



# Depictions of activism at universities compared; Contexts for Political Engagement

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**Abstract**— *The goal of this study is to make a case that the campus of a university served as the venue for discussion, planning, and mobilization. Campuses have come to represent the perfect arena of power where social demands are made and power battles are fought since they serve as a microcosm of society. The campus acted as both a microcosm of the outside world and a testing ground for ideas and activities before they were introduced to the entire public. In terms of approach the study used a documentary review to highlight the various experiences associated with student activism from three public universities in Uganda. Findings indicate that, the university has developed into a setting for remaking society. The youth of Uganda in the 1990s sparked significant social transformation and began a new chapter in human history. The movement stressed the significant position that higher education institutions hold as centers of research, teaching, and community action. Since the freedom of thinking expressed inside the campus's physical setting gives humanity the vital inventiveness required to create a better and fairer world, the campus' privileged status should continue to be maintained. The study only included three public universities in Uganda, so it may not be feasible to extrapolate the results to other nations. Instead, it may be more practical to provide students with tailored learning support, let alone allow the university to grow organically.*



**Keywords**— *Higher education activism; campus organization; social transformation; democratization; internet age.*

## Introduction

Student activism and politics were key aspects of higher education in Uganda during the twentieth century, according to historiography. From the 1930s Ugandan universities and secondary schools were a center of the revolutionary movement. For four decades, most youth movements focused on independence from the British Empire. After independence in 1962, activist groups shifted their focus internally. Student leadership groups in public universities across Uganda, particularly Makerere University, were politically affiliated, and student government elections were closely linked to political standing. Student activist groups were the main opposition to the regimes of Milton Obote and Idi Amin, and students were particularly persecuted during Amin's presidency. During Museveni's presidency, students were leading critics

and engaged in major protests before and after Museveni's movement to lift presidential term limits in 2006. Consistent opposition to President Museveni culminated in three Makerere University closures.

This article, in part, pursues evidence as there is to substantiate this fact in Uganda. It depends very much upon one individual's recollections, and inevitably dwells more upon episodes in which the author was himself involved. In this review the likely to be omissions, for which apologies are given, but, hopefully, the balance will not be disturbed by this individualistic approach. The focus of the article is upon student activism. This is because events the recent past have shown that, for whatever reason, the academic staff of university have not been especially prominent in their protests. Many Ugandan academics have left the country. There are very few expatriate members staff left at

Makerere from countries in which University traditions of freedom of expression are cherished. There have been some examples of staff victimized, and in a sense the academic staff have been terrorized into silence.

In August 2018, the Ugandan government introduced a tax on social media, SMS and Whats App (Schwartz, 2018). Since the 2006 protests, social media has increasingly been used as a tool for organizing and protesting among young people in Uganda. While President Museveni claimed at the time that the tax was intended to increase productivity, he had censored social media in the past. During the 2011 and 2016 elections, he completely shut down social networks and there was a growing number of people arrested for posting anti-government statements online (Bariyo, 2018). The social media tax also came in the wake of the populist election of Rep. Bobi Wine, who communicated with his supporters via Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. According to a statement by Amnesty International, this is a clear attempt to silence dissent under the guise of increasing government revenue, Batarigaya (2018).

Within a day, students mobilized online, using VPNs to evade the tax and protesting the social media tax and that this tax needs to be abolished, Schwartz (2018). There were also thousands of citizens protesting across Uganda, most of whom were under the age of 30, Bariyo (2108). A group of students from Makerere University also petitioned then-Speaker Rebecca Kadaga for the social media tax and encouraged her to speak out against the tax in front of the House, Batarigaya (2018). After the public outcry, the government lowered the tax on mobile money transactions, but as of November 27, 2018, the social media tax remains in place.

In the latest development in April 2021, twelve Makerere University students were suspended for protesting online lectures. Students demonstrated against the continuation of online lectures and demanded a full reopening of the institution. Only freshmen were physically on campus while the rest were to study online for the first 5 weeks.

