Research article

Are African flagship universities preparing students for citizenship?

Lucky Kgosithebe* and Thierry M. Luescher**

Abstract

This article investigates the contribution of higher education to democratisation in Africa by studying the political attitudes of undergraduate students at four African flagship universities in Botswana, Kenya, South Africa and Tanzania. It analyses students' attitudes against those of youths without higher education and mass publics in their respective countries. The study focuses on flagship universities because of their role as important players in the development of the social, economic and political leadership of their respective countries. The surveys used stratified random samples of third-year students across all faculties and years of enrolment, which resulted in a weighted sample of 400 students from each of the participating institutions. Students' attitudes are compared with those of the same age percentiles of youths without higher education, and those of the entire population sample, from the nationwide public opinion surveys conducted by Afrobarometer. The analysis of the data uses the notions of commitment to democracy, critical citizenship and political engagement to show that students at the four flagship institutions have significantly higher levels of political awareness and political participation, and higher levels of criticalness, than youths without higher education and the general mass public. However, no consistently higher levels of commitment to democracy were found among students. We therefore argue that the study provides evidence of the political hothouse conditions typical in many African universities. It also provides grounds for the call that African higher education institutions should be more conscious of, and explicit in, the cultivation of the norms, values and practices conducive to democracy in order for higher education to contribute in enduring ways to citizenship development and the deepening of democratisation in Africa.

Keywords

Citizenship; higher education; democratisation; student politics; public opinion.

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Higher education and democracy in Africa

In the course of the 1990s, a great number of African nations embarked on transitions to economic and political liberalisation and democratisation, embracing competitive, multiparty electoral systems within an enabling framework of political and civil rights (Bratton & Van de Walle, 1997; Lass, 1995). More recently, the wave of popular protests and uprisings known as the 'Arab Spring' has again raised the hopes for the political emancipation and democratisation of countries in North Africa and parts of the Middle East. The global history of democracy shows, however, that the democratisation of state and society is not an event; it is an ongoing project that comes in 'waves' and has its 'reverse waves' (Huntington, 1991; Brown, 2011). Moreover, while there is a broad consensus on what constitutes a well-designed institutional framework to make democracy work, democratic institutions like popularly elected and representative legislatures, responsive and responsible executives, and well-functioning judiciary systems constitute only the 'hardware' of a democratic system (Mattes, Davids & Africa, 1999). In order to deepen and consolidate, democracies require people committed to democracy, that is, committed democrats, critically thinking and actively participating citizens, as well as democratically minded leaders and professionals to staff the complex institutions of modern democracy. Sustainable democracy is said to require a critical mass of educated people who believe in and support democracy, and who have the cognitive skills to act as critical citizens and the organisational experience and relevant expertise to take on democratic leadership roles in state and civil society. These democrats constitute the 'software' of a modern democratic system and vibrant civil society (Mattes et al., 1999); they form the constituency to enhance the quality of democracy and its endurance, particularly in times of stress (Gerring, 2011).

Whether, and to what extent, African higher education contributes to democracy and development has come into the spotlight of research conducted by the Higher Education Research and Advocacy Network in Africa (HERANA). Among the HERANA studies, four have looked specifically into higher education's contribution to strengthening democracy (i.e. Mattes & Mughogho, 2010; Mattes & Mozaffar, 2011; Luescher-Mamashela et al. 2011; Luescher-Mamashela, et al. 2015). There are good reasons for including democracy in the HERANA studies on higher education and development: democracy and development are closely interlinked. In Sen's terms, democracy has intrinsic, instrumental, and constructive roles to play in the process of development (2001, pp. 146–159). Correspondingly, Gerring argues that 'a transition [to democracy] that is consolidated (and thus maintained over a long period of time) is likely to bring manifold benefits – economic, infrastructural, environmental, educational, public health, and gender based' (2011, p. 231).

