

STUDENT GOVERNANCE AND ACTIVISM IN AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES: EXAMINING THE ROLE OF HIDDEN CURRICULUM AND SHARED RESPONSIBILITY IN SOCIETAL TRANSFORMATION

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Abstract: *This paper explores the role of student governance and activism within African universities, highlighting its impact on public policy and societal transformation. Student unions, as formalized governance structures, are integral to university management and serve as advocates for student welfare. These bodies foster a hidden curriculum, where students actively shape social policies through engagement and, at times, activism. This activism, often manifested in protests or strikes, arises from students' commitment to transparency, accountability, and good governance, advocating for improvements within universities and broader society. Drawing on examples from African universities, the study examines how student movements function as pressure groups that influence institutional and governmental policies. Ultimately, the paper argues that student activism is not merely a reactive force but a constructive element in promoting shared responsibility in university governance and achieving equitable societal development.*

Keywords: *Activism, governance, students' union, universities, hidden curriculum, shared responsibility*

Introduction

The presence of students is essential to African universities. Therefore, these universities could not survive without the students. The core of these academic endeavours is the student body. Remember that in medieval Italy, students constructed and administered some of the first universities. In the age of massification that is the twenty-first century, students are rarely considered the main reason for the institution—rather, they are typically viewed as liabilities, clients, or sources of income. A thorough analysis of the appropriate role for students in higher education institutions is required in light of the enormous and sometimes painful changes that have occurred in the field, but this is a challenging task. African Union's development plan, Agenda 2063, considers equal access to high-quality higher education as a crucial indicator of progress toward democratization, socioeconomic growth, and

technological advancement. This is predicated on the idea that higher education may support democracy, good citizenship, socioeconomic progress, and technical advancement. Universities exist because of learners. At the core of academic endeavours are the students. Students have enormous influence over student life in many universities worldwide, especially those with substantial financial and decision-making power. This calls for an efficient students' union government.

The student union government is a key player in putting policies that support student welfare and societal change into action in African universities. The establishment of student governance creates a system of checks and balances in both the national government and university management. All institutions and procedures that are intended to guarantee accountability, openness, responsiveness, the rule of law, stability, equity, inclusivity, empowerment, and widespread involvement are considered forms of governance. These standards, principles, and guidelines that govern how public affairs are handled in a way that is open, inclusive, responsive, and participatory are frequently absent from our colleges. This is one of the causes of the protests and strikes by students. The student body would be pleased to observe how authority is shared and allocated. Students will always want to see good governance in their institutions and their different countries at large. They would like to be part of an institution and society that has participatory, transparent, accountable, and effective leadership that promotes equity and the rule of law. Commitment to seeking good governance leads them to be involved in activism.

Africa boasts a diverse range of student activism traditions, government involvement, and substantial campus and national political activity. In contrast to many other parts of the world, students still have a great deal of political potential, and they have been instrumental in the overthrow of administrations in several countries. Higher education institutions (HEIs) in Africa and other countries have documented several student activism episodes, putting at risk the advantages of higher education in terms of producing human capital that is well-rounded and ready to contribute to national development. Students' activism arguably contributes to societal transformation.

Generally, students are linked to the larger society by family, marriage, friendship, religion, ethnicity, and culture. Therefore, they cannot pretend to be indifferent to the fate of their larger society. They have a stake in what goes on in the society. For example, on October 11, 2020, students and youth trooped the streets of Nigeria to demand justice for Police brutality. The protest was termed END SARS. Special Anti-Robbery Squad is the meaning of the acronym SARS. These police team primarily targeted youth, leaving many of them severely injured without following the law. Students coordinated protests to address the social injustice in society since the police's extrajudicial execution of a young person had an impact on them, the youth, and the entire community.

Thus, whether on or off campus, online, or through other forms of political participation, activism is the activity of students acting collectively in support of or opposition to a certain cause or holding the power structure accountable for their words and deeds. Over time, university students have developed

a distinct social group identity and a collective political identity that they can use to organise collective action. Kenyan university students for example have taken part in many riots related to a variety of concerns. Nearly all university students are affected by the most urgent concerns that lead to riots. The most recent incident occurred when Kisii University students went on the rampage and the main campus was closed after their administration implemented a new tuition collection scheme. The students did not seem to be happy with the change, which they said was foisted on them without their consent. Lack of discussion, when university students go on the rampage if talks with their management fail, is another key cause of activism and unrest in African universities. Particularly when strict regulations are imposed on them without their consent, this occurs.

