other members of the central administration that they should go and march. So with that disagreement and confusion from left, right, centre, this made UBSU to actually lose its stand [credibility] as far as student opinion is concerned. (interview conducted with former UBSU leadership member B and current faculty president, 17 June 2014)

During the 2009 lecturers' strike there was further evidence of factionalism between the president of the student representative council and the executive president of the student union as one group supported the on-going lecturers' strike while the union president went around urging students to go to class. While this was in alignment with university demands, it was against the council's advice and on deliberation, the council voted to suspend the student president's signature for one week (*Freedom Magazine* 2009).

Discussion and conclusion

The chapter set out to investigate how student participation in university governance has evolved at the University of Buea especially during the last decade to 2013. Using secondary and primary data, we argue that student participation in university governance continues to be fraught by external factors such as local and national political dynamics as well as ethno-regional battles. Evidence from the data showed a significant lack of cordial dialogue between the students and administration. It could be argued that while the perception is that the university administration seems more concerned with ensuring 'political correctness', student leaders on their part are embroiled in selfish agendas rather than working for the benefit of the whole. The analysis of data provides a number of lessons relating to student participation in university governance.

Firstly, a significant absence of dialogue between the student leadership and university administration resulted in a form of engagement characterised by violent protest and more activism rather than student politics. This absence of dialogue as well as a perceived authoritarian form of leadership from the administration resulted in long periods of violent protest from

students, destruction of property and businesses and even the loss of human lives. Again, this could be reflective of both stakeholders having differing interests in the processes of university governance. While recent developments indicate an improved level of dialogue between the current student leadership and university administration, an interesting study would be to assess the changes in both the student leadership and university administration which have led to more peaceful engagement and its implication for students' participation in university governance.

The second lesson from the analysis supports earlier findings that student politics in Cameroon continue to be significantly affected by ethno-regional factionalism fuelled by different parts of society, including the university administration, external stakeholders such as local elites, as well as the media. This is compounded by the Anglophone–Francophone divide in which all forms of protest are immediately ascribed to the opposition party of the English-speaking part of the country. While there is not adequate data to substantiate this link, this discourse characterises most discussion during periods of student protest (cf. Eyoh 1998).

Thirdly, and a relatively new finding is the influence of external stakeholders in the process of student politics at the UB. While students were in many ways accused of being instigated by external political parties or movements, the findings reveal the contrary. The findings from this case study differ from other studies in most African countries in which student unions align with political parties or trade unions in the struggle for independence or other liberation movements (Boahen 1994; Mazrui 1995; Nkinyangi 1991; also see other chapters in this book). However, in the case of UB, two of the main stakeholders external to the student body are former students and university administrators who use student protests to achieve personal gains. Due to the sensitive nature of the political terrain in Cameroon, student leaders, as observed from the data, managed to insulate the student union from influence of other political parties. The data, however, does not interrogate to what extent political parties would have wanted or tried to influence the student union.

Finally, the analysis shows that as in most political movements, the UB student union in many ways shifted from its initial ideals of representing student needs to being selfish intermediaries between the students and the administration. Student leaders used their offices to exploit students of their annual levies, extorting money from unsuspecting entrepreneurs, as well as conniving with corrupt administrative staff to satisfy their greed and that of their patrons. While student activism during the early years of higher education in Cameroon and at the University of Buea had a more legitimate approach to addressing challenges facing students, such as access to better living and study facilities, in the latter years, student activism at the University of Buea increasingly became an avenue for students and other stakeholders to forge a selfish and personal agenda. This is coupled with the lack of employment opportunities for graduates who see a continuous role in student union politics not as a means but rather an end. This reflects Zeilig and Dawson's (2008) argument that most of the student crises in Africa occur because students do not see themselves as being in transition to another stage of life.

In conclusion, we argue that student participation in university governance in Cameroon in general and at the UB in particular has over the last decade not changed much. Despite

changes in the top management of the university, which has witnessed four vice-chancellors in the last decade, the approach to student participation in governance has not changed significantly. Authoritarianism, force and limited dialogue continues to be the modus operandi of the university authorities at all levels. While this can be attributed to the unchanged nature of the national political landscape, which appoints the university management and in many ways expects compliance, it can also be argued that student leaders might also have to adopt a different approach to engaging with the university administration using a more transparent and peaceful approach.

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6. REVISITING STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION GOVERNANCE
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BUEA, CAMEROON: 2004–2013

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CHAPTER 7

STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN THE GOVERNANCE OF ETHIOPIAN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS: THE CASE OF ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY

Bekele Workie Ayele

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate the participation of the student union (SU) in the governance of Addis Ababa University (AAU), Ethiopia. The research conducted for this purpose addresses three questions. First, how does the SU of AAU participate in university governance? Second, how does the SU of AAU relate to the political parties of the country? And, third how does the SU of AAU uphold its legitimacy?

The study shows that the SU of AAU has very limited participation in a few selected areas of governance of the university; mostly on cafeteria, dormitory and conflict issues. Participation of students at academic department, senate, and board levels of the university is generally weak and problematic. As a result, the SU appears to have almost no influence on the core activities of AAU, that is teaching and learning, research, and community service. With regard to SU's relation to national political parties, the study finds that partisanship plays a key role in the selection of SU leaders. University officials of AAU assign only members of the ruling party to be SU leaders. In doing so, they easily influence decision-making within the SU. Due to this and other features of student representation at AAU, the SU lacks aspects of basic legitimacy. For example, the SU does not represent all students of the university, only the regular undergraduate students. Secondly, the SU is alleged to be corrupt for various reasons. And thirdly, although there are rules and regulations at AAU which guide the elections of the

SU, they have never been properly implemented. This chapter discusses these findings in detail against the context of Ethiopian higher education.

Ethiopian higher education: History, current status, and future plans

Many universities in Africa were established during the late colonial period, just after the Second World War (Aina 1993). However, this does not mean that Africa did not have higher education before the advent of colonialism. African societies had endogenous higher education long before colonialism. Ethiopia, for instance, has 1 700 years of traditional elite education mainly linked to the Orthodox Church (Wagaw 1990). The church has maintained a highly structured, organised system of education from primary to higher education focusing on religious themes and principles to date (Wagaw 1990).

Public higher education has changed significantly since the overthrowing of the ‘Derg’ regime in 1991, and the establishment of the current Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia in 1994 (FDRE 1994). The Marxist-Leninist-oriented higher education of the ‘Derg’ was abandoned as part of the higher education reform. A succession of new policies was designed and implemented to expand and reform the higher education sector. The *Education and Training Policy*, for instance, was the first such policy adopted in April 1994. This policy provided the major framework for Ethiopian higher education reform and transformation. More recently, the *Higher Education Proclamation* (No. 650/2009) was enacted to lay down a legal system to enable Ethiopian higher education institutions (HEIs) to effect institutional transformation, and thus enable them to serve as dynamic centres of capacity-building, consistent with the aspirations of the peoples of Ethiopia in the context of globalisation.

Generally, the higher education reform agenda has been embraced as critically important for the country’s development. Hence, the number of public universities dramatically increased from two in 1992 to 34 in 2014. Correspondingly, the enrolment capacity of public higher education institutions tenfold rose from 34 584 in 2001 to 344 107 in 2009/2010. In terms of enrolment capacity, a particular focus is on programmes related to science, engineering and technology (SET). Thus, the qualification mix is planned to be 70% for SET and 30% for social sciences and humanities (ESDPIV 2010).

Governance of higher education institutions

Governance of HEIs is the most powerful instrument to set and influence the teaching, research and community service functions and make them relevant for the 21st century. However, the definition of governance depends on the circumstances within which it is being used. There are, as a result, a variety of definitions of governance in the existent literature (Goedegebuure & Hayden 2007; Meek & Davies 2009). A common element for understanding

governance in the context of HEIs is the notion of a ‘multifaceted web of interaction and relationships’ among bodies operating at different levels which comes into play differently depending where, by whom and when the decision is made and on what aspect (De Boer & File 2009; Goedegebuure & Hayden 2007; Meek 2003).

From this perspective, HEIs are organisations constituted by various stakeholders. The participation of stakeholders in the governance of institutions, especially key stakeholders such as students, is crucially important for HEIs’ wellbeing and survival. If we look back in history, the earliest modern student organisations in Africa were primarily of religious and cultural character, espousing limited political aims (Luescher 2005). African student politics first took a decisive turn with the shock of the invasion of Ethiopia by fascist Italy in 1935, which politicised many African student organisations and changed the character and form of African student politics significantly (Luescher 2005).

The student movement in Ethiopia in particular is of fundamental importance in shaping the future of the country and instrumental in both its political and social development (Bahru 2014). Almost in tandem with the global student movement, the year 1969 marked the climax of student opposition to the imperial regime, both at home and abroad. In the second half of the 1960s and the early 1970s, the movement emerged from rather innocuous beginnings to become the major opposition force against the imperial regime, contributing perhaps more than any other factor to the eruption of the 1974 revolution; a revolution that brought about not only the end of the long reign of Emperor Haile Selassie, but also a dynasty of exceptional longevity (Bahru 2014).

However, the revolution initiated by the students’ strikes and demonstrations in early 1974 was rapidly taken over by a brutal military regime which, while assuming their Marxist vocabulary, destroyed anyone who lay in its path and set Ethiopia on the road to the wars which ended only with its own destruction in 1991 (Bahru 2014). Yet, the EPRDF government that then came to power, and still governs Ethiopia, was itself derived from a particular splinter group within the pre-1974 student movement. The EPRDF proceeded to put in place the solution to Ethiopia’s ‘national question’, of ‘self-determination up to and including secession’, first articulated by a student activist writing under the pseudonym *Tilahun Takele* twenty years earlier.

Nowadays, student participation in the governance and decision-making of HEIs constitutes a general feature of higher education systems and institutions internationally (Miles et al. 2008). Students form a big body within HEIs and without their participation in the governance of institutions, they cannot adequately achieve their missions of teaching and learning, research and community service (Huisman et al. 2006). Lizzio and Wilson (2009) posit that student involvement in the running of the affairs of institutions is beneficial to the university, to the student and to society at large. Obondo (2002) also asserts that student associations represent an important untapped resource in universities’ efforts to confront crises and diffuse potential conflicts. Student representation in HEI governance has also been considered with reference to the role of students as novice scholars, clients, citizens and consumers of higher education (Bolman & Deal 1997; Luescher-Mamashela 2013).

HEIs in Africa in general and in Ethiopia in particular have set up student unions with the rhetoric of including them in the governance of the institutions to represent and defend the collective student interest. Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to investigate the actual participation of the SU in the governance of Addis Ababa University.

Case study selection: The AAU

The researcher purposefully selected AAU to be the case study institution as it is more information-rich in terms of student participation in its governance than other universities in Ethiopia. Student politics at AAU has a long history; students of AAU have been asking questions related to their participation in the governance of AAU since the early 1960s. When their questions have been rejected by university officials, student revolts were orchestrated through the student union. Moreover, since all universities in Ethiopia are regulated by the same national framework, the *Higher Education Proclamation No.650/2009*, which sets uniform legal provision for all HEIs of the country, SU participation in the governance of other universities in the country may not be so different from AAU, even if the participation of SUs in the governance of AAU might be somewhat different from other universities in the country due to aforementioned historical issues and its special status as the Ethiopian flagship university.

Emperor Haile Selassie decreed the opening of a junior college named Trinity College on 20 March 1950 (Wagaw 1990). Eight months later, the Emperor changed its name to University College of Addis Ababa (UCAA). The UCAA consisted of the Faculties of Arts and Science, Engineering and the Building Colleges located in Addis Ababa, the Alemaya College of Agriculture near Diredawa, and the Public Health College at Gonder. In 1961, the UCAA was officially renamed as Haile Selassie I University, integrating more institutions that included the Faculties of Education, Law, and Medicine, the School of Social Work, and the College of Business Administration (Wagaw 1990). And, in 1974 the name was again changed to AAU.

Trinity College, now AAU, started its education by enrolling 33 students in 1950. Presently, AAU has ten colleges, four institutes which run both teaching and research, and six research institutes that predominantly conduct research. Within these academic units, there are 55 departments, twelve centres, nine schools and two teaching hospitals. AAU runs 70 undergraduate and 293 graduate programmes of which 72 are PhD and 221 masters programmes. AAU has a total enrolment of over 50 000 students and about 7 000 staff of which 2 000 are academic staff and 5 000 support staff members.

Within this research context, governance is operationally defined as the structures and processes within AAU which establish responsibilities and authority, determine relationships between positions and thereby define the way through which all parties, including the SU of AAU and its subunits relate to each other (De Boer & File 2009). The terms HEIs and universities are used interchangeably in this chapter. Lastly, legitimacy is operationally defined as the belief of the student body that the SU of AAU has the right to govern.

Problem statement and research questions

There are various reasons for studying the participation of students in governance. First and foremost, the participation of students in governance of universities facilitates their introduction to democratic ideals and practices. If students are involved in the decision-making process of universities about salient issues concerning their lives, they are likely to identify with the outcomes of such processes and universities with institutionalised participation of students experience less student-related administrative problems (Obondo 2000). Obondo posits that if governance is shared then students feel more positive towards university goals and objectives. Shared governance does not associate leadership with the effort of one individual as in the traditional theories (Goleman 2002; Harris 2004); it focuses rather on a concept of governance where responsibilities and activities are distributed across a wide range of people within each specific context (Lumbly 2003). Therefore, shared governance is all about the involvement of different units of the institution to work together to achieve a common goal. Moreover, according to Menon (2005), if the university is to survive and compete in the market, it has to meet consumer (i.e. student) needs.

Even though there are a considerable number of studies on student involvement in the governance of universities in other counties, unfortunately this topic has remained under-researched in Ethiopia to date. As a result, despite its huge importance we do not know much, beyond common sense, about the nature of SU participation in the governance of Ethiopian universities in general and in AAU in particular. Thus, this chapter addresses three research questions in an attempt to bridge this gap. These are:

- How does the SU of AAU participate in the governance of the university?
- How does the SU of AAU relate to the political parties of the country?
- How does the SU of AAU uphold its legitimacy?

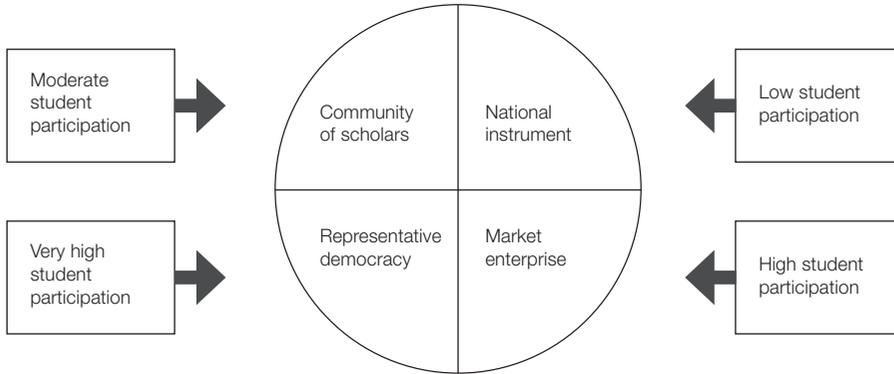
Theoretical framework of the study

In order to examine how the SU is involved in the governance of AAU, it is imperative to have a theoretical framework. To this end, Olsen's (2007) model of university organisation and governance is used as a framework to effectively guide the discussion and interpretation of the study to fully conceptualise the participation of the SU in the governance of AAU. This model has been previously used and adapted for the study of student politics and participation in university governance in a number of studies, including Minksová and Pabian (2011), Luescher (2008) and Luescher-Mamashela (2010).

As can be seen from the above figure, Olsen (2007) distinguishes four visions of university governance and organisation. These visions have been formulated primarily with institutional governance in mind. The four visions are: the university as a community of scholars; national

instrument; a representative democracy; and a market enterprise. The four visions of Olsen could include, and even may go beyond, the best known typology of systematic governance models based on the Triangle of Coordination (Clark 1983) which depicts three ideal types: academic oligarchy, state administration and market coordination.

Figure 1 Olsen's university steering model



Community of scholars

This model of governance is similar to the classical Humboldtian model. In this model, institutional administrators would want more control with no interference from external factors (Olsen 2007). Within the logic of the academic oligarchy (Clark 1983), power rests primarily with the senior academics; students have very moderate formal participation in decision-making. This is because students may be seen by academics as immature, lacking experience and being incapable of formulating responsible proposals (Lizzio & Wilson 2009; Tavernier 2004). However, informal consultation of students is common in this model (Luescher-Mamashela 2010).

National instrument

In this model of governance, the state takes care of the funding and regulates the university's operations, which limits the level of institutional autonomy in procedural as well as substantive matters and allows the supervisory authorities, that is the government, to steer the universities in a hierarchical way, in technical-administrative as well as professional-academic matters (Gornitzka & Maassen 2007; Olsen 2007). University administrators, thus, are external appointees rather than being elected by their peers from within the academy (Minksová & Pabian 2011). According to this model, political decisions should be implemented within HEIs in order to serve national priorities, whether they are nation-building or economic development. Following this logic, students do not have a say in the formulation of policy

agendas and are hardly in a position to participate in their implementation. The reasons for their exclusion from governance within this model would be similar to those stated above (in that students are seen as immature and incapable), perhaps with the important addition of students' partiality. Students in governance will promote the particular corporate interests of the student body which may be in contrast to the state.

The representative democracy

In this model, democracy is viewed as an end in itself. The model represents the interests of various stakeholders in a corporatist manner. Thus, students as stakeholders have the right to participate in the governing of the university. Decision-making is organised around elections of stakeholder representatives, bargaining and coalition building among the organised groups, all with the aim of accommodating their interests (Olsen 2007). The model rejects the idea that a single actor (such as the state or the academic oligarchy) can represent the 'general will'; instead, it adheres to the principle that every interest group should be democratically represented in the governance process. Thus, students clearly qualify as a legitimate interest group in higher education and therefore as legitimate governance actors.

Market enterprise model

According to this model, institutional governance is modelled on corporate governance, with more responsibilities and powers exercised by appointed professional management executives as the key governors (Minksová & Pabian 2011). The market enterprise model of higher education also involves a different definition of students: they are defined as clients, customers or consumers and universities as service providers in terms of a consumerist perspective (Luescher-Mamashela 2010, 2013). In this model, therefore, students participate in the governance of universities so as to safeguard their interests.

In sum, as can be seen in Figure 1, students do not have an equal degree of participation in the governance of universities across the four models provided by Olsen (2007). The four visions/models can be presented in their degree of student participation in the governance of university from the very high to the low as follows: representative democracy, market enterprise, community of scholars and national instrument.

Methodology

Design of the study

To address the research questions of the study, the researcher employed an explanatory sequential mixed methods research design (Creswell 2007). Consequently, quantitative and qualitative

data were collected sequentially in two phases. The quantitative data were gathered and analysed in the first phase of the research. The results of quantitative data analyses thus provided the basis for qualitative data collection and analysis in the second phase. Quantitative results were used to identify points for further qualitative investigation. The mix of quantitative and qualitative data analyses helped therefore to refine, extend and explain the general picture of the participation of the SU in the governance of AAU.

Samples and sampling techniques of the study

The population of the study consisted of all 50 000 undergraduate and postgraduate students in the regular and extension programmes of AAU. In the context of AAU, the student organisation at the university at institution-wide level is called the student union (SU). Student organisations at college/campus level are called student councils (SCs). Sample students were selected by using stratified simple random sampling techniques (Onwuegbuzie & Collins 2007). To this end, the SU had been classified into strata of SCs. Finally, a simple random sampling technique was used to selected samples from each stratum SC proportionally. A stratified simple random sampling technique is believed to cater for SC's sub-interest. The number of samples for the study was decided based on the sample size determination suggestion by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). Hence, from the total of 50 000 students of AAU, 381 were selected as a sample of the study.

Instruments of data collection

A. Questionnaire: A questionnaire is an important research instrument to obtain subjective information about participants and to document objective, measurable impact results (Dillman 2006). In this study, a questionnaire was developed based on a literature review of student participation in the governance of universities. The questionnaire has proven reliability (Cronbach Alpha of 0.976); it was administered to the sample of students of the study.

B. Semi-structured interview: Robson (2002) defines the semi-structured interview as a research conversation where the interviewer has prepared a set of questions in advance, but is free to modify their order depending upon the interviewer's perception of what seems appropriate in the context of the conversation. In this study, a semi-structured interview was used to collect data from the SU president of AAU. The interview was conducted face-to-face in the office of the SU president at Sidist Killo, the main campus of AAU.

C. Focus group discussions: The basic premise of focus group discussions is that when quality judgments are subjective, several individual judgments are better than one (Subramony et al. 2002). In this study, two groups of discussions were held. The first focus group discussion was conducted with seven students chosen from the student councils (SCs) of each campus. The

second focus group discussion was held with nine ordinary students, who are not leaders of either the SU or SCs, chosen from the general student body of AAU. In both groups, students were selected purposefully on the basis of their longer years of stay in AAU. The researcher himself led the discussions by posing questions specified in the focus group question guide and encouraging all discussants to contribute. Discussants in both groups freely aired their views.

D. Document Analyses: Important institutional documents such as the *University Senate Legislation (USL)* (AAU 2013), the *Student Union Legislation (SUL)* (AAU 2006) and the *Higher Education Proclamation No.650/2009* were consulted so as to get an overview of the legal provisions regarding when, how and why the SU of AAU is involved in its governance.

Data analysis

Data from the survey questionnaire were analysed quantitatively using SPSS to uncover the frequencies of responses regarding students' views. Secondly, data from the interview, focus group discussions and documents were analysed qualitatively using thematic analysis, by identifying emerging themes within the data (Creswell 2007; Ezzy 2002). Finally, the results of both quantitative and qualitative analyses were integrated in such a way that the strength of one approach could offset the limitations of the other and thus provide material for addressing the research questions. Olsen's (2007) models of university governance provide direction and a framework for the interpretation of the results.

Student participation in the governance of AAU

The structure of the SU of AAU

The SU of AAU has a total of 30 seats which are proportionally distributed among the campuses/colleges of AAU. Each college of AAU has one student representative in the SU per 1 500 students of the college. However there will not be more than four representatives from a single college in the SU whatever the number of students of a college. The SU has especially reserved seats for women students and students with disabilities. The SU of AAU has 13 executive bodies: the president, vice-president, secretary, and vice-secretary, external relations, academic affairs, ambassador, service affairs, moral affairs, cultural affairs, finance, disability affairs and gender affairs. The duties and responsibilities of each executive body are clearly stipulated in the SUL (AAU 2006: Article 7.4).

In the context of AAU, student organisations at college/campus level are called student councils (SCs). SCs are not necessarily required to adopt the same structure as the SU. Hence, campus SCs of AAU are not homogenous in their structure. The Amist Killo campus SC, for instance, does not have 13 executive bodies like that of SU. They have only five executive

bodies whereby, for example, the roles and responsibilities of the vice-president have been added to those of the secretary of the SC. Moreover, at AAU the membership of SCs and the SU is voluntary but all students of AAU, by default, are members of SCs/SU. The SCs/SU of AAU do not have their own legal personality – they are part of the larger legal persona of AAU.

Extent of participation of SCs/SU in the governance of AAU

As clearly stipulated in the *Higher Education Proclamation No. 650/2009*, in the USL of 2013 and SUL of 2006, students are a central element of the communities of AAU. Hence, they should be encouraged by the university leadership and officials of AAU to organise themselves; enhance their self-governance; democratically elect their representatives; and participate in all the governance structures of AAU. It is obvious that the representation and participation of SCs/SU in the governance of AAU has the potential to contribute to good governance at AAU and in the country at large. As literature indicates, the participation of SCs/SU in governance could help AAU to become a competitive and democratic institution; to enable AAU to effectively and efficiently address its mission in the context of 21st century globalisation. In relation to this point, Huisman et al. (2006) argue that students form a big body in the universities and without their participation in the governance of universities, the universities would not adequately achieve their missions. Moreover, the more SCs/SU engage in governance, the more they build their commitment to democratic governance and develop aspirations for the democratisation process of the country as a whole. It is important for the general student body to be part of the democratisation process of Ethiopia and beyond. Lizzio and Wilson (2009) posit that student involvement in the running of the affairs of institutions is beneficial to the university, to the student and to society. Thus, the following table presents students' views about the participation of the SCs/SU in the governance of AAU.

As can be seen in Table 1, the majority of students reply 'No' to all positively-phrased questions that measure the participation of SCs/SU in the governance of AAU. It seems that SCs/SU are perceived to be excluded from participation in the governance of AAU. When students were asked: 'Should the SCs/SU increase its influence to participate in the governance of AAU?' 321 respondents (84.3%) agreed with the proposition; while only 17 (4.5%) disagreed and 43 (11.3%) answered 'I do not know/DK.' This corresponds with the widespread perception that SCs/SU are excluded from governance and therefore that it is necessary to increase pressure upon the leadership of AAU so that students can participate in all the governance of the university. The survey findings therefore suggest that this route to enabling students to enter the social world as qualified individuals and responsible citizens through the formal participation of the student leaders is currently quite limited (Luescher-Mamashela 2013). Meanwhile, Obondo (2000) posits that in order to effect a democratisation of higher education governance, existing organisational structures, their composition, operational rules and procedures have to be modified in consistence with the demand for an all-inclusive approach to academic administration.

Table 1 The participation of SCs/SU in the governance of AAU

| Items | Yes | No | DK |
|---|---------------|----------------|----------------|
| Do SCs/SU participate in all governance structures of AAU? | 22 (5.8%) | 219 (57.5%) | 140 (36.7%) |
| Do SCs/SU bargain collectively to participate in governance of AAU? | 17 (4.5%) | 240 (63.0%) | 124 (32.5%) |
| Do SCs/SU hold regular consultative meetings with the governance bodies of AAU? | 47 (12.3%) | 234 (61.4%) | 100 (26.2%) |
| Do SCs/SU have independent budgetary authority? | 55 (14.4%) | 184 (48.3%) | 142 (37.3%) |
| Do SCs/SU vote the governance bodies of AAU? | 32 (8.4%) | 191 (50.1%) | 158 (41.5%) |
| Do SCs/SU appraise its effective participation in the governance of AAU? | 32 (8.4%) | 236 (61.9%) | 113 (29.7%) |
| Do SCs/SU hold regular discussions with the general body of students? | 23 (6.0%) | 238 (62.5%) | 120 (31.5%) |
| Do SU and SCs regularly communicate/discuss governance issues of AAU? | 83 (21.8%) | 199 (52.2%) | 99 (26.0%) |

Students from the two focus group discussions also emphasised that ‘SCs/SU should strive to increase their participation in and influence in the governance of AAU’ (focus group discussions with non-SC students and SC member students, 19 April 2014). When they were asked to give their justification for SCs/SU to increase their influence to participate in the governance of AAU, they had this to say:

We [students] have a huge stake in AAU. We are covering our education expense in the form of cost sharing scheme. Besides, but also administrators of AAU are less professional; lack integrity (they are corrupt); and the ability of leadership and governance. So, our participation is imperative to intervene on these issues which are important for students and the institution itself. (focus group discussions with non-SC students and SC member students, 19 April 2014)

It is evident that students are justifying their claim to participation in the governance of AAU from a consumerist/market perspective. They argue that they have the right to participate in the governance of AAU so as to get good governance and quality service. In the market perspective, students are not seen as internal representatives and participants in the joint ‘Bildung’ of human knowledge, but rather as external users or even customers wanting services and knowledge from academe (De Boer & Stensaker 2007). The market perspective is highly associated with customer-focused planning and decision-making (Jones et al. 2002). The market orientation has been adopted by Ethiopian HEIs as a strategy to survive in the increasingly competitive higher education arena of the 21st century (*Higher Education Proclamation No.650/2009*). Paradoxically, however, SCs/SU of AAU are perceived to be restricted from participating in the governance of AAU (as indicated in Table 1).

In order to further illuminate this question, the president of the SU was asked about the extent of SCs/SU participation in the governance of the university. He had this to say:

The SCs/SU is participating in the governance of AAU particularly in students' educational matters. For instance, unless the minutes of meetings of AAU about the education activities of students are approved and signed by the concerned SCs/SU representative, mainly by the academic affairs [officer] of the SCs/SU, the minutes of that meeting will not be considered valid and will not be implemented. (interview with the president of SU, 12 March 2014)

The SU president's view of participation of SCs/SU in the governance of AAU (as evident in this extract) is narrowly focusing on the academic affairs of students. When the president of the SU was asked more generally about the extent and degree of SCs/SU participation in the different governance structure of AAU he argued:

The participation of SCs/SU in the governance of AAU is weak both at the bottom, at the level of the department and at the top, at the Senate and Board levels. (interview with the president of SU, 12 March 2014)

This view of the SU president thus substantiates the students' response in Table 1; it has also been supported by the SCs members during the focus group discussion.

The SCs/SU have never been part of the decisions of the Senate and Board. However, the participation SCs/SU is relatively better or strong at the middle level, faculty/college level, but it is poor at the lower level, at the level of the department. (focus group discussion with SC member students, 19 April 2014)

Therefore, it appears clearly that the participation of SCs/SU at the level of academic departments, senate, and university board is weak and problematic. Meanwhile, student representation at department level has been identified as the most strategic and potentially most useful participative mechanism because it aids problem-solving on issues that have immediate impact on students, while offering the greatest potential for building a sense of community and social capital between staff and students (Lizzio & Wilson 2009). Moreover, departmental level participation is crucial as it is the level where higher education actually takes place in terms of both teaching/learning and research (Hearn 2007). Conversely, the lack of student participation at senate and board levels implies that SCs/SU are little involved in those crucial areas and levels of governance mandated to govern the core business of AAU (i.e. teaching and learning, research and community service activities); moreover, Menon (2005) argues that students may not be in a position to effectively represent the interest of their groups if they have no place on the university board. The absence of student participation at all these levels of governance

implies that SCs/SU are left at the margins of the decision-making process of AAU.

The apparent marginalisation of SCs/SU from the governance of AAU is also evident in the new structure of AAU, in which SCs/SU are not even indicated in its organogram. The governance structure and change, therefore, are on the anvil in terms of the participation of students in the governance of AAU. Similarly, the *Higher Education Proclamation No. 650/2009*, which is considered the ‘bible’ of university governance in Ethiopia, does not indicate at all how SCs/SU of Ethiopian universities in general and at AAU in particular ought to be represented in the governance structures of universities. This exclusion of SCs/SU from participating in the governance of the university, however, is against other legal provisions regarding the participation of students in the university governance. Thus, the participation of the SU in the decision-making process at the senate and at the departmental level has been acknowledged by the USL which states:

The student body shall be represented in the governance of the University, including the Senate, its various committees, college/institute academic commission department academic commission, other academic decision-making bodies and bodies engaged in the delivery of services to students. (AAU 2013: Article 182.5)

Moreover, the SUL clearly stipulates that the SCs/SU should participate in senate-level decision-making processes. It states that ‘the president of the union will appoint one male and one female student from the union to participate in the university senate meeting’ (AAU 2006: Article 7.4.1).

However, SCs/ SU are in reality left at the margin of governance of AAU; they have only very limited participation in selected areas of governance. In relation to this point, the SU president mentioned that ‘we mostly have been working with the cafeteria, dormitory and conflict issues at AAU’ (interview with the president of SU, 12 March 2014). During the focus group discussion, SCs members argued:

The leaders of AAU prefer to involve SCs/SU whenever there is problem in relation to the issues of cafeteria and student conflicts. During conflicts in particular they even send us media to express our support for them. But they do not allow us to ask them questions pertaining to the participation of SCs/SU in other governance issues of AAU, for instance, to be the part of the boards. (Focus group discussion with SC member students, 19 April 2014)

The above quotation thus reflects Munene’s (2003) argument that students continue to have minimal or no say in African higher education decision-making. Against this marginalisation of students from university governance, Obondo (2000) argues that the democratisation of decision-making is important not only because many conflicts arise from such unequal power relationships, but also because universities are advocates of democratic institutions, and should

therefore practise what they preach. Excluding the SCs/SU from departmental, senate, and board levels, can become the cause for other problems. For instance, in the early 1960s the marginalisation of students caused civil unrest and drove out prospective students and academics from their country mainly to HEIs abroad, thus causing brain drain. In the worst-case scenario, a marginalisation of SCs/SU might make AAU a place to breed student discontent leading to extremist political stances.

Student influence over core activities

The lack of SCs/SU participation in the governance of AAU may also have contributed to the student perception that the SCs/SU have no or very little influence over major activities of AAU. In the questionnaire, students were asked to give their views about the extent of SCs/SU influence in the core business of the university. Table 2 presents the results.

Table 2 The degree of SC/SU influence on teaching, research and service of AAU

| Items | Very weak | Weak | No opinion | Strong | Very strong |
|--------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|--------------|--------------|
| Teaching/Learning | 152 (39.2%) | 103 (26.5%) | 92 (23.7%) | 22 (5.7%) | 12 (3.1%) |
| Research | 147 (37.9%) | 113 (29.1%) | 103 (26.5%) | 7 (1.8%) | 11 (2.8%) |
| Community outreach | 145 (37.4%) | 136 (35.1%) | 79 (20.4%) | 12 (3.1%) | 9 (2.4%) |

The mission of AAU, like other universities in the world, is teaching, research and community outreach/service. The university indicates core areas where the administration should give due emphasis, which includes allowing, facilitating, and encouraging students to be the part and parcel of governance to influence the pursuit of this mission. This is not only desirable but also necessary. However, the majority of students, as indicated in Table 2, perceive the influence of SCs/SU on the teaching, research, community service activities of the university as very weak or weak. Meanwhile, Menon (2005) posits that student leaders can contribute to the core business by, for example, facilitating the evaluation of the curricula and the teaching practices through the identification of shortfalls in higher education programmes and instruction. In 2003, Bergan also stated that students should participate in and influence the content of teaching and learning of the universities.

It is good to note that there are variations across SCs of AAU in terms of their participation in the governance of their respective campuses. For instance, the Amist Killo campus SC has been doing exemplary participation in the governance of its campus. Conversely, other campus SCs of AAU are not only antagonistic towards the administrators of their campus virtually across all issues on which they are supposed to work together, they are also excluded from

participating in the formal governance of their campuses. The unique participation of the SC of the Amist Killo campus might be attributable to the fact that the SC of the campus, as indicted earlier on, has adapted its own structure.