Past research conducted mainly in Europe and North America has found that education in general, and higher education in particular, plays an important role in the development of a democratic citizenry and democratically minded leaders (for details see: Mattes & Luescher-Mamashela, 2012). In their landmark study, Nie, Junn and Stehlik-Barry argue that 'formal education is almost without exception the strongest factor in explaining what citizens do in politics and how they think about politics' (1996, p. 2).

Education increases society-wide literacy levels, thus enabling larger sections of the

citizenry to follow politics using a variety of media sources, including print and online newspapers; education stimulates other forms of cognitive engagement with politics, and interest in and discussion about politics; education increases knowledge of basic facts about the political system, government, and political incumbents; and, overall, education plays a role in the inculcation of democratic norms and values. Higher education in particular is said to enable students to acquire and interpret new information in a more critical manner. Increasing levels of education also translate into improved communication and organisational skills which enable people to persuade and mobilise others. The sum effect of education is therefore higher levels of political efficacy, which result in specific political behaviours such as citizens joining civil society organisations, contacting elected representatives and other government officials, working together with other citizens and participating in community action groups, acquiring attitudes of tolerating political opponents and refraining from violent protest, and, ultimately, supporting democracy and defending it if it comes under threat (for a detailed overview of the literature see: Mattes & Luescher-Mamashela, 2012; and Brown, 2011).

Studies that empirically investigate the contribution of higher education to democracy in the African context are hard to come by. On the one hand, access to higher levels of education in Africa has been limited to an elite few; the average higher education gross enrolment ratio in sub-Saharan Africa is only around 6.1% of the 18-24 years age cohort (even if it has been growing at a fast pace) (UNESCO, 2011; 2008 figures). In addition, limited access to basic political infrastructure such as independent news media has further hampered the development of the type of cognitive skills demanded of ordinary citizens in Africa to act as full democratic citizens. In a recent study involving representative mass publics from 18 African countries, Mattes and Mughogho (2010, p. 1) note:

> Along with limited access to news media, the extremely low levels of formal education found in many African countries strike at the very core of the skills and information that enable citizens to assess social, economic and political developments, learn the rules of government, form opinions about political performance, and care about the survival of democracy."

Hence, poorly performing government leaders are often afforded surprisingly good performance evaluations by citizens, while democracy gets low levels of support. Mattes and Mughogho conclude that this produces an anti-democratic concoction of attitudes aptly named 'a particularly corrosive form of uncritical citizenship' in Africa (Mattes & Mughogho, 2010).

The few empirical studies that have specifically investigated the contribution of higher education to democratic attitudes among citizens in Africa have produced ambiguous results. While some have shown strong positive correlations between increasing levels of education and democratic attitudes and behaviours (Evans & Rose, 2007a; 2007b), others have argued that the analyses used in these studies have failed to isolate the specific 'higher education effect' (Mattes & Mughogho, 2010). Rather, Mattes and Mughogho (2010) argue that, if studied in isolation – and thus controlling for the primary and secondary education level effects – higher education produces *diminishing returns* for support of democracy

and the development of democratic attitudes among citizens in Africa. They arrive at this conclusion from the analysis of data from Afrobarometer surveys that cover 18 African countries. It shows that African university graduates are *not* significantly more supportive of democracy than citizens with lower levels of educational attainment; they thus suggest that African universities fail to deliver on a key aspect of their public-good mandate, that is, 'the socialisation of enlightened, responsible and constructively critical citizens' (cf. *White Paper on Higher Education*, Republic of South Africa, 1997, section 1.3).

The above overview of the literature shows that the higher education–democracy nexus has been analysed by several scholars, most of whom argue that higher education contributes in varying degrees to popular support for democracy and thus the consolidation of democracy. Typically, previous studies have looked at the political attitudes of citizens with different levels of education. The present article, in contrast, seeks to nuance these findings by adding to the analysis the attitudes and behaviours of students *while at university*. In addition, the analysis is meant to show whether participation in student politics influences support for democracy, for exmaple by analysing whether student leaders are significantly more committed to democracy than students not in leadership and whether their participation in campus politics is matched by increased participation in the democratic process beyond the campus.