Furthermore, in Kenya for example, the delay in Higher Education Loans Board (HELB) pay-out is another problem that worries students. The students depend on the Higher Education Loans Board (HELB) for both their maintenance on campus and the payment of tuition. Protests erupt when the lending authority takes too long to distribute the money. Students from the University of Nairobi and other campuses in Nairobi, for instance, have reportedly gone to the HELB headquarters at Anniversary Towers many times to make the same demand. Since there is a lack of housing at most institutions and many students live off campus, security is yet another important worry. While others are stabbed, there are many instances of insecurity when students are robbed, sometimes even at gunpoint. As a result, students demonstrate against the lack of safety in their homes, blaming their educational institutions for offering poor housing and failing to consider the safety of their students. Students from several institutions around the nation demonstrated in the streets in June 2021 in protest at the rise in incidences of rape and the horrific killing of university students. From Freedom Corner in Uhuru Park, Nairobi, the students marched while singing denunciations of sexual and gender-based violence. However, the police intervened to stop the protests, explaining to the media that the event was unauthorized since it lacked the necessary paperwork from the authorities (Oxymy, 2012).

In a different incident, students at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (MMUST) Kenya demonstrated against high tuition and rising examination costs after the management disregarded their plea. Ethnicity and interference in student elections are the other significant concerns fuelling activism in Kenyan universities. Consequently, students at Maseno University rioted over allegations that police destroyed their election campaigns, which resulted in the deaths of two students. Students assert that certain university administrations have a role in influencing election results. Election rigging thus causes unrest.

It is therefore worthy to note that students' exposure to democratic principles and practices is facilitated by their engagement in university governance. Students are more likely to identify with decisions made by universities on important issues affecting their lives if they participate in those processes, and universities with institutionalized student engagement have fewer administrative challenges relating to students. Researchers contend that students are more supportive of university aims and objectives if

governance is shared. Instead of linking leadership to the work of a single person as in the conventional theories, shared governance emphasizes a concept of governance where duties and actions are divided among a wide variety of persons within each specific setting. Therefore, shared governance is all about getting diverse parts of the organization to collaborate to accomplish a single objective.

Although there have been many studies on students' engagement in university governance all over the globe, this paper focuses more on students at universities in Africa. It explicitly brings out the relationship between students' governance and their activism. It dwells more on students' engagement in policies that pertain to their welfare and that of society at large. Hence, a need for good governance for the transformation of the society.

Role of the Hidden Curriculum in Student Governance and Activism

The hidden curriculum profoundly shapes student governance and activism within African universities, extending beyond formal education to impact students' beliefs, behaviours, and sense of agency. The hidden curriculum consists of the unintended lessons, values, and norms absorbed through university experiences—elements that are often unwritten yet influential in educational environments (Luescher-Mamashela, 2013; Brooks, Byford & Sela, 2015). In African universities, this curriculum fosters a culture of collective identity, political awareness, and civic responsibility among students, driving their engagement in governance and activism (Stuurman, 2018; Mawuko-Yevugah, 2013).

Through interactions within academic settings, student governance, and peer relationships, students encounter implicit lessons about democracy, accountability, and justice. These experiences teach students to assess institutional power structures and societal norms critically. This exposure cultivates a civic identity that positions students not only as learners but also as active contributors to social discourse (Oanda, 2018; Klemenčič, 2012). For instance, participation in student unions often helps students appreciate the importance of democratic processes, which they may later replicate in wider community involvement (Edward Van Gyampo, 2013).

The hidden curriculum empowers students by fostering a sense of agency and collective responsibility, encouraging them to effect change. When students encounter issues, such as delays in financial aid or inadequate housing, they are prompted to organize collectively, reinforcing the idea that they can challenge inequities within the university and broader political contexts (Adeyeye, 2009; Mulinge & Wawire, 2012). This aligns with research indicating that student activism within university governance can serve as a foundation for future political engagement (Mugume & Katusiimeh, 2016).

