Chapter 1

HERANA Higher Education and Democracy: The Student Governance Surveys

1.1 Project overview

The Higher Education Research and Advocacy Network in Africa (HERANA) was established in 2007 and it is coordinated by the Centre for Higher Education Transformation (CHET) in Cape Town, South Africa. The research component of HERANA investigates inter alia the complex relationships between higher education and development in Africa, with a specific focus on economic development and democratisation. Alongside the research component is an advocacy strategy that aims to disseminate the findings of the research projects, better coordinate existing sources of information on higher education in Africa, develop a media strategy, and put in place a policy dialogue series that facilitates interactions between researchers, institutional leaders and decision-makers. The capacity-building component of HERANA is the Higher Education Masters in Africa (HEMA) Programme.

The Student Governance Surveys project, on which this report is based, forms part of the broader HERANA investigation into the contribution of higher education to democratisation in Africa. There are three research projects in this stream of investigation:

- **Higher education and democratic citizenship in Africa.** This project explores the role of education in general, and higher education in particular, in the attitudes of Africans towards democracy using selected Afrobarometer data.1
- **Higher education and national legislatures in Africa.** This project explores the ability of national university systems to supply the human capital to run the national legislatures in selected African countries. The study uses a combination of primary and secondary sources, including interviews with members of legislatures.
- **Student governance at three African universities;** that is, the University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, University of Nairobi, Kenya, and University of Cape Town, South Africa. This project explores the role of universities in the formation of political attitudes

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1 The Afrobarometer is a major empirical research programme that monitors public support for democracy in Africa by means of a series of representative public opinion surveys. The Afrobarometer data and instruments used in these HERANA studies are based on Round 3 of the Afrobarometer, which was conducted in 18 countries during 2005 and 2006 (see Afrobarometer 2010).
and democratic citizenship among students and student leaders. It uses surveys based on Afrobarometer instruments as well as Afrobarometer data.\(^2\)

The Student Governance Surveys project examines students’ attitudes towards democracy, their political behaviour, and their perceptions and conceptions of politics and governance on campus as well as in relation to national politics. A particular focus is on exploring the relationship between student political involvement (e.g. formally as student leaders/student representatives and/or as student activists) and students’ attitudes towards democracy. The latter involves establishing students’ conceptions of democracy; students’ demand for democracy in politics on and off campus; the perceived supply of democracy and good governance on and off campus from the student perspective; and students’ political knowledge and behaviour.

Key questions explored by means of the Student Governance Surveys include:

- To what extent do students demand democracy? Are they ‘committed democrats’?
- What are students’ perceptions of the supply of democracy in their country? Are they ‘critical citizens’?
- To what extent are students interested and participate in politics on and off campus? Are they ‘cognitively engaged’ and ‘active democratic citizens’?
- What are students’ views on regime change in their country? Are they ‘transformative democrats’?

The surveys are designed so as to enable comparison between the views of ordinary students and student leaders, between data collected from students at different universities in Africa and between the Student Governance Surveys data and Afrobarometer data (Round 4). Thus, intragroup and intergroup comparisons, and cross-case and cross-country comparisons are possible, provided that the survey instruments were specifically designed to be compatible with the Afrobarometer. So far, surveys have been conducted at three universities located in three different African countries.

Throughout the project process, advocacy and dissemination activities have taken place. These have included seminars at participating universities (UDSM 2009, UCT 2009), participation in student leadership training workshops and the dissemination of findings by means of presentations to student leaders and student affairs professionals (e.g. at the African Student Leaders Summit 2010) and presentations to academic and non-academic audiences (e.g. Faculty of Education Seminar, University of the Western Cape). Findings and conclusions on different concerns of the project have also been distributed via the HERANA and CHET websites, including the presentation ‘Student Perceptions of Student Leadership: Involved, Responsive, Corrupt: Evidence from HERANA Higher Education and Democracy Studies’ (Luescher-Mamashela 2010a).

An important component of the Student Governance Surveys has also been its training component for new higher education researchers. By means of the HEMA programme

\(^2\) Afrobarometer instruments and data used in this study are mainly based on the Afrobarometer Round 4, which was conducted in 19 countries during 2008 (and one country in 2009).
(which is a Norad-sponsored partnership between CHET, the University of the Western Cape, the University of Oslo and the University of Makerere) it has been possible to support an MEd student at the University of the Western Cape to conduct the Tanzanian survey and eventually to produce a Master’s dissertation.

The remainder of this chapter outlines the analytical framework, research questions, research design and instruments used for the study. The chapter concludes by providing an overview of the report as a whole.

1.2 Analytical framework of the study

The analytical point of departure for the Student Governance Survey is that higher education’s role in and contribution to democratisation can be understood inter alia by investigating the political values, perceptions, attitudes and behaviours of students and student leaders. Higher education in democracies is typically tasked to contribute to the development of an informed, critical and active citizenry (WPHE 1997). Generally, the relationship between education and democracy is sometimes described as a ‘virtuous circle’ (Evans & Rose 2007) whereby education supports the functioning of democracy through citizenship development, while democracies, in turn, typically increase participation rates in education through their commitment to basic equalities. Yet, how exactly the ‘education effect’ works, and what contribution there is from the higher education level, remains far from clearly understood.

