



Neo-Liberal Policies, Governance Reforms and Students' Politics at Makerere University: A Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

The study focused on neo-liberalism and its influence on Governance Reforms and Student Politics at Makerere. Systematic Literature Review was employed to review academic journals, policy papers and book chapters. Both broad search and specific focused search were used to generate themes and subthemes of the required literature. The study was guided by the public-private distinction theory which elucidated succinctly on the role of public-private organizations and their relevance to this study. The study revealed that before and after independence, higher education in Uganda was a monopoly of the state. However, in the late 1980s and early 1990s there were reforms in Uganda's higher education delivery based on neo-liberal policies. It is pointed out that government was no longer competent enough to maintain its monopoly in the management of higher education in the country because of its inability to adequately fund the system. So what happened is that a number of governance reforms were implemented based on neo-liberal policies which focused on market-oriented approaches. Such market-oriented concepts included; cost sharing in public universities, private higher education, commercialization/commodification and massification of higher education. Students' response to such neo-liberal reforms was particularly significant especially at Makerere. These policies shaped students' politics at Makerere characterized by violent demonstrations and strikes which at times led to loss of lives and property in and around Makerere.

Introduction

This study focused on neo-liberalism and its influence on governance reforms and students' politics at Makerere University in Uganda. Makerere was selected for this study because of several reasons; (i) It is the oldest public University in Uganda and in the East African region (ii) It is a flagship university in Uganda where several neo-liberal reforms have been implemented and (iii) It is the largest public university in Uganda. It will be recalled that during the post-World War II reconstruction and nation building phase during the post independent period in Africa, the state played a crucial role in higher education development (Verghese, 2013). Most developing countries invested in higher education during this phase, recognizing the importance of qualified manpower in nation building (World Bank, 2002). During this period, public higher education remained an elite sector with limited access but with considerable government funding. In the 1980s, the terrain changed and university education was marred by severe inadequacies characterized by a deplorable state of decline and disrepair (Albach, 1984; Mamdani, 1993 and Kinyanjui, 1994). In the developed countries, the governments were fast in responding to the deterioration through "catch up management" policies and measures to withdraw public subsidies. However, in the low resourced countries, the response was slow although the reforms were later adopted to reduce the costs of running the institutions (Varghese, 2013). In Uganda like in many other developing economies, these reforms followed a neoliberal path and paved way for Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) with market-guided principles which dominated the public domain in Africa in the mid-1990s. Makerere, Uganda's flagship university embarked on these reforms in 1992 prompting other public universities in the country including Mbarara, Kyambogo Gulu and Busitema to follow suit in the years that followed. However, not so much has been done to carry out a comprehensive study on the interrelatedness of neo-liberalism with student politics and governance reforms in public universities in Uganda. Therefore, the objectives of this study are threefold; First, to critically analyze the concept of neo-liberalism, its evolution and how it later influenced the management of public universities in Uganda in the 1990s and 2000s. Secondly, to critique the various governance reforms at Makerere University in the era of neo-liberal reforms. Thirdly, to examine how neo-liberal governance reforms influenced students' politics at Makerere University in the 1990s and 2000s.

Methods

The study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to identify trends in neo-liberal policies, governance reforms and student politics in public universities (Webster & Watson, 2002; Tranfield et al, 2003). The approach was particularly preferred because it is suitable in fields with large amounts of studies (Tranfield et al, 2003). The review used a broad search to identify the themes under neo-liberalism, governance reforms and students' politics putting into consideration the global, regional and country perspectives. After conducting the broad search, it was noted that some of the articles were not relevant to the study and therefore, a specific and focused search was carried using key words related to the specific themes such as commoditification of education, commercialization of education liberalization and privatization of education, Structural Adjustment Programmes, governance models in universities, student demonstrations, student representation and students activism. Specific terms that were used in the literature search included; neo-

liberalism, unicameral, bicameral, tri-cameral models, student demonstrations, student's strikes and guild councils. In addition to academic literature, other sources such as book chapters and World Banks reports were also reviewed using the relevant websites.