Ethnic divisions as weaknesses in student organising

Ethiopia implemented ethnic-based federalism in 1991. Since then there has been relentless propaganda by ruling party politicians about the issue of one ethnic group having been exploited by another. Arguably, this may be one of the major reasons for the internal fragmentation of SCs/SU and students of the university in general along diversity lines of mainly ethnic and very recently also religious character. During the focus group discussions it was indicated that the ethnic-based federal system of Ethiopia has made it difficult for SCs/SU to collectively bargain with or demand participation in the governance of AAU. Discussants from the SCs noted that ‘the students of AAU are divided along the ethnic lines of Ethiopia. This is also true for the SCs/SU’ (focus group discussion with SC member students, 19 April 2014). They argued:

The federalism system of the country has resulted in a sense of enmity between and among the different ethnic groups of students of AAU. Thus, it is not only difficult but impossible for students of AAU to stand shoulder to shoulder and demand leaders of AAU to respect their right to participate in the governance of the university. (focus group discussion with SC member students, 19 April 2014)

The problem of ethnic and religion-based conflict at AAU has also been confirmed by the president of SU:

One of the challenges for me and my associates is ethnic and religious based conflicts: students struggle amongst themselves based on ethnic/region differences. (interview with the president of SU, 12 March 2014)

As a result, SCs/SU cannot form a coherent interest group to demand from the leadership of AAU their right to participate in the governance of AAU. Meanwhile, SUL and USL clearly articulate the importance of unity within diversity at AAU. One of the SUL objectives is, ‘to create a society which respects individuals’ religion, ethnic, political and gender difference’ (AAU 2006: Article 3); and, one of the USL of 2013 objectives also is ‘Promotion of mutual respect, understanding, tolerance and co-operation among University students, other members of the university community and between University administrations’ (AAU 2013: Article, 185.1.5).

Due to this internal fragmentation in the student body, collective peaceful demonstrations to demand greater student participation in the governance of AAU are less likely to happen. In relation to this point, non-SC student discussants indicated that:

Students of AAU are fragmented across the available diversity lines. Hence coming together for demonstration is unlikely. (focus group discussion with non-SC students, 19 April 2014)

The organisation of any demonstrations is, however, marred by administrative hurdles as well. SC member students indicated the ‘logic’ involved:

Mass peaceful demonstrations of students are not allowed by administrators of AAU. To demonstrate, in the first place, one needs to get permission from pertinent government bodies. Otherwise, the demonstration would be unlawful. But, demonstrations in support of government and/or AAU leaders are allowed without any permission. In this case, demonstrations are legal even if they happen to be violent. (focus group discussion with SC member students, 19 April 2014)

It is ironic that AAU or government officials could be asked for permission to demonstrate against themselves. As indicated in the previous quotation, there are also double standards in allowing demonstrations: they are legal if they are supporting the government; they are illegal if they are raising students’ issues, for instance, in terms of student representation in university governance. Experiences tell us that the Ethiopian government can be brutal in repressing peaceful demonstrations. Peaceful demonstrators have been labelled as individuals who want to unlawfully dismantle the constitution of the country by force. In some cases, they have been considered as terrorist groups. Thus, AAU students who organise a demonstration may be labelled as terrorists in the worst case scenario. However, according to Altbach (1991: 250–251, in Luescher 2005: 27), the repression of student activism is often counterproductive, ‘increasing both the size and the militancy’ of protests and ‘sowing the seeds of later unrest’ over the long term. During interview, the SU president was asked, ‘Do the SCs/SU of AAU collectively demand their right to participate in the governance of AAU?’ His view was quite different from what is indicted by the two groups of focus group discussions.

Yes, there are times when the students of AAU as a whole bargain with, and at times [make] demands [on] the administrators when they failed to address the students’ burning issues. But it was not by going out to the streets but by following the bureaucratic procedures of AAU peacefully. (interview with the president of SU, 12 March 2014)

As the extract shows, the understanding of the SU president about peaceful demonstrations is quite different from students’ understanding of peaceful demonstrations. Students’ conception of demonstration implies going to the streets; that of the president indicates against taking to the street and rather following the bureaucratic procedures of AAU. Preventing students from demanding their right to participate in the governance of AAU might be emanated from a

desire of the university leadership to fully control the student body. This would perpetuate the current mentality of most Ethiopian people to simply be passive about demanding their rights by engaging, perhaps, in peaceful demonstrations.

Lack of communication and internal deliberation

On a different note, consultative meetings are important devices to ensure the democratic participation of students in university governance. Obondo (2002) argues that students should participate in the governance of universities through regular meetings with their members and the university administration, which requires designing mechanism for regular communication. In this regard, the SUL indicates, ‘The general assembly, which is the highest authority of the SU, should meet twice per year’ (AAU 2006: Article 7.1.1). However, no such consultative meeting of SU has been held at AAU. The SU president acknowledged the absence of such meetings; he attributed it to the negative attitudes of students towards SCs/SU. He had this to say:

They [i.e. the students] call us [SU/SCs] teletafi in Amharic, meaning SCs/SU are members and supporters of the ruling party of the country for the sake of their own personal gains and advantages. They believe that we prefer to side with the university administrators blindly instead of students while passing a resolution on contentious issues. (interview with the president of SU, 12 March 2014)

In the president’s response, it is implied that students do not want to come to a meeting which is led by SCs/SU as student leaders are viewed as selfish and unfair supporters of the university leadership. In other words, students do not believe that SCs/SU have the ability and the goodwill to genuinely discuss students’ issues. Therefore, they do not want to be a part of a meeting which is simply held for the purpose of having a meeting. Rather, consultative meetings should be instruments to address critical issues of students’ participation in the governance of AAU. Generally, negative attitudes could make students of AAU not to aspire to join SCs/SU or participate in their meetings. Conversely, during a focus group, the lack of consultative meetings was attributed by SCs to ‘the incompetent leadership skills of the SU leaders’ (focus group discussion with SC member students, 19 April 2014).

Meetings of Ethiopian SUs held at national levels have also not been raising issues of SC/SU involvement in the governance of Ethiopian universities. The president of the SU of AAU was asked to comment about the summits of SUs of all 34 public universities of Ethiopia. He had this to say:

In the national summits of SU of Ethiopian Universities, there is no talk of SCs/SU democratic representation and participation in the governance of universities. The SU

leaders themselves are not interested to deliberate on these issues. (interview with the president of SU, 12 March 2014)

It is possible that the SUs have been influenced by external bodies perhaps by the leadership of universities. Hence, SU leaders themselves had suppressed raising the question of student participation in the governance of AAU in particular and the other universities of the country in general. In relation to this point O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986) argue that in countries run by authoritarian regimes, SUs are compulsory, non-competitive and imposed and controlled by the regime.

In sum, as the result of the lack of consultative meetings, students seem to have overlooked an important forum for the exchange of experiences and ideas which are imperative for democratic governance. Thus, students are missing a pathway to democratic citizenship and leadership. In democracies, lobbying legislators and senior government officials is an accepted and effective tactic to make input to and put pressure on the political system to address student concerns (Zuo & Ratsoy 1999). Genuine participation of students in university governance and at the level of national higher education policy-making would serve all these purposes.

Lack of finances for SCs/SU and perceptions of corruption

In the context of AAU, the budget for the SCs is allocated by the administration of each campus and that of SU by AAU itself. The SU is therefore not distributing the budget it gets from AAU to its branches – the campus SCs. In relation to the budgetary issues, SC member students reported the following:

Some college/campus administrators do not give budget for SCs in cash. Rather they fund them in kind. Some other campus administrators give SCs enough money so that they do not have financial problems, for example, the Amist Killo campus. All campuses SCs except the Amist Killo have serious problems of finance. Although the SU gets enough money for its annual budget from AAU, it does not in turn distribute the budget to SCs. (focus group discussion with SC member students, 19 April 2014)

Since the budget given to the SCs is not enough, they have been engaged in additional income-generating activities by renting their campuses' cafeteria, satellite TVs, and conference halls. They also receive money from external sources such as donors to work on HIV/Aids, gender, etc. on their campuses. Recently, however, the leadership of AAU prohibited SCs from using campus facilities to generate income and to get money from donors without prior approval. This is because they suspect that SCs/SU have become corrupt. SCs in the focus group discussion argued:

The leaders of AAU use the pretext that SCs/SU is corrupt so as to snatch from us the income generating activities. It is rather a vested interest to influence SCs/SU and use us in the way they like it by using their money as weapon [...]. The university leaders do not even allow us to generate our own income. Leaders do not want to see strong and vocal SCs/SU as they are so weak and corrupt. They want us to be dependent up on their help and assistance on every matter, of which finance is the main one. (focus group discussion with SC member students, 19 April 2014)

University officials might think that if SCs/SU has a strong financial muscle, they would reach a level where it would be difficult to resist their influence and to disarm/disable students' participation in the governance of AAU. They are, thus, using the budget they allocate to the SCs/SU as a tool to give the university officials an upper arm and to disempower SCs/SU. Meanwhile, it is common practice for student governance to run businesses such as bookstores, internet cafes, tuck shops and restaurants. In this case, they have to work together with the senior managers such as the dean of students or the director of student affairs (Luescher 2005). Moreover, the SCs/SU are entitled by USL to generate income by using the facilities of the AAU. The legislation states that to 'raise funds to finance its objectives' is one of the rights of the student union (Article, 184.1).

Perceptions of SC/SU corruption were raised, however, not only by administrators of AAU but also by students. During a focus group discussion, students argued:

Corruption is prevalent in the graduate committee of students which is answerable to the SU. They collect money from each graduate class student for the preparation of the graduation bulletin and T-shirts. In most cases, the quality of the bulletin and/or the T-shirts is poor because of corruption and in some case they may not be prepared at all. Corruption is much worse at the end of the terms in office of the SCs/SU members. At this time, they do not only steal Birr (Ethiopian Currency) but also office utilities like computers, printers, and others. Some SCs/SU members have been observed running their own business in the main cities/towns of Ethiopian soon after their graduation. (focus group discussion with non-SC students, 19 April 2014)

Experience tell us that financial matters are very critical, and budgetary issue appear to be one of the major causes of conflict between university officials and the SCs/SU of AAU. Meanwhile, it is imperative to empower SCs/SU to run their own budget and establish the necessary checks and balances to prevent corruption and rent-seeking behaviour instead of denying them a budget categorically. This helps SCs/SU to learn about exercising independent budgetary authority and responsibility.

Lack of student involvement in the selection of senior university leaders

During an interview, the SU president of the SU was asked whether SCs/ SU have the right to participate in selecting the governance bodies of AAU. He replied that they do not (interview with the president of SU, 12 March 2014); his view was corroborated in the focus group discussions:

There is no such issue called election of the leaders (or governance bodies) of AAU. Leaders, for instance, [university] presidents are appointees of the Ministry of Education based on their degree of affiliation to the ruling party of the country, i.e. the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). (focus group discussions with non-SCs students and SC member students, 19 April 2014)

As indicated vividly in the above quotation, the SCs/SU have not been involved in voting for the senior leaders or governance bodies of AAU. The chief executive of AAU, namely the university president, is an appointee of the ministry of education (MoE) in a top-down fashion. In turn, the president of AAU will appoint his subordinates, the vice-presidents and others, in close consultation with the MoE.

This top-down model of appointing university leaders totally excludes the rights of students, who are the major stakeholders, from participating in the selection of persons who are capable of leading AAU. As university leaders have a huge power to influence important matters to students such as curriculum development, the teaching and learning process, the evaluation of learning outcomes, and the recognition and relevance of academic degrees, the exclusion of SCs/SU from selecting the university leadership means that there is no sense of accountability to students, and students have no say on these critically important matters which directly impact on their lives. That is why the top-down model has been discouraged by the existing literature on governance. Stoker (1998), for instance, posits that the top-down model has been abandoned in favour of more democratic and participatory models of governance. In contrast to that, AAU appears to be vigorously pursuing this model.

Arguably, governance of AAU follows the national instrument model outlined by Olsen (2007). In the national instrument model (Olsen 2007), university administrators are external appointees rather than being elected by their peers from within the academy (Minksová & Pabian 2011). It is national cabinet and political parties who set the priorities for HEIs along with a small group of public servants in the MoE (e.g. Trow 2006). According to this model, students do not have a say in the formulation of policy and are hardly in a position to participate in their implementation. They are considered as 'junior', 'partial' and not competent. Students' partiality to the student interest, it is argued, would only promote the particular corporate interests of the student body, in contrast to the state which represents the 'public interest'. In this regard, AAU is an arm of the state and is governed primarily by external actors responding to external factors, and students are marginalised from participation in university governance (Olsen 2007).

The relationship of SCs/SU of AAU to national political parties

AAU – as the Ethiopian flagship university – has a special responsibility within the country's university system as other institutions look to it for direction. It ought to encourage students to raise critical questions about the realities of the present world and help them to contribute their fair share to address these questions. This is imperative for building good governance and democracy not only within AAU but for the country as whole. To this end, it would also be prudent to expose students to the views of various opposition political parties, their economic and political philosophies and visions for the country. Table 3 presents AAU students' views regarding the relationship of SCs/SU of AAU to the political parties of Ethiopia.

Table 3 SCs/SU of AAU and political parties

| Items | Yes | No | I don't know |
|--|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Do different political parties of the country run their business within AAU? | 6 (1.6%) | 358 (94%) | 17 (4.5%) |
| Is AAU required by law to assign students from opposition parties as leaders of SCs/SU? | 21 (5.5%) | 108 (28.3%) | 252 (66.1%) |
| Do AAU officials encourage opposition party member students to be SCs/SU leaders? | 17 (4.5%) | 340 (89.2%) | 24 (6.3%) |
| Does legislations of AAU restrict students from becoming SCs/SU leaders based on their political party membership? | 236 (61.1%) | 22 (5.8%) | 123 (32.3%) |

As indicated in Table 3, the majority of students (61.1%) indicate that the legislation of AAU restricts students who are members of opposition parties from becoming leaders of SU. However, the document's analysis shows that there are actually no segregation articles regarding partisanship in the regulations of AAU such as SUL of 2006, USL of 2013 and the *Higher Education Proclamation*. Students' perception that such restrictions are in place might be based on what they are observing being practiced by the authorities of AAU in assigning the leaders of SU. Although AAU regulations adhere to the principle of the participation of all students as members and leaders of SCs/SU, in practice the leadership does not allow students from opposition political parties to be leaders of SU. In other word, in practice, students have been subjected to discrimination as the result of their political stance. Students in the focus group discussion also said:

Elections of student representatives are made by the unwritten rules and regulation. Why has AAU had these rules and regulations if leaders of AAU failed to implement them? [...] Students will be elected as leaders of SCs irrespective of whether or not they are from the ruling party of the country. Yet, students will not be assigned as leaders of SU unless and otherwise they are active members of the ruling party of the country. (focus group discussion with non-SC students, 19 April 2014)

In addition, SCs during focus group discussion argued:

The practice of electing SU is totally different from what is indicated in the rules and regulations. What has been included has never been implemented, for instance, AAU leaders are appointing SU leaders. (focus group discussion with SC member students, 19 April 2014)

Therefore, having regulations which are not going to be implemented is the same as having no regulation at all. Principle and practice of electing SU leaders are divorced at AAU. Meanwhile, de Boer and Stensaker (2007) indicate that for students to participate actively, it is important that they elect their representatives who should have substantial powers.

As indicated above by student focus group discussants, in the process of assigning student representatives at department and campus levels, the political background of a student is not an issue. However, university administrators will not allow students from opposition parties to be the leaders of the institution-wide SU. Thus, not all students of AAU have equal rights to be elected as union leaders:

There is a considerable degree of influence to recruit students to be leaders of SU who are strong and unwavering supporters of the ruling party. There is no room whatsoever [that] a student from the opposition parties will be elected as a leader of SU. The top officials of AAU have their own mechanism whereby they could clear opposition political party member students from becoming leaders of SU. There has never been a SU leader from the opposition parties of the country since EPRDF took power in 1991. (focus group discussion with SC member students, 19 April 2014)

During focus group discussions, students also reported that the SU was weak compared to SCs in terms of its participation in the governance of AAU and in terms of its ability to challenge the administrators for democratic participations of students. They had this to say:

The interference of leaders of AAU upon the SU is so huge for fearing that SU leaders might mobilise the general body of students and cause unrest. [...] SCs are relatively freer and hence they are stronger than the unfree SU. (focus group discussion with non-SC students, 19 April 2014)

University administrators of AAU believe that the SU has more capacity to diffuse potential conflicts than SCs. In order to prevent potential conflicts, they closely watch the activities of the SU. SCs of AAU are stronger than the SU simply because the former are freer from interference by administrators. The president of the SU also confirmed this view of students:

Although, the SU is a legitimate body within AAU, we are not allowed to move in

our own way. The leaders of AAU are influencing the SU to do things which they want to be done and not to do things which they do not want to be done. For instance, we direly need to have a press of our own, but administrators will not allow us to have one. (interview with the president of SU, 12 March 2014)

The administrators of AAU might fear that an SU press will raise the awareness of students about democratic governance and their (lack of a) role in the process. With regards to public media, Altbach (1991) indicated two points about the sensitivity of student access to such media. On the one hand, student activists rely on mass media to disseminate their message broadly, particularly if it concerns issues relating to the broader society; on the other hand, the nature and scope of media coverage is difficult to predict and may alter the forms of protest. This might be the reason why AAU prohibits the SU from having its own media. However, prohibiting the SU from owning a press contradicts what has been clearly stipulated in USL. The legislation states:

The students union shall have the right to write, print, and publish their own newspapers or any other form of media, including wall literature, posters, and pamphlets. The exercise of this right shall have due regard to secularity of education, the obligation of the members of the academic community not to interfere with the right of others to privacy and in any manner or form to unreasonably arouse religious, ethnic, national, or gender hatred. (AAU 2013: Article 21.3)

The governance structures and processes which establish and determine relationships, responsibilities, authority between positions and thereby define the way through which all parties in an institutional setting relate to each other (De Boer & File 2009; Maassen 2003) seem dysfunctional at AAU. This is why the SU has been doing what it has been ordered to do by the authorities of AAU. If there are SU leaders who have been found doing otherwise, the student councils and students in the focus group discussion said, ‘SU leaders would be expelled not only from AAU but also from the country by being accused of trying to mastermind students’ riots.’

The practice of top-down administration, which is prevalent at AAU, as indicated earlier on, appears against de Boer and Goedegebuure’s (2003) argument that it is simply no longer viable to run a system from one national control centre. De Boer and Stensaker (2007) also posit that decision-making powers should not be concentrated but diffused, ideally in a system of horizontal checks and balances whereby the representative council has the upper hand. Closely controlling the activities of SU within a confined pace provided by the leadership of AAU also contradicts the ideal of university democratisation which refers to ‘a reconstitution of internal decision-making in universities with reference to democratic principles, inter alia, by making decision-making processes in universities more representative of internal constituencies such as students’ (Luescher-Mamashela 2010: 260).

Students were asked to give their response about the procedure of electing the SU. The following table presents the details of the result.

Table 4 The procedure of becoming SU leaders at AAU

| Items | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|-----------|------------|
| Through departments/schools | 114 | 29.9% |
| Through non-political (students') organisations | 15 | 3.9% |
| Through political (students') organisations | 215 | 56.4% |
| Individually | 37 | 9.7% |

As indicted in Table 4, the majority of students (56.4%) indicated that SU members and leaders were appointed by political students' organisations (linked to political parties). As we saw earlier, officials of AAU do not disregard the political background of students while selecting the SU leaders. By assigning students who are members of the ruling party as SU leaders, AAU officials can easily influence the decisions made by SCs/SU from within. This is in addition to AAU officials' influence from outside the SU structures. The power of SCs/SU to participate in governance of AAU, consequently, is weakened from within and from outside. The top leadership of AAU who were themselves appointed by the MoE based on their ruling party affiliation will not allow students from opposition parties to be the leaders of the SU. Therefore, it appears unthinkable to assign students from opposition political parties of the country as the leaders of SU. In relation to this point, SCs during the focus group discussion had this to say:

The Presidents and the Vice-Presidents of AAU all are assigned into these positions based on their membership of the ruling party or based on their potential of becoming member of the ruling party. It is not at all based on their merits. (focus group discussion with SC member students, 19 April 2014)

AAU is led by a university president who is assisted by four vice-presidents and the executive director of the College of Health Sciences (with the rank of vice-president). All these higher authorities of AAU took these positions less because of their abilities and competencies; rather it is because of their affiliation with the ruling party of the country. There is no ground, therefore, to expect that undemocratically selected leaders will allow SCs/SU to exercise democratic elections so as to include students from the opposition political parties. Thus, internal governance at AAU appears impacted by 'external governance' from the MoE of Ethiopia (De Boer & File 2009: 10). There is no clear demarcation between institutional autonomy and state authority. This phenomenon has affected the democratic election process of the SU leaders at AAU. However, it must also be said that currently the vast majority of

students of AAU are members and supporters of the ruling party. In relation to this point, students in the focus group discussion argued:

The ruling party has been using AAU as one of the right places to politically socialise students. This is done by the special group of students, who are the ruling party wing of the university. In Amharic these groups of students are called Jero Tebies. Most students become members of the ruling party for they hope that they will get employment after graduation. And employment opportunities have been used as a technique by Jero Tebies to easily convince student to join the ruling party. [...] Jero Tebies have stronger influence upon the leaders of AAU than that of the SCs/SU. They dictate not only SCs/SU but also AAU administrators. Jero Tebies are mainly from the Tigrrian ethnic group of Ethiopia. (focus group discussion with non-SC students, 19 April 2014)

It is well known that the Tigrrian ethnic group is one of the minority ethnic groups of Ethiopia who have led the country for the last 23 years after the overthrowing of the military regime. This might be the reason why students from this ethnic group are active in their roles as Jero Tebies at AAU. As indicated in the quotations, the participation of SCs/SU in the governance of AAU appears weak compared to Jero Tebies. Moreover, in Ethiopia, graduate employment has become a challenge as a result of the massification of higher education while the economy is failing to create enough jobs and there is a lack of entrepreneurship training in the curricula of HEIs. Lack of employment opportunities might have created competition among students of AAU to outshine others in the activities of ruling party politics, as membership of the ruling party is seen as a 'requisite' for employment. They become, therefore, members and leaders of SCs/SU to increase their access to the highly competitive job market in the country. In other words, securing employment is their only motive to become members and leaders of SCs/SU, rather than joining the SCs/SU for the substantial issues. Activity in the ruling party is viewed as more important than scoring as in their academic work:

By registering as member of the ruling party, students believe that they will be employed after graduation. Thus, university students who are members of the ruling party work harder in the activities of the party within the university and beyond than their academics works. And, they [members of the ruling party] have been given priorities of employment in government institutions even if the job description does not match with their academic credentials and vice versa. (focus group discussion with non-SC students, 19 April 2014)

Members of student councils somewhat substantiated this view by indicating the following:

Particularly, SCs/SU members and leaders have been using their experiences of the

councils/ the union as effective spring board to high paying government jobs upon graduation. (focus group discussion with SC member students, 19 April 2014)

Over and above that, the leadership of AAU is organising students and academics in a special scheme of the ruling party called *Anid lamist* (Amharic word literally meaning ‘one to five’). This is to say that all students and academics of the university are organised into groups of five students and academics having one leader for each group. The leaders of the groups are expected to be members of the ruling party. *Anid lamist* appears to be creating an opportunity for AAU officials to clearly know students’ and academics’ backgrounds in relation to their political affiliations. University administrators of AAU, however, have claimed that the purpose of *Anid lamist* has nothing to do with politics. It is an attempt to organise students and academics so as to improve the quality of research, teaching and community services of AAU. They argue that *Anid lamist* has been one of the strategies used by South Koreans to eradicate poverty.

In sum, the relationship between SCs/SU and political parties is a problematic one. Generally, it seems that students from opposition political parties will not be assigned as leaders of the SU. Meanwhile, SUL states that ‘All Students of the university have the right to elect and to be elected for the Student Union’ (Article 5.1.1). Moreover, the current AAU practice contradicts the multi-party political system which has been implemented in the country since 1991. In this situation, it is also difficult to expect that the multi-party political system in the country will develop further if the next generation of leaders, the current student body, have never been exposed to different views and perspectives at this important stage of their life. The exclusion of students who are members of opposition parties from becoming leaders of the SU further substantiates the interpretation that AAU’s model of governance is similar to the Olsen’s model of the university as a ‘national instrument’ (Olsen 2007), which in turn affects the representation and participation of students in the governance of AAU.

The legitimacy of SCs/SU of AAU

The fundamental essence of governance is legitimacy. The legitimacy of leaders is important as it requires students to believe that these leaders have the right to instruct them and that they have an obligation to follow their leaders’ instructions. Legitimation of student leaders can be achieved through the use of democratic elections in assigning the leaders of SCs/SU. At AAU, SC/SU members and leaders are elected in a way that mirrors the parliamentary government system of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. During the interview, the president of the SU was asked to explain how he and his colleagues came to the position they have:

Firstly, all academic departments elect their own representatives. Thereafter, the representatives of each department, which are situated within the same campus (in

most cases, it is a college), elect students who are going to be the members and leaders of the SCs of the campus. Finally, all elected campus council leaders assemble together to elect students who are the members and leaders of the SU. (interview with the president of SU, 12 March 2014)

All the phases of SC/SU representatives' election processes, except at the department level, are facilitated by the election board, which is chaired by the student affairs officer of the campus (for SC elections) and the student affairs officer of the AAU (for SU elections).

The process of electing members and leaders of the SCs/SU is facilitated by the presidium. The presidium consists of the students affairs leaders as chairperson; the vice students affairs as secretary and other students and academics as witnesses. The presidium facilitates the election of the president, the vice president and the secretary of the SCs/SU. Then after, the presidium leaves the podium for these elected individual to run the election of other members of SCs/SU. And the whole election process is fair, free and democratic. (interview with the president of SU, 12 March 2014)

The above democratic election processes outlined by the president of the SU were contested and branded undemocratic by students during the focus group discussions, especially at department level. They said:

At the department level, students have never elected their representatives. Only God knows how department representatives have been elected and by whom. (focus group discussion with non-SC students, 19 April 2014)

Arguably, if the election of department representatives is not fair, free and democratic, this will mean that the whole election process of SCs/SU is undemocratic as the representatives from departmental level elect SC students and so forth. Therefore, SC/SU leaders may lack legitimacy. Thus, in the survey, students were also asked to indicate how SC/SU members and leaders got their position in the SCs/SU. The following table presents the results.

As indicated in Table 5, there is a dominant perception among students at AAU that democratic election of SCs/SU leaders is lacking. The vast majority of students (96.6%) replied that SC/SU leaders are appointed/selected by AAU officials rather than by students. Failure to elect SC/SU leaders by students themselves via secret ballot democratically might send a strong and wrong message to students who are going to be future leaders of the country that denying one's right to vote for one's leaders is acceptable. When students become leaders, therefore, they will also not make sense of democratic election principles; correspondingly, we are falling short in terms of preparing democratic leaders. Maxwell (2005) argues that leadership can be learned through motivation and training, and only a few leadership skills are innate. Thus, having undemocratically elected SC/SU leaders instils an undemocratic culture in the

students and perpetuates a lack of good governance and democracy in AAU in particular and in the country as a whole.

Table 5 The procedure of assigning students to be leaders of SCs/SU at AAU

| Items | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Appointed by AAU officials | 368 | 96.6% |
| Elected by students via secret ballot | 13 | 3.4% |
| Total | 381 | 100.0% |

Moreover, democratic elections are the major manifestation of the legitimacy of leaders. By extension, Klemenčič (2012) states that the norms of legitimate student representation stipulate that student organisations ought to be governed by democratically elected student representatives and be democratic and autonomous in terms of their governance. Furthermore, Kamuzora and Mgaya (2012) posit that competitive elections are the only credible mechanisms for making students believe that their student leaders govern them at their bequest and on their behalf. In this sense, the SC/SU leaders of AAU may be facing a crisis of legitimacy.

Meanwhile undemocratic elections are not part of the history of SCs/SU at AAU. For instance, SCs/SU of the 1960s of AAU elected SC/SU members and leaders democratically. If so, why have AAU leaders failed to make the SC/SU leader elections fair, free and democratic? Do they fear what happened in the early 1960s to the monarchy when democratically elected student leaders as part of the Ethiopian student movement played a major role in the Ethiopian revolution that led to the fall of Emperor Haile Selassie? Autonomous and democratic SCs/SU might be perceived as a threat by university and government leaders.

Another problem affecting the legitimacy of SCs/SU of AAU is that they do not appear to represent all students of the university, but only the regular undergraduate students. The SUL (AAU 2006) defines the general assembly of the SU as follows: 'It is the assembly of all the department representatives of regular undergraduate students of AAU' (Article 1.1). USL, however, defines what a student means within the context of the legislation as 'any person who is admitted and registered at the University in regular/evening/summer/distance or any other program with the view to pursuing his undergraduate or graduate degrees or improving his language skills or advancing his specialised studies' (AAU 2013: Article 2.1.49). Therefore, there is a difference in understanding what a student is between the SUL and the USL as the general assembly is only for and from the undergraduate regular students. The president of the SU tried to justify this as follows:

Undergraduate regular students do not have the experience and the know-how to manage themselves, while they are studying at AAU. The easiest way is to organise them into SCs/SU and give them the support they need. It is easier for AAU to

render the necessary guidance and counselling for the organised students by their peers. (interview with the president of SU, 12 March 2014)

However, the students in the focus group believe that the president's justification is a pretext:

The SCs/SU members are exclusively [only] from the regular undergraduate students. It does not include postgraduate students (both extension and regular) and even extension undergraduate students. It is a strategy to exclude mature students from becoming members and leaders of SCs/SU as leaders suspect and fear that they are going to challenge them and change them all, if a need arises. (focus group discussion with non-SC students, 19 April 2014)

Moreover, SUL and USL exclude freshman (first-year) students from becoming leaders of SCs/SU. SUL states that 'first year students of the university will not be elected as student union leaders' (AAU 2006: Article 8.3.6), and USL states that 'no student organisation may elect to any of its top three offices any student who has not completed at least one full year of study at the University' (AAU 2013: Article 187.2). Therefore, students do not have equal representation in the SCs/SU even though university governance is an issue which affects all students directly.

Arguably, the SCs/SU of AAU lack legitimacy in numerous respects: student leadership is subject to unwritten restrictions of partisanship; they are not representing the whole student body but only regular undergraduate students; and first-year students are precluded from standing for elections. The effect is that SC/SU leaders lack influence in various directions: downwards for followers, upwards for the leadership of AAU; and sideways where colleagues influence each other by showing a better way. In this context, it is difficult to believe that SCs/SU of AAU could struggle democratically and peacefully to protect and promote university students' interest and welfare. These aspects of the lack of legitimacy of the SCs/SU contradict the objectives of the SUL (AAU 2006) which are 'to represent all students of the university on issues pertaining to their democratic right' (AAU 2006: Article 3.1) and 'to make sure that students' human and democratic right are respected' (Article 3.8). In addition, USL states:

...ensure that all members of the student body, including those enrolled in continuing and distance education programmes and graduate programmes, are represented in the student union that officially represents the whole population of the student community. (AAU 2013: Article 182.1)

Thus, for democracy to prevail at AAU, SC/SU leaders could and should be legitimate, represent all students, and should be given more representation in the governing bodies of the AAU. The lack of legitimacy of SC/SU leaders can be understood in terms of the government's interest to govern the AAU in keeping with the national instrument governance model of Olsen (2007).

Conclusion and recommendations

The participation of SCs/SU in the governance of AAU has been marginalised. Despite provisions for the participation of all students as members and leaders of SCs/SU, in practice the AAU leadership does not allow students from opposition political parties to be leaders of SCs/SU. Moreover, as shown in this chapter, SCs/SU of AAU do not represent all students of the university but only its regular undergraduate students. They lack legitimacy also in terms of following the right rules, regulations and procedures in electing the members and leaders of SCs/SU. The participation of SCs/SU in the governance of the AAU appears to suit the governance model of national instrument (Olsen 2007), which limits the representation and participation of students in the governance of the AAU and questions the legitimacy of the SUs/SU.

Student-centred learning, which has been widely implemented at AAU, implies that students should be active role-players not only in the teaching-learning process but also in the governance of the AAU, in terms of a student-centred model of governance which facilitates the participation of students in the governance of the AAU. Thus, it would be good if training was provided for students in SCs/SU and for university administrators on the issues of shared governance and the roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder. This would help SCs/SU to play their role in the governance of the AAU. Administrators of the AAU should therefore encourage students' participation in all the governance structures of the AAU, from the department to faculty to senate and to boards, including in all statutory university committees.

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CHAPTER 8

PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION AND STUDENT REPRESENTATION IN UGANDA: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF MAKERERE UNIVERSITY AND UGANDA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

Taabo Mugume and Mesharch W Katusiimeh

Introduction

Until recently, public universities had a near monopoly in providing higher education in many countries on the African continent. The market-friendly reforms initiated as a consequence of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) and a new policy environment among others created an encouraging environment for the emergence of private higher education (Mamdani 2007; Varghese 2004). Private higher education in this chapter refers to both the acceptance of fee-paying students in public universities and the growth of the non-state sector in higher education. Both have impacted on how students participate in the governance of universities. It has been argued that student involvement in university governance helps in training and mentoring future leaders and introducing them to democratic ideals and practices. Furthermore, when students get involved in university governance, it contributes to their ownership of decisions including those which could have been otherwise objectionable or viewed as malicious. Universities with institutionalised student participation in governance experience less student-related administrative problems since student representatives can diffuse potential conflicts (Amutabi 2002; Luescher-Mamashela 2010, 2012).

Student representation in higher education institutions in Uganda has evolved over time as shown by Byaruhanga (2006). It can be traced to when Makerere University (MAK) was set up as the first institution of higher learning in Uganda. MAK remained the only university in

the country up to 1988 when the Islamic University in Uganda (IUIU) was established as the first private university in Uganda (IUIU 2014; UNCHE 2014; Sicherman 2005). It has been argued that this shift was an early response to the emergence of new public management in higher education in Uganda which popularised the liberalisation of the economy and other forms of privatisation (Mamdani 2007; Nkiyangi 1991). Another development was the introduction of private or fee-paying students in MAK which in the long run opened up space for business opportunities and many new universities sprung up in the course of the 1990s, including the Uganda Christian University (UCU) (Mamdani 2007; Owor 2004). The reforms reshaped student representation in Uganda; for example in MAK the Makerere University Private Students Association (MUPSA) was formed as a new constituency vying for influence to protect private students' interests at the university (Lutaakome et al. 2005).

Past studies of the student experience at universities in Africa have typically concentrated on students' participation in politics and student protests, especially looking at reasons why student activities are highly politicised (Burawoy 1976; Byaruhanga 2006) and the impact of student activism on higher education policy and national politics broadly (Amutabi 2002). However, overall there is a dearth of literature on student representation in Uganda, and especially little is known about the way that student representation has been affected by the introduction of private higher education.

This paper assesses how the emergence of private students in public and private higher education has shaped student representation in Ugandan universities. This will be done by comparing MAK, which is a public institution with a sizeable parallel student body of government-sponsored and private students, and UCU which is a purely private higher education institution. We assess the structures of student representation in both institutions, the electoral process and discuss the relationship between student leaders and institutional management in the process of student leaders representing students' interests. Then we consider the impact of other students' associations and party politics on student representation in the two institutions with special reference to private students. Data for the study were generated through in-depth interviews with student leaders in each institution, a focus group discussion and interviews with the deans of students of the two case universities.