1.2.1 Levels of education, democracy and participation: a training ground?

The analytical agenda of the Student Governance Surveys presupposes a certain conception of the relationship between levels of education and democratic attitudes and behaviours. As a means to illustrate different relevant conceptions, Figure 1 (below) depicts rival hypotheses concerning the relationship between support for democracy and different levels of education in a simplified manner. Firstly, Model A represents the notion of an additive effect of education on support for democracy. In accordance with the work of Evans and Rose (2007), the hypothesis illustrated in Model A proposes that every additional level of education adds (more or less) equally to support for democracy. Model B adds to Model A the notion that the interaction between increasing levels of formal education and support of democracy is positive in more than a linear sense. The essence of Model B is that each additional level of formal education interacts with political attitudes in a way of exponentially increasing support for democracy. It could be argued that this is the type of potentially democratising effect of formal schooling feared by autocratic regimes. Writing about the European context, Hoskins, D’Hombres and Campbell (2008) find that tertiary education increases the likelihood of individuals taking part in voting by 8.5% and to participate in protest activity by 27.3%.
Recent studies have shown that levels of formal education have both direct and indirect, positive effects on democratic attitudes (Evans & Rose 2007; Hoskins et al. 2008; Mattes & Mughogho 2010). The most recent studies based on Afrobarometer data suggest, however, that this relationship is mostly indirect, mediated by use of news media (especially newspaper use), and that the interaction is such that once literacy has been achieved, additional levels of education add little (or, in the words of the authors, yield ‘diminishing returns’) to support of democracy (Mattes & Mughogho 2010). Model C therefore illustrates most closely the state of knowledge concerning the interaction between increasing levels of formal education and support for democracy in Africa based on data from mass public samples.
Whereas the contribution of increasing levels of formal education to democratic attitudes is a concern pursued in much of the current literature on the nexus of education and democracy in Africa, it is only one amongst the concerns of this study. The Student Governance Surveys’ focus on university students has a somewhat different rationale; overall the purpose is to open up ‘the black box’ of the way the ‘educational effect’ works on citizenship development in a particular way. The project supposes that, on the one hand, university students have had the benefit of the full formal civic education curriculum offered by the education system in their particular country along with the experience of various institutional political cultures. While current literature puts much emphasis on the importance of the primary and secondary levels of education in citizenship development, higher education is regarded here as the level at which the education system’s impact on students’ political attitudes and behaviours cumulates and culminates. From this perspective, there is no need to make an artificial distinction between different schooling levels. On the other hand, university students are also at an age and a level of political maturity where they can be expected to engage already in ‘big politics’; that is, by being members of political organisations and organisations of civil society, attending political meetings and rallies, participating in national elections and perhaps demonstrations. Student Governance Survey data of students’ political attitudes and behaviours in relation to national politics and governance can be compared to those of the same age cohort of the national mass public samples of the Afrobarometer as a way of testing the different models of interaction between levels of education and support for democracy. This is therefore one of the analytical focuses of this project.

The central analytical concern of the Student Governance Surveys is to explore and try to understand students’ conceptions of democracy, their attitudes towards democratic governance, their perceptions of national regime performance and satisfaction with the current political system in its own right as well as in terms of different conceptions of citizenship and so-called educational pathways to democratic citizenship. Related to that, the project explores the proposition that political involvement at university level (e.g. as student activist or formal student representative/student leader) has a ‘spill-over effect’ on attitudes and behaviour towards governance at national level and/or more generally on attitudes towards democracy. To put it differently: Does active participation in student leadership at university influence support for democracy in general? In this regard, a set of hypotheses or models equivalent to that of Figure 1 can be tested whereby levels of education are substituted by levels of political participation, with support for democracy as a dependent variable. Models A+B would thus represent the hypothesis of a positive effect of increasing political participation on support for democracy. Model C proposes that higher levels of political participation only offer ‘diminishing returns’ for support for democracy; and Model D represents the null hypothesis; that is, there is no empirical relationship between participation and democratic attitudes. In this regard, Models A–C represent variants of arguments in classic democratic theory (as represented by Rousseau and Mill) that political participation acts as a ‘training ground’ for democracy (compare Muller, Seligson & Turan 1987).

Relevant literature on the relationship between education and democratic citizenship points to a number of ‘educational pathways’ to democratic citizenship. It is in terms of
such pathways (or mechanisms) that the Student Governance Surveys try to open up ‘the black box’ of the presumed ‘educational effect’.

1.2.2 Educational pathways to democratic citizenship

The notion of ‘democratic citizenship’, the way it may be cultivated and, more especially, how it may be indicated and measured in terms of specific political attitudes and behaviours of students in general and student leaders in particular, has been central to the conceptualisation of the Student Governance Surveys. Helpful in this regard has been the study on the contribution of education to democracy by Nie, Junn and Stehlik-Barry (1996). Nie et al. argue that formal education operates through two distinct mechanisms or pathways in its effect on citizens’ democratic attitudes and behaviours. One is through a cognitive pathway in that formal education enhances cognitive ability in relation to politics (e.g. knowing what democracy is; knowing relevant office holders etc). Nie et al. argue that formal education not only enhances people’s ability to gather and process information relevant to a particular profession, but also information about government and politics, along with the ability to make sense of this information. Thus, formal education is expected to enhance the verbal proficiency of citizens with respect to understanding the political system (e.g. democracy) and weigh it against alternatives (Nie et al. 1996).

