

Crisis and Student Protest in Universities in Kenya: Examining the Role of Students in National Leadership and the Democratization Process

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Abstract: The aim of this article is threefold: to interrogate the crises that have afflicted public universities in Kenya over a period of thirty years, starting in the 1970s and intensifying in the 1980s and 1990s; to examine the impact of student activism and protest on education policy; and to investigate the role of current and former university students in national leadership and the democratization process in Kenya. University students are destined to be the intelligentsia who one day will take over the reigns of power. Students also constitute the largest reservoir of technocrats in Kenya's development milieu, providing highly trained manpower in many sectors. To many they are also the vehicles of ideological dissemination and are often regarded as the representatives of the left and sympathetic to the cause of the common man. As such, to engage the students is to engage the common man. Yet there are lacunae in the research and academic knowledge in this area. Commentators have largely ignored student protest in Kenya despite the fact that universities have a long history of student activism in which students often have engaged authorities in running battles, some of them violent. In the national political arena, university students often rally behind radical politicians and former university students. The political course in Kenya would not be the same today without university students. This article seeks to interrogate their multiple roles.

Résumé: Cet article a trois buts: se pencher sur les crises qui ont accablé les universités publiques du Kenya sur une période de trente ans à partir des

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