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The Governance of Higher Education

This chapter presents a review of literature in relation to the subject of student involvement in university governance. The chapter is organized into six sections. Section one examines the meaning of the concept of governance, bringing in the related concepts of leadership and good governance. This is followed by the profiling of the practice of governance in higher education. The discussion here incorporates the identification and profiling of the principles that universities must observe for good governance to exist and the tools and practices they can rely on to enhance good governance. The third section of the chapter delves into the subject matter of student involvement in university governance. Here the presentation centres on the historical development of student involvement in governance, the forms that involvement assumes and the benefits of participation for the society, the student and the institution. Whereas section 4 of the chapter focuses on the relationship between students and leadership, section five examines the governance of university education in Kenya, including structures and practices used. The final section of the chapter (section six) identifies some of the research issues emanating from the historical analysis of student involvement in the governance of higher education.

The Concept of (Good) Governance

Governance is a complex and highly contested concept that is difficult to capture in a simple definition. Because the concept means different things to different people, diverse definitions of it abound in the literature. As advanced by Plato when referring to the term 'Kubernao' in Greek, governance is the act of governing or steering a government, or for that matter any other appropriate entity (www. gdrc.org/u-gov/governance-understand.html). This definition is consistent with the one offered by the Webster's Third New International Dictionary (1986:982) that governance is a synonym for government, or 'the act or process of governing, specifically authoritative direction and control'. A similar definition is offered

by the Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary and Thesaurus when it views governance as the way that organizations or countries are managed at the highest level and the systems for doing this. The concept of governance has also been defined as 'a process whereby elements in society wield power, authority and influence and enact policies and decisions concerning public life and social upliftment' (www.gdrc.org/u-gov/governance-understand.html). This is close to Santiso's (2011) view that governance is a multifaceted concept that captures the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development. The definition is also closely allied to the one advanced by the World Bank (1992, 1994, 2000a) that governance is the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development and includes the capacity of governments to design, formulate and implement policies and discharge functions.

What emerges from the sample definitions presented above is that governance is not just a broad concept whose meaning transcends the notion of government but also a highly contextual concept whose meaning cannot be captured using one monolithic definition. As such, the process and practices that will apply will vary significantly given the environment in which they are applied. For instance, governance in the public sector needs to take into account legal and constitutional accountability and responsibilities; whereas in the non-governmental sector, representing stakeholder interests may take precedence over all else in the governance to be applied (Task Force on Higher Education and Society 2000).

Within the context of higher education, the term governance has been used to refer to the means by which universities and other higher education institutions are organized and managed (ESMU 2009). The Task Force on Higher Education and Society (2000) defined it as the formal and informal arrangements that allow higher education institutions to make decisions and to establish, implement and continuously monitor the proper implementation of policies. Whereas the arrangements are official and explicit, their informal equivalents refer to unwritten rules governing how people within higher education institutions relate to each other. For the purpose of this study, the term governance is employed to refer to all those structures, processes and activities that are involved in planning and directing of higher education institutions and the people working in them. Since governance is about interest articulation and goal realization, it raises the questions about who decides when on what; and in the case of higher education this introduces the two levels of governance, i.e.: the internal and external levels or dimensions of governance. Internal or institutional governance refers to the organizational arrangements within institutions that contribute to the smooth running of these organizations and constitute the lines of authority, decision-making processes and policies, staffing and financing mechanisms. External governance, in most cases, refers to the macro system or state control of higher

education institutions and entails the laws, decrees, funding arrangements and evaluations they subject these institutions to (Eurydice 2008; OECD 2008). Higher education governance is therefore understood as the external (system) and internal (institutional) coordination of higher education and research. Consequently, in relation to this study, while the involvement of students in governance is mainly an internal governance issue, its implementation has a lot of influence from State policies and practices especially relating to democratic politics that have close ties to whether higher education institutions practice participatory decision-making or not.

The Relationship between Governance and Leadership

Closely related to the concept of governance is the concept of leadership. Although the literature presents the two as distinctive items, in practice they often overlap (Task Force on Higher Education and Society 2000). Leadership can be defined as an influential relationship among leaders and followers who are bound together by a mutual goal that constitutes the basis for their quest for change (Gordon 1955; Rost 1993). It manifests an interaction between a person and the members of a group in which one person, the group leader, influences, while the other persons respond (Gordon 1955:10). Kouzes and Posner (1995:30) define leadership as 'the art of mobilizing others to want to struggle for shared aspirations'. For Davis (2003:4), leadership implies movement, taking the organization or some part of it in a new direction, solving problems, being creative, initiating new programmes, building organizational structures and improving quality.

According to Bolman and Deal (1995: 102), 'The essence of leadership is not giving things or even providing visions. It is offering oneself and one's spirit.' As can be gleaned from the above definitions, leadership is a 'collaborative endeavor'; that is, leadership is not the leader, but the relationship that exists between the leader and those following him/her. It is crucial for a leader to be able to share power, empower and co-operate with others. According to Bennis and Bennis (2003), a leader has a focus on the people and the interest of everyone. He/she motivates, earns trust of others through integrity and notably has a vision of what they want to achieve in the present and in the future. Leadership may be seen as an inborn ability that is only in a few people and not in others. However, Kouzes and Posner (1988) differ with this and explain that leadership is a set of learnt and observable skills. As such, people who have the aspiration and persistence can acquire the much needed skills and abilities for the role. Basham (2000) echoes similar sentiments, arguing that few leadership skills are naturally endowed but are learned through enthusiasm and training.

The literature identifies a variety of leadership types. These include transformative, participative, transactional and distributed leaderships (Gous 2003; Parrish n.d; Rost 1993). Transformational leadership entails a leader

who motivates others through a shared vision of where they want to go and what they want to achieve. These leaders tend to delegate duties, and monitor and inform the people what they are supposed to do (Parrish n.d). They share power, learn from others and identify with the needs of others to also achieve and grow (Gous 2003). This kind of leadership is change oriented (Basham 2010; Gardiner 2005); leaders guide their followers in confronting the status quo. Participative leadership, on the other hand, is about inclusivity. The leadership engages everyone in decision-making, with the view to making people own what is being created (Diamond 2006). However, vested interests and the lack of a culture of openness may undermine participation at different levels (Obondo 2000). The transactional type of leadership is more concerned with productivity rather than changing the environment (Basham 2010; Connor 2004). The leader is the authority figure and he/she simply wants his/ her objectives to be followed and will attempt to make changes only when the paradigm in play seems not to be working. Others are not given space to be creative or even to appreciate their resourcefulness (Connor 2004). Finally, distributed leadership involves several individuals, who have diverse skills that enable achievement of goals, contributing to the leadership (Pearce 2004; van Ameijde, Nelson, Billsberry and Meurs 2009). This form of leadership has been associated with higher performance compared to old 'leader dominated' leadership forms.