Another such mechanism represents a positional pathway, whereby formal education places individuals more centrally in society. Social network centrality is the concept proposed by Nie et al., and they argue that the positional pathway operates such that ‘educational attainment has a profound effect on the positions of individuals by placing them in more- or less-central network positions’ (ibid.: 45) within society. Citizens who are more centrally placed in society are also more likely to be in the centre of political networks. While higher levels of educational attainment therefore enhance the centrality of citizens in political networks, lower levels of attainment conversely correlate with a more peripheral positioning.

In this conception, democracy is primarily about citizens’ voices being heard; hence cognitive ability and network centrality may be considered among the key attributes of democratic citizenship. The basic argument is that the more closely citizens are seated to the ‘political stage’ and the more clearly they can articulate their political demands, the more likely it is that they will gain political actors’ attention and be able to effectively influence politics as ‘enlightened and engaged citizens’. Formal education in this view is ‘primary among the factors used in assigning educational rank and seats’ (ibid.: 187). Therefore, by increasing verbal proficiency and cognitive awareness of politics, formal education apparently produces more cognitively aware and ‘enlightened’ citizens; in addition, the positional pathway relates to the notion of ‘engaged citizenship’ and the sense of political efficacy.

1.2.3 Transformative citizenship and democratic consolidation

Nie et al.’s (1996) study focuses on citizens’ attitudes and behaviours in ‘old’ democracies; moreover, it employs a rather elitist view of democracy. In developing country contexts
where regime transitions to democracy are often incomplete, formal education may have more and different kinds of contributions to citizenship development. Regime transition involves periods of substantial change in the political system which ‘set a society on a path that shapes its subsequent political development’ (Munck & Leff 1997: 343). The notion of a democratic transition involves a regime change towards a more democratic society. In his classic study of regime change, O'Donnell distinguishes two phases of democratic transition. The first concerns the process of transition from the previous non-democratic regime to the installation of a new democratic government; the second phase is concerned with the consolidation of the democratic regime to the effect that there is no need to fear an autocratic regression (in Munck & Leff 1997).

A democratic transition does not necessarily imply that the majority of a population is democratically inclined. More often than not, populations may be merely anti-authoritarian, and democracy provides a somewhat mystical ideal of freedom, justice and equality; that is, an ideological means, to denounce the existing regime and formulate and legitimise opposition to authoritarianism. However, in order for a new democratic regime to be consolidated, it needs to be seen by all significant political actors and an overwhelming majority of the citizens as ‘the only game in town’ (Linz & Stepan 1996, in Mattes, Davids & Africa 1999: 1). It requires the development of a democratic political culture. Thus, Schmidt argues that ‘regime change is completed once the rules of the new regime are accepted by the most important individual and collective actors and the new order can be accounted for as “consolidated” in the sense that its procedures and normative foundations are politically and culturally deeply entrenched’ (1995: 819, our translation). A liberal democratic culture presupposes the widespread acceptance that (1) democracy is less a system to deal with socio-economic problems more effectively than a solution to the problem of tyranny; (2) there is a distinction between the democratic regime per se and the incumbent government; and hence that (3) democracy is an institutionalised system of governance whereby problems are dealt with by changing governments and the political leadership rather than changing regimes (Huntington 1991). More substantive, social-democratic and participatory conceptions of democratic culture will add to this procedural view the need for a sense of ‘demos’, a sense of common membership of a democratic community (however imagined) along with the pursuit of socio-economic equality. A good attempt at formulating the individual or micro-level long-term requirements of democratic consolidation has been made by Mattes et al. (1999):

*Regardless of how well designed its political institutions and processes, a sustainable and consolidated democracy requires people who are willing to support, defend and sustain democratic practices. In other words, a democracy requires democrats; it requires citizens.* (Mattes et al. 1999: 1)

Supporting and sustaining existing political practices may, however, not be enough to bring about a stable democratic order; political practices themselves may still need to be transformed and democratised further lest ‘procedures and normative foundations’ of a new regime that is not substantially democratised may become ‘politically and culturally deeply entrenched’ in Schmidt’s sense (1995: 819, our translation). Thus, the argument that ‘education can change only the composition of the population that is at or near the top
of the rank [of decision-making, because] the number of good seats is fixed’ (Nie et al. 1996: 188) may be taken as inherently problematic in country contexts where defective and pseudo-democratic practices persist. In other words, not only the willingness to support, defend and sustain, but also that to deepen and expand democratic practices may be vital to the consolidation of a new democracy.

Transitions to democracy precisely involve that the number of seats in proximity to the social and political centre of society is expanded (along with introducing new procedures for allocating seats). In developing countries in which transitions to democracy are often still incomplete, education therefore may have an additional important effect in that it produces agitators for democracy – transformative democrats, if you will – who are critical of current regime performance and supportive of deeper democratisation and eager to see change happening. In this respect, formal education may operate through yet another distinct mechanism or pathway in its effect on democratic attitudes and behaviours – by creating demand for democracy where there was previously none or little, and conversely stimulating a more critical evaluation of current regime performance and thus the nature and extent of the supply of democracy in the country. In this view, educational institutions are seen as cultural institutions that are upstream rather than downstream of national culture. The notions of ‘demand for democracy’ and perception of ‘supply of democracy’ are important to this argument and will be elaborated on below.