Students engaged in governance and activism develop practical skills in negotiation, public speaking, and strategic organization—skills learned through experience rather than formal instruction (Carey, 2013). Such political literacy prepares students to be effective civic participants outside the university context (Swank, 2012; Klemenčič, 2014). In university governance, these students learn about democratic ideals and the limitations of authority, preparing them for roles in civil society where these insights are invaluable (Amobi, 2018).

Participation in student governance exposes students to ethical dilemmas, such as balancing personal beliefs with role expectations or managing peer conflicts. These experiences cultivate values of integrity, equity, and respect for diversity, forming a moral foundation essential to responsible activism (Crellin, 2010; Taft & Gordon, 2013). Such moral resilience is evident when students participate in movements like the #EndSARS protests in Nigeria, reflecting a deeply embedded ethical stance on justice and equity (Stuurman, 2018; Oanda, 2018).

The hidden curriculum promotes shared responsibility, encouraging students to view themselves as co-governors of their institutions. This collaborative governance approach teaches students the importance of inclusivity and transparency, which are essential for democratic practice (Warren et al., 2015). By navigating shared governance, students develop skills in consensus-building and conflict resolution, understanding that these qualities are critical to both institutional governance and broader social reforms (Luescher-Mamashela, 2014; Mawuko-Yevugah, 2013).

The hidden curriculum within African universities is vital in cultivating future leaders and activists. By fostering civic identity, empowering agency, shaping political literacy, and promoting ethical resilience, it transforms student governance from a formal structure into a platform for societal change. African universities thus serve as breeding grounds for civic-minded individuals equipped to address issues within and beyond academia, making the hidden curriculum an essential component of student activism and societal transformation in Africa.

Student Leadership in African Universities

Some universities in Africa have different nomenclatures for student leadership. In Nigeria for example, for some federal and state universities, the student government is called the Student Union Government (SUG), while in some private universities, it is called the Council of Honour (COHON). Protection of the rights of students is the major aim of the students' union government. The government represents students inside and outside the walls of the university. It also represents students on local and national issues. Since it is an elective body, it serves also as a training ground for aspiring politicians to entrench true democratic values lacking in some of our societies today (Emereonye, 2013).

Since they assert that they speak for all students in the nation, national student representative organizations—which typically take the shape of a national association or union—stand out (Klemenčič 2012). While there are similarities in student organizing at the national or systemic level throughout nations, there are also notable historical distinctions between nations and general geographic areas, such as Francophone versus Anglophone Africa; Central, East, North, Southern, and West Africa. Questions like how many associations compete to represent students nationally, what organizational traits they have, and which ones are recognized as representing the entire student body in formal sector bodies, government, and institutional structures are some of the issues raised by the variations in the features of the national systems of student representation. Additionally, there are notable differences in the composition and procedures of higher education policy processes, as well as in the function and

sway of representative student associations. Legislation as well as unofficial state-student relations norms and practices may be the source of these discrepancies (Tshishonga, 2019). Two analytical vantage points can be used to examine these variations in student representation within national higher education polities: the national systems of student representation and the national student interest intermediation into national public policy processes.

The first analytical viewpoint looks at how national student interests are compiled and expressed. In this context, we refer to several national student representation systems, whose features are characterized by the number of associations and the existence of representative monopolies granted by the government. Here, the systems of student representation that are classified as corporatist, statist, neo-corporatist, and pluralist are distinguished (Klemenčič, 2012).

The government manages or essentially establishes a student representation group under the corporatist concept. The state grants this kind of student association the authority to represent all students and act as a mediator between the state and the entire student population. However, according to Klemenčič (2014), such an association lacks autonomy in terms of having the power to determine its internal structures and procedures, political and professional agenda, governance, and managerial autonomy, as well as having control over financial, human, and other resources. Under a corporatist system of student representation, political authorities control student associations by influencing, if not outright handpicking, the student representatives. The student association is financially and politically dependent on the state.