Vice-Chancellor Barnabas Nawangwe said the students are accused of destroying university property, disrupting teaching and learning, inciting violence and physical assault, for their involvement in the above offensive actions and to ensure the safety of our new students, the university and property I hereby suspend you from Makerere University, immediately. You are invited to appear before the Student Disciplinary Committee to exchange views on the matter at a date to be announced in due course. One of the suspended students remarked that the vice chancellor's actions were unfair because he was not involved in the demonstration. Her lawyers argues that the students'

suspension is unlawful because the students have not been subjected to disciplinary proceedings.

The purpose of the article, is to critically review the literature on the subject of student activism and social rebellion, to include a critical analysis of the positions of previous scholars, and to pave the way for charting the ways students' campus experiences on both sides shape their political visions and expand networks of solidarity in the escalating social rebellion at public universities in Uganda in the light of existing literature in the media and personal reflection. The article is divided into five sections, Section I defines student activism whilst highlighting the historical trajectories of student protest in Uganda. Section II examines recent student protests; Section III introduces the reader to the notion that the campus is a social space. Section IV provides an analysis of the current challenges preventing campuses from fulfilling the role of educating new generation of students. Section V provides an explicit implication for student learning/support. Finally, a brief conclusion is given in the last section of the treatise.

### **Student activism in the context of historical trajectories.**

Mamdani (2017) claims that:

Student guilds have historically provided the training ground for the next generation of leaders and activists. Activism defines a university.

In fact, colonialism's reason for establishing technical colleges rather than universities in Africa was for fear of producing the next generation of anti-colonial activists. Between 1960 and 1974, students at Addis Ababa University led a movement to end Emperor Haile Selassie's authoritarian monarchy.

The recent "online learning must-fall movement" in Uganda has shown us, student movements and campuses in general are central to the negotiation of new regimes of power. Student activists who emerged particularly from guild politics often ended up as the new intellectuals and political elites: Milton Obote, N Robert Mao, Noble Mayombo, Olara Otunnu, David Rubadiri, Okot pBitek, Asuman Basalirwa, Ebaju Adeke, Charles Rwomushana, and Nkunyngi Muwada .

Mamdani (2018) sees that there is something special about a university that encourages and motivates activism among its students. It could range from her readings (Marx, (1968) Fanon, (1967) Soyinka, (1970) Cesare, (1956) etc.) to her age group in her twenties full of youthful exuberance and courage. This then means that teaching and promoting activism is a core part of the campus.

Student activism is a feature of higher education around the world. On the African continent, early student activism

focused on national politics to achieve independence in colonized countries. After independence, African students took part in a second liberation struggle for social justice and democracy and against apartheid in South Africa. In Asia, since World War II, students have organized protest movements that have toppled authoritarian regimes in some countries and threatened governments in others.

In South America, the Cordoba protest movement of 1918, which began at the University of Cordoba, Argentina, was the first major student-related uprising on the continent and led to changes in university leadership. In Western countries, the 1960s was a decade of turbulent student activism, as students participated in United States civil rights movements, fought against the Vietnam War, and demanded student representation in university decision-making processes.

Student activism was widespread in European countries, as French students led a struggle against the De Gaulle regime, while students in West Germany organized extra-parliamentary opposition to the regime. The main drivers of student activism in European countries in the 1960s were issues beyond campus politics. However, student activism remains widespread as student activists continue to organize to defend and expand their achievements.

### **Historical background of student activism in Uganda**

The 1950s saw a movement toward pan-Africanism and independence in Uganda, aided by the multinational student bodies at Makerere College University. In 1954, students founded the Tanganyika African Welfare Society at Makerere College to promote independence and fair treatment of Tanganyikan. Along with the National Union of Ghana Students, the welfare society was considered one of the most important student movements in colonial Africa.

### **Prior to 1962 independence from colonial rule**

Immediately after independence, there was a rift between staff and students over the role the universities would play in the newly formed regime. Senior staff, mostly expatriates and British employees, believed universities had an obligation to be independent. Local staff, on the other hand, saw universities as a tool to support a nationalist agenda. According to Mamdani in *University Crisis and Reform: A Reflection on the African Experience*, the locals ultimately succeeded and the university became politically affiliated. However, the educated group of young people consisted mainly of social elites. Instead of embracing the progressive movements of other student movements of the time, Ugandan university students showed political apathy.