The paper argues that the emergence of private students in Ugandan higher education has indeed affected student representation in university governance in various ways. Firstly, it has resulted in the creation of new organisations such as MUPSA which have reshaped the structures and the scope of student representation even though they remain under the leadership of the student guild which is the official institutional structure of student government. The emergence of private students has also reshaped interest prioritisation of the student leaders, who are increasingly focusing more on private students' interests in the case of MAK, as private students have become the majority of students in the student body.

The study further finds that in both institutions, the growth of private students has curtailed political activism, since fee-paying students seem to fear questioning or challenging university management due to the potential of negative personal consequences of such actions,

such as suspension or expulsion, and the fear of the financial implications of such consequences. Hence fewer students are willing to publicly protest. Thus, student politics has lost some of its visibility and students appear to have lost interest in the student guild government and have channelled their energies elsewhere. At UCU in particular, ethnic-based student associations that represent sectional interests have come to play a big part in choosing student leaders. This may partly be due because political parties are barred from contesting student elections at UCU. The study also finds that UCU management prefers vetting the guild candidates to make sure that students' structures of representation suit their institutional needs. Conversely, at MAK national political parties are deeply involved in student representation and guild politics, historically and at present. Thus we highlight the resilience of political parties to maintain relations with student leaders, both formally and informally, despite the decline of student activism as a result of private higher education. As far as formal student representation through institutional committees is concerned, the study finds that this has been less successful, hence student leaders turn to using personal networks with management staff to voice student interests.

Student participation in university governance

The literature on student politics worldwide was mainly published in the 1960s and 1970s. Most of the debates focused on student movements and activism as forms of student politics. Furthermore, most of the authors highlight how student politics at the time intersected with national politics; in Africa this was mainly in the process of liberating colonies and how students influenced change in national policy decisions in metropolitan countries and the former colonial territories (Altbach 1966, 1967; Byaruhanga 2006; Liebman 1968; Lipset 1966). Thus, student leaders in Africa are historically noted for their opposition, initially to the colonial governments through their contribution to the struggle for independence in most states. They also often opposed the single party systems that emerged on the continent immediately after independence in most African countries. Hence, advocating for liberty and democratic rule including protesting against other racist regimes on the continent, such as the South African apartheid government and Ian Smith's Northern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) has been historically part of student politics (Byaruhanga 2006; Mazrui 1995; Munene 2003). As a result Altbach (1984) argues that because of the immense contributions made by students around the developing world, most especially during the struggle for independence, students bought themselves a legitimate place in national politics, of which Uganda is one example.

In Uganda, MAK student leaders have historically been criticised for contributing less during the time of Uganda's struggle for independence in comparison to student leaders in other countries such as Kenya and Tanzania at the time (Byaruhanga 2006; Musisi & Muwanga 2003; Mutibwa 1992; Sicherman 2005). However, Byaruhanga highlights that after independence, 'students' sense of social obligation has bolstered their willingness to stand visibly, often at personal risk, demanding human rights for themselves and others, as well as changes in

university administration and the larger body politic' (2006: 139). He argues that this has been due to their concern with the country's politics and their aspirations as the upcoming elite in Uganda.

In consideration of the importance of higher education, Mattes and Luescher-Mamashela (2012) argue that higher education provides important skills for democratic citizenship and leadership. This includes that students and graduates have gained greater competency in accessing political information, have more critical perspectives on politics and the economy, more frequently participate in democratic action and so on. They suggest that higher education can play a crucial role in the democratisation of politics in Africa by developing 'institution-builders' for state and civil society. Thus student leaders can be instrumental in the process of democratisation, given that Uganda is still struggling to build democratic institutions (Haggard & Kaufman 2012; Omara-Otunnu 1992). Other reasons raised for formal student participation include that students have rights in university decision-making along with academics by virtue of their membership of the university community; students are directly affected by decisions in various domains and have expertise and experiences that suitably contribute to better decisions (especially in co-curricular student affairs); formal student participation in university decision-making does not only have educational benefits for students (as a learning experience) but is also likely to improve the quality of decisions made and their willing and informed acceptance by students (Luescher-Mamashela 2010). In this way, the inclusion of students in university governance can contribute to the pursuit of the university's purposes. In addition, as noted above, it is argued here that student participation can also contribute to the deepening of democracy in the university and nationally. However, Luescher-Mamashela (2010) warns that in a large market-driven university that primarily looks at students as clients, the participation of students in university governance may amount to little more than the representation of service-users on user committees. Conversely, student participation may be quite extensive, involving conceptions of students as stakeholders or a constituency, in a politicised university environment where students have a strong sense of ownership of the university and conceive of themselves as a distinct group within a university community that ought to be governed democratically (Luescher-Mamashela 2010).

According to Teferra and Altbach (2004), the provision of higher education by private institutions is a growing phenomenon in many African countries. They outline reasons such as the declining capacity of public universities, the reduction in public services and pressure by external agencies to cut public services. In terms of numbers, there are now more private institutions than public ones in some countries, although in most countries private higher institutions are smaller and tend to specialise in specific profitable fields, such as business courses. Mohamedbhai (2008) argues that as a result of a rapid increase in enrolment, higher education institutions inevitably experience 'institutional massification'. This has occurred without an accompanying increase in resources – financial, physical and human – which has had a direct impact on the physical infrastructure, the quality of teaching and learning, research, quality of life of the students, etc., even though a number of strategies have been

adopted to diversify higher education institutions, such as setting up of more private institutions as well as the enrolment of private, fee-paying students in public universities.

The higher education context in Uganda

Higher education institutions in Uganda are licensed by the Uganda National Council for Higher Education (UNCHE) as outlined in the Universities and other Tertiary Institutions Act 2001 (Government of Uganda, 2001). Higher education, as referring to post-secondary studies, training, or/and training for research, is provided by universities and other tertiary institutions in the country. Institutions of higher education are divided into public institutions such as MAK, which are funded by the state, and private institutions which are owned by private organisations or individuals and are therefore not maintained by public funds but rather rely on students' fees and donations, of which UCU is an example (Kajubi 1992; Munene 2009; UNCHE 2014). Therefore even though public universities may admit so-called private or fee-paying students, they still remain categorised as public since they are administered by government and possess a percentage of students directly funded by the state as a policy in Uganda (Kajubi 1992).

Until 1988 when the first private university was founded in Uganda, the country had only public higher education institutions (IUIU 2014). The introduction of private or fee-paying students in MAK first and the establishment of private higher education institutions was a result of economic reforms or SAPs introduced in Uganda by international financial institutions from the 1980s (Mamdani 2007). Mamdani (2007) further posits that the SAPs-led initiative to introduce private students in MAK started with the abolition of some of the privileges which were enjoyed by government-sponsored students at the time. These privileges included allowances for textbooks, travel, stationery and a living-out allowance, even though the new policies would later lead to student strikes. The initiative gradually led to a full-fledged private students admission drive at MAK which exposed a business niche in private higher education nationally and as a result many private universities sprung up in Uganda mostly in the 1990s; among them was UCU (Owor 2004; UCU 2014). In addition to the reasons noted above for private higher education in Africa, Bailey et al. (2011) posit other reasons with specific reference to Uganda, such as the increase in household incomes, putting education in general on the national development agenda and the government focusing on free primary and secondary education which increased the number of students available to join higher education institutions. Moreover, the expected high private returns to having higher education qualifications makes it attractive for families to invest in higher education. The chapter now turns to assessing how this emergence of private students has shaped student representation in MAK and UCU.

Student government at Makerere University and at the Uganda Christian University

Institutional profile

The history of Makerere University dates back to 1922 when the British colonial administration established Makerere Technical College for training civil servants. It became a university college in 1949 which was affiliated to the University of London, and then joined the East African University in a merger with the university colleges established in Nairobi (now University of Nairobi), Kenya, and in Dar es Salaam (now University of Dar es Salaam), Tanzania. The special relationship with the University of London was called off in 1963 and the East African University lasted from 1963 to 1970 when MAK eventually became independent as a national institution of Uganda (see Bailey et al. 2011; Mutibwa 1992). MAK remained the only university in Uganda up to 1988 when IUIU was founded (IUIU 2014; UNCHE 2014). Since Uganda attained independence, student politics at MAK has continuously been influenced by national politics (Byaruhanga 2006).

Uganda Christian University (UCU) was founded in 1997 as 'a private, non-profit-making educational institution established by the Church of Uganda' (Owor 2004: 1). Bailey et al. (2011) explain that in Uganda, private universities are classified into religious-founded institutions such as UCU, community-founded institutions, and those which have evolved from other tertiary institutions. The most common feature is that all private institutions depend on student fees and donations. Obong (2004) argues that privatising higher education in Uganda led to a shift from elite to mass higher education which is also highlighted in the earlier discussion.

Given that MAK is the oldest university in Uganda, the same applies to its governance structures and practices of student leadership. Hence, according to the deans of students at MAK and UCU, new universities in Uganda have always borrowed from the institutional framework of MAK. For comparison purposes, it is important to consider student representation at MAK before and after introducing fee-paying students (i.e. the current situation), and then assess UCU's institutional student leadership framework in relation to MAK, given that UCU is fully private.

In 2011 private students at MAK constituted approximately 80% of the total student population, a number which continues to increase. Even though the influence of government-funded students at MAK cannot be underestimated in student leadership at the institution in general, it is important to note that they have come to make up a very small percentage of the student population in the university. Private students form the majority in the institution and within the structures of student leadership. However, there is no evidence to suggest that private students are legally favoured in any student leadership positions due to their high numbers in the institution (*MAK Annual Report* 2011, 2013; Ssembatya & Ngobi 2013).

Structures of student representation

The Universities and other Tertiary Institutions Act (Government of Uganda, 2001) informs the need for student unions or leadership, which is then outlined in more detail in an institutional statute and the respective student guild constitutions. Hence both universities, MAK and UCU, have student leadership structures which are headed by a guild president who is directly elected by students and then appoints a cabinet from the student parliament or Guild Representative Council (GRC). All other student organisations are under the guild cabinet which is the main formal structure of student government. Guild leadership in both institutions is directly funded by students through a mandatory fee paid by every student (Byaruhanga 2006; MAK Guild Constitution 2011; UCU Guild Constitution 2012).

MAK had only government-funded students up to the early 1990s when fee-paying students were introduced in the institution. In 1997 private students formed the Makerere University Private Students Association (MUPSA) to advocate for their interests. This was in response to the isolation of private students, given the institution's tradition of having had only government-funded students while private students by then formed a huge percentage of the new 'parallel' student body. The organisation thus defends the rights of private students, mainly by ensuring fairness in relation to how private students are charged for institutional goods and services in comparison to government-funded students. For instance, after a lot of campaigning for private students to be allowed into MAK residences, on allowing them, they were charged more for the meals in their respective halls of residence than government-funded students (interview with MUPSA leader, 16 April 2014). The dean of students of MAK noted that:

The main reason why they form these associations is because they want to resist. We are running a public-private university on very little money. The resources are very little on the ground and yet we have an obligation to deliver services to the students. So we are in constant struggle with students. They are demanding better service delivery. We are demanding that they should pay the little they should pay and it is not meeting their expectations, so we are always in that struggle. (interview with MAK Dean of Students, 23 October 2013)

The establishment of MUPSA has not challenged the guild leadership as the legitimate and main student representative structure; rather MUPSA operates as an association at MAK under the guild leadership structure. Hence it is the way the guild office operates which has changed, given that the majority of students it represents at MAK are now private students while before they were all government-funded students. MUPSA therefore enjoys a level of influence mostly in relation to issues affecting private students. UCU, conversely, which has only fee-paying

students, has generally borrowed the MAK structures of guild leadership even though some of the structures and their influence on management may differ from MAK (interviews with MAK student leaders, 23 October 2013; interviews with UCU student leaders, 11 April 2014). The MUPSA leader and guild leaders indicated that they work together in resolving private students concerns; thus the relationship was very productive. They do not compete for power to represent, since MUPSA must operate under the guild office and is not represented on the guild cabinet; rather it operates like any other student association at MAK. Moreover, evidence from interviews in both institutions shows that private student fear confronting management, for example by means of strikes, since they can be expelled and the fees paid go to waste. This in the process has empowered other groups on campus, mainly ethnic-based associations. The groups which the private students turn to, end up playing an important role in determining guild election winners, in addition to political party influence, even though the latter are more prevalent at MAK than at UCU where political parties are not formally allowed to operate on campus (interviews with MAK student leaders, 23 October 2013; interviews with UCU student leaders, 12 April 2014).

MAK students generally have representatives from their halls of residence and from their respective colleges, which representation is then extended to the different schools. The guild cabinet at MAK has 28 members and 96 GRC members (who form the student parliament). At UCU student representation is mainly based on academic programmes with a guild cabinet of 17 and 32 GRC members; hence UCU differs from MAK. Also MAK has more students with a student body of over 30 000 most of whom are private students, while UCU has a student body of about 10 000 (Byaruhanga 2006; Lutaakome et al. 2005; Ssembatya & Ngobi 2013; interviews with student leaders, 11 April 2014 and 23 October 2014).

As Table 1 (below) shows, at MAK there is student representation in Senate, Council, Admissions Board, Research Committee, Quality Assurance Committee, Appeals Committee, Anti-sexual Harassment Committee, Finance Planning and Academics Committee, Students Welfare and Disciplinary Committee, Estates and Works Committee. Governing bodies and committees with student representation at UCU include: Senate, Council, Student Affairs Board or Welfare Committee, Quality Assurance Committee and Health Committee (see Table 1). In addition to student guild structures of representation and the private students association, there are other student organisations or associations at MAK which have historically represented and still represent student interests. These include the Games Unions, Academic Associations, District or County Associations, Ethnic Associations and Secondary School Associations. However there is no evidence to suggest that private students are favoured in leadership even though private students are the majority members. The same categories of student associations are also found at UCU (Byaruhanga 2006; interviews with student leaders and dean of students, 23 October 2013).

Table 1 Student representation in university governing bodies and committees

| Student representatives at MAK | Student representatives at UCU |
|---|---|
| <i>Senate committees</i> | <i>Senate committees</i> |
| Senate (2) | Senate (1) |
| Admissions Board (1) | Quality Assurance Committee (1) |
| Research Committee (2) | Health Committee (1) |
| Quality Assurance Committee (2) | |
| Appeals Committee (ad hoc) (2) | |
| Anti-Sexual Harassment Committee (2) | |
| <i>Council committees</i> | <i>Council committees</i> |
| Council (2) (the Guild President and Guild Vice-President) | Council (1) |
| Students' Welfare and Disciplinary Committee (2) (one must be disabled) | Student Affairs Board and Welfare Committee (1) |
| Finance Planning and Academics Committee (1) | |
| Quality Assurance Committee (1) | |
| Estates and Works Committee (1) | |

Source: Interviews with MAK student leaders, 23 October 2013 and UCU student leaders, 12 April 2014; MAK Guild Constitution 2011; UCU Guild Constitution 2012

The electoral processes

Byaruhanga (2006) posits that student halls of residence are very important for campus student politics in MAK since they accommodate private and government-funded students. All students at MAK (even those who stay off campus) are assigned to a hall of residence upon admission and the same applies to the colleges; therefore the emergence of private students has not changed the constituencies at MAK. UCU has made changes to the model initially borrowed from MAK and the main constituencies are academic programmes rather than halls of residence and colleges. The number of representatives a constituency such as an academic programme at UCU gets is determined by the number of students it has enrolled. Constituencies with less than 200 students get one representative, while those with 200 and more students get two representatives. In addition, UCU uses student residential assistants who are appointed by the administration (not elected). Therefore they report to the administration and are given free accommodation with meals at their respective residences and a communication allowance every month as remuneration. Hence, UCU has clearly made changes to the MAK model (interviews with student leaders and the dean of students, 11 April 2014). The electoral constituencies for the guild representative councils of MAK and UCU are outlined in Table 2.

The guild constitutions of both institutions (MAK 2011; UCU 2012) outline the electoral

process for constituting the GRC, noting that guild elections are facilitated by the electoral commission made up of students who are guided by a staff member. The guild president in both institutions is voted into office directly by registered students.

MAK guild candidates go through party primaries in their respective political party branches or party chapters on campus, while others contend as independent candidates (Alina 2014). At MAK students stand for elections to the GRC through different constituencies, that is the halls of residence, schools, the games union, and other constituencies; this has not changed with the emergence of private students (interviews with student leaders, 23 October 2013; compare Table 2).

Table 2 GRC electoral constituencies

| GRC representatives at MAK | GRC representatives at UCU |
|--|---|
| <i>Hall-based constituencies</i> | <i>Programme-based constituencies</i> |
| 11 halls of residence with two representatives each | Child Development Studies (1) |
| The chairperson of each hall is a representative in the GRC (11) | Education (2) |
| Academic constituencies | Mass Communication (2) |
| 28 schools with two representatives each | Business and Development Studies (2) |
| <i>Association-based constituencies</i> | Social Works and Social Administration (2) |
| Games Union (1) | Business and Finance (2) |
| Chief editor of the <i>Makererian</i> (the students newspaper) (1) | Business and Management (2) |
| <i>Other constituencies</i> | Public Administration and Management (2) |
| Disabled students (4) (2 females and 2 males) | <i>School-based constituencies</i> |
| The Speaker of the House can be chosen from outside the house (1) | School of Divinity and Theology (2) |
| The Clerk and Deputy Clerk are voted by the House (2) | School of Law (2) |
| | Faculty of Science and Technology (2) |
| | <i>Residency-based constituencies</i> |
| | Resident students (4) (2 females and 2 males) |
| | Non-resident students (4) (2 females and 2 males) |

Source: Interviews with MAK student leaders, 23 October 2013 and UCU student leaders, 12 April 2014; MAK Guild Constitution 2011; UCU Guild Constitution 2012

UCU, in contrast, has moved on from the MAK model. Currently guild presidential candidates go through a vetting process at different levels in the institution. Their application forms are submitted by the electoral commission to the respective faculties of the candidates so as to be

considered by faculty vetting committees which comprise of students (i.e. class representatives) and staff, chaired by the faculty dean. In the process about one or two candidates may be selected for further consideration by the University Vetting Board, which is a university standing committee, in which every faculty is represented by the dean and one student, and members of the electoral commission. The University Vetting Board is chaired by a senior member of staff appointed by the vice-chancellor. At this level, between two and five names are selected to stand for guild presidency. However it is noted that vetting is a new policy which is only a few years old and was formed in response to the challenges the institution faced by allowing students to be the sole deciders of who becomes guild president through voting (as in the MAK model) (UCU Guild Constitution 2012; interviews with UCU student leaders and dean of students, 11 April 2014). UCU has therefore changed the model initially borrowed from MAK by adapting a formal process of vetting.

The MAK model appears to be generally preferred by UCU students and student leaders as they expressed dislike towards vetting. However, a few students in the focus group discussion held at UCU thought it was good for management to ensure that student representatives are decent individuals. Most students in the focus group expressed resentment towards the automatic vetting out of non-Anglican candidates for the guild presidency post as unfair and discriminatory. The few who supported the vetting out of non-Anglican candidates argued that the same is done by other religiously founded universities such as the Islamic IUIU and Uganda Martyrs University (UMU) (interviews with UCU student leaders and focus group, 11 April 2014). This highlights the challenges new private institutions face in the process of adapting the MAK model. At UCU the transition from being a theological college to university status still affects theology students aspiring for leadership since students think they can somehow collude with the management rather than defending the interests of students (interview with former student leader, 12 April 2014).

Student representation and activism at MAK and UCU

Student leaders in both institutions outlined similar student interests including repairs for door locks, sockets or plugs, switches, shower curtains and renovations generally in the buildings, and major issues are connected to fees which affect the private students (interviews with student leaders, 22 and 23 October 2013 and 11 April 2014). Focus group discussions at UCU (12 April 2014) for example indicated that they needed more time (at least four weeks) to get the registration fee and the first instalment of the tuition fees; others indicated that the penalty for late payments should be reduced; fee-related challenges affect every student. Meanwhile at MAK, private students continue to contest the policy of paying 60% of tuition fees in the first week of registration. MAK guild leaders also allocate more time to issues of fees which affect private students who are the majority at MAK; hence there were the 60% fee protests by the guild leadership at MAK in 2013 (Anguyo 2013). It is important to note that representation

happens in many ways also by different actors on behalf of the students even though the guild leadership is the formal elected body.

In both institutions, as noted earlier, guild leaders represent student interests in the various institutional committees (see Table 1). According to the MAK student leaders (interviews, 23 October 2013), this form of representation has not changed even with the emergence of private students. They noted, however, that the actual interests that student leaders currently defend before management have changed considerably with the emergence of private students, arguing that issues concerning private students and most especially timelines for students paying fees in an academic year consume much of the discussions in most committees on how those funds are spent. They further noted that there are problems which affect the whole student population (private and state-funded) such as issues to do with lectures, marks and many more. But student leaders indicated that even with these problems, private students were more vocal in complaining, mainly arguing that they pay a lot of money for these services in comparison to their contemporaries sponsored by the state. At UCU, which has only private students, student leaders (interview, 11 April 2014) explained that student fees were the main concern among students, which is also highly contested at MAK. However, both MAK and UCU student leaders argued that in the university committees they are always outnumbered; hence even though they hold a voting right at the end of the deliberations, voting tended to favour institutional management, not student leaders and thus not the students' interests which they represent.

In the process of representing students, there are clear formal institutional channels to follow in raising students' concerns. According to both MAK and UCU student leaders (interviews, 23 October 2013 and 11 April 2014), it is either through a particular committee or the official responsible in the hierarchy of institutional management through which concerns must be raised. Student leaders in both institutions highlighted how they were ignored or basically not taken seriously by management staff. The argument that student leaders were being ignored was also presented in relation to committee membership since in most cases student leaders could not change the management's position through the vote in a committee as they were always outnumbered. At MAK, student leaders gave an example of complaining about delayed marks after tests in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, but the chair of senate indicated that the college had resolved that issue. After students threatened to strike, senate held another meeting the next day to resolve the issue. At UCU, one of the deputy vice-chancellors was attacked by students as he tried to respond to their demands on increasing student fees. Students argued that his responses indicated that the institution did not care about or take into consideration the fact that students were actually struggling to pay fees and thus needed management to be considerate when determining fee increments. Even though student leaders in both institutions faced the above challenges in the process of representing student interests, these challenges seem to be more prevalent at MAK than at UCU. Different reasons may be considered for the difference between the two institutions. The MAK student leaders noted that the institution appears complex for management to run, given the large student

numbers. In this respect some of MAK's challenges appear to be related to the emergence of the private students, given that they account for more than 80% of the student population.

According to the MAK student leaders (interviews, 23 October 2014), the lack of attention from management to the issues raised by student leaders and their inability to adequately influence policy change through committees has led to student leaders relying more on personal networks with management staff to ensure attention is paid to students' concerns. In the period before there were private students at MAK, violent strikes typically influenced policy changes at the institution; however, nowadays as there is less spirit to strike at the institution, student leaders have turned to other methods to influence policy (Byaruhanga 2006). Student leaders indicated that personal connections with some members of management create a conducive environment for engagement outside committees, thus influencing management's position in some cases and leading to changes. This appears also more prevalent at MAK than at UCU where student leaders indicated little connections at a personal level with members of management and thus less engagement with management staff at an informal level (interviews with UCU student leaders, 11 April 2014).

Student leaders have also tried to use student strikes or protests to engage with management in the process of representing student interests. As noted above, at MAK student strikes were historically a popular form of students engaging management; the tradition's popularity has, however, declined. MAK student leaders (interviews, 23 October 2013) showed that strikes do not happen at the same rate and level of violence as before the admission of large numbers of private students; and even when they happen, fewer students participate. The main reason raised for the loss of interest in using strikes and protests is the fear of private students at MAK to be suspended or expelled after having paid a lot of money to access education at the institution. While before there were only government-funded students, in the case of expulsion students' families did not directly lose funds. It further emerged that students decide to avoid protests in fear of victimisation by management. The trend appears to be the same at UCU where all students are fee-paying. In the history of the institution, just one protest is noted.

The implications of going against the administration ... we have had student leaders [here] whose education has been discontinued by the university ... because the administration felt they behaved in an unexpected way. (interview with student leader, 11 April 2014)

Student leaders at UCU also gave an example that when students tried to rebel, the information leaked out and before they could even start the strike, the police were deployed around campus. This is picked up in the interviews as information leaked by the residential student assistants who are rewarded for their positions in the residences. However student leaders and students in the focus group discussion (12 April 2014) noted that Christian values also play an important role at UCU in ensuring that students follow certain moral principles such as respecting 'elders' and not going against them. Students may not be willing to violently engage or even

verbally confront the ‘elders’ in management positions. Conversely, the same values may not wield the same influence on students at MAK, most especially with respect to the way private students express their grievances to the administration. Therefore, this seems to be another factor why MAK appears to be more prone to student protests than UCU (Byaruhanga 2006). Hence the responses from the interviews with student leaders in both institutions showed that the threat of strikes is used more frequently – in that students threaten management to go on strike, than the actual organisation of strikes; this is true even at MAK where strikes and protests used to be popular before the emergence of private students.

The dean of students at UCU gave insights into the institution’s policy shift from elected student leaders or representatives in residences to appointed resident assistants. He noted that:

[Elected student representatives]... were student pleasers and we realised that things were getting out of hand in the student resident life. Our facilities were vandalised and student leaders could not say who was involved because they did not want to be voted out. That is when we thought about having student leaders who are appointed by university administration [i.e. resident assistants]. (interview with dean of students, 11 April 2014)

In addition to vetting guild presidential candidates, management therefore ensures that it has compliant student leaders in the residences at UCU by having created a system of appointed and paid student resident assistants. In contrast, hall representatives at MAK are elected and there are no appointed students (also see Byaruhanga 2006); thus even with more private students in residences the structures and process of student representation at residence level has not changed. The system of residence assistants at UCU provides a case of how a university administration is able to out-manoeuvre students in stopping any attempts to resist or protest against institutional policies.

Student leaders at MAK and UCU (interviews, 23 October 2013 and 11 April 2014) indicated that students have become more connected to their ethnic affiliations; a process that has made ethnic-based associations in both institutions very powerful. In the case of MAK, the MUPSA leader (interview, 16 April 2014) agreed with other interviewed student leaders that ethnic associations are powerful, in addition to political parties. He noted that the rivalry among the different ethnic associations at the institution also intersects with national party politics and that in the process ethnic student associations have come to represent the interests of students using branches/chapters of political parties on campus. Since political parties have their strongholds in particular regions of the country (which, in turn, correspond to dominant ethnic groups), that influence is imported into the institution as students end up supporting a party that is popular in their particular region. Given its direct link to national politics and questions related to both, the political socialisation experience of student leaders and deepening democracy in the country, the influence of multi-party politics on student politics will be discussed next.

The influence of multi-party politics on student politics

Byaruhanga (2006) highlights the unsuccessful attempts of the MAK administration to discourage national politics or party politics from influencing student politics on campus. He notes that the institution still remains a breeding ground for political activities by national politics. This was further confirmed by the MAK dean of students and student leaders (interviews, 23 October 2014). MAK student leaders argued that even though political parties in Uganda had historically had an interest in and influence on student leadership at the institution, the advent of multi-party democracy and private higher education in Uganda exacerbated the interest by the various national political parties in MAK guild politics. Student leaders proposed that the increased interest may be due to growing student numbers, and the interest of the various political parties in youth recruitment, the promotion of party ideologies, and so on. Therefore the emergence of private students at MAK may have led to an increase in recruitment drives on campus because of the tripling of student numbers at MAK. As political parties show more interest in the institution's student leadership, student leaders also gain access to powerful politicians in the country. As a result, institutional policies such as student fee increments become a contentious *national* issue as students are able to call upon national political leaders through their respective political parties to help them challenge university policies. The implication is that political party actors rather than student representatives come to represent student interests in the institution on contested matters.

Even though political parties have shown interest in recruiting new members at UCU, institutional management has banned student leaders from affiliating with political parties. However, this has not stopped student leaders from informally affiliating with political parties as noted after the UCU 2012 guild elections:

Although candidates vying for any guild office at the Uganda Christian University are not allowed to openly affiliate with political parties, Mr Emmanuel Wabwire did not hide his true colours when he flashed a V-sign and held a key, the FDC [political party] symbols, after he was declared the new guild president. (Mugaga 2012)

In relation to the above, Luescher-Mamashela and Mugume (2014) suggested a framework for studying the relationship between student leaders and political parties; a relationship which they argue is mutually rewarding as well as problematic. They argue that the relationship involves associative actions through which student leaders may participate in the political party, the political party may represent student leaders' concerns, goods and service exchange between student leaders and the political party, and the political party may control the student leaders in the process.

The evidence above therefore shows that, since political parties, for example in MAK, hold primaries before guild elections, student leaders are able to access party structures and participate in the party' activities. It is noted that they call upon party leaders to promote

interests as articulated by student leaders. In the process student leaders' interests are represented by the party. This is a service student leaders may receive from their respective political party. It has been noted that party recruitment in the institution can be easier when championed by student leaders on behalf of the political parties; thus the exchange of goods and services in the process of the relationship. Through student leaders calling upon party leaders at the institution, they can help in resolving issues student leaders may not be able to resolve at MAK, while in the process party leaders may be able to control the student leaders in the institution since they need party leaders' assistance. The discussion also shows that the relationship may be problematic in instances where for example student leaders contact party leaders to promote their personal interests rather than the interests of the students' constituency. This corresponds with earlier discussions which showed the increase in party interest in student politics in Uganda is argued to be due to the emergence of the private students or private higher education.

Conversely at UCU, even though the relationship happens informally because political parties are banned on campus, the institution took away another prospect for political parties to recruit students who are a product of the emergence of the private students in Uganda's higher education. The evidence from the above quote further shows that the relationship between student leaders and political parties takes place in a more indirect way at UCU through the associative actions suggested by Luescher-Mamashela and Mugume (2014). However it is also clear that student leaders, through the political parties, represent students' concerns at the institution, as noted at MAK, while less prevalent at UCU due to the banning of political parties. The chapter concludes with the following discussion.

Discussion and conclusion

This chapter sought to assess how the emergence of private students in higher education has shaped student representation in Uganda. Overall it is clear that the transformation of higher education institutions is related to the implementation of SAPs which led to the introduction of fee-paying students in public universities such as MAK and the founding of private higher education institutions such as UCU. This in turn has shaped student representation in the higher education institutions in Uganda, whether private or public.

Given the history of MAK as the oldest university in the country and therefore with the oldest structures of student representation, the MAK guild structure of representation has been borrowed by the new private institutions such as UCU. Interviews show that the MAK guild structure has however, been changed by such institutions in order to adapt to the student leadership model needed by a particular institution, thus highlighting the presence of a general trend among universities founded on religious grounds. Such adaptations include the introduction of a vetting process particularly for candidates running for the guild presidency to be filled by a believer of the religious denomination followed by the founders of the institution.

The discussion above highlights that in both institutions, structures of student representation are well established: in the case of MAK the same structures are in place even with the emergence of private students, while UCU borrowed the MAK model and made certain changes to suit the purpose in the institution. In particular, the banning of participation of political parties in the guild electoral process has been highlighted. Thus, there are no party primaries at UCU while they exist at MAK. Further, more evidence shows that the representation of students' interests is directed more towards representing the interests of fee-paying students at MAK who now make up more than 80% of the student population. At UCU all students are so-called private or fee-paying students.

The process of representing students' interests in both institutions appears to be complicated by management's failure to pay timely attention to the issues raised by student leaders, even though it is argued above that MAK appears to be more affected by this problem than UCU students. In addition, evidence from the interviews and the focus group discussion shows that the fact that private students pay for their education influences their level of involvement in activities that involve directly confronting management, especially through protests and strikes. It is highlighted that they reflect on the consequences of their actions primarily in terms of the individual/familial and personal consequences they may entail as, in the end, they may be 'punished' individually. For example, if a private student is expelled for striking or participating in a protest, the loss of fees falls on them, their individual guardians or parents. Therefore it is argued that in both institutions, the fear of such consequences contributes to students avoiding involvement in student protests and strikes. As a result they turn to threatening strikes rather than actually striking. This is problematic as the formal representation of students in decision-making structures of the university, for example in council, senate, and their committees, appears to be ineffective. This has led to students looking for alternative ways of addressing their concerns, especially using ethnic-based associations or, at MAK, party political connections (which also have ethnic markers) to play a role in representing student interests. By extension, in both institutions ethnic identities influence the choice of student leaders.

Moreover, the link of student politics to national politics (especially via political parties) is noted to be most significant in the case of MAK. This is primarily due to the status of Makerere University in the national and higher education landscape in Uganda as the national flagship university, due to the historical relationship MAK student politics and leadership has played in national politics, and due to the size of the student body – including the large number of private students – at MAK. Even though political parties are not officially allowed at UCU, evidence suggests that political parties influence student leadership at UCU in informal ways.

The chapter has also outlined the structures of student government and argued that they have not changed much with the emergence of private students at MAK, including the establishment of the Makerere University Private Students' Association (MUPSA), while UCU has significantly adapted the structures borrowed from MAK to suit the needs of the institution – especially those of the university leadership – as noted in practices such as the vetting of guild

candidates, the employing of residential student assistants, and the banning of political party influence on student leaders at UCU. The case of UCU is instructive in some respects; it avails an opportunity for other institutions to learn different ways of adapting student representation in the process of seeking ways of availing students with space for input into institutional decision-making, while keeping the institution on course in achieving its goals.

Conversely, given that MAK is the oldest university in Uganda and has a much longer tradition and older and more developed structures of student representation, new universities will continue to learn from this model and use it as a basis for innovation. Certainly, the extent of student representation in university committees at MAK is instructive; moreover, as multi-party democracy matures in Uganda, the MAK model will provide rich material to learn how to successfully integrate party-representation in student politics. At this point it is clear that, on the one hand, the UCU model for student representation has led to fewer strikes (UCU 2014); on the other hand, this has been achieved at the expense of other student experiences which could also contribute to student development. The contrasting cases of MAK and UCU further offers a reminder on how institutional culture reflects values and impacts on the student experience, for example in terms of the ways students express their demands to the administration.

Finally, the chapter exposes a need to further investigate the relationship between student leaders and political parties, and the impact of private students on the quality of provision of services, so that lessons can be learnt to inform higher education policy and practice.

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- UCU former student leader, interviewed 12 April 2014.
- UCU students focus group discussion, 12 April 2014.
- UCU student leaders, interviewed 11 April 2014.