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

This study on neo-liberal policies, governance reforms and students' politics was guided by the public-private distinction theory. The theory attempts to draw a line between public and private organizations by first providing appropriate definitions of the two concepts. Dublin (1978) explains that public-private distinction has been used in a summative fashion representing a bundle of variables. Public organizations have often been equated with governmental bureaus (Peabody & Rourke, 1965) and private organizations have been identified as all other organizations or business firms. Some scholars think that both concepts are multidimensional and such dimensionality was provided by Benn & Gaus (1983) who suggested that public and private vary along three dimensions; (i) Interest (ii) access and (iii) agency. Explanations that base on public interest tend to distinguish whether benefits or losses are communal or restricted to the individual whereas the explanations that base on the public good and market failures cite public goods and market failures as a reason for governmental activity and therefore as a reason for the existence of public bureaucracies (Breton & Wintrobe, 1982). However, proponents of privatization of public services argue that many government organizations produce non-public goods (Savas, 1982). Nonetheless, explanations based on ownership argue that ownership is a crucial distinction between private and governmental organizations. Hence scholars of public-private distinction opine that public organizations are those owned by government whether they are government bureaus, schools or manufacturing firms (Hickson et al, 1986; Chubb & Moe, 1985). It will be noted that these explanations assume that public owner more heavily subjects the organization to institutional controls of government as opposed to economic markets and other non-governmental control processes. It is also pointed out that governmental organizations that are funded through market sales or user charges often have concomitantly greater autonomy from governmental controls (Perry & Rainey, 1988). Conversely, Michele-Ford(2011), avers that the dichotomous vision of public-private divide has become outdated in a sense that it no longer describes accurately the ways in which public and private operate in contemporary social life; where the two spheres were once separate there is now a significant overlap and interaction.

The relevance of the public-private theory is that it attempts to demystify the public-private paradigm which is a focus of this study. It critically bisects the two concepts and situates them to neo-liberalism which vehemently advocates the replacement of the public mode of higher education delivery by market forces embedded in the private sector. In this case, neo-liberalism treats higher education as a commodity and that the twenty-first century university should be managed like a business entity to ensure sustainability in the delivery of services.

Neo-liberalism and Market-guided Measures in the Management of University Education in Uganda

Meaning and origin of neo-liberalism

The term neo-liberalism is fluid and often difficult to define. Its meaning has been an issue of intense debate among scholars. Rustin (2016) postulates that it is an ideology that refers to the entire post-1980 capitalist system. Hall (2011) argues that neo-liberalism tends to lump together a wide variety of circumstances and conditions which do not refer to a single entity. Other commentators see neoliberalism as a theory of political and economic practices that proposes that human wellbeing can best be served by freeing individuals' entrepreneurial freedoms and skills (Harvey, 2005; Ball, 2012; Marrow & Torres, 2000). Neoliberalism as a contemporary of liberalism is principally associated with the ideas advanced by the Chicago School of Economics. It emphasizes the efficiency of market competition, the role of individuals in determining economic outcome, distortions associated with government intervention and the regulation of markets (Palley, 2004).

Historically, neoliberalism ideas are rooted in the principles of classic liberal economic and political theory as propounded by among others Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill. Classic liberalism availed itself of the full lexicon of bourgeois' ideas which were entailed in possessive individualism, freedom of equality, ownership of private property, self-interest, a limited form of the state, free trade and the right to accumulate capital (Palley, 2004; Hall, 2011). Nonetheless, classical liberalism began to lose its impetus by the late 19th century but neoliberalism which rose from the 1970s came to its rescue by borrowing and appropriating extensively from its classical predecessor. What makes neoliberalism different from classical liberalism is that it adds a further and explicit market inflexion to the classical liberal ideas.