The running thread across most definitions of governance is the way issues affecting the entire institution, or one or two components thereof, are decided. Consequently, governance is intertwined with leadership. Specifically, there exists a reciprocal (two-way) link between leadership and governance. Leadership represents the organization of people into manageable groups and influencing them into a specific direction for the purpose of harnessing available resources for the good of all. Hence, it is a significant component of any governance arrangement, including that of higher education institutions, because it provides an opportunity for members of the institutions to participate in running their organizations. In an academic community, student leadership arises from the way governance is structured within a college or university. The governance structure in place in terms of policies, goals and procedures as well as the organizational structure articulates the rights and responsibilities of various actors in the institution in addition to legitimizing the kind of groups and power relations that an institution will have. The governance structure and particularly a policy on stakeholder participation in governance, therefore, must be accommodative of all members of the institution, including students through their leaders.

Leaders play an important role in (effective) governance (Department for Education and Skills 2006). For good governance to thrive it requires quality leadership that is capable of giving it direction by fostering interagency collaboration and shared understanding (Brookes 2006; Craig 2005; Lownsborough and O'Leary

2005; NCSL 2008a); promoting clarity of roles and responsibilities between actors (Brookes 2006; Craig 2005); and growing collaboration and team work (Harker, Dobel-Ober, Berridge, and Sinclair 2004; National College for School Leadership 2008b; University of East Anglia with the National Children's Bureau 2007). Strong leadership also contributes to effective governance by ensuring that people's and institutional needs remain at the forefront of the agenda, focusing on the clear issues and outcomes and, by encouraging commitment at all levels (Department for Education and Skills 2006; Robinson 2008).

In turn, governance supports leadership through arrangements and frameworks. In addition to setting the right goals and procedures for ensuring institutional aims are met, the governing body must appoint personnel and give them power to make decisions on behalf of the organization. Furthermore, the existence of good governance arrangements (frameworks), such as partnership agreements and 'outcome-based' accountability frameworks, support effective leadership by providing strategic direction for leaders (Brookes 2006; Thompson and Uyeda 2004); fostering agreed and shared objectives and vision, including clarifying roles and responsibilities (National College for School Leadership 2008a; Brookes 2006; Thompson and Uyeda 2004) and; by helping leaders to foster commitment and shared aims (Department for Education and Skills 2006; Utting, Painter, Renshaw and Hutchinson 2008). These are features of effective leadership for narrowing the gap (Martin, Lord, White, Mitchell, and Atkinson 2009). Governance frameworks also help leaders to establish accountability. Accountability is central to the purpose and function of governance and important for effective leadership. The National College for School Leadership (2008b) found that effective leaders think creatively about governance arrangements so as to guarantee shared participation, shared responsibility and accountability, and sustainable partnerships.

The Concept of Good Governance

Emanating from the broad concept of governance is the concept of 'good governance'. The concept denotes the quality of the governance process, in particular the effectiveness of government (Santiso 2001). The quality of governance is ultimately attributable to its democratic content. Neither democracy (in our case participation) nor good governance is sustainable without the other; the two should converge. Good governance represents the best possible process for making decisions. It is not about making 'correct' decisions but about the processes for making and implementing decisions. For the Wold Bank (1994), good governance is epitomized by predictable, open and enlightened policy-making and a bureaucracy imbued with a professional ethos acting in furtherance of the public good. This is consistent with the sentiments expressed by Healey and Robinson (1994) who opined that 'good governance' implies a

high level of organizational effectiveness in relation to policy-formulation and the policies actually pursued, especially in the conduct of economic policy and its contribution to growth, stability and popular welfare. A good governance system puts further requirements on the process of decision-making and public policy formulation. It extends beyond the capacity of public sector to the rules that create a legitimate, effective and efficient framework for the conduct of public policy (Santiso 2001).

There exist a number of characteristics or practices of 'good governance' that set it apart from bad (or poor) governance. Poor governance tends to be associated with arbitrary policy making, unaccountable bureaucracies, unenforced or unjust legal systems, the abuse of executive power, a civil society unengaged in public life, and widespread corruption (Kaufmann, *et al.* 1999; World Bank 1994, 2000a; http://www.goodgovernance.org.au/about-good-governance/what-is-good-governance/). The first characteristic of good governance is participation (Santiso 2001; World Bank 1994, 2000a). Good governance requires that all stakeholders have a voice in decision-making, either directly or through legitimate intermediate institutions that represent their interests. Anyone affected by or interested in a decision should have the opportunity to participate in the process for making that decision. Members' participation could be direct or delegated through an entity created to represent them in the decision-making process. The delegated model is especially applicable where the group is too large to efficiently make all necessary decisions by involving everyone, as is the case with universities where the student body delegates the responsibility for involvement in university decision-making to elected (or appointed) representatives.

The second characteristic of good governance, one that is closely related to participation, is consensus orientation. Good governance mediates differing interests to reach a broad consensus on what is in the best interest of the group and, where possible, on policies and procedures (http://www.goodgovernance.org.au/about-good-governance/what-is-good-governance/). The third fundamental requirement of good governance is accountability (Kaufmann *et al.* 1999; Santiso 2001; World Bank 1994, 2000a). Where good governance is the norm, decision-makers are accountable to the public and/ or to institutional stakeholders. Accountability means that administrators (or managers) have an obligation to report, explain and be answerable for the consequences of the decisions they make on behalf of the stakeholders they represent (World Bank 1994, 2000 a; http://www.goodgovernance.org.au/about-good-governance/what-is-good-governance/). Closely linked to accountability is transparency. Normally built on the free flow of information, transparency represents the extent to which people (stakeholders) follow and understand the decision-making process. Transparency exists where stakeholders are able to clearly see how and why a decision was made; what information, advice and consultation decision makers considered, and

which legislative requirements were followed (http://www.goodgovernance.org.au/about-good-governance/what-is-good-governance/; World Bank 1994, 2000a). Where transparency exists, processes, institutions and information are directly accessible to those concerned with them, and enough information is provided to understand and monitor them.

In addition, good governance is responsive. It ensures that the needs of the entire community/ stakeholders are served while balancing competing interests in a timely, appropriate and responsive manner (http://www.goodgovernance.org.au/about-good-governance/what-is-good-governance/). In this scheme of things, institutions and processes are designed to serve all stakeholders. Furthermore, Good governance is effective and efficient. This means that processes and institutions produce results that meet needs while making the best use of resources (http://www.goodgovernance.org.au/about-good-governance/what-is-good-governance/). Equity and inclusivity are other distinguishing features of good governance. All community members and/ or stakeholders should be satisfied that their interests have been considered by decision-makers during the decision-making process. This means that all groups should have opportunities to participate in the process. The final characteristic of good governance is adherence to the rule of law. Where good governance obtains legal frameworks should be fair and enforced impartially, particularly the laws on human rights (http://www.goodgovernance.org.au/about-good-governance/what-is-good-governance/).

Governance in University Education

Governance is essential whenever a group of people come together to accomplish an end (Institute on Governance 2016). The higher education setting is a case in mind. For universities to service their role effectively, they need governance. University governance can be construed in terms of the framework of rules and practices by which management ensures accountability, fairness and transparency in the institution's relationship with all its stakeholders, such as regulation agencies, students and faculty (Task Force on University Education and Society 2000). This framework consists of contracts between the university and its stakeholders for the distribution of responsibilities, rights and rewards; the procedures for settling the sometimes conflicting interests of stakeholders in accordance with their duties, privileges, and roles and; procedures for proper supervision, control, and information flows to serve as a system of checks and balances.