CHAPTER 9

STUDENT ACTIONS AGAINST PARADOXICAL POST-APARTHEID HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY IN SOUTH AFRICA: THE CASE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

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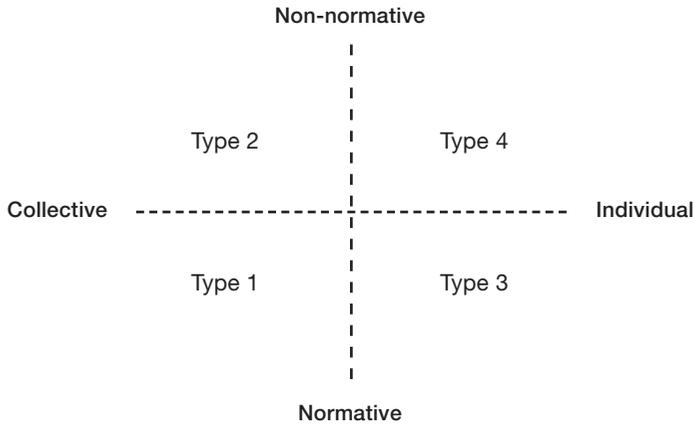
Introduction and theoretical framework

The pursuit of transformation in South African higher education led in the early years of the democratic government to a paradoxical post-apartheid higher education policy involving the simultaneous pursuit of (1) a massive expansion of higher education for black students, which in effect meant creating opportunities of access to higher education for historically disadvantaged students who came mostly from working class and poor backgrounds; and (2) a self-imposed commitment to fiscal 'austerity' reflected in the rejection of free higher education, the continuation of cost-sharing, and only limited provision of financial aid, which required that students, including the working class and poor, were expected to pay a significant share of the costs of study. The implementation of this paradoxical policy further deepened and compounded challenges of financial sustainability and student affordability that already persisted at the University of Western Cape (UWC) in the mid-1990s. The paradox was most severely experienced by poor students whose constrained ability to pay a portion of their cost of study could not be mitigated by institutional resources or funds from family and relatives.

However, students rejected 'object surrender' (Mamdani 2007b: 18) and sought to challenge the effects of this policy through a range of actions. Inspired by the Wright et al. (1990)

framework for categorising the numerous possible behaviours exhibited by disadvantaged-group members, Cele (2015) proposes that various kinds of student actions can be conceptualised along two continuums, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1 Matrix of student actions



The horizontal continuum (in Figure 1) relates to the range of forms that student actions take within higher education institutions. We describe the extremes of this continuum as collective student action and individual student action, with the former depending on the cohesive power of the student body as an organised force, the relationship between the student body and the student leadership and common concerns or objectives, while the latter is about individual students pursuing their self-interest individually, rather than collectively with other students.

The vertical continuum in Figure 1 involves an interpretation of the content of student actions in terms of whether or not such actions follow the prescribed norms of the system. The extremes of this continuum are normative and non-normative student actions. Normative student actions occur within prescribed norms. For instance, student participation in higher education governance or ‘formal governance’ (Luescher 2005: 2) or ‘ordinary governance process’ (Pabian & Minksová 2011: 262). Non-normative student actions occur outside the prescribed norms of the higher education system. For instance student activism or ‘informal governance’ (Luescher 2005: 2) or ‘extraordinary governance process’ (Pabian & Minksová 2011: 262).

The relationships within and between the two continuums are complex and characterised by interrelatedness and interdependency, on the one hand, and diversity of purpose and outcomes, on the other hand. This, however, presents a possibility to construct four ideal types of student actions with both analytical and practical applicability to this study. These ideal types are (Type 1) collective normative student action, (Type 2) collective non-normative student action, (Type 3) individual normative student action and (Type 4) individual non-normative student action. Cele (2015) elaborates on these four idea types in detail.

This chapter focuses on the response of students through different actions at the University of the Western Cape in the conflict that broke out in 1998. It analyses their various actions in opposition to their lived experience of the paradoxical post-apartheid higher education policy in South Africa. The chapter proceeds to explain the different student actions taken during the 1998 UWC conflict through the lens of the basic theoretical framework outlined above. Thus, in the next section, we seek to show how this typology could be used to analyse the manner in which UWC students responded to the effects of the paradox between 1995 and 2005. The main focus is on the 1998 UWC conflict over the possible financial exclusion of about 7 000 students.

Student actions and the 1998 UWC conflict

Student use of collective student normative and non-normative action

UWC students tended to use student activism and formal student participation in higher education in a complementary manner to address effects of the policy paradox. The 1998 UWC conflict investigated here was the most important instance of student activism in the 1995–2005 period. Therefore we consider different aspects of the event, starting by providing a context for understanding the 1998 UWC context. Second, we explore student action of lobbying used to garner support from external stakeholders. Third, we focus on the actual events of student activism, which issues finally in an analysis of the resolution to the conflict.

Collective normative student action (Type 1)

As a matter of due course, the UWC management and SRC held fee negotiations annually in the 1990s. These negotiations tended to commence immediately after the election of a new SRC, which used to be held between September and October each year. These negotiations are a unique form of the kind of formal student participation in university decision-making operative at the time, typical of the consultative and democratic nature of the ‘struggle university’ and ‘intellectual home of the left’ that UWC had become in the course of the 1980s struggle against apartheid. The fee negotiations can thus be understood as a normative kind of collective student action in the context of this institution. The intended outcome of the negotiations was a financial agreement for the coming academic year between the student leadership and the university leadership. The negotiations between the UWC management and SRC did not always lead directly to the intended outcome. This was the case in 1998.

The 1998 UWC conflict arose after protracted negotiations between student leadership and university management collapsed, as they could not reconcile their differences about the issue of students with outstanding fees and debts from previous academic years. UWC had indicated that it was ‘owed some USD 10 million (ZAR 50 million at the time) by 7 000

students too poor to pay' (*Green Left Weekly* 1998: 1). The UWC SRC was made up of members of the South African Students' Congress – the student organisation affiliated to the ruling African National Congress – and negotiated primarily on behalf of these 7 000 poor students. The manner in which this matter was to be crafted into the financial agreement was clearly going to pose a challenge.

The main contested points of negotiation between the UWC SRC and management related to certain provisions in the draft 1997/1998 financial agreement. The UWC SRC argued that the bone of contention in the draft 1997/1998 financial agreement related to what they described as 'Clause 4 or safety valve' (*UWC SRC Annual Report* 1998: 11). In the past the clause used to read

in the event students experiencing difficulty in meeting the required minimum contribution towards their outstanding fees their cases will be assessed individually to determine how further assistance can be extended. (*UWC SRC Annual Report* 1998: 11)

However, in the draft 1997/1998 financial agreement, the clause read, 'in the event students experiencing difficulty in meeting their outstanding fees their cases will be assessed individually to determine affordability' (*UWC SRC Annual Report* 1998: 11). According to the 1998 SRC,

an impression was created that affordability meant how much students can afford only to learn later that affordability meant whether or not the university could manage to register students without the stipulated amounts. Clearly, this was a recipe for exclusion and we consequently declared a dispute and that agreement was subsequently nullified. (*UWC SRC Annual Report* 1998: 11)

The source of the dispute between the UWC SRC and management thus centred on how they understood and used the notion of 'affordability'. The UWC SRC approached 'affordability' from students' financial standpoint, arguing whether or not students (or possibly 'all those affected') could afford to pay and if so, how much they could afford. Conversely, the UWC management approached 'affordability' from the institutional financial standpoint by asking whether the university could afford to admit students with outstanding debt and who could not pay. UWC student leaders would possibly be pushing for more students to be admitted without regard to that definition of 'affordability'. The UWC management, on the other hand, was more concerned with ensuring overall financial sustainability, given the vast amount of student debt (R50 million) and the generally precarious financial situation the university found itself in. Therefore we may say that the dispute was a manifestation of the difficult reality of managing the paradox of expanding access in a context of limited funding on the ground; it demonstrated the tension between affordability (for students) and financial sustainability (of the institution).

A frosty relationship between UWC students and university management, especially with the new rector, Prof. Abrahams, exacerbated the situation. Students argued that they met with an administration that was 'resolute on excluding students on financial grounds based on students not having met their financial obligations towards the institution' (*UWC SRC Annual Report 1998*: 11). They acknowledged that UWC management had 'a point' from the legal perspective. However, students' contestation was premised on the view that the

escalation of the student debt was a direct consequence of management's mismanagement of the university in general and the financial quagmire it was embroiled in, as it never put any systems in place of ensuring that students meet their financial obligations. (*UWC SRC Annual Report 1998*: 11)

The UWC SRC further argued that university management was unable to come up with new ideas and solutions to the on-going institutional financial crisis. It was left to the UWC SRC to come up with proposals, including 'parental involvement' and establishment of a student credit management mechanism (*UWC SRC Annual Report 1998*).

Lobbying for external student support

The UWC SRC and management fell into a deadlock. UWC students then tried to explore other options in a bid to find solutions. They went outside the university, where they engaged and lobbied the ceremonial Chancellor of the University, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, officials of the national Department of Education and the ANC headquarters, all organisations of the Mass Democratic Movement including the trade union federation and ANC Youth League, and other civil society bodies such as churches and the Red Cross (*UWC SRC Annual Report 1998*: 3).

These efforts, however, were all in vain. They were told that they had 'no justifiable cause' (*UWC SRC Annual Report 1998*: 3). Students were told to pay:

We were called names such as; a bunch of fee dodgers, irrational students who want free education, cell phone-toting youth who belabour their poverty in order to lead a posh lifestyle on campuses. (*UWC SRC Annual Report 1998*: 3)

This characterisation of students was an opposite to the pre-1994 notion of students as 'shock troops of the revolution' (Wolpe 1994: 7) and 'energy driving force' (Gerwel 1988: 3) for transformation of UWC. According to the SRC, students felt abandoned by their former allies:

[We were] literally left on our own. The crucial challenge of the time was to be united. An honest re-examination of our positions and their attendant tactics was needed. This is the challenge that some did not comprehend. (*UWC SRC Annual Report 1998*: 3)

Thus, the 1998 UWC conflict began with students employing Type 1 collective normative student action, using negotiations and lobbying in order to address their problem of ‘unmet financial need’. Eventually, students decided to shift from Type 1 to Type 2, which is collective non-normative student action, or in this case, student activism. As we shall show, the shift did not imply complete abandonment of Type 1. Rather it was a tactical shift whereby students used Type 2 to put more pressure on the university management to accede to their demands and resolve the impasse. The shift implied ineffectiveness of collective normative student action. In the next section we shall analyse student activism as it happened and its resolution.

The use of collective non-normative student action (Type 2)

Having failed to find sympathy and support or external intervention to unlock the impasse after four months of negotiations, the UWC SRC convened a general student council in which all student organisations were requested to make proposals on how to resolve the impasse (*UWC SRC Annual Report 1998*: 3). By January 1998, it was ‘clear that a different approach was required to make a breakthrough’ (*UWC SRC Annual Report 1998*: 4). Students opted to protest. According to the *UWC SRC Annual Report*, the student actions sought to protect about 7 000 students (out of a total student body of about 12 000) who were facing financial exclusion. In anticipation of student unrest, the UWC management suspended all academic activities and ordered students to vacate campus premises on 30 January 1998 (*UWC SRC Annual Report 1998*: 4).

However, the following day, on 31 January 1998, the UWC SRC convened a general mass meeting at which students resolved to defy the university management. On 1 February 1998, students staged a five-hour sit-in at the university (*Green Left Weekly 1998*; see also *UWC SRC Annual Report 1998*). They refused to vacate student residences when ordered to do so by the university administration. After students ignored the final notice to leave the campus, the university management called in the police. Heavily armed police came and ‘bundled students into armoured cars and police vans’ (*Green Left Weekly 1998*: 1). More than 300 students were arrested (*Green Left Weekly 1998*; see also SAPA 1998). The remaining students marched to the UWC front gates, where a vigil of several hundred students and staff continued (*Green Left Weekly 1998*).

Hundreds of students marched to the Bellville magistrate’s court when those arrested were due to appear on Tuesday, 03 February. SAPA reported that students toyi-toyied (danced in protest) and sang freedom songs outside the court and held aloft banners proclaiming: ‘We are not criminals’, and ‘We do not have the money, please help’ (3 February 1998). The arrested students were released on bail (*Green Left Weekly 1998*).

According to the *UWC SRC Annual Report*, first-year students who were still to register volunteered themselves to the police for arrest. Other students ‘encamped on the campus boundary and slept outside the main university gates on Modderdam Road [now Robert Sobukwe Road]’ (*UWC SRC Annual Report 1998*: 4). Students showed solidarity and were

prepared to do anything to support one another, especially those who could not pay. Solidarity and willingness to sacrifice were thus critical dimensions of the 1998 UWC conflict.

The police and their dogs guarded the university premises against the students sleeping at the entrance gates. This followed a meeting in which the 'Minister of Education assured vice-chancellors that in case of an emergency, police will be supplied, and indeed, they were supplied' (*UWC SRC Annual Report 1998: 3*).

Students did not wash for two days while sleeping outside and depended on the SRC to 'buy food from the nearby fisheries' (interview with former UWC student leader, 30 August 2006). Sympathetic faculty and staff also assisted some of the stranded students (interview with former UWC student leader, 30 August 2006). Students blockaded vehicles from entering the university. The situation was a 'nightmare to the first-year students who were coming from as far as the Eastern Cape in buses because they also had to disembark at the gates' (interview with former UWC student leader, 30 August 2006). Some parents eventually fetched their children, especially the first-years. These parents arrived from various parts of the country. Some students ended up going to relatives in nearby townships. Others made their way back forcefully to sleep in the residences.

While student activism was continuing, the UWC SRC and the university management re-opened and continued negotiations in a bid to reach an agreement. The fact that students were embarking on both forms of collective action further highlights their complementarity dimension. As student activism was continuing, the student leadership realised that their struggle was 'losing its moral high ground' (*UWC SRC Annual Report 1998: 3*). The UWC SRC acknowledged that the continuation of activism had a negative impact on public support. This was evident: 'If you read papers extensively, you would have realised that our cause was slowly running out of sympathisers' (*UWC SRC Annual Report 1998: 3*). Then South African Deputy President Thabo Mbeki went out to 'say that African students are not as poor as they portray, so they must just pay' (*UWC SRC Annual Report 1998: 3*).

It would seem students could only rely on themselves to 'win' and had to defy the ANC government and especially their 'comrades' or 'leadership'. They had lost political support as key sectors of society and government converged on the view that students should pay. The fact that civil society and the liberation movement disagreed with the students' view in itself lent credence to the strong and harsh words used by the deputy president in dismissing the students' notion of being 'poor' and insisting that they should pay. The attitude, language and tone used in the above extract were unexpected and harsh for a democratic government, which had recently been elected into office. Again, similar trends could be observed on the rest of the African continent, where student activism not only threatened those in power, but those involved were severely punished. Clearly student activism had what Altbach called a 'surprising impact on the authorities' (1998: 162).

According to Jansen, government had taken a 'strong interventionist stance' against those institutions it considered 'completely ungovernable and found its very authority, if not legitimacy, threatened by an unstable, volatile higher education sector' (2004: 304). The message of the

government to students and managements of higher education institutions was clear. Students were expected to pay their fees. Higher education institutional managers were expected to collect such fees. Only 'academically-deserving students from poor backgrounds would receive funding; disruption would not be tolerated' (Jansen 2004: 305).

Government further absolved itself from responsibility over student debts. It shifted such responsibility to higher education institutions. This approach can be characterised as 'neo-liberal' in keeping with the GEAR macro-economic policy framework – invariably described as a self-imposed structural adjustment programme – in that it was no different from the notion that government only creates conditions and markets will grow the economy and bring development to the people. Thus, the 1997 *White Paper on Higher Education* argued that the Ministry of Education 'bears no liability for debts contracted between students and their institutions or funding agencies, but accepts that a study of the scope and dynamic of student debt in relation to institutional debt and liquidity has become necessary' (Department of Education 1997: 45–46). This government stance needs to be understood in relation to the discussion on the National Students Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) and without any doubt had a significant impact on the UWC's experience of the policy paradox of pursuing expansion of access despite limited funding (with cost-sharing being advanced as a solution).

The relationship between the UWC SRC and student body was critical in support of the 1998 Type 2 action, student activism. Students were determined to achieve their objective of averting financial exclusion through peaceful protest. UWC students did not seek permission to protest and were not operating within the 'rules' and directives of the university management, which had demanded that they should vacate the campus. Student actions included defiance, sit-ins, protests, marches and placards.

Resolution of campus conflict and reaching a financial agreement

After two weeks of simultaneous student activism and negotiations, the UWC SRC and university management reached a consensus that resulted in the resumption of classes on 23 February 1998. The UWC management 'regretted measures that had to be taken through the long negotiation period but was confident that efforts to attain the new comprehensive agreements would ensure financial sustainability and a quality academic programme for the university' (SAPA 1998). For its part, the UWC SRC felt that the executive did 'not act in goodwill over the past two weeks, however they were willing to go forward to ensure that the student body was made fully aware of the financial implications of non-payments of 1998 fees and debt' (SAPA 1998).

The UWC SRC signed two agreements with management on 3 December 1997 and 10 February 1998. They required all returning students with outstanding debts to pay a registration deposit of ZAR 2 500 for resident students and ZAR 2 000 for non-resident students, as well as an additional minimum contribution towards unpaid fees (SAPA 1998; *UWC SRC Annual Report 1998*). The UWC SRC insisted that while the February agreement was 'not the best

ever to be signed, we, however, believe that it was the best that could be arrived at in the context of 1998' (*UWC SRC Annual Report 1998*: 12). This position was accepted at a student mass meeting held on 10 February 1998. UWC students then mandated their SRC to sign the agreement (*UWC SRC Annual Report 1998*).

We need to emphasise the significance of the UWC SRC taking the proposed settlement to a mass meeting for the student body to deliberate and decide if such a settlement should be approved. It is also significant that the UWC student body 'mandated' its SRC to sign the agreement. This is evidence of student democracy and accountability of the leadership. Students who were to be affected were involved in decision-making and approved the type of settlement they were going to have to live with, which the SRC had to carry through to its logical conclusion.

Individual student actions

Negotiating funding structures: Individual normative student action (Type 3)

As part of the 1998 agreement, UWC established a student credit management (SCM) office as one of the structures with which registering students had to negotiate funding matters (others included the bursary office and the student enrolment office). It was through student funding structures that the university exercised and implemented its student funding policy. The effect that the implementation of the institutional funding structures had on student politics at UWC are both encouraging and problematic. In addition, after 1998, national financial aid started to be rolled out on a much wider scale. Thus, as students now had to reach individual settlements with the university concerning their finances and seek financial aid from NSFAS, over the years a shift in student action occurred. We will analyse this shift in detail. First, however, it is important to also consider yet another expression of a lack of coordination and alignment between institutional and national level governance.

Over the years it became increasingly obvious that the UWC institutional funding structures lacked coordination, strategic alignment and a shared approach in dealing with students in financial difficulties. In 2004 the UWC SRC noted:

We experienced problems during registration. We had seen lack of co-operation and co-ordination between the financial aid office and student credit management. This relates to the exorbitant amounts being needed by SCM regardless of amounts (NSFAS) confirmed by the financial aid office. (UWC SRC Annual Report 2004: 10)

Similarly, the 2005 UWC SRC noted that the SCM demanded that students pay more money despite the NSFAS policy that students who held loans from it could register without making upfront payment. By 2005, 11 000 UWC students (out of a total of 14 590) received some form of financial assistance to the amount of ZAR 88.2 million, of which ZAR 40.7 million

was allocated by NSFAS. The SCM's argument was that NSFAS money came from the state, and as such, it was not a parental contribution. Given that most UWC students had NSFAS loans (and therefore came from families where no parental contribution was possible), they found themselves caught between two contradictory policies (NSFAS and SCM) in respect of required upfront payments. Nationally, it seemed as if institutions did not know whether they could allow NSFAS students to register without paying registration fees.

Furthermore, the *UWC SRC Annual Report* (2005) indicated that clarity should be sought from management with respect to power relations between the SCM and residence administration. It stated that some students were cleared for registration by the SCM and the SRC, but still encountered accommodation problems, as the residence administration demanded additional money. Similarly, a former UWC SRC president argued that the student administration unit 'should be able to find [those] who can afford and who cannot afford to pay, given that they have a student database. In that case, every year they will be able to ask students if their situation has changed. If the situation has not changed, they give such student NSFAS'. To the extent that there was 'no student administrative relationship between the administrations and the financial aid, which is quite key, the financial aid office does not use the student database housed in the administration. The system is not the most efficient' (interview with former UWC SRC president, 19 September 2007).

The former UWC SRC president made an important point about the need for the university structures to harmonise and enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of their systems and processes for the benefit of students. He was also correct to insist that the student administration should have been able to determine who was poor or not. However, as indicated above, this was one of the original responsibilities assigned to the SCM. The SRC should have demanded more accountability and ensured that the SCM did not abdicate its responsibility.

Individual students had therefore many concerns about the way the university managed the payment of fees. They indicated that it would seem to them that the university structures (especially the SCM) applied different eligibility criteria to different students when considering their cases. Some students had outstanding fee account balances and could not pay full registration fees, but they were allowed to register, while others who owed less money were denied. This is illustrated in the following interview:

I was refused to register with R1 000 but other people came with R500 and they still have balances from the previous year and they still are registered. (interview with third-year UWC BCom student, 28 August 2009)

Despite its weaknesses, the SCM should not have allowed such a practice to develop from the beginning because it was unfair to students and undermined the purpose of the SCM. In this case it could not be described as students 'exploiting' the system, but as an ineffectual system.

Students raised concerns about the nature of the registration and financial clearing process and the attitude of some university officials working in student funding structures. A UWC

BA third-year student could not hide her disappointment and frustration with the manner in which she was treated, as ‘if you do not exist, as if you are not even there. You know it is so inhumane.’ She felt that the SCM was her last hope and asked if ‘they cannot help you in the SCM, where else do you go? If they say, they cannot help you what do you do?’ Her main anxiety was facing the prospect of having to go home or ‘to call home and what do you say?’ (interview with third-year UWC BA student, 29 August 2006). Perhaps the student was more concerned about the negative impact that such a call would have on her parents, given the fact that she was doing her final year and could be expected to take care of them as well as her siblings, or worse, that society might mock the family for having wasted money.

A second-year UWC BAdmin student struggled to determine whether it was the SCM office or its management who ‘failed to listen to my situation. We out rightly failed’ (interview with second-year UWC BAdmin student, 29 August 2006). He was simply told that he did not meet certain criteria and therefore ‘you are out’. This seemed to have confused him, because he had assumed the role of the SCM to be ‘to look into students’ problems because we all have individual problems, sympathise with students and then play a sort of mediatory role between the students and the management’ (interview with third-year UWC BA student, 29 August 2006).

A third-year UWC BSc student said that she arrived back from holidays before the university opened in mid-January. She was aware of her outstanding fees from the previous year and decided to go and seek assistance from the SCM. When she presented her request, staff members said, ‘We cannot help you. There is nothing we can do for you. You just have to pay the balance. And I am like, my mother only has this much.’ She tried the SRC and failed. She then decided to return to the SCM, hoping that things might be different. She ‘kept on going to the SCM for the whole month without any luck’ (interview with third-year UWC BSc student, 19 September 2007).

A third-year UWC BPharm student stated that the registration process took a long time and was ‘emotionally bad but we managed to perform well’. He continued to attend classes while waiting for his registration to be finalised. However, there were problems. He said:

I remember at one time in one of my classes, there were certain practicals that we had to do in the hospital, lecturers said those who had not registered they cannot go to the hospital. (interview with third-year UWC BPharm student, 29 August 2006)

This was going to have a huge impact on the student, as he explained that ‘everything we do as final-year students is hospital-based and they have to group us’. Lecturers told us, ‘If you have not registered, they are not going to put you in anything. Imagine, now my whole life has to come to a halt because we have not registered.’ The student said he waited for about two months, the whole of February and March, before he could be registered during the last week of March. He had returned to campus on 15 January, and had been battling since then (interview with third-year BPharm student, 29 August 2006). While waiting for his registration

to be finalised, he also ran out of money and food and this affected him. He wanted to 'study but something would tell me that I am hungry and I need to eat. I knew what I needed to do, but my mind was not really on what I should be doing it was concentrating on my other unsolved problems'. He felt that if the registration process had not dragged on for so long he would be 'free'. However, his anguish continued while university officials kept on asking for the registration fees when his situation had not changed, and he 'told them whatever cent they want to squeeze out of me or out of my mother, I just do not have it' (interview with third-year UWC BPharm student, 29 August 2006).

The university and poor students thus both found themselves in a difficult situation. On the one hand, the university remained committed to expanding access to the poor, but to survive it required money, which it hoped somehow these poor students would be able to raise. On the other hand, students had been admitted and their expectations of escaping poverty and underdevelopment had been raised; they rested all their hopes on the financially strapped university to take care of their study costs. In between there were university officials who seemed less interested in the historical and socio-economic deprivation of students and were bent on meeting the 'set targets' of fee collections.

The head of the SCM accepted that the registration and clearance process was tedious, and that the behaviour of his staff members was painful at times. However, he argued that

[students should] realise ... that we do have the mandate, which is to ensure that all students pay as part of their contribution in order for the university to survive before the state subsidy comes in. Yes, people might see us as being harsh but the reality is that students have been told many times about the portion of their contribution for registration. (interview with head of student credit management, 30 September 2007)

This highlights the difficulties that UWC encountered even after the institution of NSFAS in implementing the government's policy of expansion of access to the poor and limited financial assistance to individual students as well as to institutions directly. It is evident from the statement of the head of the SCM, that the paradox deepened the existing challenge of financial sustainability of this historically disadvantaged institution, as well as affordability of education to working class and poor students. In trying to deal with this challenge, it would seem the university was hoping that the cost-sharing approach would help. The university tried to get poor students to make a contribution towards the costs of their study. It did so, well aware that the majority of its students were poor and could not afford to pay. As the university was driven by the motive of 'organisational survival', the SCM became a critical instrument.

Another instrument became university merit awards, but many students felt this did not help them either. According to a second-year UWC BSc student, the merit awards or bursaries were 'only for the top achievers which leaves out those who get the [marks of] Cs and the Bs, and for us who are B and C students, then there is no help, therefore the merit awards are not

enough.’ This student argued that the financial aid office should be ‘realistic because they cannot expect someone who is unable to buy myself a book to suddenly become an A grade student’. His reason for this was that ‘half the time there are projects that you must do and you need to go and research in certain books and at times you go into the library, there are only five of those books and when they are booked out there is nothing you can do’. Students without sufficient and necessary study materials would therefore be placed at a ‘disadvantage when compared to the top achievers who tend to have all the required materials’ (interview with second-year UWC BSc student, 30 August 2006).

Students highlighted negative implications deriving from the registration process. According to the *UWC SRC Annual Report*, the fact that students registered late had a negative impact on their academic progress. Teaching would have commenced by the time students who registered late joined classes. The UWC SRC dealt with the problem of lecturers and tutors refusing admission to students who were still solving their registration problems. The UWC SRC found that it was difficult to de-link academic exclusions from financial exclusions because students spent time in long queues, missed classes and lost valuable time (*UWC SRC Annual Report 2004*: 11).

Thus, students had to be ‘cleared’ by the SCM, including those who had external bursaries and were NSFAS recipients. The NSFAS recipients were supposed to pay registration fees or upfront payment because NSFAS did not cover it prior to 2003. Without making upfront payment, NSFAS students would not be allowed to register or to be ‘cleared’ by the SCM. Meanwhile, students applied for NSFAS through the financial aid office, which kept all records and made decisions on loan allocations; yet the two institutional structures seemingly did not communicate with each other. In the next section, we examine student action in respect of the financial aid office.

Student negotiations with the UWC financial aid office

The financial aid office was responsible for administering student bursaries and NSFAS. Therefore it had a huge responsibility and was a critical part of the UWC funding regime. Some students’ experiences with the office were not as pleasant as they should have been. For example, a third-year UWC BPharm student indicated that when he was doing his second year, he had posted home the NSFAS application form. His parents received it, but they could not find it when they were supposed to complete and return it to UWC. His parents eventually managed to find it and sent it late. It then transpired that his father had ‘signed on the wrong place and those people at financial aid office just did not want to take it’. As a result, the student was ‘stressed about where to find money to pay for this semester as well as next year. I have not really been talking about it even to my friends. My academic work really suffered. It has been hectic because now my only worry is getting a job’ (interview with third-year UWC BPharm student, 29 August 2006).

Students also complained that the financial aid office did not help them to understand the

NSFAS loan agreement details. A fourth-year UWC BPharm student mentioned that when he submitted the NSFAS loan agreement form ‘nobody told me or explained the terms and conditions of NSFAS bursary so we could understand. Somebody must say this will happen when you start working, this is how you are going to pay and this is the amount we are going to deduct from your pay. We know we are going to pay when we work but not what are the rates.’ A student would have appreciated more information to be prepared. ‘I do not want a situation when I get out of here I have huge debt that I do not understand’ (interview with fourth-year UWC BPharm student, 30 August 2006).

Some of the stories of students highlight the frustrations and anguish that they were going through as they were engaging with the SCM and the financial aid office. In an effort to improve their chances of registration and survival on campus, students had to use and rely on their solidarity networks and explore other strategies (such as mutual student support and family support), which we explore in the next section.

Self-initiated support

During interviews students informed us of how the problem of ‘unmet financial need’ was affecting them and the actions that they undertook to deal with it. Students said that they constantly worried about where to find money to settle debts or pay the next instalment of their fees and that this affected their academic performance negatively. Some ended up participating in extra-curricular activities, which had become their ‘only choice’. A second-year UWC LLB student indicated that in 2005, she ‘owed ZAR 3 000 or something so I couldn’t pay up because I didn’t have the money’. The student had been part of the HIV/Aids group that went to a camp where they met a businessman who was sponsoring students who were involved in extracurricular activities with ZAR 5 000. So ‘I got that ZAR 5 000 and paid for whatever I was still owing’ (interview with second-year UWC LLB student, 29 August 2006).

Other students indicated that they would do anything, including working in dining halls, as long as they could earn something, including food. For instance, a second-year UWC BAdmin student indicated that he was ‘very shy to ask for money from home because I understood the situation. I used to eat with my roommate but I found I’m becoming too much of his burden and more particular he is younger than me.’ The student then decided that he could no longer be a burden and wanted to free himself, so he ‘went to see the Residence Director and I pleaded my poverty’. The residence director understood and gave a letter to the student granting him permission to ‘eat once a day up to certain period at Mthonjeni residence dining hall (interview with second-year BAdmin student, 29 August 2006).

Unfortunately, when the agreement lapsed, the student did not know what to do and went back to the residence director who said, “I will not give you another letter but now you need to work.” Then it is when I got the letter and I worked but it was not so much.’ The student was working at the residence canteen but the owners did not want him to do much, which could affect ‘my academic progress. So I normally used to go when they were about just finished

then I just clean up the floors' (interview with second-year BAdmin student, 29 August 2006).

While doing menial jobs, the student was approached by visiting doctors who asked him a few questions. They discovered that they all came from Mpumalanga province (in the east of South Africa). One day, the doctors called and told the student that they would 'pay my meal fees until I finish and they said that I must concentrate on my studies rather than working for food'. The doctors promised to support the student with everything (including books) that he needed at the university. However, the student had to 'sign a contract with them which was not about repayment but indicating that should I fail my studies, they will stop paying. Therefore, we must not blame them as if they deserted me' (interview with second-year BAdmin student, 30 August 2006). The message was loud and clear that the student should focus on his studies. A similar message had earlier been communicated when he was working at the residence, even though it was rather subtle.

Some students sought university part-time jobs, most of which came through the university's work-study programme. Students worked up to 20 hours per week as tutors, drivers, library assistants, laboratory assistants and administrative assistants on campus. A second-year UWC BCom student received NSFAS but,

it did not cover everything. So I have been struggling since my first year. However, to make up for difference, I applied and was employed as tutor for first-year physics students. At the same time, the SRC appointed me as one of the drivers. (interview with second-year UWC BCom student, 28 August 2006)

The university deducted 60% from the work-study stipends and paid these funds into student fee accounts. For instance, a third-year UWC Library and Information Science student indicated that she was on the university work-study programme, which was 'not enough. The policy is that 60% of what you receive is deducted and paid into your account and so I do not even get to work enough hours of what is required' (interview with third-year UWC Library and Information Science student, 30 September 2004).

Many students viewed part-time jobs as more than providing financial assistance. The part-time jobs helped students in settling debts, developing some sense of independence and gaining work experience. A third-year UWC Library and Information Science student received NSFAS, which was inadequate and hence she needed to find additional funding. She spoke about how her father 'saved money to pay for my studies while he was working' (interview with third-year UWC Library and Information Science student, 30 September 2004). Having her father's savings did not deter her from searching for a temporary job so that she could pay for her studies. She worked at Paarl Library on weekends. She worked as a student assistant at the UWC campus and as a casual worker between October and January.

I used my money to pay for my tuition and transport fees. This made me feel independent and I am also gaining experience which will help me after I have

completed my studies. (interview with third-year UWC Library and Information Science student, 30 September 2004)

This is an interesting story of a student who had a vision and ambition that transcended her immediate concerns to study (which can be so consuming) but which in her case included completing her studies and finding a job thereafter and most importantly, becoming an ‘independent person’.

It would seem that almost all cases discussed above show the type of students who knew what they wanted, who were brave, who had a passion for education and their future, and who rejected victimhood and developed a deep sense of hope and optimism. In other words, these students refused to fall into what Mamdani called ‘abject surrender’ (2007b: 18) and possessed a liberating spirit. In terms of this chapter’s conceptual framework, they refused to accept their disadvantaged status and to fall into inaction and exclusion. Their response to the paradoxical post-apartheid higher education policy was action – albeit not the kind of action one would conventionally consider ‘political’.

We have identified self-initiated support as one of the forms of individual normative action that students undertook to address their problem of unmet financial need. The individual stories of students describe various forms of self-initiated support. They include participation in extra-curricular activities, being prepared to help clean residence kitchens and doing various other kinds of part-time jobs on and off campus. What seems to be an underlying and commonly shared characteristic is their rejection of the victimhood mentality and willingness to do ‘something’, ‘anything’, as long as they could find the money to contribute to the costs of their study. This is despite possibly ‘dehumanising’ experiences they might encounter in the process of seeking financial assistance, some of which have been related from the students’ point of view above.

Student–family networks

At the heart of cost-sharing is the requirement that parents should share the burden of study costs. Some writers argue that parents should pay for the education of their children ‘not only because of the personal benefits the parents can expect to enjoy but also because it is their responsibility and their obligation as parents’ (Merisotis & Wolanin 2002: 1). Interviews with students showed that their parents understood the need to contribute and tried to do everything possible to pay for the education of their children however trying their own circumstances. Some managed to find the required funding, but others struggled to make financial contributions towards the education of their children at UWC owing to their poor socio-economic situation. Some were single parents looking after more than one child. For instance, a third-year UWC BPharm student said that for two years ‘my mother had paid for me and then there was one year when she just could not because she was also paying for my other siblings’ (interview with third-year UWC BPharm student, 29 August 2006).