The neo-corporatist paradigm recognizes one or a few student associations as the representative voice of all students, and the government either legally or informally accords these associations the monopoly of student interest intermediation. Additionally, including them in the formal or informal structures and procedures of the national policy-making processes for higher education. The difference between a neo-corporatist system of student-state relations and a corporate model is that the former usually involves state regulations to support the existence and operation of student representation, while the latter respects the autonomy of these associations.

The state may provide administrative grants for national student associations or higher education institutions may be required to collect fees from all students, which are then directed to student representative associations within the institutions. Typically, these institutional associations fund the work of other non-profit, non-governmental youth organizations through national youth councils or national youth foundations, among other ways. Again, there does not have to be a single national or system-level "umbrella" student group for the neo-corporatist model to be adopted. According to Palma (2020), the neo-corporatist model is characterized by the existence of a single association that has the privilege of representing all students or a subset of them based on differences in function (for example, one association representing universities and another polytechnic, or one representing public

institutions and the other private), territory (when different institutions represent different regions), or ethnicity or religion.

In pluralist regimes, on the other hand, the government acknowledges the existence of representative student associations and is prepared to include them, formally or informally, in the formulation of public policy. One association is not given a monopoly on representation by the state. There may be multiple associations that compete with one another for access to state-granted resources and public policy processes, sharing similar goals and modes of operation. In nations without a national student organization, the government works with student unions at universities, resulting in a variant of the pluralist system.

How student interests are mediated into public policy is the subject of the second analytical viewpoint. In this case, the analysis focuses on the features of public policy processes related to student social welfare and higher education, as well as whether formal methods for resolving student concerns exist or if students only contact public authorities informally (Klemenčič 2012). As a result, we may distinguish between formalized systems, in which students hold official seats in national higher education bodies, and informal student interest intermediation systems, in which students only have informal meetings with government representatives.

Several formal neo-corporatist national student representation systems exist, including those in Botswana, Burundi, Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, and Uganda. This indicates that there are officially recognized national student associations that are independent in their day-to-day activities, at least in terms of their legal position, funding, and governing structures and procedures. Neo-corporatist systems would also be in place in nations where there is no national student association or where the one that does exist is dormant. In these situations, student representatives from a single university—usually the national flagship institution in the capital—represent the interests of all students in national policy matters. Kenya and Botswana are presumably two examples of this (Mulinge & Wawire, 2012).

Quality of Student Leadership

For instance, the student union government in Nigeria and a few other democratic African nations are constantly fighting to advance and defend the rights of its members in their shared endeavour to attain the necessary high standards of education. Emereonye (2013) claims that the students' union has historically served as a watchdog, preventing the abuses of the colonial authority. The author went on to say that the student unions of the time were essentially pressure groups whose goals were, among other things, improved education, capable leadership, self-rule, and positive social change. Drawing from the aforementioned statements, can we infer that there is quality student leadership?

The rising infiltration of national political cultures and university management interests in the way that student leadership is established and administered is a concerning trend that impacts the calibre of student leadership and the degree to which they represent student issues. A new trend in Kenyan

colleges, for instance, pits candidates for student leadership roles against the interests of university administration, which wants easily manipulable student leadership, and politicians, who finance their expensive campaigns. Student campaigns are typically generously supported by a national political party. It can be argued that some political leaders assist students genuinely to help them launch their political careers; others, depending on the leadership of the institutions, may have hidden agendas or be seeking personal favours from students in exchange for an outlet for their criminal intent, which may include drug distribution on campus or the promotion of tribal agendas. The colleges are then breeding grounds for tribalism, particularly when it is made clear that the leaders are primarily or exclusively members of one particular tribe. After that, the "untouchables" at the university are the members of the "special" tribes, and things can only get worse from there.

It is also important to consider whether student representatives uphold democratic frameworks and adhere to open, transparent processes to determine their legitimacy. The validity of student representation is seriously harmed by corrupt student representatives who utilize their position of political influence to get financial benefits or symbolic favours. The most frequent instances are when student representatives support a certain political party during elections by endorsing it, joining it, or in some other way expressing their support in return for favours like study grants and the assurance of employment after graduation. The most noteworthy countries for these behaviours are Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, and Uganda (Oanda, 2018).