Neoliberal Policies and Higher Education Governance Reforms

Prior to the 1980s, universities especially in Europe were governed under the collegial or self-governance model (Giovanna, 2013; Saint, 2009). This model was indeed dominant in Great Britain where the senate which was comprised of the professoriate was the pinnacle of power and influence in a university (Rolland, 2017). And so from the 1940s to the late 1970s, the practice in the public universities in Great Britain was that no governing body would act in a major policy issue without consulting the senate – most policy issues were initiated at the senate level (Shattock, 2017). The belief at that the time was that only academics were suitably competent to regulate the public affairs of scholars (Moodie & Eustace, 1974). This epitomized the view that the university was "a republic of scholars". In the collegial governance model, the vice chancellor was selected by the senate from among the university's most esteemed scholars to fulfill ceremonial and administrative roles (Saint, 2009). However, with the emergence of the neoliberal reforms characterized by the New Public Management (NPM) and massification policies, a call for universities to operate as a business became a reality. Proponents of this view averred that while education has been expected to work in a market regulated by the state, the state has not always been successful in regulating education (Rustin, 2016). Neoliberals see education as an instrument for sorting and grading learners to class society. The liberal purpose of education is essentially to provide the workforce needed to sustain the capitalist economy. Along this line of argument, it is contended that education achievement and opportunities are subject to competition. Ball (2003) argues that education should be made more cost efficient through cost containment measures, commodification of knowledge, greater responsiveness to market forces, engaging in entrepreneurial activities through quality

improvement based on assessment, ranking and grading, quantification and calculability. According to Giroux (2002), the neoliberal model has serious implications when applied to education because it treats education as just another service to be delivered to those who can afford to buy it. The justification is that it provides people with choices, yet there is overwhelming evidence that in economically unequal societies only those with sufficient resources can make choices; those who are poor have no choices at all (Palley, 2004). It is this World Bank model that guided policies on university education in Sub-Saharan Africa.

In Africa, Western powers comprising mainly of USA and the United Kingdom (UK) spearheaded the neoliberal reforms in higher education delivery through the World Bank's marketisation of higher education ((Levidow, 2002). Beginning in the 1980s, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) launched a neoliberal agenda that dictated self-financing of higher education in exchange for development loans. The two intergovernmental international organisations had already advocated the implementation of Structural Adjustment Programmes for loan seekers (Levidow, 2002). According to World bank (1988), it was argued that in light of budgetary constraints in universities in Sub-Saharan Africa, there was urgent need for reforms that reduced government subsidies in higher education. The first order of business was to institute reforms towards three simultaneous ends; transfer some of the burden of financing university education to parents and students, reduce unit costs and shrink public sector participation in favour of the private sector.

The state-led model of investment was deemed irrelevant in 1980s and the economic reforms of the 1990s clearly indicated a move from state to market. There was a change in strategy where public investment was diverted from higher education to primary education in developing countries in particular (World Bank, 1986; Banya& Edu, 2001). The new trend of reforms in Africa's university education was reflected in terms of 6 Cs thus; corporatization of management, collectivization of access, commercialisation of learning; commodification of knowledge, computerisation of education and connectivity of institutions (Zelena, 2004). In that perspective, these trends can be categorized into two; (a) Privatization of public institutions (b) promotion of private institutions (Varghese, 2006).

Neoliberal reforms characterized by market friendly policies and globalization resulted into the expansion of university education without placing additional burden on public treasury. Consequently, the developed and developing countries reduced and even withdrew subsidies to higher education and introduced cost recovery measures, cost sharing strategies and income generating activities (Sanyal, 1995; Ishengoma, 2004) to that effect. These entrepreneurial universities (Clark, 1998) helped expand enrolment without burdening public exchequers.