The student surveys

Against the background of findings of previous studies into the nexus of higher education and democracy, HERANA conducted surveys with students and student leaders on the campuses of four African universities to establish what kinds of citizens and future leaders of state and civil society are emerging from some of the most prestigious public universities in East and Southern Africa. Surveys were conducted with a representative sample of third-year undergraduate students at the University of Botswana (UB) in 2011, and at the University of Cape Town (UCT), the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM), Tanzania, and the University of Nairobi (UON), Kenya, in 2009. The universities were not selected to be representative in any way; rather, it is their unique 'flagship' status as the oldest and presumably most prestigious institutions within their respective higher educational and national contexts, and thus their potential significance in the (re-)production of the social, economic and political elites of their countries, which warranted their selection for the study.[1]

The HERANA student surveys were conducted on the understanding that macropolitics and public higher education are closely interlinked – as the history and legacy of apartheid in South African higher education show. For instance, the apartheid legacy is still evident in the constitution of the sector itself: in the higher education landscape which, even after the bail-outs of the late 1990s, the mergers and incorporations of the early and mid-2000s, and subsequent developments in the sector, still discernibly reflects historical inequities on key indicators (Bunting, Sheppard, Cloete & Belding, 2010; Mngomezulu, 2012). Apartheid social engineering has its legacy in students' class backgrounds and academic preparedness, and, as the Soudien Commission highlighted, in students' lived experience on campus, in that, after almost two decades of South African

democracy 'discrimination, in particular with regard to racism and sexism, is pervasive in [South African higher education] institutions (Ministerial Commission, 2008. p.13).

The surveys use the micropolitical dimension of students' and student leaders' attitudes to democracy as indicators to be described and understood in comparative terms, thus seeking to measure the so-called educational effect of higher education on democratic attitudes and citizenship at university level. The analysis of the data uses a heuristic of three basic conceptions of democratic citizenship: the notions of 'committed democrat', 'active citizen' and 'critical citizen'.

- *Committed democrat* refers to a notion of citizenship that highlights unwavering commitment to democracy; it is measured in terms of consistent preference for democracy over non-democratic regime alternatives on an index with four survey items.
- *Active citizenship* refers to the classic Kantian distinction between active and passive citizens; it measures on an index of six survey items not only support for democracy (one indicator), but also participation in democratic politics by means of involvement in formal political leadership and participation in informal political activity such as mass meetings and demonstrations (measured on five items).
- The notion of *critical citizenship* is based on Norris's work (1999) and Jeevanatham (2005) and is measured here as support for democracy (one item) alongside a critical stance towards the level of democracy in the country. It therefore combines in one index both regime support and the critical evaluation of regime performance (three-item index).

The student surveys produced 400 weighted responses of third-year students (and student leaders) at each university (but it excludes from the sample international students at UCT). Having designed the student survey instruments based on Afrobarometer's methodology, the article compares the findings of the student surveys with national public opinion data from Botswana, Kenya, South Africa, and Tanzania, both in aggregate form as well as disaggregated to youths of the same age cohorts as students but who do not have higher education.[2]

The student responses from the four East and Southern African universities and national data from Afrobarometer have to be understood within their respective institutional and national contexts, which provide important variation for comparative analysis. While it is not possible to go into details here, it is important to keep in mind that, even though all four countries are democracies, Kenya, South Africa and Tanzania are of to the African group of the post-Cold War (or 'third wave') democracies, while Botswana has been a multi-party democracy since its independence in 1965 and is widely hailed as the 'African success story' in consolidating democratic politics on the continent (Cook & Sarkin, 2010). Moreover, various comparative indicators show that the three younger democracies have succeeded to varying degrees in consolidating democracy and good governance in the past two decades. Kenya and Tanzania are only considered 'partly free' by Freedom House and neither of the two qualifies as a genuine electoral democracy. South Africa and Botswana, in contrast, are