Indeed, one of the most prevalent problems with student governments' autonomy is their affiliation with and interference from political parties. These protocols are in existence in most of the countries that were reviewed, including Zimbabwe, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda, and Ethiopia. It is believed that the government operates particularly effectively in Burundi, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Nigeria, and Zimbabwe when it comes to student engagement. Student leaders fear expulsion or other consequences for their advocacy in a number of these countries (Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Uganda, and Zimbabwe) (Mattes & Luescher-Mamashela, 2012).

In addition to political pressure, the competition for student leadership is partly driven by the benefits that university administration grants to student leaders in exchange for their cooperation; it is not driven by a desire to support academic standards or assist students. It has been observed that student leaders get paid, are accommodated in special, bigger rooms with televisions and, sometimes, satellite television, are provided with free meals, and are paid to attend multiple seminars and conferences. These benefits, along with political manoeuvring that caters to individualistic neo-liberal cultures, are to blame for the decline in the quality of student representation as well as the alienation of student representatives from their peers (Obiero, 2012).

For instance, student guild elections at Makerere University in Uganda are organized along national political party lines. Student campaigns for guild elections are organized on the platforms of Uganda's most influential political parties because most Makerere students are 18 years old or younger and are

passionate about national political parties (Natamba, 2012). Campaigns for student leadership are extensively funded, in addition to political party membership (Mugume & Katusiimeh 2016; Natamba 2012). Since politicians hijack the student union government campaigns, many a time, there exists decline in the quality of leadership because the elected leaders dance the tune of the politicians that helped them win elections.

University Governance and Shared Responsibility

Student union government is all about effective leadership for the welfare of the students in all facets of life. Representation is based on participatory democratic ideas. In the context of universities, participatory democracy is demonstrated by shared governance arrangements that provide students and other important stakeholders a voice in academic decision-making (Warren et al., 2015).

For student politics to be represented, two prerequisites must be fulfilled: (i). the capacity to organize students into interest and representational groups. (ii). the establishment of shared institutions, such as an executive board, presidency, or secretariat, and the institutionalization of governance systems by formalizing the regulations and processes in statutory instruments. This setup enhances shared responsibility and determines the stability and continuity of the students' union government.

Student union leadership and governance is one of the governance strategies in the administration of most universities in Africa. The place of shared responsibilities in these universities cannot be overemphasized. This is the reason the student government has come to stay. Shared responsibility in the universities is one of the things that makes universities unique and special. It vividly represents togetherness in the affairs of the university. Shared responsibility is a thing of joy. Here, the vision and mission of the university are well-guarded for the continuous development of the institution. Shared responsibility is shared governance and shared accountability. Collegiality leads to shared governance, which is a collaborative process (Crellin, 2010). It is both a means to an end and an end in and of itself that should be preserved and respected, making it an essential component of the university's culture. To increase university productivity, the students' government union, which is a part of university governance, promotes student involvement in the formulation of the institution's plans, policies, and decisions.

Higher education governance takes place at several various levels, including supranational or regional, national or system, federal systems, state and provincial, institutional, and sub-institutional (e.g., faculty, department, and resident halls). Representing student interests on these various levels can take many forms, from protest action to student representation in formal decision-making structures, given the inherent tension between student activism and representation—the former symbolizing the desire to change the status quo, the latter of carving out a better place within it (Taft & Gordon, 2013). Institutional student governments in many nations affiliate with other national-level stakeholders in representative structures to represent students' interests to governmental officials and other national stakeholders in higher education. Different degrees of formalization and institutionalization are used

by these national student representation groups in their organizations. Some are comparable to extremely sophisticated joint institutions found in official organizations to which the government delegated authority for representation and decision-making. Others function more like loose networks that jointly fulfil their representative roles without the need for any common institutions or even just coordinating bodies. Instead of just one national organization, there could be several vying for influence over policy and representation in some countries.