In terms of the notion of educational pathways, the idea of a transformative pathway as a mechanism by which formal education ‘activates’ political demands for regime change in young citizens has been central to the conceptualisation of the Student Governance Surveys. Viewed from the perspective of such a pathway, higher levels of educational attainment are expected to enhance the disenchantment of citizens with the existing (hybrid or semi-democratic) regime by simultaneously raising levels of dissatisfaction with regime performance (i.e. negative perceptions of the supply of democracy) and increasing support for a more democratic dispensation (i.e. raising demand for democracy).

By amending Nie et al.’s notion of a cognitive pathway, we have thus set out to investigate the argument that transformative citizenship involves cognitive and behavioural dimensions that agitate for an expansion of the number of seats at the centre of decision-making. In this respect it is important to uphold more than a narrow elitist view of what democracy is. Rather, as a way of deepening and consolidating democracy it should be considered in its original sense as a participatory way of decision-making in which not only the ‘qualified’ are involved but where better decisions are reached through the counsel of the many. As Bleiklie puts it, in this idealist view, ‘democracy is not only a mechanism for leadership selection, but also a form of collective decision-making that constitutes a way of life’ (n.d.: 1).

1.2.4 A student leadership pathway to democracy?

The studies of Altbach (1989; 1991; 2006) and others into student activism and its causes suggest that a focus on university students in Africa to explore the notion of transformative citizenship in terms of the attitudes and behaviours of political agents may be quite
The history of student political activism is one closely related to the world’s major political revolutions (ranging from the French revolutions of 1789, 1830 and 1848, and the German risings of 1848 through to the student uprisings of 1968, the role of student activists in Eastern Europe in the late 1980s and the tragic Tiananmen Square Massacre of 1989); in short, authoritarian rulers have been rightly cautious to keep the lid on the liberalising and democratising potential of student movements (e.g. Altbach 1989; Luescher 2005; Munene 2003; Perkin 2006). Altbach argues, for example, that university students and academics living in the post-Cold War transitions to democracy era in Eastern Europe were the first to articulate the political discontent. While nationalism and opposition to Soviet influence were part of students’ motivation, ‘a desire for freedom of expression and representative government also played an important role’ (Altbach 2006: 338).

Following Badat (1999) and others, the Student Governance Surveys make a conceptual distinction between the student body as a whole and the student leadership. This distinction serves as proxy of different levels of political participation at campus level. In addition, we also make the distinction between the formal and informal political involvement, whereby the former ‘official student leadership’ refers to elected student representatives who formally operate through conventional channels of university governance, and the latter ‘student activists’ who typically operate through more unconventional means of political articulation and involvement. This can include various political and non-political student organisations and groups largely outside of formal decision-making structures and/or movements that emerge ad hoc (Luescher 2005). For analytical purposes there is also a distinction in the conceptualisation of the surveys between different levels of governance; that is, the campus level of student politics and university governance and the national level of politics and off-campus civil society.

The notion of different spheres or levels of governance and political participation in relation to these distinct levels enables us to investigate the possibility of a ‘participation spill-over effect’ from one level to another level. The proposition in this regard is that political values, perceptions and behaviours acquired by students participating in politics at one level of governance (e.g. in formal student governance as student representatives) are transferred to another level (e.g. the national level, by the same students being more likely to participate politically and interact with public offices). In this respect, we propose a student leadership pathway to democratic citizenship whereby political values and behaviours acquired in the context of student leadership are transferred into the context of national politics as corresponding political attitudes and behaviours and vice versa. It is in this way that we bring the ideas of a cognitive and a positional pathway and participatory democracy together in the Student Governance Surveys.

The notions of educational pathways to democratic citizenship outlined above, and particularly the propositions of a ‘student leadership pathway’, illustrate the conception of citizenship development and its relationship to formal education relevant to this study. Firstly, the different mechanisms or pathways of formal education’s effect on citizenship must not be confused with the notion of citizenship education. While the pathways refer to social processes inferred from observed political attitudes and behaviours of individuals, citizenship education per se can have a much narrower and programmatic meaning.
Narrowly conceived, citizenship education typically refers to specific civic education programmes. In many countries, educational curricula include subjects such as ‘citizenship studies’ or ‘history’ with explicit political education content. In contrast to that, Frazer (1998: 101) notes that ‘it is also common for educationalists to emphasise the importance of pedagogical style and modes of school governance in preparing children for their roles as citizens, or subjects’. The latter involves a much broader conception of citizenship education that encompasses the ideological, pedagogical as well as political orientations and practices in educational institutions overall (e.g. Daun, Enslin, Kolouh-Westin & Plut 2002). In this respect, citizenship education at educational institutions can be said to have two distinct learning outcomes:

First, students need to learn how democracy works – through participation in student organisations and university decision-making bodies, and by developing a conceptual understanding of democracy. Second, they need to learn that democracy works by experiencing that they can influence events and their own living conditions through participation. (Bleiklie n.d.: 1, original emphasis)

It is by pursuing these learning outcomes in specific education programmes, as well as in classrooms, governance, and student developmental practices, that universities have the potential to contribute to citizenship education and deepening democratisation in transitional contexts.3

1.2.5 Role models of citizenship

The notion of citizenship is related to the idea that as a member of a state a person has certain rights and responsibilities (Mintz, Close & Croci 2006). Moreover, the idea of citizenship is closely related to that of democracy, in that citizenship is first defined in terms of certain political rights like equality before the law, free speech, and voting rights (these are often termed ‘first-generation rights’) which enable citizen participation in decision-making. In the struggle for democracy in a country like South Africa, debates around democracy and citizenship focus on political rights at first but shift this focus in time. As the South African constitution and South African debates on citizenship show, the focus of the rights-based discourse may rapidly shift towards second-generation rights (that includes rights to basic services such as housing and healthcare) and third-generation citizenship rights (focused amongst others on the rights of cultural minorities) (Von Lieres & Robins 2008).