considered two of the few fully free electoral democracies in Africa (Puddington, 2009). Moreover, during data collection, Botswana (2011) and Tanzania and South Africa (2009) were politically stable – and all three have been ruled by the same political party since their transition to multiparty democracy. Kenya, in contrast, saw a change of political party at the helm of government in 2002 after it made its transition to multiparty democracy in 1997. However, in 2007/2008, the country experienced the worst case of electoral violence in its political history. By June 2009 (when the student surveys were conducted), Kenya was also still recovering from the aftermath of the election violence and a new constitution had not yet been adopted. The effect of the macropolitical context on the attitudes of students and mass publics is evident in the data. For Kenya, it is fair to conclude that Kenyans' opinions reflect in part the political instability that occurred due to post-election violence in the 2007/2008 elections (Luescher-Mamashela et al., 2011). The interpretation of cross-country analyses must therefore be mindful of the different national and institutional contexts present at the time of data collection.

African students' political attitudes in comparative perspective

Students and the idea of democracy: Are African students committed democrats?

A first 'requisite' for democratic citizenship and leadership is presumably knowing the basics of what democracy is and is not. Yet, democracy is not only in political theory a contested concept; it means different things to different people. The student surveys conducted at UB, UCT, UDSM and UON did not presuppose a particular conception of democracy; rather they investigated students' understanding of the term 'democracy' and their views on what features of society were essential for a country to be called a democracy as part of the investigation.

The data shows that more than nine out of ten student respondents can provide a comprehensible and valid definition of democracy in their own words. Almost all definitions carry a positive connotation. In closer analysis, students of the four flagship universities have predominantly procedural, liberal and/or participatory ideas of what democracy is. Half of the students (51%) define democracy first in terms of political rights and civil freedoms; just under a third (31%) as popular participation and deliberation in politics; meanwhile less than a tenth define it in substantive terms as equality, fairness or justice. Concerns with socio-economic development (such as access to basic services) are almost completely absent from students' conceptions of democracy. Only when students are prompted with a multiple-choice 'wish list' of potentially important features of a democracy, socio-economic goods (such as provision of basic services; equality in education; and full employment) come to top the list marginally ahead of political goods such as freedom of speech or majority rule.

Taking the notion of 'committed democrat' as the touchstone, the analysis shows the extent to which students prefer democracy over authoritarian regime types. Almost three-quarters of students (72%) prefer democracy over any other regime type, and over 88% always reject non-democratic regime types, such as one-party rule, military rule

and presidential strongman rule, as alternatives to democracy for the way their national government should run.

However, overall, only a minority of students at UON (45%) and UDSM (36%) can be described as unreservedly committed democrats in that they *always prefer democracy* and *always reject non-democratic regime alternatives* in the survey. The students from these two East African universities also emerge as *less committed to democracy* than the same-age cohorts of youths without higher education and the general mass public in their respective countries. Thus, at UON and UDSM, the Mattes and Mughogho (2010) finding that citizens with higher education[1] are not necessarily more supportive of democracy than citizens without higher education is confirmed – albeit not at UB and UCT, where a majority of students are committed democrats. At the UB, more than two in three students qualify as committed democrats (69%). At UCT, 54% of the students are committed democrats by this definition, which is considerably more than the South African mass public and their age peers without higher education (where only about a third are fully committed to democracy) (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Committed democrats
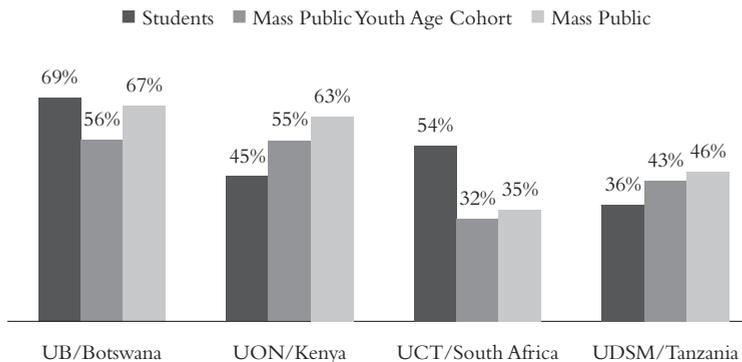
N students = UB, UON, UCT, UDSM 400 each