A fourth-year UWC BPharm student spoke highly of his father's support to his studies. This is despite the fact that his father had last worked when the student was doing Standard 2 (i.e. primary school Grade 4). However, his father had 'connections and somehow always managed to find money. My father is my Superman. I always say there are some people that are in worse positions than I am. Complaining really will not help you' (interview with fourth-year UWC BPharm student, 30 August 2006). Given that searching for funding can be emotionally draining, the student said that his mother provided emotional and moral support and she 'will say, you will be fine and all of that' (interview with fourth-year UWC BPharm student, 30 August 2006).

A second-year BAdmin student indicated that her father 'is not working anymore and he borrowed money from my cousin. I will have to pay it back once I have finished my studies' (interview with second-year BAdmin student, 29 August 2006).

While it is important not to generalise uncritically from these observations, one should not miss the determination in the manner in which parents sought assistance for their children. It might seem obvious that parents should support their children, but it is not necessarily possible in poor communities, where parents lack the means of survival and have to support several children. It requires someone to have character and a positive attitude. Thus, one can see from the above cases that parents used different means of securing financial contributions for their children's education. Parents used their savings if they had any, relied on old established networks for assistance and even borrowed from relatives and friends to make financial contributions for their children. We can broadly categorise the student-family networks that students described as falling into the normative dimension. Some parents had to borrow money from relatives and friends. In some instances parents expected their children to repay the borrowed money once they had completed their studies. In other instances parents had to find ways of repaying the money.

Individual student actions (Type 4)

Student solidarity

Needy students also found support from their fellow students. This support took various forms, including the sharing of residence rooms (which is a practice known as 'squatting'), sharing books, study materials and laboratory equipment. For instance, a third-year UWC BPharm student indicated he 'sacrificed a lot' (interview with third-year UWC BPharm student, 29 August 2006). He could not buy the laboratory coat and 'often used my cousin's lab coat who is also studying here' (Interview with third-year UWC BPharm student, 29 August 2006). The third-year UWC BPharm student had to use 'the little money that we receive from home to buy study notes every week. While it's special the money that parents give you, it's like you don't have money for everything' (interview with third-year UWC

BPharm student, 29 August 2006). He said, 'I don't complain like other people when they don't have money to go buy clothes. I just spend ZAR 150 on buying basic food and other essentials that I know that even if I don't have money, I could still eat and go to class. Nobody would know that I am eating such basic food or something' (interview with third-year UWC BPharm student, 29 August 2006). It would seem the primary focus of this student was to learn while ensuring that he survived hardship. He also had a sense of prioritising and separating his 'needs' from his 'wants'. Most importantly, the student understood his family background and did not allow peer pressure to affect him.

Another student had a mother who had worked as a domestic worker for 12 to 13 years. The mother used 'her wages to pay for some of my studies. However, that is not enough' (interview with second-year BAdmin student, 29 August 2006). The mother could only afford to pay for tuition fees. As a result the student could 'not stay in the residence. I am squatting with a friend at Cape Peninsula University of Technology [former Peninsula Technikon]' (interview with first-year UWC BAdmin student, 29 August 2006). The Cape Peninsula University of Technology friend thus risked his or her future by allowing someone to squat who was not even studying at the same university. This indicates a deep sense of solidarity among students. Students had to choose between achieving education and conforming to the rules of the university, and they chose education.

We describe student solidarity as both individual normative and non-normative student action. In some instances students are willing and prepared to risk their studies (and by implication their future) to help those in need. Actions that fall under the normative dimension include the sharing of resources such as text books, laboratory coats, study guides and food. Actions that fall under the non-normative dimension include sharing of accommodation or 'squatting' in so far as they involve the breaking of rules. Students also struggled through great hardship on their own, rationing food and living on the barest necessities. Indirectly students were rebelling against the effects of a paradoxical higher education policy in what Jansen once described as 'unseen pains of transition' (2004: 118).

Conclusion

The above discussion sought to show how Cele's typology of student actions (collective student normative action [Type 1], collective student non-normative action [Type 2], individual student normative action [Type 3] and individual student non-normative action [Type 4]) can be used to analyse and understand student actions against the effects of the paradoxical post-apartheid higher education policy on the expansion of access and provision of financial aid at the UWC. Using the 1998 conflict between the university and students over the possible financial exclusion of about 7 000 students, the analysis highlighted how students can shift from one action to another or even combine different actions to produce outcomes that favoured them. This would suggest that student actions especially Type 1 and Type 2 should

not be seen as opposites but rather as mutually reinforcing and complementary as the 1998 case indicates. The discussion also showed how students could shift from collective to individual actions in order to address their funding problems. It would seem though that a variety of factors might influence the choice of action for students, for instance, the prevailing conditions or organisational challenges. It also confirms the iron law that student politics cannot be abstracted from characteristics of the student body.

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CHAPTER 10

THE UNIVERSITY OF BURUNDI AND STUDENT ORGANISATIONS: GOVERNANCE SYSTEM, POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT AND STUDENT REPRESENTATION

Gérard Birantamije

Introduction

This chapter focuses on issues of governance with regard to the representation and participation of students at the University of Burundi (UB). My purpose is to demonstrate how students, by participating in their organisations, have played a significant role both in governing bodies of the University of Burundi and in the political development of the country by influencing political decisions on higher education and beyond. This case study focuses on the role that student organisations, especially the *Association des Etudiants de Rumuri* (ASSER, i.e. Association of Rumuri Students)¹, have played in the governing system of the University of Burundi, which has always been linked to the political development of the country by ‘producing’ the governing elite. This constitutes a very symbolic aspect that pushes students and student organisations not only to care about student life and the university but also the political developments of the country as a whole. Participation in student organisations in this context represents an opportunity for political socialisation and developing leadership skills.

ASSER constitutes an interesting case to study in that it has a long history as an organisation. Although it has undergone several name changes over the course of its existence, its founding dates back to the establishment of the University of Burundi in 1964. Until 2009, the organisation was not subject to the law governing the framework of non-profit organisations although it

¹ Rumuri is the name in local language of the University of Burundi. ‘*Rumuri*’ means light or torch. The idea behind it is that the university and academics would constitute a light for the whole nation.

was considered to be one.² Moreover, since its inception, ASSER and its predecessors, UNEBA (*Union Nationale des Etudiants Burundi*, i.e. the National Union of Students of Burundi), UGER (*Union Générale des Etudiants de Rumuri*, i.e. the General Union of Students of Rumuri), and CGER (*Cercle Général des Etudiants de Rumuri*, i.e. the General Circle of Students of Rumuri) have participated in the overall governance of the University of Burundi even though this was not legally enshrined.

In this chapter, I argue that student representation and participation in decision-making structures at all levels of the UB engendered both efficiency and efficacy in governing the university, and established within student organisations the basis for leadership skills on higher education governance matters. In higher education governance, representation and participation usually require administrative procedures, election or nomination of contributing groups, as well as governance structures such as councils or boards of trustees, senates or scientific advisory committees, faculty boards, departmental councils, etc. (Bergan 2004). These various types of bodies ultimately comprise the governance structure of universities. They are established in accordance with criteria of representation for all stakeholders (such as lecturers, researchers, other staff, students, external members, etc.). Representativeness and participation of different groups are of great importance for the governance of the University of Burundi.

Methodologically, I adopt a historical–political approach that is based on facts and events experienced by students of these organisations. This approach permits a broad understanding of the political weight of their interventions in the management of the university and beyond. In the first part of the chapter, I demonstrate the role played by student organisations, especially ASSER, in the overall governing system of the University of Burundi. Then, the study identifies how the political positions that have been taken by ASSER and its predecessors impacted on national policy decisions. My sources are mainly archival documents related to student organisations and interviews with former leaders and members of these organisation.

Student organisations and the governance of UB: Historical background

The creation of the University of Burundi, which celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2014, is linked to the decolonisation movement of the 1960s. The almost simultaneous formation of the first Burundian student organisation, the *Union Nationale des Etudiants Burundi* (UNEBA) likewise played a major historical role in the struggle for national freedom (Cart 1973). The association epitomised a general mobilisation of the African intelligentsia as well as the organisation of African students into associations both in Africa and in Western countries. Several scholars have argued that African students in general contributed significantly to the decolonisation movement throughout the African continent (Sekou 1973; Sow 1993).

² There was a problem in accessing the archives. We were not able to find the statutes of this organisation before 2005. But according to the elders of ASSER who were interviewed, the statutes of 2005 would be just a copy of the old statutes with some rearrangements in order to adapt to current problems and changes. The objectives have remained the same.

UB was founded in the wake of declarations of independence, especially that of the Belgian Congo (now, Democratic Republic of Congo/DRC) and Ruanda-Urundi (now, Rwanda and Burundi). At first, UB had a single Faculty of Agriculture and was dependent on the Official University of Lubumbashi in the former Belgian Congo. It acquired full university status and became entirely independent from the Official University of Lubumbashi in 1964 under the name of the Official University of Bujumbura (OUB).³ On 1 September 1973, UB was established through a merger of the three public tertiary institutions of Burundi, the *Ecole Normale Supérieure* (ENS), *Ecole Nationale d'Administration* (ENA), and *Université Officielle de Bujumbura* (UOB).

The student movement was born out of much the same circumstances as the university. At the time, most Burundian students attended either Kinshasa Lovanium University or the Official University of the Congo and Ruanda-Urundi, now the University of Lubumbashi in the DRC. Within these universities, the Burundi students established UNEBA, which became the predecessor of the *Association des Etudiants Rumuri* (ASSER). However, not only did a generation of students pass between the first formation of UNEBA and its subsequent transformation to ASSER, but the groups' advocacy and ideology differed. ASSER was founded in the 1980s during the academic year 1985–1986. Before ASSER was established, students engaged in two other associations: the *Union Générale des Etudiants de Rumuri* (UGER 1964–1976) and the *Cercle Général des Etudiants de Rumuri* (CGER 1976–1985) (interview with JB Manwangari, Bujumbura, July 2014).

A further development in the field of student associations occurred in 2009. A dispute arose between ASSER, at first with the faculty and later also with the university's rector. The university authorities prohibited the initiation rites known as 'university baptism' to which the new students were subjected. As a result of the conflict, ASSER was abolished and considered to be an illegal organisation by the authorities. Out of ASSER's failure arose another student organisation, the *Fraternité des Etudiants de Rumuri* (FER, i.e. Brotherhood of Students of Rumuri). This new organisation deliberately maintained the same goals of the previous group in spite of the imposed obligation of the name change (ASSER archives 2005; FER archival document 2009).

Student associations as stakeholders in shared governance

Stakeholder analysis, as recently devised by organisational management theorists, facilitates an analysis of the emergence and acceptance of student organisations in shared governance at the University of Burundi (cf. Clark 1978). Stakeholder theory considers that each party within an organisation has an interest in the survival of the organisation (Mercier 2006). The consistent creation of serial student organisations fosters a form of interdependence given each

3 Both institutions originally carried the appellation of 'official'.

party's interests. Even without being legally registered by an authority, the University of Burundi acknowledges the various associations. Within legal definitions, these groups have neither been unions nor non-profit organisations (as per the decree No. 1/011 of 18 April 1992 on organised non-profit associations). At the time of their creation, none of the student organisations intended to have a formal role in the decision-making processes of the university or in the overall governance of higher education in the country for that matter. Their objective was to serve their constituency by channelling and rationalising the aspirations of students in order to avoid erratic or violent action both in society and in politics.

At its inception in 1960, UNEBA's objective was to address the political issues of the time, including the question of immediate independence of Burundi from Belgium. Nationalism was the weapon of the independence struggle and students desired to embody the hope of an entire nation. These students did not seek to exercise power directly but to contribute their ideas for consideration by decision-makers at any level. During the 1960s, the UNEBA interventions did not focus on the issues of student life at the university but rather on the political agenda of their country. Convinced from the beginning of the importance of their participation in national liberation, the acts of the 6th congress of UNEBA proclaimed that

It is not possible for a student from developing countries to deal only with books and theoretical knowledge that they gather during the school period and neglect, while he [sic] is still studying, the application of theoretical knowledge to national realities.
(UNEBA 1965: 3; own translation)

The activities of UNEBA were indeed intended to build on theories in order to examine and take a position on national realities. In 1960, UNEBA sent a rather provocative petition to the General Assembly of the United Nations entitled 'For Burundi: Independence or Nothing' (Ngayimpinda 2004). The petition received a supportive response from the United Nations as well as the Burundian political party, *Union pour le Progrès national* (UPRONA), that had requested independence. The action created a relationship between the new nationalist leaders of the UPRONA party and students.

However, the success of the newly forged relations between political actors and the student organisation also opened a door to criticism of their public action. UNEBA continued to take positions on important policy and political issues such as the transition from a monarchical to a republican regime, the issue of ethnic balance in the education system, changes of the national symbols and most importantly, the issue of social justice and equity (Nduwayo 1985). On this last point, for example, the senior members of UNEBA heavily criticised the national budget, which they perceived to be more focused on institutions than on the poor populations and their needs.

Ideologically, UNEBA followed the Socialist International movement, a very left-wing political current of the 1960s and 1970s that opposed liberal capitalism and Western imperialism embodied in African colonisation and apartheid. Moreover, it is argued that the initiation rites

for new students, namely the ‘university baptism’ mentioned above, served to educate new students about issues such as the Cold War, the position of great pan-African leaders, the values of integrity, truth, and responsibility while dealing with public affairs found in traditional values (interview, JB Manwangari, Bujumbura, July 2014).

UGER shared the same political positions as UNEBA. However, UNEBA was a worldwide federation of Burundian students that carried its message outside the country. In contrast, UGER was deeply interested in student life at UB. But, until that period, the management of students’ campus life had not yet caused problems because the number of students was still very low (Ntibashirakandi 2014). More importantly, the student organisations themselves managed the public space on campus. Two main agencies, the UGER Executive Committee and the UGER Congress, shared the governance of the campus with the university authorities. They maintained public order within the perimeter of the campus, managed disputes among students and between students and the staff of the directorate for university infrastructure (interview with JB Manwangari, Bujumbura, July 2014). These duties continued to be carried out by CGER and subsequent groups until the creation of ASSER in 1985.

Furthermore, according to Julien Nimubona, who was an early ASSER leader and is a former minister of higher education, early student association activities involved training students in the art of administering the city. However, ASSER, more than the two other organisations, inherited an explosive situation. Towards 1985, the number of students enrolling at UB was increasing so that the first substantial appeal by ASSER was concerned with the construction of a central university campus at Mutanga (which is the current site of UB). Due to ASSER’s lobbying, more student residences and auditoria were constructed from 1986 (interview with J Nimubona, Kigali, July 2014).

Given the success in negotiating campus facilities, ASSER gradually became an instrument for students in all matters relating to student life on campus, although the emphasis shifted towards academic life. As an essential modification, ASSER established two fundamental components: the Council of Delegates which had the latitude to discuss and propose issues on all academic matters, and the General Assembly of the students, administered by an executive committee that remained sovereign for any decision-making related to student life within the organisation’s purview (ASSER Statute 2005: Article 5).

During the 1985/86 academic year, the chairman of the executive committee became an *ex officio* member of the rector council, and the university’s board of directors accepted that students should have representatives. Additional representatives became members of faculty councils and in the departments. Indeed, at all levels, students share responsibilities in decision-making for all questions involving the governance of UB. This representative system is recognised not only by the administration of the university but also by the national political authorities, including the president of the Republic.⁴ Participation in high-level decision-making

4 Despite the fact that student representatives in the rectorate’s council and board of directors were elected by their colleagues, they were appointed by a presidential decree as other members of the two councils.

was a new experience for the student organisations. One can say this new procedure has institutionalised a system of shared governance at the university while simultaneously providing multiple sources of legitimacy from inside the campus as well as outside. Henceforth, all decisions of the university authorities needed the endorsement of the student representatives to be accepted. Thus, before a decision is made, the General Assembly seeks information about the issue through their representatives and determines alternatives if the policy or action is in conflict with student interests. In other words, even if the Council votes on a decision, it needs to be approved by the General Assembly of the students first. If this step is ignored, the students would declare a strike on all campuses of the university (ASSER archives 15 February 2002; 16 December 2011). For ASSER, a student strike was considered the only expression of power in relation to the decision-makers. Thus, strikes quickly became a strategy and an instrument of struggle to deal with decisions considered to be unjust for the whole student community (ASSER 1999).

The instituted shared governance system has permitted student organisations to be more proactive in voicing their opinions. It allows university authorities to receive input from students in managing the campus and academic issues both at intermediary level (department and faculties) and high level (boards of directors, rector council).

ASSER: From student tribune to student court

While the predecessor organisations to ASSER certainly played a big role in the governance of the University of Burundi, challenges have not been lacking and hence the model of shared governance has been subjected to several criticisms. The more ASSER is successful, the more it appears as a refractory organisation in the eyes of the university authority with which it has to cooperate to avoid misunderstandings and conflicts with students. The university authorities recognise the challenges of this partnership and have quickly dropped a significant portion of its prerogatives. ASSER was appreciated and appeared in the eyes of students not only as their genuine defender but also as a court of student interests.

ASSER: A student tribune?

When we consider ASSER as a student tribune, the idea we are focusing on is the defence of student interests. Here we must start from the fact that since the creation of UB, the state has fully subsidised food, housing, and infrastructure maintenance. These state subsidies were intended to support all Burundians who finish high school and aspire to higher education regardless of their own resources. Although being generally considered to be a positive and future-oriented public policy, over time it developed some perverse effects. The ever-increasing number of students who enrol in the university has posed the need for administrative control, but proved to be beyond the ability of the university staff and authorities. By the middle of the

1980s, three major issues emerged related to the lack of campus management which permitted ASSER to step in to fill the gaps.

First, the number of new students enrolling in the university generally has been increasing annually even though the number of available slots in both academic departments and dormitory rooms promised to all eligible Burundian students did not match the demand (Ntibashirakandi 2014).⁵ Further, the *Régie des oeuvres universitaires* (i.e. the board of student accommodation) responsible for the allocation of residence rooms also neglected to develop an appropriate process of distribution across the different campuses. Thus, receiving a master list of students from the *Régie*, ASSER's Committee for Social Affairs assumed responsibility for the process in accordance with the prevailing criteria such as seniority, equity, the number of students accepted into the various faculties, and the distance between student residences and lecture halls (ASSER archives, 22 June 2002).

By the academic year 1998/1999, the UB administration announced that all new students would no longer have access to residences. Furthermore, returning students who had failed during the previous term had to vacate the residence for the benefit of those who succeeded in their first year. The university authorities announced and explained the measure, but encouraged ASSER as the more legitimate agency to publicise the new policy. The administration believed that it was extending ASSER's legitimacy among the students as it was permitted to adjudicate a few appeals. Yet, the new policy and procedure proved not to be acceptable to the student body and led to a student strike that closed the campus for a one-month period in early 1999. While the student representatives considered the rector's decision to be consistent with reality, ASSER's General Assembly voted for the strike (interview with J Nimubona, Kigali, July 2014). This divergence of opinion created two opposing groups: residential students and commuting students. The situation escalated when the university provided meals to the residential students, but not to the commuting students. Faced with this inequitable situation, ASSER called for a strike and advocated for the commuters to eat at the university cafeteria (ASSER archives). This tactic was intended to put pressure on the university authorities to review their policies of using student subsidies allocated to it by the ministry of higher education and the ministry of finance.

Second, ASSER promoted solidarity among students in many important aspects in students' lives. In fact, regardless of problems arising at various times, the student association established the foundations of solidarity akin to Emile Durkheim's mechanical solidarity. Solidarity in a homogeneous social structure integrates individuals within the group. Furthermore, solidarity inspires collective consciousness (Durkheim 2007). ASSER encouraged the development of solidarity more than any previous association. Since the 1980s, the steadily increasing number of students and the resulting residential challenges on campus, along with the structural adjustment policies (SAPs) being instituted, encouraged student solidarity through

5 Any Burundian student who has passed the entrance examination is eligible for a residential room on the campus of the site of his or her faculty.

various claims to student privileges. The IMF and the World Bank's SAPs exerted pressure on government, especially on social spending that included the education budget (interview with G Ndaruzaniye, Abidjan, July 2014). In response, students adopted mechanisms to meet these challenges. In fact, the students adopted at least two stances with regard to the good management of the university.

The first relates to the purchase of technology (i.e. television sets and digital decoders) for all campuses in 2002. Students felt very disconnected from the world of new technologies. Since the university authorities were not responding to this need, ASSER decided to tax student scholarships by BIF 200 (about USD 0.13) per student each month in order to build a fund to purchase the desired technology (ASSER, Note for New Students, 4 February 2003).⁶ The coveted devices were purchased and distributed to four campuses of the University of Burundi (Minutes of the regular meeting of the Executive Committee of ASSER, 8 March 2003). The effort of fulfilling the needs of the students, which normally would be the task of the administration, stimulated an *esprit de corps* that furthered the legitimacy of ASSER in the collective mind of the student body.

The second case occurred in 2005. Residential students on the various campuses complained that their mattresses were too worn out to be comfortable. ASSER student representatives countered an unrealistic promise of the minister of higher education with a proposal for reallocating BIF 600 of their scholarships (about USD 0.39) per month per student, and cancelling two vehicles that were ordered by the university for its academic staff. This denoted a pressure on the authorities but also demonstrated a desire to see the general interest triumph over individual interests. The ministry accepted only the former proposal (ASSER minutes of General Assembly, 4 August 2005). Although the solution meant that once again students were paying for positive modifications to their campus life with their scholarships, ASSER gained further legitimacy and promoted solidarity among the students by addressing student problems when the authorities failed to do so.

Thirdly, the increase in enrolment also meant an increase of students who failed courses and had to repeat them, thus lengthening the time that students stayed at the university. The small size of the campuses led the university authorities to limit access to campus housing, which affected students from remote places up-country who hoped to obtain rooms on campus. Once again, the students did not abandon their colleagues. They set up a support mechanism for these so-called *sinistrés* (i.e. disaster victims), enabling the managers of student scholarships to subtract an amount of BIF 50 (about USD 0.03) per student to provide a scholarship for these 'disaster victims' permitting them to purchase basic items and, despite the campus restrictions on access to the university without an identity card, students developed a support system to share a bedroom called *maquis*. The *maquis* allows students who are unrecognised and unregistered for the campus managing services of the university to continue to live on

⁶ At the time, the scholarship provided BIF 3 150 (USD 2.31) for residential students and BIF 19 668 (USD 12.72) for commuters. The 'donation' for residential students was therefore 1.3% and 0.1% for commuters.

campus and continue their studies (interview with Tatien Sibomana, Bujumbura, July 2014). In fact, these students still had the opportunity to be enrolled in the faculty of their choice but could not qualify for scholarships and the government subsidies of teaching and research, and their parents had to pay for their basic needs (such as room rent, meals, health care, life insurance, etc.). But considering the fact that students were predominantly rural and poor, the problem persisted as their parents or families were unable to finance their rent and food requirements.

ASSER's attention to solidarity also manifested through support for students with diseases or who were in need of medical intervention. Small bills for students who were victims of illness or robbery on the campus were paid by ASSER via its own funds arising from taxes which it levied on small businesses on the campus (e.g. snack bars, phone shops, kiosks for various products, etc.) (ASSER, Social Contribution, Act No. 001/2002; ASSER minutes of the meeting of 8 July 2005 between the ASSER organs and shop holders).⁷ In fact, while each student subscribes to the mutual benefit fund of public servants, this contribution remains with limited benefits even to pay for local medical interventions. Students whose scholarship is substantially low and irregularly paid are often unable to pay the bill equivalent to 20% of the total fees. So, frequently the situation arises whereby ASSER is expected to pay the medical bill on behalf of a student. Therefore, some cases required 'exceptional or ad hoc mobilisations': campaigns to raise special funds, for example to send students for surgical interventions to India or Europe. Due to the fact that the university was not able to provide financial aid, student solidarity ensured that no student would be allowed to succumb to diseases that could easily be cured elsewhere (interview with D Me Bashirahishize, Bujumbura, July 2014). The shortcomings of governmental provisions for the benefit of students are significant. But some of the deficiencies are related also to governance problems at the university. While it is the responsibility of the university to organise such interventions, the fact that it does not provide any more than basics opens avenues for students to intervene in its place.

Finally, ASSER has stood out as a *bona fide* tribune in the academic field. This is a sensitive area in which disagreements arise between various stakeholders. In the past, contrasting opinions have arisen between the rector and the deans of faculties on the one hand, and the student association through its council of delegates and the commissioner for academic affairs on the other hand. ASSER's interventions in this area have long focused on reforms at UB, specifically the issue of the academic calendar and problems related to the way each faculty organises its academics activities (ASSER letter to the chairman of the board of directors of UB, 12 December 2002). During the 50 years of UB's existence, many reforms have been undertaken. Students have taken positions on two major reforms in particular: the reform on the adoption of continuous assessment and the transition to the bachelor-master-doctorate (BMD) system.

The adoption of a continuous assessment system was the result of the political and social

⁷ Each shop holder agreed to pay BIF 5 000 per month.

crisis that has shaken the country since 1993 that did not spare the university. The university was forced to manage the challenges posed by the quasi-permanent shortage of qualified teaching staff (at PhD level); the breakdown of cooperation with foreign universities; brain-drain; and the departure of students to many foreign universities (Mane 2007; Midende 2007; *Observatoire de l'Action Gouvernementale/OAG* 2011).

The idea of adopting continuous assessment was related both to overlapping academic years and the duration of the academic year itself. For many years at UB, no one was able to tell when the academic year started or ended. Practically, the time between the courses taught by one professor and another have long been due to staffing issues as well as the lack of a standardised calendar, yet students were required to prepare for and pass exams based on material acquired during these sporadic intervals. The continuous assessment proposal was an attempt to regulate the academic calendar by avoiding months that normally were given to students to prepare for their first and second exam sessions. However, convincing students to make this transition was difficult since they considered the system as ostensibly too restrictive and not flexible enough for them. ASSER, through the Office of the Council of Delegates and the Commissioner for Academic Affairs, engaged students in debates to understand the challenges that were posed by the new system. The results of these debates were announced to the authorities of the university.

ASSER persuaded the class representatives, deans, and heads of department to cooperate in the development of class schedules that take into account the challenges of this type of assessment (ASSER minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee, 11 August 2002; *Report of the Rectorate Council*, 11 July 2002). However, as this new assessment model would have to be integrated into new academic regulations, it introduced additional controversy between the authorities (especially the Directorate of Academic Affairs) and ASSER. The director argued that 'ASSER was not to be invited in the elaboration of a regulation that it has to govern', but ASSER posited that 'to be excluded from the development of regulations that are supposed to govern it makes nonsense'. (ASSER archives, minutes of the rector's council, 14 November 2002, 2; minutes of the General Assembly of Students, 28 September 2002). After negotiations, ASSER proposed that an ad hoc committee should be set up to facilitate a discussion of the matter. Although this committee was not formed, the debate was conducted within the faculties and departments. ASSER contributed to the modification of the proposed regulation on continuous assessment. Afterwards, ASSER organised a campaign to sensitise students to the regulation. Since then the modified system has worked, and the university continues to move towards academic year standardisation. However, the continued lack of a standardised academic calendar has thwarted planning both for the governance of the university and for the academic progress of the students (OAG 2011).

The second reform in which ASSER was deeply engaged was the transition from the former system of *Candidatures-Licence-DEA-Doctorat* to the BMD qualification system. Under the law on higher education passed in Burundi in 2011, the University of Burundi had to start to make the transition (Law No.1/22 of December 2011; Tshitenge 2012). Student representatives

engaged in an adversarial debate organised on the operationalisation of the new system inspired by the European Union's Bologna Reform (Houphouet-Boigny 2008). The system requires both changing curricula and modifying pedagogical methods in higher education. Yet, in the opinion of students, it was presented as an issue of harmonising programmes and of funds for the students who would have to repeat the year for various reasons. The discussions led to the coexistence of the two models; the old model only disappeared as students who had begun under the old system finished their degrees. Furthermore, ASSER argued for measures relating to students who failed the year in the old model and then would have to repeat the year under the BMD model. After many strikes, a compromise was reached that permitted credit transfer from one model to another (interview with B Ntahiraja, Bujumbura, July 2014). Unfortunately this transfer model was not sufficiently described in the university's regulations. Students fearing the possibility of failure and the need to repeat the year did not feel protected by the academic regulations. The coexistence of the two models divided teachers and students for some time. The professors proposed exemptions for courses for which failed students received 80% even though the academic regulations judged a course to be successful if and only if the student gets 50% in all courses from the academic unit. Finally, ASSER proposed an average of 60% in the course for it to be exempted (interview, B Gahungu, Bujumbura, July 2014). When the student representatives asked for this compromise to be reflected in the academic regulations, the board of directors amended article 129, paragraph 2 on review. It now reads:

[T]he rights and obligations arising under the 2006 Regulations will be implemented by the Jury in the interest of the student. Notably, successful lessons contained in BMD program equivalencies and lessons supplements can be integrated into corresponding Teaching Units. (University of Burundi, Academic Regulations (BMD system), 2012: Article 60)⁸

The student body hailed this change as a big victory of the student organisation.

Finally in the academic field, ASSER has long played a role in the resolution of specific faculty or departmental academic problems. Issues have been related to study trips that are made for one department within some faculties, ill-managed laboratories, language immersion courses out of the country or new equipment for the Higher Technical Institute (ASSER, FACAGRO, Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Second Year Engineering Students, 17 February 2002; minutes of the General Assembly of Students on Zege Campus, 30 June 2002). In order to address these issues, ASSER has been taking positions, written notes and sometimes resorted to strikes within certain faculties to bring pressure for change and negotiate solutions that have been consensual and beneficial for all stakeholders.

⁸ The author translated this paragraph from French: '[...] les droits et les obligations nés sous le régime du règlement de 2006, seront mis en œuvre par le Jury dans l'intérêt de l'étudiant. Notamment, les enseignements réussis figurant dans le programme BMD, les équivalences et les enseignements en compléments peuvent être intégrés dans les Unités d'Enseignement correspondants.'

Student community issues on campus: ASSER as legitimate tribunal

ASSER, more than any other student organisation operating at UB, can be considered as a community that aligns with Ferdinand Tönnies' definition. According to Tönnies, a community is a unity that excludes the distinction of parts (ASSER, Preamble, Statutes of Asser, 2005; Durkheim 1975: 383–390). What keeps people together and united, as Emile Durkheim (1975) said, is consensus. For ASSER, consensus relies on the belief in building a community and is generated through a process of socialisation that delineates that which does not belong in the community and ultimately creates a strongly clustered aggregate of consciousness.

To maintain consensus, ASSER has developed policies for including and excluding members and has organised its administrative structure in a way that supports its goals. In regard to the first issue, the association does not allow any student to be a part of the organisation when the executive committee judges him or her to be detrimental to the community (ASSER, *Statutes*, Article 4). To deal with this, ASSER established a policy that requires membership to be renewed annually through an election process covering all classes, faculties and campuses (interview with D Me Bashirahishize, Bujumbura, July 2014). In terms of its administrative structure, ASSER has created three different judicial bodies to arbitrate conflicts between students, between students and other university staff and between students and people outside of the university.

First, the Arbitration Committee which was established in 1985 ensures the arbitration of disputes between the executive committee of ASSER and the Council of Delegates, that is ASSER's parliament. At times, presidents of ASSER's executive committee have not acted in the interest of students, and it fell to the Arbitration Committee to determine punishment.

Second, the Committee of the Wise is ASSER's tribunal and exists on all campuses. Members are elected on the basis of an analysis of applications through which they are made to demonstrate their integrity and honesty (ASSER archives, *Demande d'admission comme sage auxiliaire*, 25 January 2012). This committee receives complaints from students but also adjudicates penalties relating to transgressions committed. Both committees enable the socialisation process that continues after student registration.

Indeed, the socialisation process begins with the act of initiation of new students into the university called 'academic baptism'. The ritual called 'stinking' occurs on each campus for its new students and is conducted by current students, the *honorable poilissimes* as they are known in student jargon. This ritual fosters interplay between the new and old students, but also permits the current students to instil the values of the student culture. The various Committees of the Wise are the guardians of these values; to uphold these values, a taxonomy of offenses was codified in 2005 (interview with D Me Bashirahishize, Bujumbura, July 2014). The Higher Council of Elders that includes the 'wise men'⁹ from the different campuses meets

⁹ According to the ASSER archives, no female has ever belonged to this committee. But this should not be considered as discrimination because the appointment is motivated by a request of the applicant to the executive committee of the ASSER.

to adjudicate breaches of the values committed by a student, group of students, and even a former *honorable poilissime*. The penultimate punishment utilised has been the *enterrement multiséculaire*, which literally means buried for centuries. As a public punishment, the offender is subjected to degradation and humiliation; the student is booed by all other students, spat upon, and finally soaked in drainage ditch of waste water from the kitchen of the university. The worst punishment that the Committee of the Wise can impose on a student is banishment; the student must leave the campus and is not to be received in any university homes, and if necessary the association can take legal action.

The third court is the General Assembly of Students. Speaking at the General Assembly is open to everyone, but not any kind of speech is permitted. A speaker takes his or her place on the balcony of a house overlooking the 'Revolution Square'. As an elder of the ASSER stated, when persons go up on that balcony, 'We talk for the group, but not on the group.' In other words, when a meeting of the General Assembly is held, it is forbidden to discuss anything that harms the interests of the group, as it was ordered by 'the unity of *poilissimes*'. Thus, whenever a speaker proclaims a position contrary to the will of the community, he or she is booed and 'buried' in the local jargon. Thus, the assembly acts as a court of the people, protecting the group.

In 2008, some senior technical and administrative services staff of the university received this sanction by the students when they acted against the unity of *poilissimes*. The staff members called for a cessation of the so-called academic baptism. However, the penalties – especially burial – imposed on the staff were not recognised by the university authorities as administrative sanction. The incident triggered the university to disband ASSER especially after students violently attacked a member of the academic staff, Théophile Ndikumana, a professor of chemistry. The university removed ASSER as the organisation representing the students in all structures of the administration of the university (i.e. the administration council, rector's council, faculty council, etc.). However, this quick fix solution eliminated an important path between the students and the Rectorate. When the students called for a strike, the university administrators had no interlocutor with whom to enter into dialogue. Thus, the university authorities needed to negotiate with students and as ASSER was the only case of a student organisation, there was a vacuum of representation. Thus, the Brotherhood Students of Rumuri (FER) was created to succeed ASSER (interview with D Me Bashirahishize, Bujumbura, July 2014).

Political development and ASSER interference in the decision-making process

Archival documents and interview participants suggest that Burundian students and their leaders have consistently developed their own vision of political life in their country and managed to express and publicise their positions. These visions and positions have arisen from

political events in the contemporary history of Burundi. In this section I demonstrate the manner in which these positions have been factors in building of a new type of representation both accepted and contested by the political powers.