### **Protests during Milton Obote's leadership in the 1960s**

Milton Obote was Uganda's political leader from independence in 1962 to 1971. He served as Prime Minister

until 1969, when he assumed absolute power after an assassination attempt. During his leadership there were minor clashes between students and the Obote I regime. In May 1968, students protested an anti-British demonstration after three Rhodesian Africans were hanged. Later that year a group of students planned a protest where they intended to demonstrate in front of the UK High Commission in protest at arms sales to South Africa. The army stopped the march before it left campus and used tear gas to control them.

In 1969, the student guild president was arrested and imprisoned for inciting an illegal demonstration, leading to the Obote's General Service Unit developing a spy network inside the university.

### **Protests during Idi Amin's leadership in the 1970s**

In 1971, Milton Obote was overthrown in a military coup while on a trip to Singapore. A week after the coup, Idi Amin took power to become dictator.

In 1972, early in the Amin administration, the National Union of Students of Uganda (NUSU) was banned by the government, followed by protests against the expulsion of Asian students. The President of the Student Guild of Uganda issued a statement to Amin criticizing Asian student policies as racist and was banned shortly thereafter. The following two Guild Presidents left the country under similar hasty circumstances. The students decided to disband the guild after the expulsion and did not re-establish it during the Amin regime. According to Bryan Langlands, this was a subtle form of protest, as the government asked students to ignore the exiles and return to normal, and the students refused to do so.

In 1972, after government-backed protests against the expulsion of Asian students, the vice-chancellor was killed by the Amin government. In protest, the students boycotted celebrations commemorating the fifth anniversary of Makerere.

In 1976 student protests accelerated into open opposition to the Amin regime. In February, a Ugandan student named Paul Serwanga was shot dead in front of the university, allegedly because a soldier was interested in his girlfriend. 3,500 students marched from Makerere to the student's home in Kibuli, in a "march of mourning." By the time the students reached the center of the city, reports put the numbers at close to 30,000. Shortly thereafter, a Kenyan student named Ester Chesire disappeared. There was speculation that she witnessed the Serwanga shooting and was therefore eliminated. Theresa Nanziri Bukonya, Esther Chesire's caretaker, subsequently refused to testify before a commission investigating Chesire's disappearance. She was decapitated and dumped in front of the Africa Dorm she oversaw. She was eight months pregnant. In March,

students boycotted a presidential speech and instead locked themselves in their dormitories. Paramilitary groups were called to the Makerere campus in July 1976 after students planned a demonstration calling for an investigation into Bukonya's death. In a bid to quell the protests, the Ugandan government reportedly restricted supplies of essentials in Makerere, particularly food, electricity and books. In August 1976, around 100 students were shot dead by the police and military during protests.

### **Protests during Milton Obote II leadership in the 1980s and 1990s**

In 1979, after the Uganda-Tanzania War, Idi Amin was overthrown by the Tanzanian military. Obote returned to power. During the Obote II regime, the Makerere Student Guild was restored. The guild was led by Opiyo Oloya, a political scientist at the university who encouraged opposition to the Obote policies, which were perceived as angering ethnic tensions. In 1981, Oloya was expelled from the country.

In the 1980s, political instability, civil war and HIV/AIDS greatly reduced Uganda's student population. Of the refugees who fled the country in the 1980s, 11.9% were students whose studies were interrupted. In 1980, large numbers of student refugees abroad registered for national elections. Obote tried to visit expatriate students in Koboko during this time and there was an attempt to kill him. The UNLA was active in the area, forcing the students to vote Obote back into office.

### **Ecological protests against Museveni in 2006**

Museveni seized power in 1986 and was subsequently elected in a sham democratic election in 1996. He had already seen the power of student movements as the organizer of strikes at Ntare School and Dar es Salaam University. Early in his tenure in Uganda, Museveni enjoyed weak support from the youth population. He ushered in a fair democratic climate in the ivory tower, and the populace therefore viewed him as a new generation of African leader.