In the global South, debates on citizenship also typically involve a critique of the ‘liberal’ and ‘state-centric’ conception of citizenship (ibid.: 48). Citizenship is considered beyond the idea of an ‘inactive acceptance of state-determined social and political duties and responsibilities’ whereby citizens remain essentially ‘subjects of the sovereign state’ (48). Rather, Von Lieres and Robins argue that citizenship in the South includes ‘a wide range of ideas and practices ... that may involve participation in a range of political institutions

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3 In this respect, the Student Governance Surveys shares certain conceptualisations and aims with the earlier Universities as Sites of Citizenship and Civic Responsibility project of the Council of Europe (e.g. Plantan 2002).
and relationships’ (49). Thus ‘citizenship is defined by highly localised processes of identification and political mobilisation and not only by the claims of the rights-bearing citizen vis-a-vis the state’ (49). From this perspective, student political involvement at campus level can be considered an expression of citizenship.

For the analysis of citizenship, Ichilov (1990) proposes a comprehensive framework involving different dimensions and related conceptions of citizenship to establish a set of ‘role models of citizenship in a democracy’ (12). He distinguishes between:

- **different domains of citizenship**: that is, a (narrowly defined) political or state-centred domain focused on a national or local level and the more broadly defined civic/social domain which encompasses a wide range of social concerns (13–15);

- **different types of participatory orientations**: This includes firstly a distinction between:
  - an *instrumental* versus a *diffuse* orientation, whereby the former refers to political actors limiting their participation to ‘task-oriented relations with other members’. Conversely a diffuse orientation towards political participation involves a view of participation and relations with other political actors as *ends in themselves* (15);
  - a *particularistic* versus a *universalistic* orientation. Particularistic here refers to an orientation towards a particular society or political community, while a universalistic orientation involves a commitment in political participation towards universal values such as freedom and equality (15–16);
  - three modes of activity i.e. *active*, *passive* and *inactive*. The original Kantian distinction between active and passive citizenship discriminates between “passive” citizens who are merely protected by the law and “active” citizens who may also contribute to it’ (Weinrib 2008: 1). In Ichilov’s terms, active citizens are oriented towards changing the conditions under which politics occur, one who is ‘active in public affairs’, while passive citizens are of a ‘consuming nature’, for example, content with only reading newspapers (1990: 16). He distinguishes this mode from ‘inactivity’ or ‘avoidance’ by which he refers to a complete absence of action, an apathy and indifference towards political objects (16);
  - *verbal support* versus *actual behaviour* in adherence to certain principles (16); and
  - different attitudinal dimensions, distinguishing among *affective*, *cognitive* and *evaluative* responses of a political actor (16).

- Lastly, Ichilov also distinguishes between **different objectives and means of participation**. Key among these distinctions are those of (a) participation as a means to express *consent or dissent*; and (b) participation by *conventional* or *unconventional* means, whereby typical conventional means in a democracy would be elections and the like while demonstrations, sit-ins and similar protest action are considered as more unconventional (17–18).

In the conceptualisation of the Student Governance Surveys and the analysis of their results, Ichilov’s different dimensions of citizenship take various operational and adapted forms. Firstly, the surveys distinguish as two key domains of participation the campus level of student politics and university governance from the national political sphere. In this
regard it is important to keep in mind that the focus of the surveys is on constitutional or regime politics that deals with attitudes and behaviours in relation to a particular political system (i.e. the politics of ‘who makes what rules when and how’) rather than towards the distribution of specific resources at a specific point in time (i.e. the politics of ‘who gets what when and how’) (e.g. Hyden 1992).

As mentioned above, central in the surveys’ conceptualisation of different participatory orientations is the distinction of involvement in (formal) student leadership as student representative from non-involvement, on the one hand, and an activist political orientation from a passive/inactive one. This conceptualisation thus combines the distinction between conventional/unconventional means of political action with those of active/passive/inactive orientation. Moreover, related to the distinction between active/passive/inactive citizenship is that of cognitive engagement. Cognitive engagement can be considered a necessary but not sufficient condition for active citizenship (in that it involves cognitive awareness of politics through discussing politics; reading newspapers and knowing incumbents etc. but not distinct activist behaviour) (compare Saha 2000).

Thirdly, a fundamental distinction between different types of citizens is between those that can be considered as committed democrats and those who cannot. The notion of ‘committed democrat’ defines those respondents who have a consistent and high demand for democracy. They always prefer democracy and always reject non-democratic regime alternatives (e.g. military rule; strongman rule) when offered the choice in the survey.