Strong presence and entrenched positions on political issues

The struggle for independence originally drew Burundian students into politics, but not without their apprehension about national structures. By engaging with and acting on their conscience and concerns, students were drawn into national politics and came to be part of building a national political leadership. As noted above, a group of students within the UNEBA sent a petition to the Security Council and the UN Trusteeship Council supporting the immediate independence for Burundi in 1960 (Cart 1973). This action was very risky for a student organisation to take as the colonial power remained the sole provider of scholarships in African and Western universities for Burundian students. Moreover, the danger was significant given the influence of political actors who sought to delay or even disrupt Burundi's independence from Belgium. The Christian Democratic Party (PDC) led the postponement faction as a group founded at the instigation of senior colonial officials of the Belgian trusteeship to act as a counterweight to the passionate nationalism and advocacy for independence of UPRONA (Deslaurier 2002; Nimubona 1998). By opting for immediate independence, UNEBA positioned itself in the eye of a storm that was controlled by internal elites and Belgian colonial officials until the general election of 18 September 1961. In addition to the colonial authority-linked PDC, which became the target of students, a second group emerged. Claiming to be closer to the people and rural families, the People's Party (PP) supported liberation but sought a process of political transition before reaching independence. The PP sought a political agreement ensuring fairness and equality between Hutu and Tutsi (Nimubona 1998). In this regard, UNEBA played the national unity card well, earning itself a reputation as a movement with a national vision. In his Independence Day speech on 1 July 1962, the Deputy Prime Minister Pierre Ngendandumwe publicly emphasised the role played by UNEBA (Nduwayo 1985).

This reputational status led UNEBA to further extend its political commitment. It adopted entrenched positions against the post-colonial running of the country. At the same time, UPRONA, which had yet to gain much support, was heavily criticised by UNEBA. Suggesting the transition from a monarchy to a republican system in the shortest possible time, UNEBA argued that the monarchy opposed the ideals of progress, justice and equity, a position which was also held by the international socialist movement. UNEBA asked for justice in the case of the murders of Kamenge unionists, the assassination of Prime Minister Ngendandumwe in 1965, and the purges of Hutus in the ranks of the army during the first days of the republican regime. Although the UNEBA was dissolved in 1968 by the ruling republican junta, the students gathered in a congress in 1971 and sent a petition entitled *Political Dementia and Legal Scandal in Burundi* to the Burundian Ambassador in Belgium M Laurent Nzeyimana (Madirisha 1966).

The petition strongly criticised the regime and especially the President of the Republic, Michel Micombero.

In 1971, the government charged some citizens for having conspired against the Micombero regime (Ngayimpenda 2004). During one famous case, the Ntungumburanye case, the *Union Générale des Etudiants de Rumuri* (UGER) generally denounced the various crises that had shaken the country in 1969, 1970 and 1971. Although UNEBA declared that ‘we do not build a solid plan on an ambiguous basis’ (Bimazubute 1966), UGER protested against the judicial proceedings in the Ntungumburanye case. With regard to the latter, students referred to the highly irregular impeachment proceedings because not only had there been no evidence produced against the accused but most of the defendants had been subjected to torture. Students advanced that ‘a country cannot live by presidential pardon, but lives by the law’.¹⁰ This accusation was a severe condemnation of the death sentences which were followed by presidential pardon in many cases. Decisions taken by the university that followed demanded the dismissal of the involved students from the university. Consequently, eight student leaders were excluded from UB. Among the expelled students were Didace-Olivier Nimpagaritse, who later became Professor of Civil Law at UB, and Yves Sahinguvu, who became First Deputy President of the Republic from 2008 to 2010 (Interview with JB Manwangari, July 2014).

Such stances have been common among all student organisations at UB. In April 1972, during the *Ikiza* (i.e. the disaster), the Micombero regime massacred thousands of Hutu intellectuals (Chrétien 2007). Yet on all the UB campuses, Tutsi and Hutu students experienced no ethnic problems. The UGER protested against the arrests of their Hutu student colleagues and against Micombero’s Tutsi-controlled government. Although success to push the government to give up arresting Hutu students was minimal compared to the extent of the crisis, students continued, presenting their position that a leader must transcend any kind of divisions. This student perspective was also evident when ASSER issued a press release in August 1988 condemning both the killings of Tutsi civilians in two communes in the north of the country by the Party for the Liberation of Hutu People (PALIPEHUTU) and the repression carried out in retaliation by the army on the Hutu population in these two residential areas (interview with J Nimubona, Kigali, July 2014). Moreover, in the wake of the massacre of 15 August 1988, students were part of the group of 27 Hutu intellectuals who addressed an *Open Letter to President Major Pierre Buyoya* a week later. Publicising an open letter to a Burundian government authority had never occurred prior to this (Manirakiza 2002). The *Open Letter* criticised the current national government and the various crises that had been carried out against Hutu populations. Not surprisingly, but unsuccessfully, the authorities tried to force the letter’s publication to be quashed. Many of the signatories were imprisoned or exiled. After the storm that the *Open Letter* aroused, especially in diplomatic circles, President Buyoya was forced to establish a joint committee to reflect on the issue of national unity, which was one of the demands of the signatories of the letter (Manirakiza 2002).

10 Translation of ‘*Un pays ne peut pas vivre de la grâce présidentielle, mais vit du droit.*’

These positions clearly show a strong student organisational commitment to national politics. In addition, students also consistently expressed specific positions on educational policy matters.

Student organisations and national education policies: So far from power, so close in action

In the early days of the post-colonial period, the Burundian education system imitated the Belgian model: an elitist system upon which social mobility depended. Education was increasingly touted as the path to national development and autonomy. But, it has been shown by many scholars that the educational system had long been closed to a large portion of the population. Even today, inequities remain for many due to public policy. Yet, student organisations have continued to be the first to point to the need for the government to attend to education policies that will help the disadvantaged. From the first days of independence, UNEBA raised the question of the education system in clear but paradoxical terms. Students pondered if the act of their own education could lead to the exploitation of others after graduation:

We can already ask ourselves if, as government officials or politicians, we prefer a human operating system so that we will not be the black bourgeoisie that wants to succeed in place of the white bourgeoisie of the old colonial society.
(Nduwayo 1985: 67)

In various publications, UNEBA argued for certain principles to reform Burundi's post-colonial education system. Its first point was that primary education had to be adapted to national realities. The school should be the focus of community development and influence the development of the countryside. For example, according to this student organisation the school should be a centre of agricultural extension methods in a predominantly agricultural country. The other battleground of UNEBA was the democratisation of the school system. Since 1961, UNEBA has pleaded for free primary education, a measure that was finally implemented in 2005 following the debt relief programme sustained for Heavily Indebted Poor Countries and as a measure to support the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals promoted by the UN.

The vision of the students was clearly too idealistic for a country with a very limited budget. The association was highly extroverted and at the forefront of the rest of the country. UNEBA did not limit its demands to only primary education. Students also questioned the secondary and higher education systems. Regarding the latter, it organised a strike in 1966 during which students through the organisation asked teachers to end the repeated failing of students. Students considered failing as a continuation of the colonialist principle that held

the natives down for fear of being replaced (Regards 1967). It was argued that, by extension, the practice of failing students continued to maintain the assumption that fewer (native) elites minimised (native) trouble. These claims have been transmitted from student generation to student generation even after the demise of the UNEBA, the UGER and the CGER, and later ASSER and FER. Each group in succession has invested in representing the views of the oppressed masses by combating policies unjust to rural and poor populations. Carrying the banner of the underclasses has been particularly true regarding the question of student scholarships at the University of Burundi. Increases in scholarship fees have consistently resulted from government's macroeconomic analysis of national realities. Furthermore, students have always feared the removal of scholarship grants. On 20 February 1984, the government transformed the scholarship grants into loans; since then every student has been required to repay the amount granted (Mukuri 2013).

The *Cercle Général des Etudiants de Rumuri* (CGER) challenged this new policy of loans. As one of the former leaders of CGER Eugene Nindorera explained, the fight was very difficult. The CGER established a committee to draft a statement against this government measure in order to defend the poor and criticise the patronage and regionalism system that characterised the regime. Demonstrations were planned but the student movement was almost thwarted. The government infiltrated the organisation's core through its intelligence system. Even the president of the CGER was a member of the intelligence services. Although the protest movement rapidly lost steam, the message had already been given (interview with E Nindorera, Bujumbura, August 2014). At the fall of this regime on 3 September 1987 through a military *coup d'état*, a key measure of the new regime was cancelling the provisions of the loan-scholarship policy for students at the University of Burundi (interview with J Nimubona, Kigali, July 2014; Mukuri 2013).

This seems to have repeated itself recently. In 2014, the government tried again to implement major reforms to the student scholarship system at the University of Burundi. However, the presidential decree and ministerial enforcement orders were challenged by the student association FER with a strike that paralysed the institution for almost two months (Hakizimana 2014). According to the order of the minister of higher education, students who graduated from secondary school beginning in 2013–2014 and who earned a score higher than 69.2% in the university entrance examination would receive a classical scholarship, that is a full scholarship for the duration of their studies. Graduates earning a score between 66.5% and 69.1% would be free to enrol in higher education, but without any other support from government in terms of scholarship fees. Finally, those with a score between 64.2% and 66.4% would be supported with BIF 200 000 (USD 125), but only if they enrolled in one of the authorised private institutions of higher education (Sahabo 2014).

Burundi consistently has been plagued by a financial crisis; thus, according to the government, the state budget cannot sustain students indefinitely. For UB students this argument was unrealistic. In Burundi, it has not been unusual that when facing a crisis, the government has found solutions that negatively affect the poor's incomes (Ntibashirakandi

2014b). In response, the student organisation FER supports a measure to prevent the children of the poorest people from losing their dream of raising their socio-economic level in society. Supporting the position of the student organisation, Professor Libérat Ntibashirakandi, a former ASSER member, argued that the government has to analyse the problem from the bottom up. Among the ten institutions that are most competitive for top students, three are public and located within the countryside. The seven others are located in Bujumbura and are either under the auspices of the Catholic Church or are seminaries (Ntibashirakandi 2014b). A large number of students attend colleges funded by communes. These colleges are less fortunate in material terms and have less qualified teachers. As a consequence, most of the students who attend these institutions earn average results in their school-leaving examinations and thus have no access to scholarships. Due to the strike organised by FER and observed during two months, the government reversed its decision and negotiations were opened on the issue (Bigirimana 2014).

Another case in which ASSER has been politically engaged in defending the weakest sector is its challenge to the government's policy on the weights in the access to secondary education. In March 1990, the Minister of Primary and Secondary Education, Gamaliel Ndaruzaniye, ordered the results of the national examination to be weighted by age groups (Mukuri 2013). This policy established a competition for admission to secondary education. If the examination is an evaluation of abilities, the measure of weighting the results by age groups posed a problem according to ASSER. The student organisation criticised it as a thinly-veiled strategy to encourage children from wealthy families and to discourage class repetition (interview with G Ndaruzaniye, Abidjan, July 2014; interview with F Bamvuginyumvira, Bujumbura, July 2014). Indeed, in its Article 13, the order had weights according to age brackets as follows: 1.3 for the age group 10–14 years; 1.2 for the age group 15–16 years; 1.1 for the age group 17–19 years; 1 for the age group 20–22 years (Mukuri 2013: 390). ASSER contested this public policy because pupils from the cities and wealthy families do not develop in the same way as those from the countryside who make up the bulk of the children. The countryside children begin primary school at an advanced age (7–9 years old) because they must travel long distances by foot to school which can take up to 10 km. Children were expected to first develop the needed physical abilities. In applying the weighting, the countryside pupils who could qualify for a higher weight (1.3) would be rare. Thus it would mostly be children from the city or from wealthy parents who advanced early to seventh grade.

After student protests in the streets of Bujumbura, Article 13 containing this weighting clause was removed by the minister. According to Gamaliel Ndaruzaniye, by rescinding the order the government's aim was to respond to questions that arose about the admission rates to secondary schools which remained 4% at that time (1989) and which was not politically tenable. However, the question remained how to increase the number of students in colleges without increasing the infrastructure to host students which would cost the government a lot. The challenge was the need to remove the internship system so that government could increase the capacity of the secondary school system as well as the issue of class repetition in primary

school. The student demonstrations at the UB turned out to be beneficial because they provoked the start of a dialogue on broader issues relating to the education system. The debate eventually led to the introduction of communal colleges and private secondary schools in Burundi's education system. Both communal and private colleges were opened for all students who failed the national exam in primary school. They could enter secondary school but without any support from the government.

Clearly the positions taken by the students have been of utmost importance in the transition from colonialism to independence and ever since, whether in response to outbreaks of aberrant political power or socio-political crises. Students have particularly played a key role in challenging educational policies when they found that the poor and disadvantaged populations would be bearing the brunt of a decision. As lighting rods, students and their university have taken and continue to take risks for the benefits of others. Through the years, their efforts have built a spirit of leadership both in the student community and at the national level.

Conclusion

The main purpose of this chapter has been to analyse the role played by student organisations in national politics in Burundi and in the governance of the University of Burundi. The chapter highlights that student organisations at UB, with particular focus on ASSER, have from their creation played an important role in defending both students' interests and general national interests. They have progressively constituted a genuine tribune both for students and the general population. Dealing with internal problems, student organisations at UB constituted somewhat the basis of a 'community of destiny'. This has been demonstrated by different interventions in everyday life on different campuses where student organisations are considered to be a legitimate tribunal. Furthermore, through participation in various decision-making structures of the University of Burundi and through their positions taken on public policy, a succession of student organisations at the UB has provided a privileged space for building a national leadership. Finally, the chapter highlights the importance of shared governance and student representation in higher education governance for public policy to be made and implemented without contestation.

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CHAPTER 11

POLITICISATION OF THE NATIONAL UNION OF GHANA STUDENTS AND ITS EFFECTS ON STUDENT REPRESENTATION

Ransford Edward Van Gyampo, Emmanuel Debrah and Evans Aggrey-Darkoh

Introduction

The discourse on Ghana's democratisation has proceeded without much focused regard to the indefatigable role that the National Union of Ghana Students (NUGS) has played. In the struggle for independence, the fight against authoritarian and military rule and the support for democracy, the NUGS has been at the centre of political action and engagement (Gyampo 2013). It has championed the interests of the marginalised including 'fighting' the university authorities to implement a quota admission system for female students, rendering support to regimes that promoted student interests, and conversely antagonising those that betrayed the fiduciary trust reposed in them by the people of Ghana (Chazan 1978; Gyimah-Boadi 2000). Indeed, in the 1970s and 1980s, the NUGS was widely identified as a youth organisation with an anti-government agenda. This is because it served as the principal non-political youth association devoted to fighting injustices and state saboteurs. In particular, it pursued a mission of ensuring that the military was prevented from interfering in democratic governance. Hence, its vitality was more pronounced during the military regimes than in times of democratic governance because of its credo to resist oppressive rule and policies crafted to undermine human rights and freedoms. Thus, with the demise of authoritarian military rule in Ghana and the emergence of democratic rule in the 1990s, the NUGS' role as vanguard of freedom and justice has waned (Nunyonameh 2012). Has constitutional rule in Ghana truncated NUGS' vibrant activities? While NUGS' role as opposition to military rule has been rendered redundant, there is a new phenomenon of NUGS engagement with politics that involves striking acquaintance with politicians in the new constitutional order.

The current relationship between the NUGS and politicians manifests in four dimensions:

First, politicians have tried to court NUGS' support with financial inducements and rewards in the form of scholarships to study abroad and assurance of positions in government. Second, politicians have orchestrated a break-up of the constituent groups that make up the NUGS. For instance, some politicians have instigated the Ghana National Union of Polytechnic Students (GNUPS) to secede from NUGS, thereby contributing to the looming danger of NUGS' disintegration. Third, it is commonplace that the politicians have infiltrated the processes for choosing the leaders of NUGS. They have not only sponsored their preferred candidates to contest NUGS' elections but also weakened their united front in order to subjugate them to political control (IEA 2007). Fourth, the politicians have antagonised student leaders who have failed to support their policies and had mobilised opposition or demonstration against them (Asante 2012).

In the same vein, educational authorities, particularly the university/polytechnic authorities have moved to protect their interests by ensuring that student elections produce leaders who are cooperative rather than agents of politicians to undermine corporate university governance (Gyampo 2013; interview, W Madilo, April 2014; Nunynameh 2012). Indeed, beginning from the mid-2000s, the various universities in Ghana have sought to curtail the influence of students by introducing stringent academic requirements as a means of determining who emerges as a student leader. In the University of Ghana for example, to hold any position in the Student Representative Council (SRC), one needs to be a student with a Second Class Upper and a grade point average of 3.0 and above (UG Regulations for Junior Members 2014). Without this, one cannot contest any position. With the introduction of this policy, only timid and timorous souls who are not prepared to challenge the status quo and act assertively in defence of student interest have emerged (interview, S Binfoh, April 2014). This is contrary to what pertained in the period before 1992 when the entire student body elected their own leaders whom they thought could adequately represent their interests irrespective of their academic achievement. This partly explains why the days of demonstrations seem over on the various tertiary educational campuses (interview, S Binfoh, April 2014).

Literature on Ghanaian politics and democracy including the works of Austin (1964), Chazan (1978), Agyemang (1988), Lentz (1995), Nugent (1996), Ninsin (1996), Gyimah-Boadi (2000), Asante (2012), Nunynameh (2012) and Gyampo and Debrah (2013), has highlighted the role of youth associations and NUGS as agents for legitimising or popularising regimes and mobilising electoral support for political parties. In this, NUGS is largely portrayed as a body formed to champion the interests of students. However, these studies have overlooked the cumulative effect, be it positive or negative, of the systematic politicisation of the student association on the democratic representation of student interests vis-à-vis politicians' partisan interests. Besides, much of the studies have failed to nuance the fundamental imperatives that determine and explain the relationship between students' associations and political parties' interests.

This study is an attempt to fill the lacuna in the literature. The chapter shows that since the attainment of independence, the National Union of Ghana Students has played a crucial

role in Ghana's political processes and served as the official mouthpiece of students. It has championed the cause of students and represented their interests in decision-making at both the institutional and national level through dialogue, negotiations and demonstrations. However, through excessive politicisation of its activities, particularly in the selection of its leadership, the credibility and reputation of this august student body seem to have been tainted from 1992 when Ghana was ushered into the Fourth Republic. This has had both negative and positive effects on the interests of students in Ghana.

Using a qualitative research approach, the chapter investigates how the politicisation of student activities has simultaneously promoted, de-emphasised and undermined the representation of student interests by NUGS. For this purpose, ten students were selected for interviews based on the criterion of being a NUGS' executive member. The interview material was complemented with information from some ten former NUGS' leaders as well as from data drawn from books, journal articles, newspaper and NUGS' publications on the matter. The chapter thus appraises the role of NUGS in promoting student interests since 1992. It examines how the politicisation of NUGS' activities has undermined and at the same time, contributed to the performance of its core mandate of ensuring the representation of students' interests at national and institutional levels. In order to provide a context for analysing the issue, the chapter starts by outlining the aims, structure, membership, funding and organisation of NUGS; it then reviews the concept of representation; undertakes a brief overview of NUGS' activities; and finally examines the extent to which the politicisation of NUGS' activities has affected the expression of students' interests. The chapter closes by drawing key conclusions.

The National Union of Ghana Students: Aims, structure and organisation

According to Chazan (1978), Ghanaian students are extremely conscious of the corporate identity of their high status in the community. The institutionalisation of this solidarity therefore emphasises their special condition. It was against this that in 1965, students of the University of Ghana, the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology and the University of Cape Coast came together to form a multi-level governance structure for the administration of students' affairs called the National Union of Ghana Students (Constitution of NUGS 2008(a); NUGS Strategic Plan 2008(b)). NUGS aims to mobilise students in higher institutions of learning and fight for the promotion and defence of their interests; inculcate in students a high sense of discipline, militant participation and revolutionary awareness of the Ghanaian cultural heritage and the means to advance these; as well as act as a pressure group to make demands and influence government decisions (NUGS Strategic Plan 2008(b)). NUGS hopes to create a distinct and forceful youth group to serve as the guardian of societal norms and innovators of societal growth (Chazan 1978). As a youth group, NUGS is concerned with the promotion of individual growth through group action. As per the *National Redemption Council Decree (NRCD) 241 of 1974*, NUGS is registered by the National Youth Council as an

independent student organisation responsible for championing the cause of Ghanaian students. In terms of membership, it must be noted right from the onset that NUGS is made up of both tertiary and 'high schoolers'. Indeed, the Union is a conglomeration of the varieties of public tertiary students and the senior high school groupings in Ghana that encompasses such associations as:

- The University Students Association of Ghana (USAG);
- The Graduate Students Association of Ghana (GRASAG);
- Teacher Trainees Association of Ghana (TTAG);
- Ghana Union of Professional Students (GUPS);
- Ghana National Union of Polytechnic Students (GNUPS); and
- Regional SRCs of senior high schools (RSRCs).

The NUGS Congress is the highest decision-making body. It is constituted by representatives of the component institutions. The Central Committee (CC) is made up of national officers, bloc executives, local NUGS and student representative councils (SRCs) of the respective member institutions. The CC meets at least three times a year to discuss issues that are of great concern to students. The national executive committee (NEC) is next to the CC, which comprises the national president, national secretary, coordinating secretary, press and information secretary, treasurer, women's commissioner and a representative each from the blocs. The NEC is responsible for the effective operation of the national secretariat, and oversees the implementation of its programmes. The national secretariat, which is located in Accra, is operated by national officers and performs the day-to-day administration of NUGS. The local NUGS secretariat is made of the local NUGS executives of the various tertiary institutions and works in collaboration with the SRCs, and acts as the liaison with the national secretariat in matters relating to the implementation of NUGS' programmes (Constitution of NUGS 2008(a)).

NUGS is a self-funded body, which derives the bulk of its funds from dues levied on its members. It also receives donations and non-financial assistance from independent donors such as the private sector (Constitution of NUGS 2008(a)). Over the years, particularly in a favourable political climate, NUGS has received financial support from the government, albeit irregularly and insufficiently. Hence, the annual dues payable by its members constitute the most reliable source of income to NUGS (interview, S Binfoh, April 2014). According to the 2008 constitution, funds for running the organisation primarily come from the dues of the various SRCs. Unfortunately, the constitution does not stipulate the exact time for the payment of dues into the accounts of NUGS by the various SRCs. Given that the various SRCs cannot vote at NUGS' congressional elections when they are in default of dues payment, most SRC leaders delay their payment till the NUGS congress. By that time, the incumbent executives may be exiting from office and hence monies paid into the NUGS account may be misused or embezzled by them ostensibly to defray or repay monies they have borrowed to run

the activities of the NUGS during their tenure. This has been a recurrent phenomenon and out-going student leaders have exploited the situation to their advantage as a result of the constitutional lacuna above (interview, S Binfoh, April 2014). Hence, the new leadership of NUGS often inherits empty coffers and is plagued with serious financial hardship that renders the new leaders inactive and incapable of even organising press conferences (interview, S Binfoh, April 2014).

Conceptualising representation

Representation essentially denotes trusteeship and means acting in the best interest of those being represented, in a manner responsive to them (Ball & Peters 2005; Heywood 2002; Pitkin 1967). Both Pitkin (1967) and Heywood (2002) argue that as trustees, representatives must act independently and their action must involve discretion; enlightened conscience; mature judgment; and not necessarily consulting those who are being represented who may be less fortunate in terms of education, expertise, experience and understanding. Indeed, Pitkin (1967) postulates that where representation is conceived as being ‘unattached abstraction’, that is, an interest to which no particular persons is specially related, the consultation of anyone’s wishes and opinions is least likely to seem significant. She notes further that those who are being represented must also be capable of independent action and judgment, not merely being taken care of. This is what Pitkin (1967) refers to as substantive representation. She argues that the more a representative is seen as a member of a superior elite of wisdom and reason, the less it makes sense for him or her to be required to always consult the opinions of the represented. Pitkin (1967) argues further that the representative must not be found to be persistently at odds with the wishes of the represented without good reason.

Trusteeship is based on the belief that knowledge and understanding are unequally distributed in society, in the sense that not all citizens know what is best for them (Grisby 2005; Heywood 2002). This view however has strong elitist and anti-democratic connotations because ‘if politicians for instance should think for themselves because the public is ignorant, poorly educated or deluded, then surely it is a mistake to allow the public to elect their representatives in the first place’ (Heywood 2002: 225). Moreover, the link between representation and education is questionable. Whereas education may certainly be of value in aiding the understanding of intricate political and economic problems, it may not necessarily breed altruism and help representatives to make correct moral judgements about the interest of others (Bluway 2006; Guild & Palmer 1968). Furthermore, there is the danger that if representatives are allowed to exercise their own judgement, they may simply use the latitude to pursue their own selfish interests. In this way, representation could simply become a substitute for democracy (Heywood 2002).

To surmount some of the challenges of trusteeship, Pitkin (1967: 109) argues further that ‘if a representative and his constituents are relatively equal in wisdom, and in capacity, he

would be required to consult his constituents'. Constituents are seen to be equal in terms of wisdom and capacity when decisions to be taken directly affect them. In this regard, representatives would be required to consult their constituents to ensure that the clear views of the latter are incorporated into the decision-making process (Ball & Peters 2005; Bluwey 2006; Guild & Palmer 1968). Heywood (2002) refers to a representative who consults his constituents before taking a decision as a delegate. A delegate is not superior to his or her constituents in terms of wisdom and capacity. He or she acts for another on the basis of clear guidance or instructions (Pitkin 1967). According to Heywood (2002: 228), 'those who favour this model of representation usually support mechanisms that ensure that representatives are bound as closely as possible to the views of the represented'. The virtue of this model of representation is that it provides broader opportunities for popular participation and serves to check the likely self-serving inclinations of representatives (Grigsby 2005). This model, however, slows down decision-making and limits the scope for leadership and statesmanship. Indeed, representatives are forced to reflect the views of their constituents or even pander to them, and are thus not able to mobilise the people by providing vision and inspiration (Ball & Peters 2005; Heywood 2002).

Heywood (2002) identifies two other models of representation. These are the mandate and resemblance models. Mandate is based on the idea that in winning an election, a representative gains a popular mandate that authorises him to carry out whatever programme was outlined during the electioneering campaign. A representative in this regard has the mandate to pursue only what he or she promised to pursue prior to the election. This model keeps representatives to their promises. It however, imposes a straitjacket by limiting the actions of representatives only to those proposals they made prior to their election, leaving no scope for them to adjust policies in the light of changing circumstances. On the other hand, the resemblance model suggests that only people who come from a particular group, and have shared the experiences of that group, can fully identify with its interests (Heywood 2002). This model represents the difference between 'putting oneself in the shoes of another' and having direct and personal experience of what other people go through (Heywood 2002). In this regard, a pro-feminist male may, for instance, sympathise with women's interests and support the principle of sexual equality, but will never be able to identify with women's problems as women do themselves, because they are not his problems. This model has however been critiqued on the grounds that a representative who typifies the characteristics of a group may not always serve the interests of that larger group. Again, if all representatives simply advanced the interests of the groups from which they come, the result would be social division and conflict, with no one being able to defend the common good or advance a broader public interest (Heywood 2002).

Representation may therefore be achieved through the exercise of wisdom by educated elites, through guidance and instructions given to a delegate, through the winning of a popular mandate, or through representatives being drawn from the group they represent. It is, however, common to find more than one principle of representation operating at the same time within a system, suggesting that no single model is sufficient in itself to secure adequate representation

(Heywood 2002). Both Heywood (2002) and Pitkin (1967) believe that a government is seen as representative not by demonstrating its control over its subjects but just the reverse, by demonstrating that its subjects have some control over what it does. In this regard, the constituents must have the power to select their leaders and recall such leaders who fail to promote the interests of those who elected them to office (Bluwey 2006; Dryzek 1996).

In sum, representation involves acting in the best interest of a group or constituent. The people or constituents, where necessary, must be able to exercise some control over the decision-making process and their representatives. They must have the power to select their leaders without outside influence and interference from politicians or any other group of people who do not belong to the parent body. Again, the constituents also reserve the right and power to remove leaders who fail to advance and protect the fiduciary trust reposed in them. This conceptualisation of representation provides the framework against which NUGS' representation of student interest in Ghana since 1992 can be analysed. A deep understanding of the models of representation enables us to appreciate the actions and inactions of student leaders as they strive to serve the interests of their constituents.

Defining politicisation of students' affairs

Politicians have developed several strategies to affect the activities of students in Ghana. They endeavour to accomplish this, for instance, by using their political parties' student wings to influence the elections of NUGS' leaders. Since 1992, the two major political parties of Ghana, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and New Patriotic Party (NPP), have both penetrated NUGS and the SRCs through the Tertiary Educational Institution Network (TEIN) of the NDC and the NPP's Tertiary Education Students Confederacy (TESCON). TEIN and TESCON are the respective branches of the NDC and NPP on the campuses of the various tertiary institutions in Ghana. They were established by the two parties to canvass for votes for the political parties (Asante 2012; Gyampo 2013). Conversely, the parties have sponsored their astute youths within their student political wings to NUGS and SRC leadership (Asante 2012). Thus, through the TEIN and TESCON, the NDC and NPP have taken control over the processes of choosing student leaders and the making of decisions.

The effects of the partisan politicisation of student leadership as, for example, experienced in the case of NUGS, on the representation of student interests have been modelled recently by Luescher-Mamashela and Mugume (2014). Adapting a framework developed originally by Schmitter and Streeck (1999), Luescher-Mamashela and Mugume (2014) argue that political party leaders may seek to attempt to 'buy' the support of student leaders by entangling them in relationships of resource exchange. Thus, political parties

provide services and resources directly to student leaders at different stages of their student political careers including campaign support through cash donation,

printing of t-shirts, posters and fliers; support to incumbent student leaders through scholarships, leadership workshops, and political support or pressure, and career opportunities upon graduation, including, leadership positions within the party... (Luescher-Mamashela & Mugume 2014: 510)

The student leaders in return are expected to represent the policies of the party; market the party among students and recruit new members for the party; adapt their posturing in accordance with party preferences; and altogether dance to the tunes of politicians sometimes to the utter neglect of student interests (Luescher-Mamashela & Mugume 2014).

These strategies have been observed in the case of NUGS' leaders' relationship with local political parties. In addition, another strategy is for the political parties to give recognition to potential NUGS leaders. Some student leaders consider political recognition as crucial because it affords them the opportunity to know and interact with top party leaders. This recognition also gives them confidence and the assurance that they could climb to the party's centre of gravity. Students who are affiliated to political parties feel important among their peers because they have political 'godfathers' (interview, S Binfoh, April 2014). For the opposition parties, influencing NUGS typically means encouraging students to challenge government's policies. Conversely, the government would need NUGS to tame students to support its policies and programmes even if they are contrary to the students' welfare (IEA 2007; Nunyoneh 2012). Again at the institutional level, the various school authorities play a role in getting their preferred candidates selected as leaders in order to ensure that whoever emerges as leader will dance to the tune of school authorities in an attempt to ensure student support of decisions taken by authorities and a stable academic calendar (interview, S Binfoh, April 2014; Gyampo 2013). As indicated earlier, they try to achieve this by setting high student academic performance standards as a requirement for contesting leadership positions and also by cajoling students who are likely to create problems for the school authorities to withdraw their candidature for elections or by cancelling unfavourable outcomes of elections and appointing their own interim leaders on the slightest and sometimes orchestrated complaint by a few students about the outcome of elections (interviews, S Binfoh, April 2014; W Madilo, April 2014).

These tendencies are what we refer to in this study as the politicisation of the National Union of Ghana Students. The politicisation of NUGS' activities therefore encapsulates a wide range of efforts both at the national and institutional level to subdue and neutralise active student activism that threatens the authority of leadership at the national political and institutional level. Since 1992, almost all the student leaders who yielded to efforts by political leaders to politicise NUGS' activities were given positions in government to serve on governmental boards or committees, and to be appointed as ministers or deputy ministers. At the institutional level too, such student leaders enjoyed very cordial relations with the authorities of the various tertiary institutions even after school (interview, S Binfoh, April 2014). It must be added that the politicisation of NUGS, particularly by politicians in recent times, also aims to ensure a sustained future and succession plan for the political parties. Indeed, most of the

politicians target student leaders as potential replacements for leadership positions within their respective parties. Hence they try to *catch them young, whiles they are in school by giving them recognition and sponsoring their elections to executive positions within the NUGS so that they can be groomed and trained for future political leadership roles in the parties.* (interview, J Asiedu-Nketiah, March 2014)

This explains why almost all the former student leaders are appointed or encouraged and sponsored to contest for various elective positions within the political parties (interview, K Afriyie, March 2014; Luescher-Mamashela & Mugume 2014).

In sum, politicians and school authorities strive to infiltrate the student camp in order to win student leaders' co-operation; avoid demonstrations and other violent student activities that tend to make leaders unpopular; ensure electoral support among students; as well as to groom students to play a role in future decision-making. Given its wide reach and nationalistic posturing as the single most powerful student group in Ghana, politicians tend to capitalise on the weak financial base of NUGS in order to bait NUGS leaders to their camps (Asante 2012). Student leaders in turn tend to yield to politicisation largely because of the personal benefits that accrue to them.

In accordance with the multi-level analytical perspective proposed by Clark (1978), the analysis in this chapter proceeds on two levels, namely the national (or macro-political) level and the institutional level where the political influences on students' activities have been most pronounced. At the national level, we examine student representation as reflected by the activities of NUGS, while at the institutional level, we focus on the activities of the various SRCs in their attempts to promote the representation of students' interests.

