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CHAPTER 8

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

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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
Senate committees	*Senate committees*
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)	
Council committees	*Council committees*
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
Hall-based constituencies	*Programme-based constituencies*
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)
Association-based constituencies	Social Works and Social Administration (2)
Games Union (1)	Business and Finance (2)
Chief editor of the *Makererian* (the students newspaper) (1)	Business and Management (2)
Other constituencies	Public Administration and Management (2)
Disabled students (4) (2 females and 2 males)	*School-based constituencies*
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)
	Residency-based constituencies
	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 discussants 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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