N valid Afrobarometer national mass publics: BW=971; KNY=1104; TZN=1208; SA=2400

N valid Afrobarometer national age cohort without higher education: BW=229; KNY=157; TZN=162; SA=312

Moreover, considering the argument made in literature on student activism (e.g. Altbach, 2006), it is perhaps surprising – or even shocking – that there is no significant correlation between involvement in formal student leadership on campus[2] and being a committed democrat, as various statistical tests have shown (for details see Luescher-Mamashela et al., 2011, p. 58). For example, despite the difference in proportions of commitment to democracy between ordinary students and student leaders, a Chi-square test indicates that there is no statistically significant association between commitment to democracy and student leadership. Therefore, current or prior involvement in formal student representation

and student leadership seems to have no significant positive impact on commitment to democracy in any of the four universities. It follows that, if there are student leadership development interventions that specifically aim at citizenship development, they presently do not result in any significant increase in support for democracy among these students. Contrary to expectation, participation in formal student leadership on campus (along with related student development interventions) therefore does not act as a distinct student leadership pathway to democratic citizenship. Similarly, the attempt to explain support for democracy among the students of the four flagship universities in terms of demographic features (e.g. gender, class), institutional and cultural factors, and attitudinal and behavioural variables, has yielded very weak and few statistically significant results (for a very detailed study on the Tanzanian data set, see Mwollo-ntallima, 2011).

Therefore, only the students in the two Southern African universities, the University of Botswana and the University of Cape Town, are significantly more committed to democracy than their age peers without higher education or the national mass public; at the University of Nairobi and University of Dar es Salaam this is not the case. If the latter universities are aiming to contribute over and above previous levels of education to a new generation of highly educated democratic citizens and leaders in their respective countries, they are currently not succeeding on those terms.

Students evaluating the performance of democracy: Are they becoming critical citizens?

To what extent do the present political systems of Botswana, Kenya, South Africa and Tanzania actually satisfy students' political ideals? How do students and student leaders see the level of democracy in their country and the performance of the democratic system? Analysing students' evaluation of democracy's performance, the surveys use the notion of 'critical citizen'. It characterises those who *prefer democracy* and are *critical or very critical* of the current level of democracy in their country (i.e. those who consider the political system in their country as not yet fully democratic).

In the analysis, the majority of the students from the three universities in the newer democracies consider their country 'not a democracy' or 'a democracy with major problems'. Most critical are students from the University of Nairobi where less than 15% consider their country a full democracy or a democracy with minor problems. In contrast, almost 90% of the students at the University of Botswana say that Botswana is a democracy with, at most, minor problems. The contrasting views of students reflect only partially the national context. On the one hand, the extremely low democracy endorsement that Kenya's democracy receives from UON students must be understood in relation to the post-2007 election turmoil there and the fact that Kenya found itself under a transitional government at the time of the survey and the new constitution still needed to be approved in a referendum in the coming months. On the other hand, the surveys also show that the students from all the universities are generally *very critical* of the extent of democracy in their country and, except in the special case of Kenya, students are *far more critical* than their age peers without higher education and the mass publics in their respective countries (see

Figure 2). As will be shown below, the heightened criticalness of students may reflect the generally higher levels of political awareness of students compared with citizens in general in their country and the youth without higher education.