Two prominent student organizations in South Africa are the South African Students Congress and the South African Union of Students (SAUS) (SASCO). Both groups assert to have the longest history of student participation in the country and speak nationally for South African students. Similarly, the other two main national organizations in Zimbabwe are the Zimbabwe National Students' Union (ZINASU) and the Zimbabwe Congress of Students' Union (ZICOSU), both of which operate as partisan movements. Reports from the Council for Higher Education in South Africa and the Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education provide information on student participation in national decision-making about higher education. Furthermore, students are represented in several national organizations in South Africa, including the Higher Education Quality Committee and the National Student Financial Aid Scheme of South Africa (Linder, et al., 2019).

For instance, student participation in university councils, senates, faculty boards, student services committees, and student disciplinary tribunals is legally permitted in Burundi, Cameroon, Ghana, South Africa, and Uganda. Although it does not ensure that student representation is present at all institutions within the national higher education systems, the absence of such requirements in the law does not prohibit institutions from controlling student representation in their internal statutes and norms.

Consequently, there exist notable variations in the ways that students engage in institutional decision-making in other countries. Co-decision, in which student representatives have full voting rights on all or some issues in governing bodies, is only used by Burundi, Ghana, and South Africa. Minimal participation as observers with no voting rights is the standard in other countries. According to Mawuko-Yevugah (2013), student organizations that are officially recognized as representative groups are only found in Cameroon, Ghana, and Uganda.

Students' involvement in the management of higher education differs from system to system and even from one institution to another. It is not in the slightest affected by the attitudes and views of the "dominant" actors, which are mainly the university administrations and higher education ministries, as well as the leadership and organizational abilities of the students themselves. According to Luescher-Mamashela (2013), one useful indicator of a student's political stance in higher education is how they are seen in the media. Students can be thought of as adults and citizens, with all the responsibilities and rights that go along with it. Students may be seen as mere troublemakers whose youth must be contained and who must either be excluded from formal governing bodies or included in a way that

domesticates or tames the student's voice. Alternatively, students may be seen collectively as a legitimate higher education constituency, an important stakeholder with an interest in the development of higher education as well as relevant experiences and expertise in decision-making (Brooks et al. 2015).

Students are typically seen as clients in marketized higher education, consumers of the facilities and services offered by the school, with ephemeral interests in the business. They might, however, be valuable sources for evaluating the level of customer satisfaction and service quality; alternatively, they might represent a certain kind of clientele with longer-term interests in the standing of their organization and the class of education provided, to name a few. Last but not least, students may be compared to immature learners or, conversely, they may be seen as co-learners, an integral part of the functioning and accomplishment of higher education, or even co-knowers (Carey, 2013).

As members of the university community, students have rights when it comes to decision-making alongside faculty. Judgments affect students directly in many areas as well, and they can make better judgments with the use of their experiences and expertise, particularly in co-curricular student affairs. Formal student involvement in university decision-making has advantages beyond the classroom (Luescher-Mamashela, 2014). Incorporating students into university governance could facilitate the achievement of the university's objective. In a large market-driven university that sees its students primarily as consumers, the involvement of students in university governance may not be much more than their presence on user committees. However, student participation may be quite extensive, involving conceptions of students as stakeholders or a constituency, in a politicised university environment where students feel strongly that they own the university and that they belong to a distinct group within a university community that should be governed democratically.

Impact of Students' Activism on University Governance

Students, many a time are involved in unruly violent behaviours because of perceived injustices in the governance of the university. Some of the perceived injustices included a hike in school fees, a hike in hostel fees, strike action by university staff, election rigging – students union government, just to mention a few. Due to these perceived injustices, these students are involved in arson, destruction of school properties, and disruption of vehicular movements in and out of campus. This creates a lot of hardship for innocent citizens and hinders productivity in university administration.

The need to stop these injustices calls for activism on the part of the students. Student collective action through various types of political involvement, whereby students act in favour of or against a particular cause and/or hold the authority accountable, is the essence of activism. Another name for this activism is protest or insurrection. On campus, protest is viewed as a means of resolving any significant dispute with the university administration. Therefore, activism can generally be defined as a deliberate action to promote environmental welfare, economic fairness, or social, political, or economic change (Adeyeye, 2009).