The policies that African countries have been compelled to adopt partly because of donor pressure and partly because of increased enrolments in higher education coupled with limited resources had direct consequences for African universities (Mazrui, 1997). World Bank figures are unequivocal that the majority of students in Africa, an average of about 60% came from the ranks of the peasantry, workers and small traders. These categories of citizens are likely to be unable to have the means to meet the increasing cost of higher education. The natural outcome was manifested in the dropout rates of students from poorer families. For instance, in Kenya's Moi and Egerton universities, with a combined population of about 6000 students in 1996, over 2000 students were deregistered over nonpayment of fees and tuition (Mazrui, 1997). This means that the elimination of book allowances and free tuition have made the universities in Africa places of learning for only students from better-off families. Further still, African universities now feel compelled to seek donor support for their departments and faculties by establishing links with more affluent universities in the industrialized world. They have to depend on these universities for money for research institutes, publishing their studies, keep journals going and for training of their junior staff.

Neo-liberal Reforms and the Management of Public Universities in Uganda

The progression of higher education in Uganda can be traced to the establishment of Makerere in 1922 as a technical college (Mamdani, 2007). Makerere assumed a university college status when it became affiliated with the University of London in 1949 (Bisaso, 2017). Under the affiliation, Makerere started offering programmes leading to the general degrees of the University of London (Nabaho, Aguti & Oonyu, 2017). Subsequently in 1963, Makerere became one of the constituency colleges of the University of East Africa and in 1970, it became an independent university in Uganda. From the early years of independence up to the mid-1990s, higher education in Uganda was funded by government. However, due to the deteriorating terms of trade and high costs of debt servicing, the government could not run the entire higher education system by 1980s. It took on the neoliberal agenda by making education a commodity, sell what could be sold and privatise what could be privatized (Musisi, 2001). In 1992, the government of Uganda (GoU) allowed Makerere University to charge fees for evening courses. Consequently, the faculties of law and commerce also initiated evening classes solely for private students (Sawyer, 2002). In 1995, the University Council allowed faculties to admit fees paying students to fill the quotas not taken up by government sponsored students. There was significant increase in the enrolment of students such that from 1993/94, enrolment of admitted students was 3,361 made up of 2,299 government sponsored and 1,062 private students. This situation metamorphosed to a total of 14,239 made up of 1,923 government- sponsored and 12,316 private students in 1999/2000 with no significant increases of resources available to the university from the government.

The neoliberal approach through privatization measures implied that while institutions remained in the hands of public ownership, their ownership and operations were guided by market principles. Some of the specific privatization measures adopted included the University Enterprise Scheme (UNES) and the Dual Track Admission Policy (DTAP) comprising of government-sponsored and private students (Mamdani, 2008), the dual track (residential and non-residential programmes), the institutional transformational programmes, cost sharing and revenue diversification strategies; abolition of subsidies, the pricing of services and the introduction of tuition fees and student loan programmes (Oketch, 2003; World Bank, 2010).

Governance Reforms in Public Universities: An African Perspective

The term governance can be construed to mean the process of decision-making that entails the creation of structures in terms of offices, positions and formal roles within the organization (Verghese (2013). Eurydice (2008) defines university governance as the formal and informal exercise of authority under laws, policies and rules by which they interact. However, Neave (2006) looks at it as conceptual shorthand for the way higher education institutions are organized and managed. Marginson and Considine (2000) consider university governance to encompass the determination of value inside the universities, their systems of decision making and resource allocation, their mission and purpose, patterns of authority and hierarchy and the relationship

of universities as institutions to different academic worlds within the worlds of government, business and the community. Before and immediately after independence, African universities were shaped after institutions of higher learning in their respective colonial powers. Universities in Francophone Africa operated alongside the model of French universities and those in Anglophone Africa operated alongside the university models in Britain and America (UNESCO, 2013). At that time, African universities enjoyed limited autonomy with limited students' access. In many instances, political leaders (presidents and prime ministers) became university chancellors and patrons, thus enjoying considerable power and influential authority over university affairs hence limiting the autonomy of these institutions. After independence, there was a serious effort to Africanize the administration and decision-making processes in African universities and the first step was to put African elites at the top of the government (Suton, 1971). The replacement of expatriates in administration and decision-making positions in newly independent countries led to what is termed as the indigenization of development (Atal, 1995). In African higher education, indigenization of education meant indigenizing staff and curriculum among others.