Around the world, higher education is under pressure to be revolutionized, in response to the changing needs of the society and its growing contribution to economic and social development. Universities, which expected to create knowledge, improve equity, respond to students' needs and do so efficiently, have undergone some transformations including rapid expansions of student enrolments and diversity in the composition of students, a relative decrease

in public funding, increasing importance of research and innovation in the knowledge-based economy and wider competition between higher education institutions. The factors precipitate the call for scrutiny of governance systems to ensure effectiveness in their operations (Fieden 2008). Institutional structures have also evolved away from the traditional mode of academic self-governance towards new modes of managerial self-governance, thereby increasing the importance of providing effective governance systems in higher education and heightening the interest of scholars on how decisions are made in higher education institutions (Jones 2011). The ultimate aim of the scrutiny of governance structures in universities is the attainment of good governance in the higher education sector.

Good governance and leadership are attributes that have been shown to have a major bearing on the capacity for the higher education sector to succeed and to play its expected role in development and to fulfil the goal of the twenty-first century being a knowledge era. Whereas good governance alone may not be a sufficient condition for attaining quality education, it is certainly a necessary one. Based on existing research (see e.g., Gibbs, Knapper and Picinnin 2009; Osseo-Asare, Longbottom and Murphy 2005; Martin, Task Force on Higher Education and Society 2000; Trigwell, Prosser and Ramsden 2003), governance plays a pivotal role in the success of institutions of higher learning and is a crucial factor in sustaining and improving quality and performance. Universities require visionary, creative (innovative) and inclusive leadership equipped with good communication skills capable of driving the change anticipated in them. A poorly governed institution will neither flourish nor deliver quality education. To be effective universities require leadership that is characterized by outstanding qualities which can earn them legitimacy from other stakeholders (Bryman 2007; Goleman 2000a, 2000b; Diamond 2006; Kozner and Posner; Obondo 2000).

Despite the centrality of good governance to the success of universities, most African universities are facing a governance crisis that often manifests itself in terms of conflict between management and students and staff that flares up from time to time over issues such as living allowances, pay, terms and conditions of service, limited representation in university governing bodies and perception of university authority as defender of state interests as opposed to the interests of the university (Mwiria 1992). Existing evidence shows that the principles of good governance are routinely flouted with great frequency in many African countries (Kauffeldt 2009; Mutula 2002; Obondo 2000; Task Force on Higher Education and Society 2000), resulting in poor governance. In particular, regular political interference, especially in public universities, makes adherence to the principles of good governance a near impossibility (Kauffeldt 2009). In many instances, the intervention is based on the perception that universities constitute a potential threat to fragile and often not well-established political systems and therefore must be closely monitored (Saha 1993).

While there is growing recognition across the African continent that higher education is critical to development, policy and institutional reforms in many countries in Africa tend to focus on the economic impact of higher education neglecting the governance dimension (Petlane 2009). Yet, attention to governance issues is particularly crucial given that African universities have not been good examples of good governance. They have been characterized by the same management ills that have plagued national administrations and other sectors of society. They are distinguished by the inability to directly contribute to policy making, and the development of a national vision, produce usable outputs, as well as corruption, patronage and power struggles. Specifically, apprehension over the internal governance of universities is manifested in the administrative deficiencies observed in the appointment of institutional leaders, particularly vice chancellors, who are perceived to be politicized and dominated by government, persistent Government over-expenditures and, more importantly for this study, weak or non-existent decision-making processes (Sifuna 2012; Petlane 2009).

Throughout the continent, the quality of governance in institutions of higher learning is a reflection of the leadership responsible for the running of these institutions. Based on EDULINK (n.d.) many African universities lack the strong management and leadership systems that are necessary to promote responsive academic and research activities. While many of the individuals who occupy leadership positions in institutions of higher learning in Africa are accomplished scholars, few are adequately equipped for the task of managing these institutions (Reisberg 2010); top managers lack the modern management skills that are crucial for such positions. In addition, many African universities continue to rely on paternalistic leadership that is focused on a single individual (i.e. the vice chancellor) who is the super leader (Bolden, Petrov and Gosling 2008). EDULINK (n.d.) singled out ineffective communication between the various levels of management and lecturers, students and other stakeholders and the poor management, and sometimes misuse, of resources, as suggested/shown by some of the pointers to the weak management systems in universities.

For good governance to obtain in universities, the institutions must uphold a number of principles of good governance (Kauffeldt 2009; Task Force on University Education and Society 2000) and rely on a number of tools and practices (Task Force on University Education and Society 2000). A brief profiling of these principles and tools is presented below, starting with the principles of good governance.

Principles of Good Governance in University Education

The key principles of good governance in higher education include academic freedom, shared governance, clear rights and responsibilities, meritocratic selection, financial stability and accountability. According to the Task Force on

University Education and Society (2000), not all the principles apply with equal force to all institutions of higher education. Whereas all these principles may be applicable to research universities, academic freedom or shared governance may be less important in vocational schools.

Academic Freedom

Academic freedom refers to the rights of scholars to pursue their research, teach, and publish without controls or restraints from the institutions they work for or from the primary stakeholder (Kauffeldt 2009; Task Force on Higher Education and Society 2000); being in our case government for the public sector, and trustees/owners for the private sector such primary stake holders. Academic freedom plays a significant role in promoting not just the quality of universities as institutions of higher learning but also the quality of the education they deliver. On the contrary, the absence of academic freedom impairs universities from fulfilling one of their primary functions, which is to be a catalyst and sanctuary for new ideas, including even unpopular ones.

Academic freedom is anchored on the UNESCO report concerning the Status of Higher Education Teaching Personnel, adopted by the Paris-based United Nations agency's general conference in 1997, after a thorough process of consultation with academic and legal experts and international NGOs, in particular the International Labour Organization (ILO). It is recognized by the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. The charter does not specifically guarantee academic freedom. However, a landmark ruling in the case of 'Kenneth Good versus Botswana' recognized academic freedom under the African Charter (Appiagyei-Atua1 2015). Despite this and the fact that many African countries have returned to an ethos of a democratic culture and a refinement of the role of the university in the globalization era, an assessment of the level of compliance with the UNESCO document indicates that the level of breach exceeds its observance (Appiagyei-Atua1 2015). This means that many countries continue to suppress or restrict academic freedom. Even where in principle academic freedom has been embraced, there appear to be limits beyond which it cannot be tolerated. This curtails academics from propagating what are considered to be unpopular ideas without negative consequences, including sanctioning by the State. The repeated attempt by the Kenya government to control the freedom of expression through untenable media bills could be viewed in this light.