The dangers of politicising students' affairs

NUGS and the representation of student interests at the national level

In sharp contrast to the orientation of NUGS as a body to promote and represent student interests, the politicisation of their activities has undermined the attainment of these ideals. The analysis of interview material and documentary evidence reveals that politicians, government and school authorities have infiltrated the camps of students to the extent that student leaders are pressured to pander to the interest of 'the powers that be' instead of advancing the interests of students. This clearly undermines the concept of representation. As postulated by Pitkin (1967) and Heywood (2002) for example, representatives are expected to act in a manner that promotes the interests of their constituents and not to pander to the interests of other superior bodies who do not belong to the constituency. The strategy to 'buy student allegiance' has undermined NUGS' ability to provide effective representation of student interests. According to Samuel Binfoh, the President of NUGS:

The politicisation of the NUGS has affected the student representatives' ability to criticise the government on issues that border on student welfare. What has exacerbated the problem is that the executive members of NUGS are polarised along partisan lines with each segment trying to promote a party's interests rather than pursuing the agenda of the student body. This development has stimulated intra-students' conflict and in-fighting among the executive members of NUGS, thereby leading to schism in the student front. The division and in-fighting has become so intense that they have defied any solution. It is also the reason why acrimonious exchanges between 'opposition party student leaders' has protracted to the detriment of holding government accountable to students. The excessive conflict among the student leaders has dissipated their energies, integrity and objectivity to initiate actions on students' concerns. (interview with Samuel Binfoh, 19 April 2014)

As a body representing student/youth interests, NUGS serves on a variety of corporate boards, including the Ghana AIDS Commission, Ghana Education Trust Fund (GET Fund), the National Youth Council, the Student Loan Trust, Ghana Revenue Authority, National Council for Technical Education and other important decision-making organs whose activities directly affect students. By the Acts of parliament establishing these bodies, they are mandated to provide one seat for NUGS to serve on their boards. For example, the Ghana Education Trust Fund Act, 581 of 2000, Section 6(k) (Ministry of Education 2000), makes it mandatory for one representative of NUGS to serve on the board of the GET Fund. Moreover, NUGS is a consultative body, which is called upon by stakeholders including the government to submit input into pertinent issues that are of interest to students in the country, for example, in drafting national development programmes and policy frameworks (Constitution of NUGS 2008(a); Gyampo 2012). At these forums, the leadership of NUGS is expected to articulate the concerns that reflect their constituents' perspectives, even if 'they are often in the minority on these boards and hence their voices are dwarfed and torpedoed when it comes to decision-making and development planning' (Gyampo 2012: 139). It may be argued that student leaders can only debate the critical issues and receive favourable responses to them if they are seen as genuine representatives of general student interests and stay clear of partisan politics. According to Asante (2012), Nunyonameh (2012), and indeed all the past student leaders interviewed for the purpose of this study, some of the important concerns that have influenced Ghanaian students' demands on government in recent years include:

- Congestion in the various halls of residence and hostels at the universities and other tertiary institutions;
- Inadequate academic facilities such as lecture theatres, laboratories, libraries and furniture;
- Lack of relevant and up-to-date books and readers;
- Absence of a formal policy on the number of years to be spent in high school;
- Weak teacher motivation;

- Low-quality education and lack of relationship between the educational curriculum and what industry requires; and
- High rate of unemployment after school especially among graduates from the tertiary institutions.

Student leaders' presence on the boards and commissions noted above has so far not produced significant benefits for students because of the issue of conflict of interest. The student leaders have allowed their personal political interest to override the organisational mandate of NUGS by posing as politicians more than as student leaders. As George Sarpong, a former NUGS' leader rightly observed, 'today student leaders have metamorphosed from activist student leaders to political sycophants who pursue their parochial objectives thereby setting aside the overwhelming interests of students'. He maintained that the crop of NUGS' leaders lack the power to bite government's bad policies because the politicians have removed students' sharp incisors. Indeed, the student leaders lack detachment because they have compromised their representative position. Hence, the politicians think of them as 'small boys and girls who have nothing to offer except youthful exuberance' (interview, S Binfoh, April 2014). Even when the student representatives speak their minds on key policy issues, their views are often marginalised because 'political leaders tend to conclude on decisions before arranging meetings with the NUGS' (Gyampo 2012: 140).

In the past, the marginalisation of students would have resulted in 'pouring onto the streets to demonstrate against government' (interview, W Madilo, April 2014). However, the current NUGS' leaders lack the wherewithal to attack the government because of the political benefits that the non-confrontational attitude brings to them. Obviously, posing as typical upcoming young politicians instead of student leaders dilutes the student-features expected to be typified by the NUGS leaders in a manner that makes nonsense of the resemblance model of representation. In the view of Heywood (2002), the resemblance model is based less on the manner in which representatives are selected than on whether they resemble or typify the group they claim to represent. In this regard, people who come from a particular group and have shared the experiences of that group can better identify with and represent the group's interests. Taking on the colours of regular politicians dilutes the features and common attributes shared by the leadership of NUGS and its student constituency. It puts student leaders persistently at odds with the wishes of their constituents and renders student representation ineffectual. As already intimated, the NUGS leaders whose elections were sponsored by politicians are not willing to mobilise students against their sponsors even if student interests have been unduly undermined. This can be illustrated by analysing the following three specific instances that buttress this point.

University of Ghana's road usage policy

On 15 March 2014, the University of Ghana decided to implement a policy that required

motorists to pay a toll before they could enter the university by some restricted roads. The objective was to create a serene and conducive atmosphere for learning, safety and security on the university campus. The implementation of the policy generated public controversy and the government requested the university to suspend it. In the process of engaging in a bilateral dialogue on the issue, the national security coordinator ordered the demolition of the tollbooths. The action of the security operatives was widely condemned as an abuse on academic freedom. Many civil society groups chastised the government for its action. Yet, NUGS kept silent on the issue. It neither commented on the university's policy nor reprimanded the government's 'invasion' of the university campus without authorisation even though many students who were interviewed by the local media admitted that the policy was meant to safeguard students' safety and provide an ambience for congenial academic work.

It can be argued that the NUGS' position in relation to the UG road usage policy reflects its political commitment to the ruling party rather than a commitment to represent student interests. Having been 'swallowed up' by the government, NUGS student leaders preferred not to comment on the issue, particularly when there was a public outcry over government's interference in the university's internal affairs. The response of Samuel Binfoh, NUGS' president, to our interview on 8 April 2014, confirmed the fact that NUGS' behaviour was politically motivated. As he rightly explained, 'most of the executives of NUGS belong to the ruling party and have received several favours and assurances from the government' (interview, S Binfoh, April 2014). The student leaders did not take action against the government even though the SRC president of the University of Ghana was part of the body that implemented the policy. A criticism against the government would have meant a 'betrayal' of its ally. NUGS' silence rather implies support for the government against the university and itself since the SRC president of the University of Ghana was a key figure among the institutional policy-makers.

Tertiary graduate unemployment

Graduate unemployment is an age-old phenomenon but in recent times, the issue has assumed national concern. The Institute of Statistical Social and Economic Research (ISSER) of the University of Ghana estimates that graduate unemployment (in relation to the active and legal employable population of 18–60 years) rose from 14.8% in 1992 to 16.4% in 2000 and came close to 36% in 2009 (ISSER 2010). Though about 250 000 young graduates enter the labour market annually, the formal sector is able to absorb only 2%, leaving 98% to strive to survive in the informal sector or remain unemployed (ISSER 2010). While several development policies have been formulated, these have not yielded sufficient employment opportunities; a situation which has disproportionately affected students who annually graduate from tertiary institutions and sometimes secondary schools.

Within this debilitating situation, NUGS is expected to champion students' agitations for improvement in the employment conditions for young graduates. Unfortunately, the leadership of NUGS has over the years kept silent on the issue because any attempt to mobilise students

to demand a solution would dent the image of their ‘political friends’ in government (interviews, NN Dowuona, April 2014; W Madilo, April 2014). Given the situation where ‘most of the student leaders receive promises of after-school jobs from politicians, NUGS’ leaders feel obliged to ignore the fact that there is mass unemployment among the youth and in particular, graduates. By pretending that there is no graduate unemployment, they have invariably shielded the government from student and youth attacks. The avoidance of student–government labour confrontations and hostilities has helped to consolidate NUGS’ cordial relationship with the government but undermined student interests (interview, S Binfoh, April 2014).

Indeed, it was the silence and inaction of NUGS that led to the formation of the Unemployed Graduates Association of Ghana (UGAG) in 2011 – an association that brings together close to 25 000 young unemployed graduates from the tertiary institutions whose aim is to demand solutions to graduate unemployment (interview, D Bress-Biney, April 2014). Unfortunately, unlike NUGS, UGAG has no political clout, its demands have not been heeded and there is no serious effort to deal with unemployment among graduates from secondary and tertiary institutions.

Duration of educational system controversies

Over the last decade, Ghana’s educational system has experienced great turbulence. Apart from infrastructural difficulties including teachers’ strike actions that have led to closures of schools, there have been political rumblings regarding the number of years that should be agreed upon by the stakeholders for senior high school education. For instance, in 2002, the NPP government appointed a committee of experts to review the educational system. Based on the Committee’s recommendation, the government extended the duration of secondary school education from three to four years in order to allow students ample time to complete the curriculum. However, when the NPP implemented the policy, the NDC reversed it when it won power in 2009. In 2012, the policy was a top priority on the NPP’s electioneering campaign and the party had clearly indicated that it would abolish the NDC’s amendment (Gyampo & Debrah 2013). The general public registered its strongest criticism against the politicians for playing ‘political football with the educational life of students’ (interviews, S Binfoh, April 2014; W Madilo, April 2014).

Despite a mass mobilisation of dissent against the NDC government for the shift in the policy of duration, NUGS has not condemned it. Instead, it has supported the government’s reversal policy. Many students believe that their leaders have succumbed to the irresistible baits of the government to the detriment of students’ interests. Evidence abounds that former NUGS leaders who did the bidding of the government were also appointed into juicy positions in government after school. The appointments of former NUGS’ leaders such as Mohammed Amin Anta (former Metropolitan Chief Executive of Tamale in the NPP regime under JA Kufuor), Emmanuel Adjei Domson (former District Chief Executive of Esikuma-Odobeng-Brakwa in the NPP regime under JA Kufuor), Haruna Iddrisu (former Minister for

Communications and now Minister for Trade), Elvis Afriyie Ankrah (former Deputy Minister for Local Government and Rural Development and now Minister for Youth and Sports), Baaba Jamal (former Deputy Eastern Regional Minister), Samuel Okudzeto Ablakwa (former Deputy Minister for Information and now Deputy Minister for Education) and Edward Omani Boamah (former Deputy Minister for Environment, Science and Technology and now Minister for Communications) gives some impetus to the current crop of NUGS' leadership to lead the student front according to the whims and caprices of politicians and in a manner that relegates the interests of students to the background. However, a true representative holds the interests of his or her constituents as paramount determinants of what he or she does and must not pretend to be smarter and more knowledgeable than those who are directly affected by his or her actions and inactions (Ball & Peters 2005; Bluiwey 2006; Grisby 2005; Heywood 2002).

NUGS and student representation at the institutional level

In Ghana, students participate in the decision-making process at the institutional level; whether on the board of governors of a high school or in the councils of tertiary institutions, students are relatively well represented. For instance, the president of the Student Representative Council (SRC) of a high school or a tertiary institution is mandated to serve on the board or council of his or her institution respectively. The representatives are expected to act as trustees and make inputs to reflect students' needs and interests during the policy-formulation stage. However, two issues have constrained the ability of the SRC leaders to give effective representation to student interests. The first is the size of their representation. While at the high school and polytechnic levels only the SRC presidents are members of the boards, in the universities, the presidents of the SRC and of the Graduate Students Association of Ghana (GRASAG) respectively serve on the university council. Their under-representation may be deliberate: it allows the university authorities to subordinate student interest to the larger interest of the university. It then gives the university authorities the capacity to make decisions while pretending that students have been involved in the processes. For instance, out of the 18-member University of Ghana Council, only the presidents of the SRC and the GRASAG are members (University of Ghana 1961). It appears that student representation on the boards and councils gives only the semblance of students being at the centre of the decision-making process. Dryzek (1996) and Pitkin (1967) are, however, right when they describe the position and representation of groups such as students and young people at such forums as simply *co-optation* in the sense that they are unable to influence the decision-making process in a manner that reflects their interests. This view was confirmed by Nii Narku Dowuona, a former SRC president of the University of Ghana (1999–2000) and Samuel Binfoh, President of NUGS, when they both noted the following in an interview on 19 April 2014 in Accra:

When it comes to voting on issues that affect students at meetings of the University Council, the popular views of students are virtually marginalised because they form the minority, and so their votes are over-shadowed by the voice of the majority.
(interview with Nii Narku Dowuona & Samuel Binfoh, 19 April 2014, Accra)

Similarly, O'Donoghue et al. (2002: 19) voiced concerns about the act of 'selecting few students as members of adult-dominated settings where students are without the power to meaningfully contribute and influence the decision making process'. They contended that this situation tends to create tokenism. As tokens, they are the 'decorations side' of meetings, which precludes any opportunity for them to substantively influence the decision-making process (O'Donoghue et al. 2002). However, tokens and co-opted people cannot pursue the principle of substantive representation as postulated by Pitkin (1967).

The second issue involves efforts by both the university authorities and politicians to influence the choice of student leaders in order to control their activities. Since Ghana returned to constitutional rule in 1992, the universities and polytechnics have implemented many privatisation-related and austerity policies in order to sustain continuous management of the institutions. These include the introduction of cost-sharing in tertiary education, academic facility user fees, and residential facility user fees, among a host of other policies. This is against the backdrop of dwindling state subvention to the institutions. The successful implementation of unpleasant user fees depends, however, on student cooperation, which could only be obtained when student leaders collaborate with the university authorities. Hence the university authorities do all they can to ensure that student elections lead to the choice of cooperative leaders rather than those who will mobilise students to oppose university policies. As indicated earlier, one means to ensure this has been the introduction of criteria for student leader candidacy such as a grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 or above (Second Class Upper) as a requirement for contesting student leadership positions and as a means of 'weeding out' those who would mobilise students against the school authorities. This criterion is grounded on the yet-to-be fully proven assertion that 'student activism is synonymous with low GPA'. Nevertheless, the university authorities have some justification in acting in tandem with the above assertion. A ten-year review of the academic performance of student leaders from the University of Ghana (1998–2008) shows that those who led massive demonstrations against government and university authorities were also at the bottom of the academic ladder in terms of their GPA, which was usually between Second Class Lower and Third Class.

Even for fear of victimisation, student leaders would prefer acceding to the bullying strategy of the university authorities rather than standing in opposition to them. It is also now common for the university authorities to prospect their preferred candidate for elections as an SRC president in order to secure high cooperation from the student front for the sake of smooth and peaceful execution of austerity policies. Among those who qualify to contest for positions on the various campuses, politicians also identify those they can easily influence and support their campaign. Hence student elections both in high schools and tertiary institutions are

replete with anecdotes and evidence of the various political parties, particularly the ruling and opposition parties, openly or surreptitiously supporting one candidate or the other (Asante 2012; interviews, S Binfoh, April 2014; W Madilo, April 2014; I Tweneboah-Kodua, June 2009). Their support takes the form of physical cash donations or sponsoring the printing of T-shirts, posters, bill boards, fliers and other expensive campaign paraphernalia (interview, S Binfoh, April 2014; Nunyonameh 2012).

Situations such as the one painted above undermines student representation and renders student leaders as merely passive recipients of decisions. Scholars such as Pitkin (1967), Dryzek (1996), Bluwey (2006), and Ball and Peters (2005) have all argued quite forcefully that true representatives must be selected or elected by their constituents and the former must be accountable to the latter. In this regard, any clandestine move to force student leaders or influence their selection on the student body weakens representation as it undermines accountability. Again, according to O'Donoghue et al. (2002), choosing or influencing the selection of student leaders by school authorities often leads to exclusivity where only the most privileged students are allowed the right to contest elections. According to the authors, these privileged ones generally act as individuals, not necessarily as representatives of their constituents. Moreover, apart from the fact that the co-opted students are often in the minority and wield no influence, there is pressure on them 'to undermine the very authority that had sponsored and facilitated their election to the privileged positions' (interview, S Binfoh, April 2014). The influence exerted on them by the university authorities would therefore imply that student leaders will not act to project overall student perspectives in decision-making.

Against this, the power to recall student representatives, be it at the national or institutional level, is scarcely exercised by students. This also undermines representation. As argued by Dryzek (1996), Pitkin (1967) and Ball and Peters (2005), constituents should not merely act as passive recipients of actions. Instead, they should exercise their power to hold representatives accountable by recalling representatives who fail to promote their interests. NUGS and various blocs that constitute it have explicit provisions in their respective constitutions that provide the grounds for recall of leaders through impeachment when they fail to act in a manner responsive to the needs of students. For instance, article 62 (a) of the Constitution of University Students' Association clearly supports the removal of a student leader who violates his or her oath of office to promote the interests of students. In reality however, this power is not commonly exercised against student leaders who violate the fiduciary trust reposed in them by their constituents. Apart from a few instances where some NUGS' presidents have been controversially removed from office by some factions within the Union, the general Ghanaian student body has rarely exercised the power of recall of their representatives who failed to perform (interviews, S Binfoh, April 2014; W Madilo, April 2014; I Tweneboah-Kodua, June 2009). This practice among students certainly constitutes a serious affront to the concept of representation as it tolerates prolonged violation of constituent interests in a manner that nullifies the position of Dryzek (1996) and other scholars who have advocated for the recall of representatives who fail to act in the interest of their constituents.

Benefits derived from the politicisation of students' affairs

As indicated by scholars such as Luescher-Mamashela and Mugume (2014), the politicisation of student organisations typically involves a mutual exchange of material and non-material resources between politicians and student leaders. This may suggest that the partisan politicisation of the activities of student organisations benefits both the leadership of such organisations and the entire student body. In this regard, politicising NUGS' activities has not only conferred material gains upon its leaders and undermined general student interests; it has also seemingly enhanced the making and execution of some policies geared towards students' progress and representation. Based on the political alliance that some of the NUGS' leaders have with the government and politicians, there are quite a substantial number of policies that have been enacted and implemented in order to promote students' well-being. For instance, the frequent disbursement of student loans, bursaries and scholarships to graduate students owed much to the good relations that the NUGS' leaders had with the politicians. In the past, there have been undue delays in the payment of student funds, particularly when students and governments were at loggerheads over the release of these facilities. It is evident that whenever the relationship between student leaders and government soured, student loans and bursaries experienced delays. There were instances where some students received their loans only at the end of the academic year.

However, through constant negotiations with government, loans, bursaries and scholarships are now being disbursed on time to meet the needs of students (interview, S Binfoh, April 2014). The government has also responded to student complaints about the sustainability of the Social Security and National Insurance Trust (SSNIT)-administered Student Loans Scheme by creating a new institution, the Student Loan Trust Fund (SLTF) in December 2005 under the Trustee Incorporation Act 106 of 1962, to handle student loans. Previously, the Social Security and National Insurance Trust Fund was the body that granted loans to students in addition to its core mandate of ensuring the welfare of government-worker pensioners. The combination of the two tasks plagued the disbursement of student loans with undue bureaucratic bottlenecks and delays (interviews, NN Dowuona 2014; W Madilo, April 2014; I Tweneboa-Kodua, June 2009).

The main objective of the Trust Fund is to provide prompt financial assistance for the benefit of students and to help promote and facilitate equal access to education, particularly at the tertiary level. For the first time, the SLTF created offices on the campuses of the institutions in order to address any unanticipated bottlenecks. The functions of these offices include providing a first stop for student inquiries; serving as picking-up and dropping-off points for student loan application forms; serving as a platform for the verification of the completeness of loan application forms; liaising between the SLTF and the loan applicants; and disseminating information to students in a timely manner (SLTF 2005).

Other aspects of NUGS' activities have been influenced by opposition parties. Depending on the political and economic climate, NUGS may draw close to the opposition politicians for

mutual benefit. When the NUGS' relationship with former president Jerry John Rawlings' regime soured at the end of the 1990s, the former found the opposition a dependable ally to battle against the government on the streets. Opposition parties' instigation led to a series of mammoth student demonstrations against poor conditions and the high cost of education as well as general hardships of Ghanaian students. NUGS christened its demonstrations and attack on the government as 'mmobrowa struggle' to highlight the plight of the Ghanaian students, including their inability to pay the high user-fee charges, among others. The 'mmobrowa struggles' – literally meaning struggles by poor students – were a series of demonstrations on the campuses of the public universities in Ghana in 2000. During these demonstrations, all the blocs under NUGS undertook a peaceful march to Osu Castle, which was then the Seat of Government, to demand a reduction in their school fees and call for the introduction of an educational fund that would support brilliant but needy students to pursue their education. There were also opposition-backed violent student demonstrations, which ended in injuries and the destruction of public property. These and other factors including a media and civil society outcry, as well as views from respected opinion leaders forced the government to accede to the students' request for the establishment of alternative sources of funding education in Ghana. Thus, the government passed legislation to create the GET Fund (interviews, NN Dowuona 2014; W Madilo, April 2014; I Tweneboa-Kodua, June 2009). Today, the GET Fund serves as a major source of funding for Ghana's scholarship secretariat and educational infrastructure (interview, S Binfoh, April 2014).

The collaboration between the university authorities and students on the one hand, and between the government and students on the other, has yielded dividends in terms of a peaceful and uninterrupted educational calendar. The days of hostilities between students and the government, notably in the mid-1970s and 1980s, were moments of uncertainty for students, guardians and managements of universities. However, within the context of the new climate of cordial relations between NUGS and government and with the university authorities, the spate and frequency of school closures and demonstrations has virtually diminished. The student leaders have used their good relations with the university authorities to secure compromises on policies that have a comparative advantage for students. For instance, the students agreed with the universities to change a residential policy called 'in-out-out-out' to 'in-out-out-in' to address residential problems that confronted the university students. The 'in-out-out-out' policy granted accommodation and residential facilities only to first-year students; while the 'in-out-out-in' policy favours both first and final-year students in terms of access to campus accommodation.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that the role of NUGS in promoting student interests and serving as a vanguard of freedom and justice has changed for a variety of reasons which can be

conceptualised in part in terms of a politicisation of the union by politicians. As has been shown, NUGS' elections have become replete with stories of aspiring student leaders having been sponsored in cash and in kind by political parties. Consequently, those who get elected are more loyal to the interests of their political godfathers than to those of their constituents. Thus, according to the Institute of Economic Affairs, most student leaders maintain that the political influence on student elections only succeeds in dividing the student front, undermines student interests and corrupts the student candidates (IEA 2007).

From the analysis conducted for the purposes of this study, we can say that the politicisation of student activities has produced a double-edged effect: on the one hand it has undermined the radical expression of student interests; on the other hand, it has also fostered the gradual institutionalisation of dialogue, negotiations, collaborations and compromises as an alternative form of achieving student representation in Ghana.

Even though the politicisation of NUGS has seemingly enhanced student leaders' ability to secure some relief and yielded some favourable policies for students, we argue that they are not enough and there is a general perception that NUGS has been captured by the government in order to suppress the expression of student demands. Thus, there is a perception that the politicisation phenomenon has narrowed NUGS' leverage within the political landscape, which in turn has raised questions regarding its legitimacy to articulate and represent the views and interests of students in Ghana.

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CHAPTER 12

CONCLUSION

James Otieno Jowi

This chapter brings together some of the main contributions of this book and opens more grounds for research and debates on the topic. Research on student politics and higher education governance in Africa is quite dynamic and this book is pioneering in several aspects. It presents the developments and trends in student politics, representation, protest and activism in Africa not only from a historical perspective but also the contemporary developments within different national and institutional contexts. The comparative chapters bring out and explain key similarities and differences in these developments. In this, the linguistic and regional diversity of Africa, which actually brings some differences into context, adds more to the richness of this contribution. The longitudinal analysis that some of the chapters pursue, provides an insightful narration of the evolution of student representation and activism up to recent times. The book presents new knowledge in an important field which is often ignored.

Change has been a key characteristic in African higher education and its governance, and students have played a pivotal role in these change processes as shown in this book. Furthermore, the crucial role that student unions and movements have played over time is not only limited to change in the higher education sector but has left its imprint also on national politics and on societal change. The chapters that adopt a comparative approach illustrate some key similarities and differences in the ways that student politics, representation and activism manifest themselves in the different country contexts. The comparative study by Oanda on higher education in Kenya, Ghana and Tanzania (Chapter 4) shows the diversity in the systems and how this impacts on student representation and politics. The case study by Bianchini (Chapter 5) which focused on Burkina Faso and Senegal contributes yet a better understanding to the way Francophone systems differ in many ways from those of the rest of the continent.

There is a challenge of leadership in African universities. While universities are made up of different stakeholder groups, students are certainly one of the key constituents. Just as Altbach recognises at the onset of this book, students have – episodically – been a crucial group in higher education leadership since the early years of the university. The development of the stakeholder society situates students at the core of the governance structures of universities, even if this is not everywhere the case, as the instances of Ethiopia and Zimbabwe illustrate. Some of the chapters use stakeholder theory to illustrate the power dynamics and roles of

different stakeholders, including students in these developments and change processes. Another important contribution is the shift from the early years when student politics was hinged on ideology to contemporary times when emergent societal issues are the main driving factors of higher education change, being important in shaping the agenda of student organisations and student protests. Rapid social, economic and political change in so many countries on the continent has also been accompanied by the growth of more democratic spaces, especially in countries that had previously been under draconian political systems. We see this coming out clearly in the Kenyan, Ethiopian and Nigerian cases. Democratic reforms have opened more spaces for students to participate more formally in the different governance structures of the universities; a point that is strongly made in Chapters 2 and 3.

The role of students in shaping national higher education policies, especially regarding higher education governance, funding, access, and quality, cannot be gainsaid. We see this as a thread running through almost all the chapters and it manifests itself in the recent experiences in South Africa, with #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall, referred to in Chapter 3. Apart from the more sporadic and episodic forms of activist student politics, some of the chapters describe how students, through their institutional and national unions, use the formal structures of decision-making on different governance levels to influence higher education policy. Over and above that, students have been – and continue to be – an important political force in different national political systems, articulating grievances that are not necessarily specific to higher education. Several of the chapters show how national politics and student politics are intertwined in the different country contexts. This is notably the case in instances such as Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya and Senegal; in some of these countries other stakeholders rely on the power and influence of student unions to try and influence policies and facilitate change. Students' potential to mobilise successful protests has made them coveted partners for certain actors, including political parties. It is without doubt that students have played significant roles in higher education policy reforms in Africa – as it is in most other parts of the world – and continue to play a significant role in shaping public policy and governance beyond higher education.

While there are many similarities, students are organised in diverse ways in the different countries. This would have been even more evident if all African countries could have been included in the study, including countries of North Africa. We note that the way student representation in higher education governance is structured has quite some influence on students' impact on governance processes, the form of student politics, and their relations with other stakeholders. Conversely, new developments such as the rapid expansion and emerging massification of higher education in many African countries sets in some new dynamics facing the sector, all of which impact on student politics, student representation and activism. One of the impacts of massification in some countries is the erosion of the power of national student unions as the prestigious national flagship university becomes one among so many universities, and the higher education sector is becoming more diverse in so many ways, with different semester dates, different election times for student leadership, etc., making it rather difficult

for students to run national unions. While in many countries the leaders of the main university unions were revered and had quite some national clout and influence, the growth of many new universities has made the student leadership scene nationally much more crowded.

A related phenomenon is the growing diversity and changing nature of students. Most chapters in this book have addressed the growing phenomenon of privately sponsored students and the rapid growth of private universities in many national systems in the last decade. The impacts of these developments, for example with respect to policy issues and the delivery of services in the institutions for these different types of students, has led to divisions between different student groups. Institutional and national student bodies are therefore growing in heterogeneity leading to a greater diversity of interests and priorities even in student representation. In addition to this, we also note the growth of other intermediary sectoral bodies that Klemenčič, Luescher and Mugume refer to in Chapter 2, making the higher education sectors more pluralist and bringing in different actors pursuing seemingly similar interests but leaving student unions in some vulnerability as this now brings their unity – which has been their key pillar – under real threat. Such plurality can lead to challenges to the legitimacy, recognition and even autonomy of student unions. Massification has also been a consequence of marketisation that has taken root in many national systems. This together with the slow but steady permeation of governance practices by new public management theory is also changing the nature of student representation as the chapters on Kenya and Uganda clearly illustrate.

While historically, national politics has frequently ‘infiltrated’ student unions, many chapters demonstrate the growth of religious and ethnic affiliations in student representation, and the growing significance of party affiliations. Some of the unions have come to serve a (ruling party or oppositional) political agenda, at times at the expense of a focus on student welfare. Student unions provide a training ground for future political leadership; they act as enablers to many political processes, which epitomises the role of student leadership in societal transformations, especially in repressive political systems or political systems that are unresponsive to citizens’ interests.

We also see in many chapters the challenge of a lack of resourcing or ability to mobilise and manage resources by student unions, which can be attributed to inadequate support systems within the institutions and poor preparation and oversight of student leaders for efficient resource management. To what extent is this ‘manufactured’ by, for instance, student affairs managements, for the manipulation of student unions’ leadership? It is only in the South African case where we see leadership training programmes for newly elected student leaders at national level and, in a diversity of ways, at institutional level. Has this led to better leadership? This is certainly an issue that should be analysed in detail; leadership training could result in better student leadership and stewardship of student unions, which could then enable the student leaders to play their representation roles more effectively.

As African student politics is grappling with changes in the sector and in student life, another emergent reality that should be subjected to further study is student representation at

different sub-levels of higher education governance, on the faculty and departmental levels, to move closer to the ‘chalk face’ of teaching and learning. Demands by the #RhodesMustFall movement for an Africanisation of the curriculum speak precisely to the point raised by Lange in her epilogue: how to include students in the governance of teaching and learning? There is a need, both in the practice of student politics and in our research on it, to look not only at top institutional and national decision-making levels, but to ‘drill down’ into the core of higher education.

There are a diversity of theoretical approaches available to the study of student politics, which can make its analyses quite robust and useful with the local contextualisation within African set-ups. How models from other parts of the world can fit the African situation is, however, always a question. Basic approaches like the multi-level analysis of student representation at institutional and national levels bring insights from different levels and contexts. Sociological perspectives add other aspects such as culture, ethnicity, religion, gender and class. The robust theoretical grounding and conceptualisation provided by Klemenčič and in other chapters are useful to further our understanding. The changing nature of student politics in sub-Saharan Africa comes out quite clearly; it requires that we apply new lenses and look for new frames; it suggests many aspects that could be beneficial for further research for even better understanding of student representation in university governance. We have already noted the many aspects of change in higher education that impact on student politics and that need to be better understood. While change is taking place ubiquitously, we note that dominant cultures, ethnicity, religion and even cultism still characterise student leadership and representation. Maybe the next step is to try and see how African conceptualisations of politics, governance and leadership can explain student representation and activism in Africa. Where we find clear distinctions compared to existing models, do we need to develop other typologies? What new does the African situation present? What other characteristics can we bring into the theoretical understanding of higher education and student politics? This book is a beginning; yet we now need to continue dynamic dialogues and further the research on student politics, in its different and complementary forms of representation and activism in Africa. Some studies such as the one on Cameroon provide very useful home-grown literature on student leadership in Africa.

It is time to move the study of student politics in the African context to the next level. Most chapters demonstrate the pivotal role that students have played in institutional and systemic governance reforms in Africa’s higher education sector, and in opening up democratic spaces in many African countries during times of repression and authoritarianism. Historically, students have put their lives on the line for the benefit of the masses; they have been key actors in socio-political transformation. Most of the chapters – and indeed most of the literature on African student politics – glorify this ‘heroic past’, which was characterised by firm standpoints and guided by ideology. This has, however, changed in recent years, arguably in tandem with the emergence of more pluralist, multi-party national politics, and student politics has somewhat become lost in the ideological prism. In contemporary student politics in Africa,

there are several issues that need alignment between reality, policy and practice. A cardinal one is the recognition of students as one of the main stakeholders in the higher education institutions and national systems, and in the growing influence that continental African politics has on national systems of higher education, and thereby according students representation in the various structures of governance. Second is the provision of legal frameworks for the operation of student unions while granting them the requisite autonomy to enable them to pursue their agenda as a part of a growing and vibrant active civil society. Also useful for policy consideration is leadership training for student leaders and resourcing of the student unions to stem the manipulation of unions by partisan and other factionalist interests and their leaders by other societal actors who take advantage of their inadequate resourcing and resource management skills. Finally, as has been evidenced in most of the chapters, student leadership is a key training ground for national leadership and therefore needs to be recognised as a learning site for key values and competencies of leadership.

This is a time when there are several continental developments and initiatives in higher education in Africa which aim at fostering closer collaboration between the different countries and regions in different dimensions of higher education. They include continent-wide initiatives for collaboration in research, quality assurance, capacity building, staff and student mobility. These developments and the new ways in which internationalisation is gaining ground in African higher education will impact on student politics, representation and activism. There are now pan-African forums for different higher education stakeholders to pursue a continental agenda. Student leadership must have a seat at those tables. There is an emerging 'regionalisation of internationalisation' which can be clearly seen in the development of regional university associations, regional networks, supra-national policies and common protocols aimed at harmonising the African higher education space. The East Africa region, for example, already had a regional students' council which suggests that student leadership and student representation may begin to take up this regional dimension. Thus, as we aim towards a more theoretically robust study of student politics, student representation and activism, higher education in Africa and the ways it is governed, developments at so many levels of policy and practice require that we also adjust our empirical gaze, looking beyond institutional and national contexts towards the regional dimension of higher education change *and* inwards into the core of higher education teaching and learning and student interest articulation and intermediation in these spaces.

EPILOGUE

STUDENTS, POLITICS AND UNIVERSITIES – IN SEARCH OF INTERPRETIVE SCHEMES FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Lis Lange

Writing an epilogue for a book one has not written is a difficult task. What is expected is neither a conclusion, usually written by the editors, nor a review of the book, something to be done once the book is published. In between these two equally unwanted alternatives, I choose to provide a reading of the book from the double perspective of the higher education manager and the researcher in higher education.

As indicated both in the book and in Altbach's preface, only for a brief and localised moment were students really in charge of a university. More generally over the years of existence of the university as institution, students entered or rather stormed the stage of history briefly: 1914 in Cordoba, 1968 in France, etc., but they have not stayed as a decisive presence in the governance of higher education institutions. This not even in countries where periodic explosions of student discontent seemed momentarily able to paralyse universities and dethrone vice-chancellors. This in itself should give us pause for thought. Profoundly hierarchical and traditional, universities have seldom accepted students as playing a serious role in academic governance (being able to make a substantive contribution to real issues such as curriculum, teaching and learning, research, engagement), nor have they conceptualised the notion of student participation in university governance as being constitutive of the student experience and of an approach to knowledge, pedagogy and politics. The transient character of the student population, their identity as youth who need to learn have surely played a part in this, but there is more to this and more nuance is needed if we are to understand the complex phenomenon of student politics.

Contexts differ greatly and the actual power that students held in the 1970s in some Latin American public universities in terms of, for example, curriculum and the appointment of academics is unheard of in the Anglo-Saxon world and in much of Europe, not to mention China, India or Japan. Why is this the case? What separates 1914 Cordoba students from their

contemporary counterparts in Argentina? What separates the 1968 student movement from current student protest in France? What separates the Anglophone and Francophone African student movements in the 1950s, 1970s and today? I think the answer is the university itself. For all the democratisation heralded by mass higher education, it is not clear that a non-elite student population was followed by a more democratic or inclusive governance practice at the university. Actually, as observed in some of the chapters of this book, mass higher education seems to have introduced more a notion of consumer demands than a sense of political participation in the life of the university. From the point of view of a higher education manager keeping this trend at bay among managers, pragmatic academics, and the very same students is very difficult, especially in places where the potential earning capacity of the prospective student constitutes the repayment for a family social investment. Can it be that the multiple identities, purposes and accountabilities developed and imposed on the university since the 1950s have created as many student identities, none of which has been engaged sufficiently critically in the context of the tensions and contradictions that characterised the 21st century university? How to develop, educate and support the identities of the student as political leaders in university governance, citizens with a right to vote, activists, 'clients', youth, and pedagogic subjects across the different spaces of the university?