Lastly, Ichilov’s distinction between different objectives of participation, that is, consent or dissent, is adapted to the level of regime politics in terms of respondents’ attitudes towards the existing regime. Are students critical citizens in that they view the operations of existing political institutions critically and evaluate the existing supply of rights, rule of law, accountability, or, the supply of democracy more generally, with a certain suspicion? Are they transformative democrats with an orientation towards deepening and further entrenching democracy, whereby they are critical of the existing supply of democracy, support democracy, and are impatient to see change? The notion of transformative democrats thus responds at the level of political attitudes to Weinrib’s (2008) challenge that to create truly democratic citizens it is necessary to remove institutional deficiencies in the developing democratic state to create the institutional conditions of universal active citizenship. Conversely, the notion of active citizenship complements that with an activist participatory tendency. The political actors required for a deepening of democracy would be considered transformative democrats in their attitudinal orientation and active citizens in their participatory orientation for the purposes of this study.

1.3 Research questions

In the light of these conceptualisations, the Student Governance Surveys are guided by a number of descriptive, comparative and explanatory research questions. Most generally, the question is: What are the political attitudes and behaviours of students in African universities? This question is taken a step further by asking what these political attitudes
and behaviours mean in terms of the contribution of higher education to democracy in Africa and, quite specifically, whether student involvement in politics on or off campus contributes to the formation of democratic citizenship. The distinct research questions pursued in this report include the following:

To what extent do students demand democracy? Are they ‘committed democrats’?

- Are students aware of democracy and understand the meaning of democracy?
- Do students prefer democracy above its non-democratic regime alternatives?
- Do students demand political freedom?
- What explains students’ support for democracy?

What are students’ perceptions of the supply of democracy in their country? Are they ‘critical citizens’?

- Are students satisfied with current regime performance?
- Do students perceive the current regime as democratic?
- Do they consider national elections to be free and fair?
- How do students perceive the supply of political freedom in their country?

What are students’ views on regime change in their country? Are they ‘transformative democrats’?

- What are students’ views on regime consolidation in their country?
- Are students prepared to give the current regime more time or do they seek regime change?

To what extent are students interested and participating in politics on and off campus? Are they ‘cognitively engaged’ and ‘active democratic citizens’?

- What are students’ views of their political role on and off campus?
- Are students interested in public affairs and do they use news media?
- Are students knowledgeable about politics?
- How do students participate formally and informally in politics on and off campus?

Throughout this report, the pursuit of these questions is interlaced with a comparative analytical perspective involving the following dimensions:

- Comparison of students’ views with those of their fellow citizens in general and of their age cohort (as taken from the Afrobarometer mass public sample);
- Comparison of students’ attitudes and behaviours at one university with those of students from the other universities;
- Comparison of the views of students in formal leadership positions on campus with those of ordinary students.
By means of the analytical framework and related questions outlined above, a set of survey instruments (questionnaires) has been developed, based on and adapted from the Afrobarometer tools (see Appendices 1, 2 & 3). The survey questionnaire includes questions that probe students’ attitudes towards democracy and its (non-democratic) alternatives, students’ attitudes towards civil society, citizenship, the rule of law, freedoms and rights, accountability and responsiveness. It explores students’ attitudes with respect to their expressed demand for these features of the political system and also gathers students’ perception of the supply of these regime features by the existing national political system. An equivalent set of questions relates to politics and governance at campus/university level, investigating students’ attitudes and behaviours in relation to university governance issues and student politics. In addition, the surveys gather information about students’ demographic and social backgrounds. The questionnaires mainly draw on questions from the Afrobarometer Round 4 questionnaire and are ‘indigenised’ to the country/university contexts in which the surveys are applied.

1.4 Survey design and methods

The design of the project involved conducting opinion polls with students at three premier African universities. The universities selected were: in Kenya, the University of Nairobi (UON); in South Africa, the University of Cape Town (UCT); and in Tanzania, the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM). The three universities were not chosen for being in some important ways representative of their national higher education sectors; on the contrary, it is their status as the oldest and arguably most prestigious universities within their respective higher educational and national contexts, and thus their potential significance in the reproduction of the social, economic and political elite of their countries which warranted their selection for this study.4

As noted above, the student surveys were designed to be compatible with the Afrobarometer (Round 4) and have adapted the Afrobarometer questionnaire as the main research instrument. This strategy provided a tried and tested methodology and tool of established reliability and validity to conduct a political opinion poll; one which would allow an analysis of the survey data on its own terms, a comparison across the three case universities, and comparisons between the student surveys and surveys of the respective mass publics available from the Afrobarometer. In the course of 2009, research teams in Kenya, South Africa and Tanzania conducted the surveys among students on the campuses of the respective case universities.

1.4.1 Instrumentation

The student surveys were designed to be compatible with the Afrobarometer (Round 4), and adopted from the Afrobarometer questionnaire as the main research instrument. Most questions dealing with respondents’ views on the economy of their country were dropped.

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4 While the three universities were not explicitly chosen for their presumed academic excellence – whatever their claims to excellence might be or mean (compare Wangenge-Ouma and Langa 2009) – they all feature among the top universities in their respective countries, as various international university ranking systems indicate (see chapter 2).
from the original questionnaire; most questions dealing with political attitudes and behaviours were maintained to gauge opinions regarding national politics and replicated in an equivalent set probing student attitudes towards university level politics, university governance, and student representation. This resulted in a questionnaire with 198 response items.

Test-runs and the actual administration of the questionnaire showed that it takes between 25 to 40 minutes for the questionnaire to be completed in full. Despite the length of the questionnaire, the response rate for the survey was extraordinarily high, with over 96% of questionnaire items fully answered (less than 4% missing values). The single set of questions with the highest percentage of missing values asked respondents to rank four suggestions of government priorities (in an order of most to least important). Only 83% of respondents ranked any one priority as ‘least/not at all important’. Overall, only four questions received less than 90% valid responses.