Shared Governance

Stakeholder involvement in decision-making has become one of the key principles of the practice of good governance which is increasingly being embraced by higher education institutions worldwide. Also known as cooperative governance,

shared governance entails giving various groups of people a share in the decision-making process often through elected representation and allowing certain groups to exercise primary responsibility for specific areas of decision-making. This perception is in line with the stakeholder theory that emerged in the 1980s from the organizational field and whose main tenet was that individuals who have a stake in any institution should be involved in the matters pertaining to that institution (OECD 2003). Shared governance entails the devolving of decision-making to those who are best qualified to make them and ensures that individual's and/ or institutional priorities are based on broad consensus and that the voices of all, including the most vulnerable, are heard in decision-making over.g. the allocation of resources. This bolsters the inclusivity of the governance process and enhances co-decision rights and consensus in decision-making. Shared governance arose out of the recognition that broad participation in decision-making increases the level of employee investment in an institution's success and improves the productivity of an organization; advantages that are relevant to quality assurance of higher education (OECD 2003).The principle of shared governance stands in sharp contrast to the traditional model of university governance, which emphasized one supreme leader, with the State having a strong hold on the universities. Other levels of university management did not have the power to make decisions (Parrish n.d). They were regulated and controlled in every way including policies, human resource issues and all forms of expression.

In a university setting, shared governance means that all those involved in higher education, including administrators, faculty and students, participate in the making of critical decisions affecting the institution (Kauffeldt 2009; Task Force on Higher Education and Society 2000). Specifically, it ensures that faculty, students and other stakeholders have a meaningful voice in policy formulation and decision-making in general. In this regard, students who constitute the majority of the institution's community, and finance the larger part of the institution's budgets, have a right to representation in decision-making through a group of student leaders.

Challenges to the participation principle of good governance have been noted in the literature (Kauffeldt 2009; Obondo 2000). According to Kauffeldt (2009), for example, the lack of cooperation in institutional governance abounds in many universities. Obondo (2000) pointed out that people with vested interests may hinder participation at different levels of the university. In addition, higher education institutions tend to lack the culture of openness and frequent dialogue on issues, which is counter to the participation principle. In such cases when decisions are made, the partakers of the decisions feel disenfranchised and do not embrace the change they embody even where it is beneficial and necessary. As a result, externally (public) university governance remains a state-controlled system, while internally the process remains the

preoccupation of top management (Task Force on Higher Education and Society 2000). Internally, decisions are made from the top and imposed on subordinate bodies, with faculty, lower cadre administrators and students hardly having any voice and/ or influence in decision-making. As the Task Force on Higher Education and Society (2000) stated, students are rarely considered as part of the higher education administrative process. As such, they are hardly consulted on many matters related to their education. Overall, the status of shared governance in universities reflects the society in which they operate. To illustrate, this fact the existence of undemocratic practices in many African countries hinders the growth of shared governance in universities. In addition, the corruption that pervades many African countries has encroached on universities, leaving them tainted (Task Force on Higher Education and Society 2000).

To deal with the governance crisis affecting them and to fulfil their roles, African universities must move away from a leadership focused on a single individual, the super leader, to a more inclusive leadership that will function broadly within the institution. Although governance structures in many universities have, in principle, shifted away from the traditional mode of academic self-governance towards new models of managerial self-governance that is concerned with the participation of all internal stakeholders in universities and colleges (Euryduce 2008) – mainly because of the benefits accrued from shared governance – the practices are still rooted in the traditional model of governance. African universities must also embrace transformational leadership; 'a style of leadership that engenders a shared-power environment with followers/ stakeholders (Bryman 2007; Rost 1993; Parrish n.d.). Transformational leadership is characterized by power sharing, collaboration, inclusiveness, collectivity, constructive dialogue collegiality and shared and dispersed decision-making, among others (Gibbs, Knapper and Picinnin 2006, 2009; Bolden *et al.* 2008; Bryman 2007; Rantz 2002; Pounder 2001; Rost 1993; Parrish n.d.). It focuses more on empowering others as opposed to an individual assuming sole responsibility for leading (Rowley 1997). The leader inspires followers through a shared vision for the future, empowers them by delegating responsibilities to them and equipping them to play their roles to the best of their abilities and, by regularly monitoring and communicating with them with regard to the tasks for which they have responsibility (Parrish n.d.: 2). This form of leadership has been acknowledged as being highly appropriate as well as needed in the higher education sector (Middlehurst, Goreham and Woodfield 2009; Anderson and Johnson 2006; Bolden *et al.* 2008; Rowley 1997).

Clear Rights and Responsibilities

The third principle of good governance in universities is the existence of clear rights and responsibilities. For good governance to be obtained/realized in higher education, mutually agreed rights and responsibilities for all stakeholders are

essential (Kauffeldt 2009; Task Force on Higher Education and Society 2000; http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/corporate-governance.html). There should exist explicit and implicit contracts between the institution and the stakeholders for distribution of rights and responsibilities. This will ensure that both external stakeholders (e.g., government, sponsors, external supervisors etc.) and internal stakeholders (students, faculty, administrators, etc.) should have a clear grasp on their rights and responsibilities. These can be explicated through laws, institutional charters and faculty and student handbooks. The existence of clear rights and responsibilities in universities is manifested in mutually agreed conditions for university operations that provide a stable condition for decision-making.

While many universities have drafted and passed legislation to delineate stakeholder rights and responsibilities, events still occur outside of or around the policy framework, creating a culture of uncertainty (Kauffeldt 2009). In Kenya, for example, whereas the roles and responsibilities of the Ministry of Education and of other external higher education regulatory agencies, such as the Commission for University Education, may be explicit, those of internal stakeholders have not been adequately formalized. Charters establishing universities only gloss over these and detailed specification is lacking in many areas of decision-making (Task Force on Higher Education and Society 2000).

Meritocratic Selection

For higher education to function efficiently, it requires a broadly defined merit system to anchor the selection and promotion of faculty, administrators and students (Kauffeldt 2009; Task Force on Higher Education and Society 2000). Where merit lacks, practices such as ideology, nepotism, cronyism and intimidation are allowed to determine selection and/or advancement. In addition, in some cases decision-making is influenced by distant bureaucrats and politicians and legal barriers stand in the way of recognition of merit. The evidence suggests that the implementation of the meritocratic selection principle in many universities has continued to be undermined by political meddling. In many African countries, the tendency for politicians to intervene in universities has left many institutions hostage to factional policies and the inability to rely on merit for important decisions such as the admission of students and the appointment and promotion of faculty (Kauffeldt 2009; Task Force on Higher Education and Society 2000).

Financial Stability

The fifth principle of good governance in higher education is financial stability. For higher education to function efficiently, financial stability is imperative (Kauffeldt 2009; Task Force on Higher Education and Society 2000). As such, the providers

of higher education must infuse the finances necessary for universities to deliver quality and relevant education. Unfortunately, evidence abounds showing that higher education in many African countries often function in turbulent financial conditions, a situation compounded by the limited financial resources available especially to public universities (see e.g. Nganga 2014; Munene 2016; Mutula 2002; Nyangau 2014; Task Force on Higher Education and Society 2000). In most African countries, the dramatic expansion of enrolments especially in public universities has occurred without a corresponding growth in the funding of the sector. The shortage of funding has made it difficult for universities to cater to the growing numbers of students, in many cases forcing (public) universities to turn to entrepreneurial activities to expand their revenue bases (Nganga 2014; Munene 2016; Mutula 2002; Nyangau 2014). This creates conditions for poor governance and makes rational planning impossible (Task Force on Higher Education and Society 2000).