Since the 1980s, African public universities have been at the helm of reforms following the permeation of market forces in higher education decision-making. Governments have passed new laws, granted autonomy to new universities, created buffer bodies, introduced performance monitoring and established external quality assurance mechanism to help govern institutions effectively in the changed context (Varghese, 2013). New higher education legislation defining the roles of the government, buffer organizations and the authority of governing bodies was passed in many countries. In terms of changes to governance of public institutions, Ministry of Education (MoE) reduced its powers mostly to overall policy, strategic planning, coordination and negotiating with other ministries and foreign agencies. As a result, many governments transferred the responsibilities of higher education and granted autonomy to institutions (Fieldeu, 2008). The major question in the 1990s was on designing survival strategies to reconstruct and revive higher education (World Bank, 1988; Eisemon, 1989). The education reforms in Africa in the 1990s were centered on the financing alternatives to promote an expanding of higher education and managing the universities more efficiently and effectively (Sanyal, 1995).

Models of University Governance

Models of governance in public universities can be categorized into three forms; unicameral, bicameral and tri-cameral (Olweny, 2015; Rolands, 2017). In a unicameral system, a single governing body is responsible for determining the academic and financial matters of a university (Dearlove, 2002; Rolands, 2017). Under this arrangement, the academic senate derives its authority from the university council. In essence, the academic body functions as a committee of the University Council (UC) and its recommendations are subject to approval by the council. In exceptional circumstances, some academic bodies have the latitude and mandate to determine certain academic issues in their own right but on the basis of formal delegation of authority by the university council (Rolands, 2017). In a bicameral governance model, the university has two governing bodies (Amaral, Jones & Karseth, 2002) each of which has ultimate decision-making authority – the senate for academic affairs and the University Council for financial matters. A bicameral model of university governance is intended to protect academics from lay interventions into academic affairs (Shattock, 1999) and to balance the needs for external accountability to the state with the needs for the participation of the professoriate in decisions that hinge on academic standards (Amaral, Jones & Karseth, 2002). Tricameralism comprises of three parts; the board of trustees charged with the oversight and financial and management and planning, the academic senate determines the academic matters and finally the university council is entrusted with matters relating to the wellbeing of the university

Governance Reforms and Model of governance at Makerere University

Before the enactment of the Universities and Other Tertiary Institution's Act (AOTIA) in 2001, university governance in Uganda was a monopoly of the state (Asiimwe & Styn, 2014). The President would be the Chancellor irrespective of his or her academic qualifications and top university leaders would be appointed by government. Nonetheless, due to underfunding coupled with World Bank recommendations and Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs), there was a call for changes in public universities governance in Uganda (Oonyu..). During the 1990s State Private Partnership (SPP) model of governance evolved. In Uganda, this began at Makerere where there was a full introduction of a Private Students' Steam (PSS). In Uganda, public universities are governed under the Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions' Act -UOTIA (GoU, 2001). This is indeed a significant feature in the shift from direct steering of higher education by government to granting the institutional autonomy of public universities (Bisaso, 2017). The UOTIA established the National Council of Higher Education as the regulatory body for higher education and mandated it to among other things accredit private education institutions and their academic programmes and to recommend the establishment of a public university to the minister responsible for education (GoU, 2001). By the provisions of the UOTIA, the Council of a public university in Uganda is responsible for the direction of its administrative, financial