Over time, the Ugandan public became increasingly disillusioned with the Museveni government. In 2005, the legislature amended the constitution to give Museveni the ability to run for a third term. In addition, after the 2006 elections, Museveni transferred hectares of Mabira forest to Sugar Corporation of Ugandan Limited. There were allegations that Museveni and his government received direct payments from SCOUT to fund their 2006 presidential campaign. As one of the first examples of using the internet to mobilize in Uganda, thousands of people in Kampala protested the environmental violation. Ocan & Akena (2022) observed that one of the ecological challenges facing the country is the dispossession of land owned by

indigenous communities, effectively distorting and alienating the communities from their indigenous ecological ethics (IEE). Therefore, consistent with my analysis, I conclude that while the country grapples with the thorny issue of environmental degradation, sound ecological policies must be put in place that recognize the validity of indigenous ecological ethics, which have been debased under Musevenism. In the wake of that strike an estimated 300 students were involved in these protests, which also contributed to the accumulation of complaints. The Museveni government also cut funding, withheld grants and refused salary increases at Makerere University. These problems together contributed to a mass strike by students and lecturers. On November 12, 2006, Museveni closed Makerere University using his authority granted by Makerere's semi-nationalized funding structure. The university reopened in January 2007. The last time the government closed a university was in 1989 during the civil war.

### **Closure of Makerere University in 2013**

In 2013, faculty and students went on strike to protest that the university and government failed to pay promised pay rises. On November 2, Museveni closed Makerere University in response to the strike led by faculty and students. The main reason for the strike was the back payment of allowances in 2016 and budget cuts in the Ministry of Education. There was also tension between students and the government over Museveni's desire to abolish the constitutional age limit in order to further increase his power. Mass strikes led to property destruction and contributed to the decision to close the university.

In 2018 African students attended the Africa Students and Youth Summit (ASYS) in Kigali, which attracted thousands of students and youth to Kigali, Rwanda in 2018 to contribute to the Sustainable development goals SDGs and the African Union Agenda 2063. Also, African students took part in a global protest carrying the Climate Action banner in an international effort to spur world leaders to act on climate change. Students around the world took to the streets during a strike as part of a Global Day of Student Protests. They called for action against climate change and criticized their governments for not taking global warming seriously.

Social media was used to mobilize students around the world in what Manuel Castells would describe as a networked movement of the internet age. It supported the contribution of student movements to improving access to quality higher education, providing decent work and economic growth, promoting gender equality and reducing inequalities in countries.



In Uganda, “the Must Fall online lecture Movement” is further evidence of the role of student activism in social transformation and in meeting the sustainable development goals (SDGs) and the African Union Agenda 2063. There are many ways in which students and youth participate fully and productively in discussions that focus on achieving the SDGs by focusing on matters of national and global concern. No one should be left behind along the way. Governments should involve youth from different backgrounds in national planning, implementation and monitoring.

Böhm, (1983); Turner, (2001); Wittrock (1985) has added that academia has become a symbol for creative and free reflection on individual social realities, making the university campus an arena of privileged critical discourse and radical action, like the student revolts of the 1960s (in Europe) and north illustrate America. Against this background, this article addresses the following research question: What makes the university as a social space such

an ideal platform for initiating broader social reforms and what can be learned from the contrasting historical developments (in North America)? recent reports from Europe? To answer the above question, in order to understand how social movements emerged and in the context of the academic (campus) space and its immediate surroundings.

### **Recent student protests in Uganda: Makerere, Gulu and Mbarara Universities.**

A number of Makerere University students took to the streets to protest a proposal by the university to charge 15% tuition for students enrolled at the university. At 7am, the students, grouped among their group of student activists at the ivory tower, marched with several placards in front of the university's main gate. The posters contained words detesting the university's recent move to increase tuition. They also called on the university administration to consider students from humble backgrounds and to look closely at the issue of affordability of studying on campus.



*Fig.1: Protesters at Makerere meet face to face with anti-riot police. In the background female students carrying placards outlining their demands.*



*Fig.2: Students being taken to detention centers by the Ugandan police, 2021.*

As the students marched, a police team joined by the military attacked the already rowdy students, who sang songs to stop their protest, which they labeled unlawful. However, the students engaged police in a verbal exchange, while some violently pushed forward to continue the protest, a move that led to over 15 students being arrested and detained at unidentified police stations in Kampala, Uganda's capital.