Accountability

Universities, whether public or private, must be accountable to all stakeholders (Bloom and Ahmad 2000; Kauffeldt 2009; Task Force on Higher Education and Society 2000; World Bank 1994). While this does not necessarily imply uncontrolled interference by stakeholders, it imposes a requirement on the institutions to periodically explain actions and to have their successes and failures examined in a transparent fashion. Accountability is important in monitoring performance in change management (Brookes 2006; Department for Education and Skills 2006; Thompson and Uyeda 2004). It ensures that decision-making is transparent across the collaborating agencies (Her Majesty's Government 2005). For the accountability principle to operate smoothly, interactions between universities and their stakeholders must be guided by clearly agreed on rights and responsibilities. In addition, there must exist mechanisms for determining the appropriate balance between autonomy and accountability (Task Force on Higher Education and Society 2000).

Some progress has been made to instil the sense of accountability especially through the establishment of semi-autonomous agencies to regulate university education, such as the Commission for University Education in Kenya. However, there is still a fair degree of State and higher education system enmeshment that leaves little space for these agencies to operate with the independence necessary to actualize true accountability (Bloom and Ahmad 2000; Kauffeldt 2009).

Tools and Practices for Achieving Good Governance

Beyond adherence to the principles of good governance in higher education, the Task Force on University Education and Society (2000) enumerated the following as important tools that universities can rely on to achieve good governance:

Faculty Councils (or Senates), Governing Councils (or Board of Trustees), institutional charters and handbooks, visiting committees and accreditation, budget practices and financial management, data-driven decision-making, style of identifying leaders (appoint or elect), faculty appointment and promotion decisions and security of employment (Task Force on University Education and Society 2000). Faculty councils and/or Senates are representative bodies of faculty members responsible for making decisions about selected academic policy such as programmes offered, curricula, degree requirements and admissions policy. Where they exist and function optimally, they facilitate delegation of power and hence promote shared governance by limiting the extent of reliance on top-down governance (Task Force on Higher Education and Society 2000). On the other hand, governing councils are independent bodies that act as a buffer between the institutions and external bodies to which the institutions are accountable, e.g., the State, and sponsors (Task Force on Higher Education and Society 2000). These represent the institutions to the outside world, thereby insulating them from excessive external interference. The Governing Council should be involved in developing the long-term plans for the institution as well as in monitoring their implementation. Where they operat optimally, they are likely to boost accountability and transparency, foster clear roles and responsibilities for all stakeholders and reduce external meddling.

The third tool for fostering good governance is institutional charters and handbooks. Charters establish the legal basis and define the mission of the institution and lay down the rules governing the institution's relation with the State or private sponsor. They may specify some internal rules of operation too (Task Force on University Education and Society 2000). Handbooks (faculty and students), on the other hand, apply to the internal governance of universities. To be effective though, they must be comprehensive, clearly written and frequently updated. Faculty handbooks articulate faculty rights and responsibilities. The objective is to guide faculty conduct within the context of teaching and research activities and their broader life in the institution and in the profession (Task Force on University Education and Society 2000). Students' handbooks regulate students' academic lives by defining the objectives, rules and requirements of different academic programmes as well as the students' non-academic rights and responsibilities (Task Force on University Education in Society 2000). Where clearly formulated charters and handbooks exist, they facilitate the institution to spell out the roles and responsibilities of faculty and students as major stakeholders.

The fourth tool that universities can rely on to nurture good governance is Visiting Committees and Accreditation. For the university sector to uphold its goal of quality education amidst expanding enrolments, it needs to come up with procedures for performance measurements and for having regular audits

and evaluation of services (Task Force on University Education in Society 2000). Comprising of international, regional and national experts, visiting committees, are an important tool for monitoring performance and promoting the responsible exercise of authority. By offering objective assessments of achievements of faculty and programmes in relation to international, regional and national standards, they serve to promote quality (Task Force on Education and Society 2000). Generally speaking, accreditation improves attraction of students, faculty and other resources to the institution. Whereas internal accreditation provides a focus for improving standards and enhancing institutional pride, external accreditation provides the market information vital for competition (Task Force on Education and Society 2000). Concerning budget practices and financial management, the Task Force on University Education and Society (2000) advances that transparent, logical and well understood budgeting and accounting rules improve the operation and performance of higher education institutions. Such rules encourage flexibility, financial stability and transparency as opposed to bureaucratic rigidity which tends to cause inefficiency. This in turn strengthens the institution's culture of good governance.

Another tool for enhancing good governance in universities is data for decision-making. According to the Task on University Education and Society (2000), to be effective in decision-making, universities need adequate data on teaching and research performance, student-based achievement, institutional financial status etc. Data are also necessary for effective monitoring and accounting. It can be argued that decisions anchored on adequate data are more objective, balanced and likely to be acceptable to the stakeholders concerned. This will reduce the level of conflict that may undermine the governance process in universities. In addition, data-driven decisions are likely to increase honesty, transparency and accountability as well as promote meritocracy, all of which are important ingredients for nurturing good governance. The style of appointment of leaders used by a university can also enhance good governance. The Task Force on University Education and Society (2000) is categorical that universities in developing countries require strong leadership regardless of the selection methods. According to them, universities across the world tend to rely more on election to fill leadership positions. Although this promotes shared governance which is an essence of good governance, more often than not it results in weak leadership that is prejudiced in favour of the status quo (Task Force on University Education and Society 2000). The Task Force considered appointed leaders to be better placed to make unpopular decisions where required but noted that these often lack widespread support, diluting the sense of shared governance. However, this can be eased through in-depth consultation with all stakeholders, which should increase the appointed leader's legitimacy.

Faculty appointments and promotion decisions and job security are two other

tools that universities can rely on to enhance good governance. Based on the Task Force on University Education and Society (2000), faculty quality is the most important determinant of quality in university education. Such quality though is significantly undermined by nepotism, cronyism, and inbreeding. On the contrary, reliance on external peer review when making appointments and promotions will greatly improve the quality of faculty by allowing quality to be judged on proper technical grounds and free of conflict of interests. Peer review also promotes the quality of publication decisions and efficient allocation of funds. Concerning security of employment, the Task Force on University Education and Society (2000) argued that its importance lies with its ability to enhance academic freedom among faculty. According to the Task Force, academic freedom – which is a basic principle of good governance in university education – tends to be greater among employment-secure faculty (those on permanent or long contract appointment) relative to their counterparts who are temporary because they can be dismissed at will. Employment security also acts as a form of non-wage benefit that reduces turnover among talented faculty.

Students Involvement in University Governance

Students' involvement in university governance has been shown to have a major bearing on the capacity for the sector to succeed and to play its expected role in development and to fulfil the goal of the twenty-first century being a knowledge era. This study focuses on the subject student participation (or involvement) in university governance processes, in an attempt to understand the extent to which students have become part of the democratization of governance in universities in Kenya. This endeavour is premised on the reality that collaborative governance is essential if universities are to attain their visions, missions and goals. For students to effectively participate in the governance of their institutions, it requires that the student leadership is not just involved in some matters. Rather, it should be adequately involved in all major decisions and policy issues affecting the university and the university must provide the students' leadership with the resources they need to be adequately involved. In Africa, the massification and marketization of higher education that has occurred since the 1990s have given students' involvement in governance greater impetus (Klemenčič 2014). Although they may not hold co-decision rights, they are supposed to be consulted in decision-making and their views solicited during the framing of policy.