Nabaho (2017) notes that originally, the legal framework for the governance of public universities in Uganda was based on the 1970 act and the 1975 decree which created a feeble management structure. He notes that the appointment of top and middle managers was vested in the president and the minister of education who had the powers to give directives to the university. Nabaho (2017) further opines that on the ground, authority was held with the University Secretary who seemed to be more powerful than the Vice-Chancellor and the deputy to whom he reported. The Vice-Chancellor could not hire or fire nor could he or she reward or punish. However, with the enactment of the Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act (UOTIA) in 2001, the council was now responsible for the direction of the administrative, financial and academic affairs in Uganda's public universities ((Bisaso, 2017). According to section 38 of the Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions' Act, 2001 as amended, the university council consists of the following; the Chairperson, the Vice Chairperson, the Vice- chancellor, the Deputy Vice-Chancellors, a representative of a sector relevant to the university, one member of the district council, a member of the convocation, two members of academic staff, a member of the National Union of Education Institutions, two students, three members appointed by the minister from the public, a representative from the ministry responsible for finance, a representative from the ministry responsible for higher education, two representatives of constituent colleges and two representatives of the persons with disabilities (GoU, 2001). The office of the Secretary is the secretariat to the council.

The senate on the other hand is the principle academic authority and so it is an embodiment of self-governance because it is composed of internal members specifically academics, administrative staff, students' representatives and three other external members. The vice Chancellor is the chairperson of the senate while the academic registrar is the secretary (Nabaho, 2017). Other members of the senate include the Deputy Vice-Chancellors, Deans and

Directors of faculties or Schools, representatives of affiliated and constituent colleges or schools – the Principal, the Chairperson of academic boards and a representative of Academic Staff, the University Librarian, Bursar, Dean of Students and the Secretary. Additionally, a number of Non-Academic staff determined by the university, two students of the university and three persons who are capable of contributing to the academic and social life of the university are also members of the senate (GoU, 2001).

In 2011, Makerere transitioned from faculty-based to collegiate university with the aim of alleviating financial challenges by granting autonomy to colleges in order to find ways of making themselves financially sustainable (Bisaso, 2017). The university now comprises of ten colleges which are structured into schools and departments (Nabaho, 2017). Despite restructuring efforts, there are still demands for autonomy and academic freedom. Omari (1991) defines university autonomy as the extent of the proximity of the state to the university. University autonomy also refers to the freedom given to the universities and manifested in processes such as governing themselves, appointing key staffs, determining the conditions of service of their staffs, controlling their students' admissions and academic curricular, controlling their finances and regulating themselves as independent legal entities without unnecessary interference from government and its organs (Sanga, 2019).

Student Politics in African Universities

Historically, it is documented that even before the formal establishment of higher education institutions in Africa; student politics formed an important component of Africa's agitation for independence (Luescher & Klemencic, 2016). The earliest known student organizations seem to have started not in Africa but in the metropolitan capitals of Europe among African students who had had the privilege of attending higher education in European countries. The focus of these earlier forms of student politics was the issue of student welfare. For instance in London, there emerged the Union of African descent (UAD) founded in 1917, the Gold Coast Students' Union (GCSU) in 1924, the Nigerian Progress Union (NPU) in 1924, and finally the West African Students' Union (WASU), the most important of all, in 1925 (Boahen, 1994). WASU's prominence as a student union emanated from the fact that the organization was able to weave its activities into anti-colonial struggles – most of the leaders of the union such as Kwame Nkrumah, later become political leaders of their countries (Luescher & Klemencic, 2016).

The need for representation from these early student movements primarily looked forward to pursuing social and cultural rather than political goals (Boahen, 1994) and agitating for better conditions for students and quality education; the kind of welfare issues that are now perceived as parochial by neoliberal higher education politics. The issues that have come to define student politics, and for which their representations in university governance or management to date is rationalized, still featured then. For instance, African students in Europe agitated for welfare issues such as the acquisition of hostels and accommodation, the organization of holiday camps, employment, scholarships, and student welfare and above all, the ending of racial discrimination and the education of Europeans in African history and culture to counteract prevailing racist views about the inferiority of the African (Boahen, 1994).