This book goes a good distance in bringing together the voices and experiences of students across very different universities on the African continent. There are two points of interrogation, raised in some of the chapters of the book, which in my view are worth pursuing. First is the issue of the theorisation of student activism, politics and governance and the extent to which a grounded theory approach that tends more to the classification of behaviour than to the theorisation of the student and student collective organisations, is actually useful to give account of a phenomenon that has sociological, economic and political dimensions that extend well beyond the university itself. How to interpret students and the role of the university in the context of economic growth, political instability and legitimisation crises in many states on the continent? How to interpret student activism outside broader studies of the state of the youth on the African continent and the impact that violence, years of halted development and skewed growth have had on their sense of self and of their future?

Second, is the notion of the responsibility that universities have in the development of citizenship. The authors generally argued for the university as a space of citizenship education, yet this space seems to be understood mostly as that created by participation in university governance. More systematic and detailed research is required on the areas of participatory decision-making that matter for citizenship development. More importantly these analyses do not focus on the possibility of curriculum and pedagogy, the actual space of teaching and learning, as being a locus of citizenship education, not as indoctrination but as praxis in understanding, judging and acting. It is possible that given the varied levels of participation of students in university politics, the issue of citizen pedagogy needs to become more central in our way of thinking about student politics.

At a time in which quality assurance regimes are inserting the student as both focus and

actor in their assessments of what quality education is, it is fundamentally important to be alert to the dangers of taming and normalising impulses to question and change under the mantle of good client services and market responsiveness. It is in this sense that student participation in university governance that does not touch the heart of the academic enterprise at the same time as it deals with fundamental issues of access and student well-being, will condemn student activism to only scratching the surface of the struggles of the postcolonial university. This book provides important experiences, voices and suggestive theoretical ideas that need to be followed up to ensure that this does not happen.

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INDEX

The index is in word-by-word order. Page numbers in *italics* indicate figures and tables; the letter 'n' followed by a number designates a footnote, for example: Senegal 98n22.

#FeesMustFall 8, 39, 54

#RhodesMustFall (UCT) 8, 39, 53–55, 247

A

Ablakwa, Samuel Okudzeto 237

academic freedom

limits on 69, 70, 72, 235

and 'shared governance' 56

university as 'state in the state' 92

accommodation *see* student residences

activism *see* student politics/activism

Adungosi, Titus 70

affiliation to student bodies 35

African Higher Education Summit (2015)

23–24, 23n6

African national student associations 12, 15–17,
24–25

Ethiopia 146–147

Ghana 6, 64, 224–228, 230–241

Kenya 72, 74

Senegal 98n22

see also Francophone student movements;
national student associations

African Student Leaders in Community

Engagement to National and Institutional

Higher Education Policy-makers 23–24

African student representation

colonial period 63–65

1970s 65–71

1980s–1990s 71–73

post-1990 74–81

African Union Commission (AUC) 22–23, 24

Agbor Tabi, Peter 117

Agenda 2063 (AUC) 22–23, 24

Aggrey-Darkoh, Evans 252

agriculture students 38

Akivaga, Symonds 68–69

All Africa Students' Union (AASU) 23, 24–25

All African Peoples Conference (1958) 88

Altbach, Philip 36–41, 252

Amin Anta, Mohammed 236

And-Jëf 96, 99

Ankrah, Elvis Afriyie 237

Anta, Amin Mohammed 236

Arap Moi, Daniel 69–70

Argentine Reform movement (1918) xi

Asquith Commission 64

Association des Etudiants de Rumuri (ASSER) 204

as student tribune 207–212

as legitimate tribunal 213–214

involvement in national policies 216,
219–220

Association des étudiants originaires de Madagascar
(AEOM) 88

Association des étudiants senegalais en France
(AESF) 96

Association des étudiants voltaïques de Ouagadougou
(AEVO) 96, 97, 100

Association des étudiants voltaïques en France
(AEVF) 94, 97

Association des scolaires voltaïques de Dakar
(ASV) 95

- Association generale des etudiants de Dakar* (AGED) 94
- Association musulmane des etudiants d'Afrique noire* (AMEAN) 94
- Association nationale des etudiants burkinabe* (ANEB) 100–101, 100n28, 103n33
- Association pour la defense des droits des etudiants du Cameroon* (ADDEC) 114, 117
- authority, sources of 43–44
- autonomy of student organisations 13–14, 19–20, 25
see also political party–student relationship
- Ayele, Bekele Workie 252
- B**
- bachelor-master-doctorate system 210, 211–212
- Bathily, Abdoulaye 96
- Benin 90, 92, 110
- Bianchini, Pascal 252–253
- Binfoh, Samuel 232–233, 235, 237–238
- Birantamije, Gérard 253
- Boamah, Omani Edward 237
- Botswana 15, 16
- Botswana Student Union (BUS) 15
- Boukary, Dabo 100
- Brazzaville (Congo) 90
- Brotherhood of Students of Rumuri *see* *Fraternité des Etudiants de Rumuri* (FER)
- budgetary issues 147–148
- Burkina Faso (formerly Upper Volta) 97, 98
 extent of massification 31
 student movements 94–95, 96–98, 100–102
see also Francophone student movements
- Burundi
 ethnic tensions 215, 216
 extent of massification 31
 legislation on higher education 22, 211–212
 public discourse conceptions of students 18
 secondary education policy 219–220
 student politics/activism 208, 218, 219–220
 student representation 15–16, 15, 21, 22, 206–214
see also University of Burundi
- Buyoya, Pierre 216
- C**
- Cameroon
 corrupt practices 20
 ethnic tensions 111, 113–114, 119–120, 126
 extent of massification 31
 legislation on higher education 22
 public discourse conceptions of students 18
 and student autonomy 20
 student politics/activism 110–125
 student representation 15, 17, 21, 113–125
- Cameroon People's Democratic Movement 111
- capacity building 24, 25, 131, 248
- CCM Youth League (Tanzania) 65, 69
- Cele, Mlungisi 36, 253
- Centre d'etudes superieures* (CESUP) 96
- Cercle General des Etudiants de Rumuri* (CGER) 203, 204, 206, 218
- Cheche* 65
- Cheikh Anta Diop University of Dakar 32, 99
- Chifon, Godlove N 253
- Christian Democratic Party (PDC) 215
- Clark, Burton 42–43, 44, 135
- Club Nation et developpement* 96
- co-operative governance 9, 56
- CODESRIA 2, 3, 61, 79
- Collectif des organisations democratiques de masses et de partis politiques* (CODMPP) 101
- collective non-normative student action 183, 187–190
- collective normative student action 183, 184–187
- Comite de defense de la Revolution* (CDR) 97, 100
- Comite pour le redressement patriotique et le salut national* (CMPRN) 97
- comités de vigilance* 95n16
- comités révolutionnaires* (CR) 100
- commerce students 38
- commercial activities of students 22, 113, 147–148, 210
- Commission for Universities Education (CUE) 75
- Committee of the Wise 213–214, 213n9
- 'community of scholars' 46, 47, 48, 49, 135
- Compaoré, Blaise 100, 101, 102
- Compaoré, Simon 101
- Conde, Alpha 93
- Confederation des syndicats voltaiques* (CSV) 97
- Confederation generale du travail du Burkina* (CGT-B) 98, 101
- Confederation nationale des travailleurs du Senegal* (CNTS) 96
- Congres pour la democratie et le progres* (CDP) 101
- Coordination des etudiants de Dakar* (CED) 98n22, 99
- corporatist systems of student representation 13–14, 15, 48, 136
- corruption in higher education 3, 7, 20–21, 20n5
see also political party–student relationship

- Côte d'Ivoire 92, 93, 97
 Council for the Development of Social Science
 Research in Africa (CODESRIA) 2, 3,
 61, 79
 Council on Higher Education (SA) 10, 16
- D**
Dakar-Matin 86n4
 Dar es Salaam University Students' Organization
 (DARUSO) 69, 72
 Dar es Salaam University Students' Organization
 (DUSO) 68–69, 72
 de-politicisation of students 7, 25, 65, 163–164,
 178
 deans of students 76–77
 Debrah, Emmanuel 254
 democratisation 56, 56n14
 of political systems 28, 102n32, 165
 of university governance 33–35, 92, 139,
 142–143, 149, 152
 see also massification
 demonstrations by students 90n13, 99, 220, 241
 see also student actions; student politics/activism
 Diabré, Zéphyrin 101
 Diallo, Salif 101
 Dicko, Amadou 94
 Dieng, Amadi Aly 94
 Diop, Cheikh Anta 94
 Diop, Mahjmouth 87, 87n7, 94
 Diouf, Abdou 98, 99
 diversity
 of HE institutions 52
 in the student body 23–24, 34, 80–81, 246
 Domson, Emmanuel Adjei 236
 Dowuona, Nii Narku 237–238
 Durkheim, Emile 208, 213
- E**
 effectiveness of student activism 40–41
 elections *see* student elections
 elite higher education systems 29–30, 32, 33, 38
 engineering students 38
 Epstein, Leon 43–44, 45
 Ethiopia
 corrupt practices 20, 147–148
 ethnic tensions 144, 154
 extent of massification 31
 legislation on higher education 22, 131, 133,
 138, 139, 140, 142
 political party–student relationship 150–155
 public discourse conceptions of students 18
 and student autonomy 20
 student politics/activism 132, 145
 student representation 15, 16, 21, 22,
 138–149
 ethnicity 4, 7, 34, 82, 247
 Burundi 215, 216
 Cameroon 111, 113–114, 119–120, 126
 Ethiopia 144, 154
 Kenya 78
 Uganda 164, 175, 178
 etudialist student movements 35, 40
European Journal of Higher Education 2, 28n1
 European Students' Union (ESU) 38
 expansion of higher education *see* massification
- F**
 Facebook 39, 53
 Faye, Bassirou 99n26
Federation des Etudiants d'Afrique noire en France
 (FEANF) 87–90, 94, 97
Federation des etudiants et scolaires de Cote d'Ivoire
 (FESCI) 92, 93
Federation des etudiants libres de Dakar (FELD) 95
 fees for students
 Ugandan universities 167, 172–173
 University of Buea 113
 University of Ghana 238, 241
 University of the Western Cape 184–186,
 189–199
 see also scholarships
 FeesMustFall 8, 39, 54
 female students *see* women students
 flagship universities 10n1, 12, 32, 52, 245
 Fongwa, Samuel 254
 Francophone student movements
 age of anti-colonialism 87–89, 94–95,
 107–108
 age of anti-imperialism 89–91, 95–98,
 107–108
 age of anti-SAP/democracy struggles 91–93,
 98–102, 107–108
 see also Burkina Faso; Cameroon; Senegal
 Francophone universities 86
Fraternité des Etudiants de Rumuri (FER) 16,
 204, 214, 218–219
 French Communist Party 88, 88n9, 89
Front de liberation nationale (FLN) 89
Front Populaire Ivoirien (FPI) 92
 funding for student bodies 22, 42
 Ghana 227–228
 Ugandan universities 168

University of Addis Ababa 147–148
 University of Buea 113

G

Gbagbo, Laurent 93
 General Assembly of Students
 University of Addis Ababa 146, 157
 University of Buea 115, 116
 University of Burundi 206–207, 208, 214
 Ghana
 corrupt practices 20
 extent of massification 31
 legislation on higher education 22, 233, 241
 political party–student relationship 224–225,
 230–233, 240–241
 public discourse conceptions of students 18
 and student autonomy 20
 student loan schemes 75, 240
 student politics/activism 67, 241
 student representation 15, 21, 22, 72, 77,
 225–228, 232–241
 Ghana National Students' Organisation
 (GNSO) 67
 Ghana National Union of Polytechnic Students
 (GNUPS) 225, 227
 Gold Coast Students' Union (GCSU) 63
 governance *see* higher education governance
 government–university relations 66, 70–71
 Ghana 72
 Kenya 72, 72–73
 South Africa 188–189
 Graduate Students Association of Ghana
 (GRASAG) 227, 237
 grants 14, 100
 gross enrolment rates 29–32, 29n2
 guilds 9, 44, 78–79, 168–172, 177

H

Haile Selassie I University 133
 Harman, Grant 46
 health issues 210
 HERANA 11n3, 20–21, 56
 Heywood, A 228, 229, 230, 232, 234
 higher education governance
 balance between representation and
 delegation 43
 Clark's analytic perspectives 42–43
 'co-operative governance' 9, 56
 different levels of 11–13
 Epstein's sources of authority 43–44
 Harman's models 46

Luescher's typology 48–52
 and massification 33–34
 Olsen's models/visions 46–48, 134–136
 and public discourse conceptions of students
 18–19
 higher education institutions
 and diversity 52
 categories based on GER 29–33
 as 'community of scholars' 46, 47, 48, 49, 135
 as 'market-oriented university' 17, 47, 48,
 51–52, 135, 136, 165
 'national instrument' role of universities 47,
 48, 49–50, 135–136, 149
 'representative democracy' role of universities
 47, 48, 50–51, 135, 136
 see also private universities; public universities
 higher education polity 11–13
 see also public discourse conceptions of
 students
Higher Education Proclamation (No. 650/2009)
 (Ethiopia) 131, 133, 139, 140, 142, 150
 Higher Education Quality Committee (SA) 10, 16
 Higher Education Research and Advocacy
 Network in Africa (HERANA) 11n3,
 20–21, 56
 housing *see* student residences
 humanities students 38
 Hutus 215, 216

I

ICT impact on student politics 8, 39, 53
 Iddrisu, Haruna 236–237
 identity politics 7, 34
 see also ethnicity
 ideology *see* de-politicisation of students; Maoist
 ideology; Marxism-Leninism ideology
 incentives/rewards for students xii, 7, 20, 50
 Ghana 225
 Kenya 73, 78
 Uganda 166, 174
 see also political party–student relationship
 individual non-normative student action 183,
 198–199
 individual normative student action 183, 190–198
 infrastructure, collapse of 71
 initiation of new students 204, 205–206,
 213–214
Institute des hautes études de Dakar (IHED) 94
 institutional massification 27, 31–32, 165
 intermediary bodies *see* student interest
 intermediation

- Islamic student associations 98
 Islamic University in Uganda (IUIU)
 163, 167, 172
 Issoufou, Mahamane 93
 Ivory Coast *see* Côte d'Ivoire
- J**
 Jamal, Baaba 237
 jobs for students 20, 73, 154–155, 195–197, 236
Journal of Student Affairs in Africa x, 1, 11n2
 Jowi, James Otieno 255
- K**
 Ka, Djibo 99
 Katusiimeh, Mesharch W 255
 Kenya
 corrupt practices 20
 ethnic tensions 78
 extent of massification 31
 political party–student relationship 77–78
 private students 74
 and student autonomy 20
 student elections 78
 student politics/activism 69–70
 student representation 15, 72–73, 76–77
 Kenya National University Students' Union 15
 Kenya University Students' Association (KUSA) 74
 Kenyatta University 15, 32
 Kenyatta University Students Association 80
 Khartoum University College 64
 Ki-Zerbo, Joseph 88n9, 94
 Kinshasa Lovanium University 204
 Klemenčič, Manja 41–42, 255
 Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and
 Technology 226
- L**
 Lange, Lis 255
 Latin America xi, 9, 249–250
Le Soleil 86n4
 leadership training 80, 246, 248
 legislation on higher education 10, 12, 21
 Burundi 22, 211–212
 Cameroon 22
 Ethiopia 22, 131, 133, 138, 139, 140, 142
 Ghana 22, 233, 241
 South Africa 22, 189
 Tanzania 10, 67–68, 75
 Uganda 16, 22, 75, 166, 168
 legitimacy of student representation 48
 and authority 43–44
 and autonomy 10, 19–20, 25
 and corruption 20
 University of Addis Ababa 155–158
Ligue démocratique 96, 99
 loan schemes
 Burundi 218
 Ghana 75, 240
 South Africa 190–191, 193–195
L'Observateur 86n4
 Luescher (Luescher-Mamashela), TM 44–46,
 48–52, 256
 Ly, Ciré 94
- M**
 Madagascar 90
Maison de la France d'Outremer 90
Maison de l'Afrique de l'Ouest 90
 Makerere College Guild 64
 Makerere Technical College 167
 Makerere University Private Students Association
 (MUPSA) 163, 168–169, 175, 178
 Makerere University (Uganda) 162–163
 institutional massification 32
 political parties' influence 20n5, 176–177, 178
 private students 163, 166–169
 relationship with government 66–67
 student representation 168–175
 Mali 90, 90n13, 92
 managerial university governance 33–34, 44
 Maoist ideology 65, 89, 89n12, 96, 97, 107
 'market-oriented' universities 17, 47, 48, 51–52,
 135, 136, 165
 marketisation
 'dearth of ideology' 7, 25
 and massification 246
 Marxism-Leninism ideology
 Ethiopia 65, 131, 132
 Francophone student movements 89, 91,
 93, 107
 Senegal 98
 Upper Volta 97n19
 mass higher education systems 18–19, 29–30,
 31, 34, 250
 and student activism 38
 in Uganda 167
 massification xi, xii, 28, 29–34
 as consequence of marketisation 246
 erosion of student power 245
 institutional massification 27, 31–32, 165
 South Africa 5, 34, 182
 mathematics students 38

- Mauritius 31, 32
 Mbeki, Thabo 188
 M'Bow, Amadou Mahtar 94
 membership fees to student bodies 14, 22
 NUGS 227–228
 SONU 74
 Ugandan universities 168
 University of Buea 123
 merit awards 193–194
 Mitterrand, Francois 91
 Moi, Daniel Arap 69–70
 Moumouni, Abdou 88
Mouvement burkinabe des droits de l'homme et des peuples (MBDHP) 98, 101
Mouvement de liberation nationale (MLN) 88n9, 94–95, 97
Mouvement des etudiants de l'Organisation commune africaine et malgache (MEOCAM) 90
Mouvement des etudiants et eleves liberaux (MEEL) 98
 Mugume, Taabo 256
Muungano wa Wanafunzi Tanzania (MUWATA) 69, 72
- N**
 Nairobi University Student Organisation (NUSO) 69, 70
 Nako, Alain Martin 120
 National Association of Socialist Students' Organisations (NASSO) 67
 National Commission on Higher Education (SA) 34
 National Coordination of Cameroon Students 111
 National Democratic Congress (NDC) 230, 236
 'national instrument' role of universities 47, 48, 49–50, 135–136
 University of Addis Ababa 149, 155, 158
 national student associations 13–15, 35
 difficulties in organising 38
 Klemenčič's typology 41–42
 and massification 245
 see also African national student associations; Francophone student movements
 National Student Financial Aid Scheme (SA) 5, 10, 16, 189–191, 193–195
 National Union of Ghana Students (NUGS) 64, 224–226
 organisational structure 226–228
 and political parties 6, 230–234, 240–241
 student representation 232–241
 Ndaruzaniye, Gamaliel 219
 Ndikumana, Théophile 214
 neo-corporatist system of student representation 14, 15–16, 17
 New Patriotic Party (NPP) 230, 236
 Ngendandumwe, Pierre 215
 Niasse, Moustapha 99
 Niger 90, 90n13, 92, 93, 97
 Nigeria
 corrupt practices 20
 extent of massification 31
 legislation on higher education 21, 22
 level of student autonomy 20
 public discourse conceptions of students 18
 and student autonomy 20
 student representation 15, 17, 21, 22
 Nigerian Progress Union (NPU) 63
 Nikiema, Aimé 98
 Nimubona, Julien 206
 Njeuma, Dorothy 114
 Nkrumah, Kwame 63, 67, 95
 non-normative student actions 36, 183, 187–190, 198–199
 normative student actions 36, 183, 187, 190–198
 Nti, Valentine 114
 Ntibashirakandi, Libérat 219
 Nyerere, Julius 65, 69
- O**
 Oanda, Ibrahim 256
Office de cooperation et d'accueil universitaire (OCAU) 88
 Official University of Bujumbura 204
 Official University of Lubumbashi 204
 Official University of the Congo and Ruanda-Urundi 204
 Olsen, Johan 46–48, 134–136
 Omani Boamah, Edward 237
Organisation communiste voltaïque (OCV) 97
Organisation démocratique de la jeunesse (ODJ) 103n33
 Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso) 91, 101
 Ouedraogo, Edouard 86n4
 Ouedraogo, Halidou 98
- P**
Parti africain de l'indépendance (PAI) 87n7, 89, 94, 95, 96, 97–98
Parti communiste révolutionnaire voltaïque (PCR/V) 97–98, 97n19, 100
Parti démocratique sénégalais (PDS) 96, 98, 99
Parti du regroupement africain (PRA) 95

- Parti socialiste* 99
- pluralist systems of student representation 14, 15, 16
- political party–student relationship 7, 10, 19, 20, 25
- Ethiopia 150–155
 - Ghana 224–225, 230–233, 240–241
 - Kenya 77–78
 - Uganda 78–79, 176–177, 178
- polytechnics 14, 39, 225, 237, 238
- Price, Max 53, 54
- primary education 29
- Burundi 217, 219–220
 - Uganda 166
- private students 5, 7, 74, 78–81
- Kenya 74
 - Uganda 163–179
- private universities 79–81, 165–166
- 1980s 62
 - level of student autonomy 20
 - see also* Makerere University (Uganda); Uganda Christian University (UCU)
- public discourse conceptions of students 17–19
- public universities
- pre-colonial era 131
 - colonial period 62, 63–65
 - 1970s 65–71
 - 1980s–1990s 71–81
 - post-1990 74–81
 - Francophone universities 86
- Q**
- questionnaires 137, 140, 150
- quota system for female students 224
- R**
- random sampling techniques 137
- Rassemblement démocratique africain* (RDA) 88, 89
- Rassemblement des démocrates républicains* (RDR) 92
- religious higher education institutions 39, 167, 172, 177
- religious student bodies 7, 34, 98, 132, 144
- Report of the Working Party on Higher Education in East Africa* (1955) 64
- ‘representative democracy’ role of universities 47, 48, 50–51, 135, 136
- repression of student activism 41, 145
- Cameroon 117
 - Francophone student movements 3, 90, 90n13, 102, 103
 - Kenya 69
 - see also* violence against students
- residences *see* student residences
- Revolution nationale démocratique et populaire* (RNDP) 89n12
- Rhodes, Cecil John 53, 53n13
- RhodesMustFall (UCT) 8, 39, 53–55, 247
- Royal Technical College (Kenya) 64
- S**
- Sall, Macky 99
- sampling techniques 137
- Sankara, Thomas 97n18, 100
- Sankarist revolution (1983–1987) 97
- Savane, Landing 96, 98
- scholarships
- African students in Europe 63
 - Burkina Faso 97, 100, 101
 - Burundi 209–210, 209n6, 218–219
 - Cameroon 112
 - and FEANF 88
 - Ghana 225, 240
 - Senegal 95, 98n22, 99, 99n26, 103
 - and structural adjustment 91, 110
 - as ‘weapon’ against students 90, 215
 - see also* fees for students
- Scott, Peter 33
- secondary schools 29, 90, 90n13, 108
- Burundi 218, 219–220
 - Ghana 227, 231, 236
 - Uganda 166
- Selassie, Haile 132, 133, 157
- Senegal
- extent of massification 31
 - student movements 94, 95–96, 98–99
 - student politics/activism 94, 95–96, 98–99, 102–103
 - see also* Francophone student movements
- Senfo Tonkam, Benjamin 111
- Senghor, Léopold Sédar 95–96, 96n17
- Sierra Leone 65
- Social Democratic Front (SDF) 111, 120
- social media 8, 29, 39, 40
- social sciences students 38–39
- society-oriented student movements 40
- solidarity between students
- Burundi 208–209, 210
 - South Africa 187–188, 198–199
- Somé, Valère 97, 97n18
- South Africa
- #RhodesMustFall protests 8, 39, 53–55, 247
 - gross enrolment rate 31

- higher education governance study 43
 legislation on higher education 22, 189
 massification 5, 31, 35, 182
 public discourse conceptions of students 18
 student representation 9–10, 15, 16, 21, 22
 UWC student actions (1998) 182–199
 South African Students' Congress (SASCO)
 16, 185
 South African Union of Students (SAUS) 16
 Southern Cameroons National Council
 (SCNC) 120
 Soviet Union 87n7, 89, 89n12, 91, 102, 107
 sports clubs 35, 64, 80, 88
 stakeholder universities *see* 'representative
 democracy' role of universities
 statist systems of student representation 14, 15,
 16–17
 strikes by lecturers/teachers
 Cameroon 125
 Ghana 236
 strikes by students
 Burkina Faso 85, 100, 101
 Burundi 207, 208, 212, 214, 217, 218, 219
 Cameroon 17, 113–115, 117, 119–120, 122
 Ethiopia 132
 against SAPs 92, 108
 Senegal 95, 96, 98n22, 99
 Uganda 166, 173, 174–175, 178, 179
 Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) 29,
 62, 91, 92, 102n32, 110, 162
 Burkina Faso 100, 101
 Burundi 208–209
 'proletarianisation' effect 92
 'self-imposed' in South Africa 5, 182, 189
 Senegal 99
 Uganda 166, 177
 university budget cuts/closures 71, 72, 74
 Upper Volta 103
 student actions
 collective non-normative action 183, 187–190
 collective normative action 183, 184–187
 individual non-normative action 183, 198–199
 individual normative action 183, 190–198
 student body, definition 34
 student councils 80, 137, 138–139, 143–144,
 187
 student credit management (SCM) office
 190–195
 student elections 19, 73, 76
 Burkina Faso 100, 100n28
 Cameroon 124
 Ethiopia 20, 130–131, 150–153, 155–158
 Ghana 225, 227, 230, 231–232, 238–239,
 242
 Kenya 78
 South Africa 184
 Uganda 5, 78–79, 164, 170–172, 176
 student governments 9, 12, 35–36
 Klemenčič's framework 41–42
 in stakeholder universities 50
 Ugandan universities 167–172
 University of Buea 114
 student interest intermediation 13, 14–15, 15,
 16, 21–22, 246
 student leaders
 and academic performance 39, 238
 political aspirations 35
 rapid turnover of 38
 recommendations to African Higher
 Education Summit 23–24
 see also political party–student relationship;
 student elections; student representation
 Student Loan Trust Fund (Ghana) 16, 240
 student loans *see* loan schemes
 student movements
 Altbach's characterisation 39–40
 British colonial Africa 63–65
 Francophone students 87–103, 107–108
 Student Organisation of Nairobi University
 (SONU) 70, 73, 74, 78
 student politics/activism 35
 1960s 9, 33, 37, 39, 102
 Altbach's theory 36–41
 Cele's typology 36
 Klemenčič's framework 41–42
 link to student representation 7, 10–11,
 11–12, 12, 36, 142–143, 162
 see also under names of individual countries;
 see also student actions
 student power
 and 'consumerism' 44
 eroded by massification 245
 medieval Europe xi, 55–56
 modern history xi–xii
 and student representation 10, 18
 student representation 9–19
 African periodisation 63–81
 benefits 132, 134, 162, 165
 challenges 24–25, 28
 and levels of higher education governance
 11–13
 Luescher's justifications 44–46

- Luescher's typology of universities 48–52
 meaning of 52
 models of 228–230
 and private students 5, 7, 74, 79–81, 163–179
 Students' Charter 23–24
see also names of individual countries
- student representative councils
 University of Cape Town 53, 54, 55
 University of Ghana 77, 225, 227, 237
 University of the Western Cape 184–190, 194
- student residences
 Ugandan universities 64, 168, 169, 170, 175
 University of Burundi 206, 208, 209–210
 University of Ghana 233, 241
 University of the Western Cape 187, 188, 191, 198
- student unions 45–46
 German national student union 40
 University of Addis Ababa 138–159
- students
 as consumers 17, 18, 44, 45, 46, 51–52, 136, 140
 public discourse conceptions of 17–19
Studies in Higher Education 2
 sub-Saharan Africa
 and democratisation 102n32
 gross enrolment rates 30–31
 massification 29
Syndicat des enseignants du Senegal (SES) 96
Syndicat des Travailleurs de la Geologie des Mines et Hydrocarbures (SYNTRAGMIH) 98
Syndicat des Travailleurs de la Sante Humaine et Animale (SYNTSHA) 98
Syndicat des travailleurs de l'enseignement et de la recherche (SYNTER) 98
Syndicat unique voltaique de l'enseignement secondaire et superieur (SUVESS) 98
- T**
- Tabi, Peter Agbor 117
 Talloires Network Leaders' Conference (2014) 23n6
Tam Tam 94
 Tanganyika African Welfare Society 64
 TANU Youth League (TYL) 66, 72
 Tanzania
 extent of massification 31, 32
 legislation on higher education 10, 67–68, 75
 student politics/activism 65, 67–69
 student representation 66, 67–69, 72
 Tanzania Commission for Universities (TCU) 75
 Tanzania Students' Union *see Muungano wa Wanafunzi Tanzania* (MUWATA)
 Tanzania Youth League (TYL) 65, 68
Tertiary Education and Management 28n1
 Tertiary Education Council of Botswana 16
 Tevoedjre, Albert 94
 Thiombiano, Amirou 95
 Tibiri, André 103n33
 Togo 91, 97
 Tonkam, Benjamin Senfo 111
 Touré, Adama 95
 Touré, Drissa 97
 Touré, Soumane 97–98
 trade unions 111, 126
 and Francophone student movements 88, 90, 91, 95–96, 97–98, 101
 and UWC SRC 186
 tribalism 64, 77–78, 120
see also ethnicity
 Trinity College 133
 Trow, Martin 29–30, 33, 52
 Tutsis 215, 216
 Tutu, Desmond 186
 Twitter 39, 53
- U**
- UCT *see* University of Cape Town (UCT)
 Uganda 16
 corrupt practices 20
 ethnic affiliations 164, 175, 178
 extent of massification 31
 legislation on higher education 16, 22, 75, 166, 168
 political party–student relationship 78–79, 176–177, 178
 public discourse conceptions of students 18
 and student autonomy 20
 student politics/activism 72, 164–165, 173–175
 student representation 15, 21, 78–79, 168–175, 177–178
see also Makerere University (Uganda)
 Uganda Christian University (UCU) 163, 167
 ethnic affiliations 164, 175
 political parties' influence 5, 79, 176–177, 178
 student representation 168–175, 178–179
 Uganda Martyrs University (UMU) 172
 Uganda National Council for Higher Education (UNCHE) 16, 75, 166
 unemployment among graduates 35, 73
 Ethiopia 154

- Ghana 234, 235–236
- Union démocratique des étudiants du Sénégal* (UDES) 95–96
- Union des étudiants de Dakar* (UED) 95–96, 99n24
- Union des luttes communistes* (ULC) 97
- Union des scolaires nigériens* (USN) 90
- Union générale des étudiants de l'Afrique de l'Ouest* (UGEAO) 94, 95
- Union Générale des Etudiants de Rumuri* (UGER) 203, 204, 206, 216, 218
- Union générale des étudiants musulmans d'Algérie* (UGEMA) 88
- Union générale des étudiants voltaïques* (UGEV) 95, 96–97
- Union nationale des élèves et des étudiants du Mali* (UNEEM) 90
- Union Nationale des Etudiants Barundi* (UNEBA) 203–206, 215–218
- Union nationale des travailleurs du Sénégal* (UNTS) 95, 96
- Union nationale patriotique des étudiants du Sénégal* (UNAPES) 96
- Union of African Descent (UAD) 63
- Union of the populations du Cameroun* (UPC) 89
- Union pour le changement* (UPC) 101
- Union pour le Progrès national* (UPRONA) 205, 215
- Union progressive sénégalaise* (UPS) 95
- universal higher education 29–30, 32, 52
and student activism 38
- Université populaire* (UPA) 88, 94
- universities *see* private universities; public universities
- Universities Act of 2005 (Tanzania) 10, 75
- Universities Act of 2012 (Kenya) 75
- Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act of 2001 (Uganda) 16, 75, 166, 168
- university administrators
Cameroon 122–123, 126
corrupt practices 20
Olsen's university models 135, 149
source of authority 44
Tanzania 68
- University Cheikh Anta Diop 32, 99
- University College of Addis Ababa (UCAA) 133
- University College of Dar es Salaam 65
- University College of Ghana 64
- University College of Ibadan 64
- University College of London 64
- University College of Makerere 64
- university colleges 63–65, 70, 133, 167
- University of Addis Ababa
case study 130–159
institutional massification 32
- University of Bologna 55–56
- University of Buea 112–125
institutional massification 32
- University of Buea Student Union (UBSU) 113–116, 118–125
- University of Bujumbura 16, 204
- University of Burundi 203–204
BMD qualification system 211–212
continuous assessment system 210–211
student accommodation 208, 209–210
- University of Cape Coast 226
- University of Cape Town (UCT)
#RhodesMustFall 8, 39, 53–55
corrupt practices 21
- University of Dakar 99, 99n26, 102n32
- University of Dar es Salaam Act (1970) 66
- University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM)
corrupt practices 20–21
relationship with government 66
- University of Douala 112
- University of Dschang 112
- University of East Africa 66, 167
- University of Ghana 67, 70, 77, 225, 226
academic performance of student leaders 238
Institute of Statistical Social and Economic Research 235
institutional massification 32
road usage policy 234–235
- University of Ibadan 32
- University of London 64, 66, 70, 167
- University of Lubumbashi 204
- University of Nairobi
corrupt practices 21
institutional massification 32
student elections 78
student representation 15, 69, 73
- University of Ouagadougou 96–97, 97, 100, 101
institutional massification 32
- University of Stellenbosch 54
- University of the Free State 54
- University of the Western Cape
student–management fee negotiations 184–186
types of student actions 187–199
- University of Yaoundé 111, 117, 118
- University of Yaoundé I 112
- University of Yaoundé II 112

- University Platform* (Kenya) 69
 University Students African Revolutionary Front
 (USARF) 65
 Upper Volta (later Burkina Faso) 91, 94–95,
 96–98

V

- Van Gyampo, Ransford Edward 254
 violence against students
 Burkina Faso 93n14, 100, 101
 Cameroon 117
 Côte d'Ivoire 92
 Senegal 93n14, 99
 violence by students
 Cameroon 115, 117, 117–118
 Kenya 78

W

- wa Thiong'o, Ngugi 70
 Wade, Abdoulaye 87n7, 96, 98, 98n21, 99
 Wade, Karim 99
 Weber, Max 44
 welfare issues 42, 63, 64–65, 70, 71–72
 West African Students' Union (WASU) 63
White Paper on Higher Education (SA) 189
 women students 55, 224
 Ghana 75
 Ugandan universities 171
 University of Addis Ababa 138, 142
 workers' unions *see* trade unions

Y

- Yameogo, Maurice 95
Y'en a marre (Senegal) 99n25
 YouTube 53

Z

- Zimbabwe 15, 16, 18, 20, 110
 Zimbabwe Congress of Students' Union
 (ZICOSU) 16
 Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education 16
 Zimbabwe National Students' Union
 (ZINASU) 16
 Zongo, Norbert 101