Origins of Students' Participation in University Governance

Historically, students' involvement in the governance of their universities has never been guaranteed the world over except in the thirteenth century Bologna University, known as the "student university" where students were in charge of their studies. However, this practice was quickly phased out to give way to the Parisian

model of university governance that was in operation at the time, where the guild of professing teachers managed the university with the assistance of an elected student rector (Luescher-Mamashela 2005). Students have had to struggle to have their voice heard in matters that concern the running of their institutions. Student movements and fights characterized the struggle for students to have their issues addressed by universities in most of the 1960s and early 1970s in Europe and North America. A similar picture was witnessed in Africa during this period just before and after most countries attained independence. For example, students used movements like the Tanganyika African Welfare Society (TAWS) and the Student Union of Nairobi (SONU), both from East Africa, to agitate for better conditions for students and modernization of the system of education and curriculum from the previous one that was racially inclined to favour the white populations (Boahen 1994; Munene 2003). Later, when student movements were banned by the governments, students turned to the use of other innovative avenues like publications, books, newspapers, periodicals, journals, pamphlets, organizing meetings, congresses, holding symposia, debates, lectures, seminars, rallies and demonstrations to continue their course (Boahen 1994; Munene 2003; Chege 2009).

Appreciation for the need to involve students in university governance was prompted by the wave of university democratization that swept across most industrialized countries in the 1970s. This involved making universities more democratic in their practices especially as it pertains to ensuring that the decision-making process in universities was more representative. The membership of university governing structures was extended to staff members and elected student representatives (Boer and Stensaker 2008, Luescher-Mamasheal 2005). Given that higher education institutional practices reflect the social realities in which they operate, where the democratization in the political sphere in Africa has taken time to mature, university governance practices have mirrored the national contexts. Anyang' Nyon'go describes the political state of African countries in the 1970s and 1980s in terms of disintegration of the national coalitions and a rise in authoritarianism in the existing governments exemplified by multiple military coups, prevalence of military regimes and one-party State (Anyang' Nyon'go 1989). In this context, universities that were incubators of critical thought began to take on the veneer of the opposition, giving rise to confrontations by students and academic staff that often led to strikes and showdowns (Mamdani 2008).

In Kenya, the post-colonial Kenyatta and Moi governments that were distinguished by dictatorship, suppression of discourse in the wider society and curtailed political pluralism by dissolution of other political parties contributed to limited application of participatory governance in universities. Universities through academic members of staff and student movements became voices of dissent for their individual institutions and society at large. The government suppressed these efforts by arresting, detaining without trial and sometimes killing

of anti-establishment academics and students. In 1972, the Student Union of Nairobi (SONU) was banned because they staged riots demanding for curriculum and examination reforms, improved conditions on campus and participation in all decisions affecting students' welfare. Specifically, during the Moi era, when sycophancy was a prerequisite for political, professional and personal survival, university administrations collaborated with the government to suspend and expel students on flimsy accusations (Chege 2009).

The opening up of the democratic space in Africa in general, and by extension Kenya, in terms of political liberalization and multiparty politics entailing the return to competitive electoral processes, rebuilding adherence to human rights and democratic institutions, came with some progress; self-governance in higher education (Aina 2009). In Kenya, President Mwai Kibaki relinquished his position as chancellor of all public universities and instead appointed eminent persons. Further, vice chancellors and top university officials were now to be appointed by the university councils in a competitive process (Chege 2009; Sifuna 2012). This change is now legally supported in the University Bill 2012 (Government of Kenya 2012). This democratic wave was echoed in the electoral practices of universities where deans and student leaders were elected through the ballot. It is, however, imperative to establish where this practice has been sanctioned by the new university statutes that are in the process of being revised by individual universities allegedly without the substantial input of members of the academic and student bodies. Besides, there is a downside to these gains given that the growing ethnic rivalry witnessed nationally during this period has crept into universities where student leadership election campaigns have taken on an ethnic face because they are heavily supported financially by national political parties (Mwindi 2009). This issue is compounded by university administrations interfering with student politics to ensure that, as much as possible, pro-administration and ethnically correct students assume office in the student government (Sifuna 2013). It is therefore evident that students' concerns are unlikely to be adequately addressed by student leaders who have been compromised by the administration that is responsible for providing solutions needed.

Implications on the involvement of students in university decision making can also be historically drawn from the other transformations that have occurred in the higher education sector in Africa, and in Kenya specifically. Growth in enrolments at the university level is one such transformation that began immediately after independences stemming from the significant role of higher education in the social and economic development of post-independent African countries (Assie-Lumumba 2006). Unfortunately, this growth in numbers coincided with the economic downturn that hit most African countries in the 1970s due to the crash in commodity markets and the rapid rise in oil prices that forced most governments to turn to multinational and private international

financiers for credit and the universities to be under-resourced. The solution to this crisis proposed by the Bretton Woods Institutions (BWI) mainly the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) had negative effects on the place of students in the governing processes of universities (Aina 2009). The Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs) imposed on governments account for changes that occurred in the university including introduction of privatization and cost sharing, financial decentralization, retrenchments of staff and dilution of academic programmes.

In Kenya, the implementation of SAPs in the higher education sector and consequent legalization of privatization of higher education was spearheaded by the recommendations by the committee mandated to analyze university educational expansions popularly known as the Mackay report of 1981 (GOK 1981). The application of this policy explains the growth in the number of private universities that followed and the introduction of privately-sponsored students in public universities attending what are popularly known as parallel degree programmes that currently account for half of the revenue generated by public universities (Oanda, Chege and Wesonga 2008). On the other hand, these new developments have introduced a new set of students into the universities through the innovative and flexible modes of learning delivery including distance learning, evening classes, credit transfers, and short courses that require adequate representation by the student governance structures to ensure that their unique needs are addressed by the university administration. It is not apparent whether this is actually happening both in the private and public universities in Kenya.

In line with these developments has been the growing application of the market approach to the governance of universities, also known as the rise in managerialism – a trend that began in the western universities and is quickly catching on in Africa (ESMU 2009; Luescher-Mamashela 2005). The application of leadership styles and management approach developed in the business world to the academic context is encouraged to enhance efficiency and relevance to the labour market environment. Consequently, emphasis on strategic goal-setting and attainment through the development of institutional mission and vision statements, strategic planning and legitimization of the authority of university executives as professional managers has become common practice in universities (ESMU 2009; Luescher-Mamashela 2005). At face value, this setup presents a huge opportunity for students' involvement in university governance given that they are the prime consumers of university courses offered; yet their prospect of benefitting in this way depends on whether self-governance, in terms of support for student government affairs is an important feature of strategic and implementation plans that are becoming more and more business-inclined (Mwiria *et al.* 2007).