Figure 2: Critical citizens
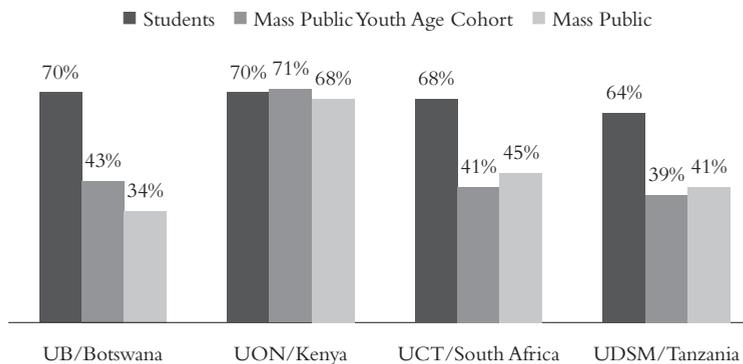
N students = UB, UON, UCT, UDSM 400 each

N valid Afrobarometer national mass publics: BW=944; KNY=867; TZN=937; SA=1996

N valid Afrobarometer national age cohort without higher education: BW=225; KNY=146; TZN=146; SA=309

Critical regime performance evaluations also emerge from questions considering the extent to which students are satisfied with the way democracy works in their country. Most students at the two East African universities are not satisfied at all with the performance of democracy in their respective countries (UON 87%; UDSM 70% not satisfied). At UB, about one in two are not satisfied (52%) with Botswana's democracy, while, at UCT, a majority of the students (57%) is 'fairly' or 'very satisfied' with South Africa's democratic system, which is more than South Africans in general (49%).

Students therefore emerge in all cases as highly critical of the performance of democracy in their respective countries; only the Kenyan mass publics – and for good reason – realise equally that the way democracy operates in their country needs improvement. Having said this, other analyses show that there are high numbers of fairly uncritical democrats and complacent (inactive) democrats in these universities – occasional armchair critics, so to say. For example, almost a third of respondents from UCT fall into this category (cf. Luescher-Mamashela et al., 2011). Nonetheless, in the national comparative perspective, the students from all campuses emerge as highly likely to be critical democratic citizens, and, in all cases but Kenya, they are much more critical than their respective fellow citizens and their same-age peers who do not have higher education. On this account, the universities therefore seem to be succeeding in producing more critical democrats in the region.

Participating in democratic politics: Are African students active citizens?

Democratic processes require more than critical thinking; they require critically constructive behaviour. In terms of the classic Kantian distinction between active and passive/inactive citizens, only those citizens who in one way or another actively participate in decision-making are indeed different from the subjects of a non–democratic polity (Weinrib, 2008). Firstly, in order to successfully participate in politics, citizens need to be cognitively engaged with and aware of, public affairs and politics around them. Contrary to inactive citizens, who are completely disengaged, passive citizens may participate in democratic politics at least through remaining cognitively aware (e.g. by following the news); active citizens, however, act upon their convictions.

In the student surveys, cognitive engagement with politics was measured mainly by investigating the *levels of interest in,* and *frequency of discussing, politics* and public affairs. Here, the surveys show that universities provide a privileged space for young citizens to engage with politics. Although the surveyed students are *not generally more interested* in politics than non-students, students discuss politics far more frequently than their age peers without higher education and the general public in their country. Talking politics, it appears, is highly common in all four universities. In addition, while students make frequent use of a diversity of news media (e.g. radio, TV, newspapers) at a level at least equal to that of mass publics, the frequency of students accessing news online is striking: Internet access to news is almost entirely a student privilege – in all four countries. Of the students in all three universities, 85% or more say they have access to and use the Internet daily or almost daily to gain access to news, whereas only around 10% of mass publics have this kind of access. Even among the relevant age cohort without higher education, Internet use is no higher than among publics in general. Thus, when it comes to cognitive awareness of politics, there can be no stopping students becoming actively involved in the democratic politics of the day.