Student Politics at Makerere in the face of neoliberal reforms

From 1980s, student leadership and representation in African universities entered a new phase. The radicalization of student activities that had been witnessed in the 1970s started to ebb, although this did not in any way lead to reduced conflict with university management. The 1980s also saw increased tensions between students' organisations and state security agents as the former struggled to resist neoliberal reforms that affected their welfare (Tabo-Mugume, 2017). University closures were common as governments yielded to the dictates of international financial institutions which introduced anti-welfare policies as part of the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs). With the introduction of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs), the public university was seen as inefficient and the need to promote programmes for private students was strongly emphasized. Student leaders from at Makerere joined together with civil societies to promote mass coalitions and participated in governance as an oppositional force, to protest the dire economic conditions (Byaruhanga, 2006). This period had an adverse effect on students' ability to organize themselves as governments sought to implement reforms that affected students' welfare (Byaruhanga, 2006). In an effort to continue with the push for their interests amidst compromising conditions, there emerged what Byaruhanga (2006) referred to as "students' survival politics" or "student acquiescence" (Mawuko-Yevugah, 2013).

In Uganda and particularly at Makerere, besides the demands for improved welfare, the students' guild leaders were at the forefront in opposing student constitutions that were drafted by the Ministry of Education to regulate student activities without any input from the student leadership. It is averred that the struggles students at Makerere in the 1990s were particularly intense because students realized that the drastic university budget cuts orchestrated by World Bank's SAPs, signaled the end of the social contract that had shaped their relation to the state in the post-independent period

Up to the 1990s, student representation and quality of participation were influenced by the wider political climate outside the universities and the post-1990 period has witnessed developments that have altered this relationship. In almost all universities in Africa, the economic crisis of the state and underfunding that was occasioned by the adoption of SAPs led, towards the end of the 1990s to the introduction of 'a commercial stream' of self-funded students. This has meant that in some universities, student representation has come to be construed along the lines of the different modes of admission and study – government-funded vs. private students. In many African universities, the era of increased and deepening neo-liberal policies has resulted in the collapse of the student common voice. The situation has been exacerbated by the external political interference and manipulation of student elections resulting in violence with cases of rigging, vote buying, bullying, threats by politicians (News from Africa, May 2011).

The structure of student representation at Makerere is based on the Guild Representation Council (GRC). The GRC is at the centre of student governance and it constitutes the university's student parliament (Luescher, 2017). The 96 GRC representatives are elected from various constituencies mainly the halls of residence including resident and non-residents students, colleges and schools of the university (Mugume & Luescher, 2017). The guild president at Makerere is directly elected by the students and he or she heads all student governance structures at the university. He or she appoints the 28 members

of the guild cabinet from the GRC who are formally responsible for articulating and inter-mediating the interests of students within the institution (Luescher, 2017; Makerere University Guild Constitution, 2011). Students are also represented in the university's council and senate and in a number of committees of these bodies. The committees have one or two students' representatives who are appointed with the consideration of gender equity and representation of disabled students. Using these structures in students' leadership and representation, students are able to voice their interests through informal and formal meetings, occasional protests and demonstrations against neo-liberal policies.

It will be noted that the neo-liberal reforms resulted into student demonstrations and strikes due to student welfare inadequacies ((Sanga, 2019). With the introduction of cost sharing, cases of increased fees, lack of or poor practical training, poor housing and sanitation facilities and dissatisfaction with the general learning conditions were on the increase (Kwesiga, 2006; Provini, 2014). Students at Makerere insisted on free tuition, free food and free accommodation and pocket money which they (students) usually referred to as "boom." Mayanja reports that every time students' benefits were tampered with, they would march to State House or to parliament to push for their demands. In 1990, government abolished the students' transport allowance and introduced book bank in place of a book allowance -this prompted students to go on strike resulting into confrontation with police and two students died.

This institutional transformation at Makerere is what some scholars refer to as "quiet revolution" (Makerere University, 2000). The transformation was mainly an implementation of alternative financial strategies as a response to government's reduced commitment in financing higher education (Sang, 2019; Kwesiga & Ahikire, 2006). The university had to take on a market oriented stance and one of the ways to achieve this was the introduction of private sponsorship programme in 1992 which critically stretched the intake of fee paying students (Sanga, 2019).

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