Forms of Students' Involvement in Governance

Students' participation in governance can occur through a range of informal (passive) and formal mechanisms (Kulati 2000; Lodge 2005; Luescher-Mamashela 2005). The level of informality and formality applied by the university affects the quality of students' participation (Lizzio and Wilson 2009). At the realm of passivity, student feedback might be informally sought on specific issues (Lodge 2005) from student councils or committees. Beyond this, informal participation takes the form of students employing a range of protest forms, stretching from cooperative-informative forms to highly confrontational and militant forms (Luescher-Mamashela 2005).

On the contrary, formal involvement entails a more systematic incorporation of students' voices into governance forums through formal membership of students on various university-level governance bodies and committees such as the University Council, Academic Senate, Faculty Board and disciplinary committees aimed at ensuring adequate representation of constituencies (Kulati 2000; Luescher-Mamashela 2005). Students could also be allowed formal representation in School-wide/ Faculty-wide as well as in departmental/ programme committees and working groups. Representation on departmental committees appears to be the most strategic and potentially useful participative mechanism because it aids problem-solving at a local level, on issues that have an immediate impact on students, while offering the greatest potential for building a sense of community and social capital between staff and students (Zuo and Ratsoy 1999). Where practiced effectively, formal representation should give students co-decision rights. In Africa, formal inclusion of students in university governance has taken three principal forms (Luescher-Mamashela 2005) 1) Establishment of student government on university campuses; 2) Representation of the institutional student body in certain structures of university governance and; 3) Involvement of national (or institutional) student organizations in higher education policy formulation.

An inherent part of democratic university governance is student governments (Badat 1999; Klemenčič 2014; Luescher-Mamashela 2005). Student governments or self-governance structures are the most recognizable and widespread platforms from which students' involvement in university governance occurs. The practice of democratic governance by higher education institutions and the resultant moulding of effective leaders entails participation of all students in student representation through elective selection of their leaders, active participation of regular students in student organizations and societies which promote dialogue among their members, and democratic internal procedures and diversity within their structures. Further, student governing bodies should have mechanisms in place to ensure continuity in student representation in terms of efficient ways to transfer knowledge to the new generation of leaders (May 2009; Astin 2000).

Although membership to student governments is voluntary (Badat 1999), it is normally assumed that all members of the student body are members of the organization. This means that student organizations operate like the one-party states of the pre-1990s in Africa where every citizen was assumed to be a bona fide member of the ruling party.

Student governments exist in different forms and designations such as student unions, councils, parliaments, boards, guilds, associations, etc. Regardless of their forms or designations, these operate as governments in the sense that they present a system of rules, norms and institutions by which the student body within an institution is organized and governed (Klemenčič 2012a, 2014). Their primary function is to represent the students' interests in institutional governance. This involves mediating the interests of the student body to the institution's management by relating to management, engaging with the structures and agenda of management and engaging in management's policy networks (Klemenčič 2014). Student governments also provide the framework for student social and political activities and student organizations on campus, as well as serve the professional function of providing academic and welfare support services to students and managing student facilities (Klemenčič 2014; Luescher-Mamashela 2005).

Student governments can be institution-specific, national or regional (Badat 1999; Klemenčič 2014; Luescher-Mamashela 2005). Whereas university-level governments are almost universally accepted, student organizations at the national and regional levels are less widespread (Klemenčič 2014). This might be explained by the fear governments, especially authoritarian regimes, have of the potency of student interest groups. To illustrate, national student associations can be very powerful political institutions that cannot be easily ignored by national governments. As Klemenčič (2014) pointed out, they can rely on varied networks to establish close connections with different actors within government and political parties. Frequently, national or institutional student governments initiate and organize student protests. Student unions also have a tradition of being training grounds for future political leaders (Day 2012; Leusher-Mamashela and Mugume 2014). Furthermore, if organized into a representative student government or movement, students have been shown to be a highly influential agency shaping higher education policy (Luescher-Mamashela 2005).

Student governments stand in implicit or explicit exchange relationship with authorities whom they seek to influence. In this relationship student governments possess and can supply important resources, such as professional expertise, legitimation of policy, social control of their members, and other services that may be of value to the authority (Klemenčič 2012a). Authorities reciprocate by providing funding and other material and/ or symbolic resources and by defining the relational structures through which student governments can formally or informally intermediate their interests. The relations between university and

representative student structures can assume one of three forms: an authoritarian paternalistic form, a democratic form or a managerial or corporate form (Klemenčič 2014; Leuscher-Mamashela 2013). In the authoritarian paternalistic approach, a student government is integrated into the institutional structure and given limited discretion for involvement on issues strictly concerning students (e.g., student services and teaching quality) and only in an advisory role rather than on a co-decision capacity. Here students constitute a junior member of the academic community who are not capable of contributing to decisions on an equal level as academics (Leuscher-Mamashela 2013).

The democratic institutional governance form, which is characterized by the existence of fairly autonomous student governments is the locus of this study. It involves student representatives being granted participation in the institution's decision-making process, often with co-decision rights (Klemenčič 2014). Finally, in the managerial or corporate governance model, institutional leadership involves student unions together with other stakeholders, with external stakeholders holding a considerable leverage. Student representatives (as well as academics) are engaged as consultants rather than as co-decision makers (Klemenčič 2012b).

While in principle most African universities may encourage the democratic governance model, in practice they tend to rely on the authoritative, paternalistic model. This is consistent with Johnson and Deem (2003), who argued that, more often than not, incongruence between espoused and practical participation characterizes university institutions, a fact that Argyris and Schon (1978) consider to be an enduring aspect of social and organizational life. Whereas university policy may emphasize student-centerdness, its practical implementation often focuses on 'managing the student body' more than responding to the experiences of the students.

The role of students in a system of shared governance, though, can be controversial given the transient nature of studentship and the rapid turnaround of student elected officials (Klemenčič 2014; Task Force on Higher Education and Society 2000). Unlike faculty and administrators, students stay in universities for a short period of time, often four years, and their elected officials normally serve a one-year term. Because of this, faculty and administrators tend to have natural authority over students in many matters of internal governance, particularly academic matters such as admission standards, grading policy, and degree requirements. Students are only allowed to play key roles in those areas that affect their lives and in which they have the competence to provide constructive input (Task Force on Higher Education and Society 2000). In addition, student governments tend to be more susceptible to change under the influence of individual 'agents' or external circumstances (Klemenčič 2014). This undermines their capacity to effectively participate in decision-making. Matters can be complicated further by the cultural assumptions of a particular academic

community. For instance, the institution may routinely make conscious efforts to protect students' rights in university policy and procedures but the often hierarchical structures of educational institutions can, perhaps inadvertently, privilege 'staff discourse' and marginalize students' views (Johnson and Deem 2003; Lizzio and Wilson 2009). Similar sentiments were expressed by Klemenčič (2014) who indicated that the relations between institutional leaders and student representatives often contain some forms of domination by authorities over students as manifested through subtle and implicit actions.

There is also the element of apathy that tends to affect the level of students' participation in governance processes. As Klemenčič (2014: 399) pointed out, despite the significant legitimate power conferred on student governments as key university stakeholders through legislation and institutional rules and the significant coercive power of student movements, the 'majority of students rarely get politically engaged in student government, even if this involves only casting a vote in student elections" (Klemenčič, 2014: 399).