The questionnaire was divided into five sections (A–E) as follows: Section A: Facts about oneself; Section B: Involvement in politics; Section C: Views on student representation and university governance; Section D: Interest and involvement in national politics and Section E: Views and assessment of politics and government in the home country (compare Appendices 1–3). The questions probe students’ attitude to politics and democracy, including students’ demand for democracy, rights, accountability, and responsiveness; students’ perception of the supply of democracy, rule of law, rights, accountability, responsiveness; and students’ attitude to democracy which included a subsection on understanding democracy, civil society organisation attitudes, attitudes towards others, identity, cognitive awareness, and political participation. A conceptual map was prepared to clearly outline the relationship between key research concepts and questionnaire items (Appendix 4).

The Student Governance Surveys’ questionnaire was submitted to the Ethics Committee of the Centre for Social Science Research at the University of Cape Town for scrutiny. After a set of minor adjustments and corrections, the questionnaire was unconditionally approved by the committee.

1.4.2 Sampling

Whereas the target population for the surveys was undergraduate university students, the construction of a representative sample of students had to take into account a number of criteria:

- First, provided that the surveys sought to gauge the impact of the experience of higher education on students’ political attitudes and behaviours, the duration which a student had spent at university had to be taken into account in constructing the sample. It is reasonable to assume that any impact of the experience of higher education on political attitudes and behaviours would require at least some incubation time to manifest. It was therefore decided that respondents should have had at least two full years of higher education experience by the time they were surveyed.

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5 This proposition in itself has not been tested. It is simply one of the assumptions involved in the construction of the sample.
Second, salient literature on student political activism makes the important observation that the political attitudes and behaviours of students differ across different faculties and disciplinary specialisations (Altbach 1989). Whether these differences are due to self-selection or an effect of discipline-specific teaching and learning, for the purpose of representativeness it requires that the sample includes, and is broadly representative of, students across all faculties.

Third, our own interest in investigating whether there were any significant differences in the political attitudes of students who were not actively involved in leadership positions (students not in leadership/SNL) and students in formal student leadership positions (student leaders/SL) adds an additional dimension to be considered in the construction of the samples. As Altbach (1989: 8) notes, student leaders typically ‘constitute a tiny minority of the student population’. The sampling procedure therefore had to be responsive to all these concerns while remaining representative of the student population and thus suitable for some degree of generalisation.

Taking these criteria into account, a sample that would target third-year undergraduate degree students, stratified by faculties, and within faculties drawing students from a random variety of disciplinary backgrounds and including a subsample of student leaders, would serve the purpose.

Ideally, a sample would be constructed by randomly selecting a pre-determined number of names from a list of all third year students. However, only at two of the three universities such lists identifying students uniquely could be obtained. Yet, even if such lists could have been obtained from all universities, contacting each individual student, setting up meetings and administering the questionnaires would have been organisationally a most daunting task, while potentially resulting in a great number of no-shows and thus in a high degree of self-selection. A uniform, operationally more feasible and more effective sampling technique needed to be chosen.

The actual sampling procedure eventually involved three stages. In the first stage, all three universities were able to supply the accurate number of the total student populations and the number of students enrolled in third year courses offered by all the universities’ faculties (or colleges, in the case of the University of Nairobi). From these faculty-based lists of courses, a random sample of courses was drawn for each university. Due to the variable number of student enrolments in each faculty, in some faculties several courses were sampled while in other faculties only one or two courses were sampled. Secondly, the random sampling procedure could have included a further stage whereby only 20 students would be randomly selected within each of the sampled courses to actually complete the questionnaires. However, provided that the questionnaire was administered in class (as a concession during teaching time and often at the beginning of a class), selecting only some students while others would have to wait was an impractical way of administering the questionnaires. The questionnaires were therefore administered simultaneously to all students in a randomly sampled class. Lastly, because a purely random sample might have resulted in the number of responses from student leaders to be too small to use as a subsample (possibly N<30), student leaders were approached specifically and deliberately oversampled. In the analysis,
this subsample of current and previous student leaders is therefore statistically reweighted down to (an empirically defensible) 10% of the total sample.

The sampling frame for the three surveys was therefore the respective university’s 2009 undergraduate enrolment data by faculty. The sampling universe was limited to third year undergraduate students and undergraduate student leaders (in the case of the University of Nairobi and University of Dar es Salaam, excluding students from campuses other than the main campus). The sample design was a representative, random, stratified, multistage probability sample. Stratification was by faculty of enrolment (and gender, in the case of UDSM). The primary sampling units were faculty-based third year courses and respondents. Courses/classes were randomly selected from faculty lists; all respondents within a course were allowed to participate.

Most of the surveys were administered in class, simultaneously to all consenting participants, in the presence of the researchers, during regular teaching time. Only in exceptional cases were extra data collection sessions organised (mainly to reach additional formal student leaders). The sample size per university was 400 students, of which at least 10% had to be student leaders.