*Fig.3: The army joined the police to crack down on rowdy students at Makerere University in 2021*

In 2021 alone, 173 students dropped out of social science faculty due to lack of tuition. With the 15 percent hike in tuition, the number of our friends languishing in the streets will increase, and it is our right to protest the move, she said in a Facebook post. Makerere, Gulu and Mbarara universities have been prone to strikes and protests in recent years, particularly over tuition fees.

As in Makerere, so also in Gulu University, another state university that was closed because of a student strike. The aggrieved students stated that they had not received their alimony payments in the first semester after interruptions caused by the COVID-19 lockdown. They accused the university of only paying them 670,000 shillings instead of 880,000 shillings in cumulative areas. Genius Ibabaza, one of the affected students pursuing a bachelor's degree in medicine, revealed that the government is paying 880,000 shillings for each student but the university is paying them less without explanation.

Shadic Ssempijja, another student, explained that when they reported to the campus on November 1, 2021, following President Museveni's directive on reopening of educational institutions after lockdown, they found that allowances for rent, transportation, internet and social assistance had been

Among those arrested is Siperia Mollie, the guild representative of the School of Psychology. However, in a recent Siperia social media post, she credited that there are multiple college dropouts due to unnecessary tuition hikes and exorbitant university policies.

cut, their However, rent was increased. Nancy Lakop, a privately funded student at the Faculty of Education and Humanities, condemned the arrests of her colleagues as unfair because they were holding a peaceful demonstration to demand a response from university officials.

The university's vice-chancellor, Prof George Openyjur Ladah, revealed that students will be paid 7,000 shillings a day per semester while they are on campus. He clarified that the state-funded students were not eligible for pay during the lockdown, hence the cut. Confirming the development, the then-Aswa River Region police spokesman David Ongom Mudong said that responding to an alarm from university officials, they were locked in their offices and surrounded by rowdy students. University authorities tried to contact the students but with no fruitful results, prompting anti-riot police to respond, and two ringleaders were arrested and detained at Gulu Central Police Station for inciting violence, Ongom said. In addition, Ongom noted that while the aggrieved students had concerns to raise, the method used to present their problems was inappropriate, and implored student representatives to seek dialogue to resolve the impasse.





*Fig.4: Gulu University students strike, November 24, 2021 over food and living allowances*

On the one hand, Mbarara University of Science and Technology (MUST) was recently bombarded with tear gas and rubber bullets as students demonstrated against prolonged strikes and online lectures by faculty. Students have been saddened that science courses cannot be taught online and that faculty have stayed off campus since re-enrolling on March 1 as they strike against un-tightened pay scales. Police engaged in running fights with students who set up roadblocks and burned tires on campus at the time.

Throughout the week, students lamented the ongoing strike by academic staff, which resulted in the establishment of an online learning mode for some with no classes at all and for others selected courses, most of which are from the Faculty of Interdisciplinary Studies. This, the students say, violates the president's directive to fully resume classes on March 1 and has restricted it financially and academically. In a note issued to students the next day, the President of the University Guild, Ms. Mariam Iculet Arikosi, pointed out the different terms agreed upon by the university administration regarding the class anomalies.



*Fig.5: Scenes of tear gas and rubber bullets at Mbarara University of Science and Technology*

While these approaches to studying student activism have emphasized the importance of geographic mobility, new approaches should not ignore the role these internal migrations can play in deepening the political influence of

student policies in developing countries. Anne Heffernan illustrates this point in the context of South Africa through the lives of three student activists from the Black Consciousness Movement. These men went from student

leaders to teachers in South Africa's townships in the early 1970s, where they were instrumental in inspiring the generation of schoolchildren who led the 1976 Soweto uprising.

### **The notion of campus as a social space**

According to the renowned sociologist P. Bourdieu (1998: 1), the concept of space contains the principle of a relational understanding with the social world. Following this train of thought, it is worth repeating that the university (the campus) is part of a larger reality (the society) within and within it. Discussing the anti-war protests in North America in the 1960s, Heineman observes: Peace work off campus was as extensive as organizing on campus. Where the surrounding community proved unacceptable to the anti-war message, the faculty devoted its energy to campus mobilization (1993:46).