Student leaders participate in different governance structures, boards, and committees to become more engaged in decision-making in most universities. This is found to be beneficial since the student leaders formally represent the student body to the university administration, and students are pleased to see their recommendations implemented. The climate at the universities has improved as a result. The standards are progressively absorbed by student representatives and other stakeholders, which has an impact on their self-perception and definition of interests. The dynamic nature of student representation and the fact that the reforms offer fresh avenues for student involvement could be the causes of the student representatives' accelerated socialization—rather than just restricting their formal involvement in governance, which would usually spark unrest.

It seems like student unions are straying from their historical political role. The interests of all students are represented here by student representatives. This relates to other stakeholders in institutional governance and moves the latter towards a more professionalized, even entrepreneurial role that concentrates on offering student services and carrying out advising tasks for quality control (Stuurman, 2018). The new approach to increasing student engagement in universities is to decrease formal student involvement, such as voting in institutional governing bodies, and increase informal engagement through student-centred learning, quality assurance, and experience-enhancing activities. For instance, boosting student involvement in significant university governing boards has enhanced the democratization of decision-making inside private universities.

In Africa, university-based student activism remains a cornerstone of higher education. There are some positive effects of student activism on university governance, despite some perceptions to the contrary regarding disruption of the academic calendar, destruction of university property, and disturbance of the peace and order of the university. According to Edward Van Gyampo (2013), Amobi (2018), Stuurman (2018), and others, some of these beneficial effects include respect for human rights and freedoms, accountability, responsiveness, and involvement. In student activism, the battle for the advancement and defense of human rights and freedoms is always the goal. Students believe that occasionally their rights are violated. Therefore, during their activism, the appropriate authorities listen to their wailings, and inadvertently, the students' rights are restored.

Students' activism has also contributed to the establishment of accountability and transparency in governance especially in the university administration and in the national political arena. Students are the major voting bloc almost in all countries in Africa. Therefore, they use their majority to vote out persons they feel are not accountable in the political sphere of the nation. This also trickles down to the university administration where the influence of the students is felt among their leaders and the university administrators.

Further, students' activism has impacted positively on the university governance through responsiveness and participation. Students strongly believe that the government has enough resources to take care of the welfare of its citizens. This is the reason the students' union government is not

deterred whenever it goes on activism. The students always want to be heard and their needs and that of the society responded to. Additionally, the students wish to actively engage in the creation and execution of laws intended to uphold their human dignity. Therefore, their activism makes this possible. In the universities today, many a time, students have their needs attended to after a peaceful protest or even after a strong activism.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper has established that students' activism is part and parcel of students' life in the university. It is observed that their action disrupts university governance. On a broader scale, it contributes to the sanitization of the university administration; hence, leading to the transformation of the society. It is interesting to consider the historical roots of student action from antiquity to the present. Students' belief that it is their historical duty to oppose oppression, misrule, and poor governance is apparent. They consider themselves to be among the nation's conscience and the articulate few. Their views of these responsibilities predispose people to radical orientations and directions, which have frequently in the past resulted in some beneficial improvements. It is crucial to emphasize that being involved in student politics entails practicing university citizenship and forming the habits of active citizenship in democratic countries; that is, the hidden curriculum in action. This then is accomplished by bringing together various lines of research on student activism and governance in universities in Africa with an emphasis on shared responsibility.

Based on the findings of this study, the researchers recommend the following:

1. Student representation and official engagement in university governance should be a fundamental component of every facet of university governance. The university's management and administration ought to make a deliberate effort to support the student groups and unions. Power and authority must be equitably allocated among all the major organizations on campus, shared among them, and dispersed efficiently.
2. Students should have a voice in matters that impact them as stakeholders in the institution. Student leaders should participate in governance to cultivate a diversified mindset and self-concept. They can contribute to society; thanks to the talents they learn.
3. As a matter of urgency, university administrators should provide student leaders with enough opportunities to fulfil their responsibilities in university governance.
4. Student activists ought to become international development activists, functioning as a proactive advocacy group for domestic and global development issues. To increase the willingness and ability of the entire student body to serve as effective watchdogs of the African nations and their activities in the international political scene, they should take advantage of the powers of emerging technologies in the information and communication spheres.

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