Proxies for active citizenship measure *participation in formal (and conventional) roles in civil society,* in particular formal leadership in voluntary associations (including participation in campus–based student representative roles and relevant student organisations), and *participation in mass meetings, demonstrations and protests* as less conventional forms of participation. Do the advantages of increased political awareness provided by the university translate into actual participation? Are these cognitively aware students behaving as active citizens?

The survey data shows that higher levels of cognitive engagement indeed correspond to very high levels of political activism, both on- and off-campus. Participation in political meetings and protests is highest at UDSM, followed by UON and UCT. At UB and UDSM, half of the students have taken part in a student demonstration in the preceding 12 months and about two in five students in a demonstration or protest off-campus (39% at UB and 36% at UDSM); 29% of UON students participated in a demonstration on–campus and 28% off–campus; and 21% of UCT students demonstrated on–campus and 17% participated in an off–campus/national demonstration. Except at UCT, where students have participated in national protests and demonstrations about as much as South Africans

in general, students at UB, UON and UDSM are around twice as likely to demonstrate as their compatriots.

Leadership and active participation in voluntary associations on- and off-campus is another indicator for measuring students' attitudes to civil society. As far as active membership or leadership in non-religious associations off-campus is concerned, students are much more likely (at UB, UCT and UDSM) and moderately more likely (at UON) to participate than their respective peers without higher education. In addition, students are, of course, also highly involved in campus-based student organisations. Student leadership on campus also correlates strongly with student leadership in off-campus voluntary organisations, whereby students are considerably more likely to be leaders in civil society organisations off-campus than their less educated peers.[4]

Figure 3: Active citizens
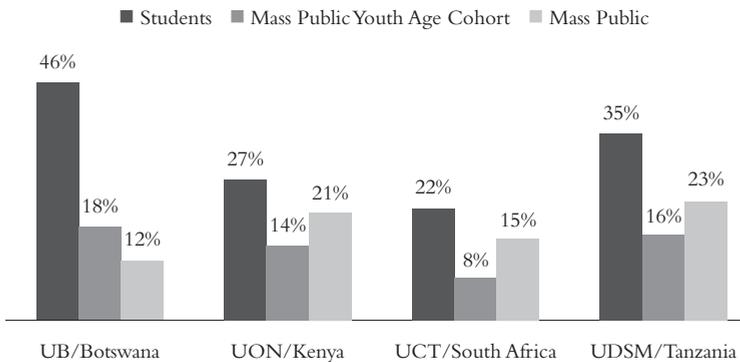
N students = UB, UON, UCT, UDSM 400 each

N valid Afrobarometer national mass publics: BW=899; KNY=1028; TZN=1121; SA=2112

N valid Afrobarometer national age cohort without higher education: BW=207; KNY=147; TZN=147; SA=264

It is clear that, with respect to all measures of political engagement, both in terms of cognitive engagement and active participation and leadership, all four flagship universities offer significant advantages to the politically interested and politically participatory student. Figure 3 shows that, compared with their fellow citizens, students are much more likely to be active democratic citizens. Moreover, the disaggregation of mass data into the relevant age cohort shows that it is not youthfulness that accounts for the more activist political disposition of students, but conditions (or predispositions) associated with studying at an African flagship university that have the effect of students being more likely active citizens.

From hothouse to training ground: Conclusions and implications

Against the background of the questions in the HERANA studies – that is, what contribution higher education makes to democracy in Africa – the student surveys show

that the four flagship universities clearly offer a privileged space for critical thinking and discussions on democratic politics and a base for formal and informal political participation. In the light of the importance of critical thinking skills in society in general (Jeevanantham, 2005) and for the quality and endurance of democracy (Norris, 1999; Gerring, 2011), this is an important contribution of African higher education to democracy. Moreover, the flagship universities offer clear advantages for participation and leadership in formal settings such as student government on campus and voluntary associations on- or off-campus. In Nie et al.'s terms (1996), students at these universities are therefore not only seated closer to the political action as observers, but they are also more likely to be on stage themselves, and more likely to be politically participating at a young age than their peers without higher education and the public in general in their respective countries.