As for the interplay between the campus and its surroundings (Bender, 1991), Heineman's studies show evidence of the social divide between the university (State University of New York) and the city (Buffalo) in religious and ethnic matters, cultural values, and class origins (ibid., p. 68). At the State University of New York Buffalo, the idea of an old campus consisting of the humanities and social sciences that supports reform, as opposed to a new campus that housed the sciences and applied sciences - both traditionally conservative - themselves provide an indication of the importance of the concept of space within the academic institution (Bourdieu, 1984).

Accordingly, any university worthy of the name is believed to exercise a high level, of objectivity in the quest for truth and evolution, of pure knowledge. The pursuit, promotion, and dissemination of knowledge are important so as to raise the degree, of intellectual advancement of the individual who is both the agent and object of development. This conceptualization fits well with concepts of the "educated society" proposed by Wandira (1981), the schooled elite (Nyerere, 1964), or reflective individuals who lift their eyes beyond the here and now to visions afar (Court, 1980). By undertaking such activities, universities continually pre-occupy themselves with the quest for truth and the acquisition of new, pure knowledge and skills that allow them to have an objective plan of reality.

Nyerere (1966:183) therefore thinks that in African universities: students need to be helped to think scientifically; They must learn to analyze problems objectively and apply the facts they have learned or know exist to the problems they will face in the future. He further argues that staff must be encouraged to challenge students and society with arguments and come up with new suggestions on how to deal with various problems.

Universities were therefore not founded to produce intellectual apes, but men and women who had a duty to contribute to the body of knowledge of man.

However, Nyerere (1980), Kamba (1983) and Ngeno (1984) added that while lecturers and professors should be allowed to analyze and discuss problems as objectively as possible, they should avoid undue emphasis on the superiority of knowledge to be own destiny. They see the main function of a university as playing a crucial role in solving social problems by coming to earth and tackling the problems of ignorance, hunger, poverty, disease and poor living conditions that our nations face. Nyerere (1980) has categorically stated that a university that produces only theoretical yes-men is little better than useless. These observations lead to a discussion of the historical contexts of student activism in Uganda from colonial times to the present.

### **Analysis of the current challenges preventing campuses from fulfilling their role of educating new generation of students.**

The current challenges that prevent Ugandan campuses from fulfilling their role and the strategies to overcome them have attracted some attention in this article, but sufficient solutions to them are yet to be found. Few Ugandan universities have attempted radical reforms in their curricula or severed ties with the government to develop independent and more relevant programs. Most postgraduate work is still done abroad, the dependency persists, coupled with the inculcation of norms and attitudes opposed to those that most African nations aspire to develop. Teaching and learning materials will continue to be imported. Tribal conflicts, often manifested in civil wars, and religious differences still dominate the political and academic climate at African universities. Despite these ongoing problems, the immense contributions that African universities have made in the short time of their existence cannot be overlooked.

Despite these ongoing problems, the immense contributions that African universities have made in the short time of their existence cannot be overlooked. They have also sought to integrate men and women from different social, economic, tribal and religious backgrounds under one roof and provide them with some education. African universities have also tried to develop research and consulting skills at an international level among local staff. Because these skills are recognized both locally and internationally, the brain drain from these poor nations continues. Most universities have also developed their evaluation criteria; They currently administer locally developed exams and issue degrees and diplomas on their own behalf.



The human resources under discussion include high calibre professors, as well as researchers and consultants capable of fulfilling the various roles mentioned in the previous sections. Not only do Ugandan universities lack the numbers, those already recruited are a mixed bag that may be difficult to bring together to do meaningful work. With that, Uganda is not only losing its most brilliant professors, but is facing a huge exodus of foreign staff who are no longer willing to stay, either because of low salaries and poor living conditions, or because governments cannot wire their salaries abroad. This leaves a number of universities with inexperienced newly graduated staff or old and less satisfied professors whose marketability elsewhere is poor.