1.4.3 The realised sample, student leader subsample, and weighting

A total of 1411 students completed the survey. This includes 405 students from the University of Nairobi, 606 students from the University of Cape Town, and 400 students from the University of Dar es Salaam. As intended, the realised sample represents closely the enrolment patterns at third year level at the respective universities (by faculty and gender, see next chapter). Typically the realised samples yield a margin of error of +/- 6% at a confidence level of 95%, unless otherwise indicated. Moreover, the data collection strategy also ensured that student leaders emerged as a significantly over-sampled group. Thus, of the total realised sample by university, 20% were current/previously student leaders (SL) at UON, 27% at UCT and 15% at UDSM. Using this group as a subsample for various analytical purposes is therefore feasible. Table 1 summarises the realised sample.

Table 1 Realised sample by university and SL/SNL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student leader?</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nairobi</td>
<td>324</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cape Town</td>
<td>444</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dar es Salaam</td>
<td>342</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1110</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Provided that student leaders were deliberately oversampled, their contribution to the total sample was statistically reweighted so as to account for 10% of the total sample within each case and across the three cases. Moreover, the three university samples were...
statistically weighted to count 400 responses each. The weights applied to responses can be seen in Table 2.

The statistically reweighted sample is made up of 1,200 responses (N=1,200.164), which are equally distributed between the three universities at 400 responses each. Moreover, in each university, the subsample of (current and previous) student leaders now constitutes 40 responses (10% of the total sample) (compare Table 2).

### Table 2 Applied weights

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>N responses</th>
<th>N weighted responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nairobi</td>
<td>SNL</td>
<td>1.111</td>
<td>324</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SL</td>
<td>.494</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cape Town</td>
<td>SNL</td>
<td>.811</td>
<td>444</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SL</td>
<td>.247</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dar es Salaam</td>
<td>SNL</td>
<td>1.053</td>
<td>342</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SL</td>
<td>.689</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1,411</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N unweighted=1,411; N weighted=1,200

### 1.4.4 Comparative Afrobarometer data

Data from the mass publics used for comparative purposes all originates from the Afrobarometer. The sources of Afrobarometer data have been the complete Round 4 database as well as published papers on the various rounds. The latter includes summary papers of trends in popular attitudes towards democracy (e.g. Afrobarometer 2009a) and Afrobarometer working papers and briefing papers (e.g. Bratton & Mattes 2009; Gyimah-Boadi & Armah Attoh 2009) as published by Afrobarometer.

Where raw data has been used and analysed specifically for the purposes of this report, the data comes from the Afrobarometer (Round 4/2008) database availed to the project. The database includes 20 country surveys, all of which are nationally representative, random, clustered and stratified probability samples. They include mass public samples from Kenya, South Africa and Tanzania. The Kenyan sample is made up of 1,104 respondents; the South African of 2,400 and the Tanzanian of 1,208 respondents. They are statistically weighted as per standard Afrobarometer within-country weights.6

For the purposes of comparative age cohort analysis, the age cohorts of the relevant country samples have been constructed to mirror the 10–90 percentile age cohort of the respective student sample.

- In the case of the University of Nairobi, the UON 10–90 percentile age cohort includes respondents of the ages 22–25 (295 N valid respondents). The respective age cohort of the Kenyan mass public sample includes 161 respondents. Of these, 27 have no

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6 All methodological aspects concerning the Afrobarometer samples are available from the Afrobarometer website. Typically, the samples yield a margin of error of ±3% at a confidence level of 95%.
formal schooling or incomplete primary schooling; 37 have complete primary schooling; 61 have some or complete secondary schooling; 31 have post-secondary education (not university); 4 have some or complete undergraduate university education (missing: 1). The total N valid of the Kenyan mass sample 22–25 age cohort without higher education used in the analyses is therefore: 157 respondents.

- In the case of the University of Cape Town, the UCT percentile 10–90 age cohort includes students of the age range of 20–23 years (327 N valid). The equivalent South African mass public age cohort includes 325 respondents. Of these, 15 have no formal schooling or incomplete primary schooling; 15 have complete primary schooling; 258 have some or complete secondary schooling; 23 have post-secondary education (not university); 13 have some or complete university education (missing: 1). The total N valid of the South African mass sample 20–23 years age cohort without higher education used for the analysis is therefore: 312 respondents.

- In the Tanzanian case, the University of Dar es Salaam percentile 10–90 age cohort is made up of students of the ages 22–26 (279 N valid respondents). The respective Afrobarometer age cohort includes 163 respondents. Their levels of schooling are as follows: no formal schooling/incomplete primary schooling: 20; complete primary schooling: 99; some or complete secondary schooling: 42; post-secondary education (not university): 0; some or complete university education: 1; (missing: 1). The total N valid of the Tanzanian mass sample 22–26 years age cohort without higher education used for the analysis is therefore: 162 respondents.

The relevant Afrobarometer mass public samples can be summarised as per Table 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AB Round 4 sample</th>
<th>Relevant age cohort (without university education)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>1 104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>2 400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>1 208</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Samples weighted as per applicable Afrobarometer in-country weight.

1.5 Overview of the report

This chapter has provided a background to the Student Governance Surveys and outlined the analytical framework, research questions and research design and methods of the study. Chapter 2 outlines in brief a context for understanding some of the differences between the three countries, universities and student bodies, and describes the social characteristics of the respondents of the surveys. In chapter 3 students’ demand for democracy is analysed, in chapter 4 their perception of the supply of democracy in their country and in chapter 5 the extent to which students are aware and participate in politics on and off campus. Chapter 6 concludes the report by highlighting its key findings, some of their implications and related recommendations.