The findings of the analyses provide evidence of the familiar phenomenon of student activism in Africa: the university as a political hothouse. They go a long way in illustrating why students tend to be at the forefront of political movements in Africa, which has inspired a diverse literature on student activism dating back to the mid-1960s and before (e.g. Lipset, 1965; UNESCO, 1994; Munene, 2003; Luescher, 2005; Altbach, 2006). Political participation, it appears, is not so much a matter of interest in politics; it is about having access to, and being informed of, current affairs; about discussing politics with peers and thus being 'cognitively engaged'; along with being placed where participation and leadership are possible. The political hothouse effect of the university observed in the surveys harbours a distinct potential for African universities to engage with the democratic mandate in order to develop democratic citizenship and leadership. On the one hand, Mattes and Mughogho's (2010) work suggests that the high levels of political engagement disappear once a student leaves the university and thereby loses the advantages for cognitive engagement and political participation offered by student life. This may be explained in terms of the findings on commitment to democracy (above) which seems to be insufficiently developed in the course of the university experience. It may thus be argued that there is a need for a more conscious and explicit cultivation of the norms, values and practices conducive to democratic attitudes and behaviours among students in order for higher education to contribute in lasting ways to citizenship development and, by extension, the deepening of democratisation in Africa.

We believe that the hothouse conditions observed in the surveys offer the very potential for universities to act as training grounds for critical and active democratic citizenship through the opportunities presented to students, namely 'to learn *how* democracy works' and '*that* democracy works' as proposed by Bleiklie (2001, p. 1; *emphasis in original*). In order to harness the potential of making the university an effective training ground, we therefore recommend that student affairs and academic departments develop strategic interventions – in and outside the classroom; and in-curricular and extra-curricular activities – that consciously cultivate democratic norms, values and practices on campus. Moreover, we recommend a sustained research effort drawing on local and international best practice, and informed by and relevant to the local, institutional and national contexts, to measure the extent to which student engagement contributes not only to students' academic success

but also to their attainment of relevant graduate attributes and competences related to democratic citizenship.

Acknowledgements

Endnotes

1. In the Mattes and Mughogho study, the 'citizens with higher education' refers to both students and graduates; in contrast, the present study only includes students who are currently at university.

2. 'Student leaders' has been defined in the surveys as students who were previously or are currently in elected student leadership positions at residence, faculty or institution-wide level, e.g. serving on a House/Hall Committee, a Faculty or School Council, or Students' Representative Council (SRC), Student Guild structures or the University Senate/Council.

3. While the selection of UB in Botswana, UDSM in Tanzania and UON in Kenya is relatively straightforward, there are other potential choices in the South African case, i.e. the University of Pretoria, the University of Stellenbosch, or the University of the Witwatersrand in some respects, as well as universities that have been important in the production of the black social and political elite such as the University of Fort Hare, the University of Durban-Westville (now part of the University of KwaZulu-Natal), and the University of the Western Cape. However, with the given criteria of age and current prestige, UCT emerged as the most defensible choice.

4. For details of the methodology, sampling, response rates, weighting, etc., of the HERANA student surveys as well as the Afrobarometer data, see Luescher-Mamashela et al. (2011). The relevant age cohorts of youths without higher education taken from the Afrobarometer sample reflect the age groups of the 10 to 90 percentile age group of the student surveys. They are: Batswana of 21-27 years of age; Kenyans of the ages of 22-25 years; South Africans of 20-23 years of age; and Tanzanians of the ages of 22-26 years. Provided that the students are selected from flagship universities, while the youths without higher education are from a representative national sample (based on Afrobarometer data), the analysis could also be interpreted in terms of differences in political attitudes between elite offspring and the youth in general.

5. Details of the correlations can be accessed from Luescher-Mamashela et al. (2011).

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