This problem is further exacerbated by the shortage of foreign exchange, which makes it difficult to purchase up-to-date textbooks, essential magazines, gadgets, equipment, and chemicals needed to perform their duties well. Due to this immense shortage, it is extremely difficult for Ugandan universities to conduct experiments, keep up to date in all subject areas or conduct large-scale research. Faced with these issues, Ugandan universities should not just talk about them. As Nyerere (1964:308) observed, slogans will not provide us with solutions to such problems.

Experts from Ugandan universities need to come together and start producing relevant teaching and learning materials. They must initially rely on local and foreign aid, but ensure that the proceeds from the sale of their materials are used to produce more materials. The experts also need to raise awareness among politicians and government officials, using objective data to educate them on the impact of different investment policies. The author is convinced that the problem in most African countries is sometimes not the lack of foreign exchange per se, but the huge diversion of funds into the army and ideological experiments that don't work. Therefore, by using objective data and opening up dialogue through the strategic application of the policy of expertise proposed by Benveniste (1977), more rational investment policies could result and more money flow into viable university projects and programs.

Inept management and administrative staff also have some adverse effects on the functioning of universities as instruments of national development. First, since most employees are appointed by the government, they are likely to come across as good guys to defend the system at all costs, knowing that once they assume that position, their appointments are secure. The appointment of ex-politicians or active politicians to university positions creates an atmosphere of distrust between academics who want to analyse reality objectively and administrators who want to defend the status quo. In addition, the administrators (vice chancellors, chancellors and other chiefs) may be less

qualified than professors. Therefore, in an effort to overcome an inferiority complex, they tend to give blind orders that are not always heeded, thus causing more conflict. Therefore, there is constant friction between the two parties. Resolving issues faced by an institution and the nation becomes difficult as neither party wants the other to gain recognition.

The author believes that it is high time for Ugandan campuses to recognize that objectivity and merit are true reflections of democracy, and that any underground appointment clearly reflects nepotism, patronage and totalitarianism - enemies to be fought at all costs have to. Search panels using objective performance criteria have been used elsewhere in the developed world and there are no good arguments against the use of such methods in Africa in general.

Political turmoil is such a sensitive issue that it would be naïve to make concrete proposals. It must be recognized, however, that the main causes of political turmoil in most African countries are ethnic and religious differences, aversion to constructive opposition from politicians, poverty and, to some extent, external interference. Ugandan universities cannot be proud of having objectively investigated the nature, cause and effect of such problems or effectively communicated research results to governments, and yet their proposals have been rejected. It is therefore not only timely, but also appropriate that such studies should now be initiated and the results passed on to the right authorities.

#### **Implications for student learning/support.**

To say that African nations sometimes lack direction means that priorities have not been made clear enough; or if it is, the resources and effort required to implement them have been diverted elsewhere. Worse, we tend to talk about our problems without taking any action. Kobayashi (1980: 681), by contrast, maintains that Japan's technological might today arose from the government's dedication to ensure that "industry was coordinated with the university". Hence, moral and material incentives were given in favor of the university's undertakings.

The older conception of a campus has given way to newer and more urgent conceptions resulting from the pressure on the campuses to change. From its ivory tower romance, the campus has felt an accountability that requires it not only to produce an educated elite, but also to prepare people who can come to earth and be able to analyze and debate the various problems facing our nations as objectively as possible, and find ways and means to solve it. By participating in dialogue or protest movements, and by using social media tools to mobilize support, students can

demand the implementation of sustainable development plans.

For campuses to achieve these outstanding goals, we must overcome the obstacles to organized effort that African universities and African nations face. Many goals could be achieved through objective review of problems, with the university providing its expertise while the government provides the necessary support. Since some problems require the pooling of resources from other universities and international agencies, cooperation between such institutions and agencies should be encouraged. Trust and commitment or reciprocity should guide cooperative relationships.

In conclusion, the youth of Uganda in the 1990s opened a new chapter in world history and amplified profound changes in society. The movement drew our attention to the important role that the university space plays as a place of inquiry, critical thinking and action. Therefore, the privileged position of the campus should continue to be protected insofar as the freedom of thought exercised in its spatial environment gives humanity the critical ingenuity needed to create a better and fairer world. The key challenge is to allow this critical discourse to emerge naturally, without dominant political factions using the university space to advance their own interests.

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