Some scholars have argued for the total exclusion of students from university governance (see e.g., Lee 1987; Wood 1993; Zuo and Ratsoy 1999). These have advanced a number of factors to justify their stance, including the following: students may not be in a position to effectively represent the interests of their groups; students have no place in university boards because only trustees have been assigned the responsibility of serving the public through board membership; students promote the interests of specific groups, which can lead to conflict of interest; and, students are not suitable for participation in boards due to limited knowledge and experience (Wood 1993). In addition, it has been argued that students have no interest in academic matters and that their involvement could distract them from their studies, thereby undermining their educational progress. Others indicate that students should be excluded from the discussion of 'sensitive' issues such as student grading and faculty tenure (Lee 1987; Zuo and Ratsoy 1999).

The Benefits of Students' Involvement in Governance

Various grounds, all hinged on the principle of participatory governance, have been put forth to elucidate why university students should be involved in university governance. These can be viewed from three perspectives: social, developmental and functional (Cress, Astin, Zimmerman, Oster, Burkhardt 2001; Kuh 1994; Kuh and Lund 1994; Lee 1987; Lizzio and Wilson; Menon 2005, 2009; Obondo 2000; Sabin and Daniels 2001). The social perspective deals with the benefits accrued to society while the developmental perspective relates to the benefits accruing to the student participants. On the other hand, the functional perspective deals with the benefits of involvement to the university.

The benefits of students' participation to society can be understood within the context of the emerging and related discourses of education for democracy

(Teune 2001) and "universities as sites of citizenship" (Colby *et al.* 2003) and as drivers of socio-economic development. Upon graduation, students join the rest of society in grappling with modern challenges including global warming, religious and ethnic conflict, poverty, decline in citizenship interest and in engagement in political process, increasing ineffectiveness of governments and shift from industrialized to knowledge-based societies. These challenges need quality leaders to tackle them with adaptive and creative solutions (Astin 2000). Further, higher education specifically produces people to work in all sectors of the economy including government, business, law, science, medicine and even the clergy, thus putting the onus on them to produce strong effective leaders. From this perspective, therefore, leadership development in higher education has to go beyond those elected into the student leadership positions in the student government to include the individual students in the general student body. This perception is in line with Astin's (2000) definition of leadership as a process that is ultimately concerned with fostering change. In this regard, a leader is anyone engaged in making a positive change in society, meaning that any student is a potential leader. As a result, universities should empower all students to be effective social change agents by instilling in them leadership attitudes and values. If they expect students to develop the skills and attitudes of effective citizenship, then it is incumbent upon them to exemplify and support these through policies and practices. Otherwise, if students feel that they have little or no influence on decision-making, universities can become sites of negative learning about organizational and civic life (Lizzio and Wilson 2009).

The developmental perspective holds that, depending on its quality, students' participation in decision-making, can provide students with considerable opportunities for learning. There exists a myriad of gains accruing to both student leaders and the general student body. The participation of students in the governance of their universities introduces and socializes them into democratic leadership ideal, values, attitudes and practices (Lee 1987) that come in handy in their future endeavours both in the world of work and their lives in the community where they reside. Essentially, providing space for democratization of students and developing their leadership programmes have been identified as a critical prerequisite to solving the many crises related to governance in higher education and building strong future national leaders (Kamuzora and Mgaya n.d.; Astin 2000). Furthermore, existing research has reported skill development of students in leadership positions, in areas such as teamwork and critical thinking (Cress *et al.* 2001; Kuh 1994; Kuh and Lund 1994). Cress *et al.* (2001) reported significant gains in academic performance by tertiary students in positional student leadership roles engaged in leadership development programmes. In addition, Terenzini, Pascarella and Blimling (1996) demonstrated that extra-curricula activities foster academic and personal development among students.

Furthermore, students implicitly generate their notions and conceptions of leadership from what is taught intentionally and unintentionally across the educational experience. When they engage in campus and student activities and organizations like subject matter clubs, athletics, student government, volunteer activities like community service work, they gain experience that is applicable to employment after college, achieve a greater awareness of community needs and societal issues and create more meaningful relationships with faculty and fellow students (Kamuzora and Magaya n.d.; Astin 2000). Student leaders report that they accrue leadership values and skills including self-awareness, self-esteem, commitment, working collaboratively, authenticity, disagreement with respect and being able to lead constructive change which can be, as well, gained by other students not holding leadership positions but involved in campus activities. Moreover, student leaders have been reported to forge political and administrative careers after using the campus experience as a practicing ground (May 2009; Kamuzora and Mgaya n.d.; Astin 2000).

From the functional perspective, three major benefits to universities can be attributed to students' involvement in governance. First, students are said to have access to experiences and information that can improve the quality, accountability and transparency of decision making (Sabin and Daniels 2001). Student participation is also associated with the enhancement of appropriate consideration of stakeholder views and organizational learning. Evidently, students are full, and perhaps the most important, members of the higher education community, they should also participate in and influence the organization and content of higher education (Luescher-Mamashela 2011; Persson 2003). This perspective is supported by survey results conducted by the Council of Europe Campaign to Combat Violence against Women in 2002 (cited in Persson 2003) which indicated that there is a wide and positive attitude towards increased student influence in higher education based on the fact that they have the right to influence decisions and practices since they are the target group and main stakeholders in higher education. Consequently, students' avenues for formal involvement in governance should be strengthened by increasing the seats reserved for students on the committees at all levels, ensuring stronger rights to vote and speak within these bodies and enjoying regulated rights to participate in evaluation procedures (Persson 2003). 'Students as partners' is another descriptor given to students to define the relationship between students and their time in universities. Usage of the term 'partners' implies the existence of an interactive relationship and mutual respect between students and the other stakeholders in the university community (Menon 2005). In view of the fact that students have the lived experience as students, their wealth of knowledge can be tapped into by universities to solve campus problems in general and conflicts in particular before they begin or spiral out of control, thus engaging them to act as change agents from inside.

Second, the participation of students in governance is considered to have important benefits for the quality of the educational 'product' offered by universities (Lee 1987; Menon 2005). Students' input can facilitate the evaluation of curricula and teaching practices, through the identification of deficiencies in higher education programmes and instruction (Lee 1987). Moreover, students' participation in decision-making plays a role in the creation of an atmosphere of openness and trust, leading to a positive organizational climate (Wood 1993). Such a climate can be expected to reduce the likelihood of conflict between management and students or between management and staff in universities. Obondo (2000), for instance, attributes the management crises at the universities of Nairobi and Kenyatta in Kenya to the failure of administrators to take into account the needs of students and staff members.

Furthermore, student inclusion in university decision-making is essential to avert disruptive strikes and student unrest initiated and organized by student governments. One way through which students articulate their concerns and grievances is student protests and demonstrations (Altbach 2006; Klemenčič 2014; Task Force on Higher Education and Society 2000). As indicated earlier, these are elements of the informal model of students' involvement in governance, representing the application of the unwritten rules of student participation in institutional governance (Task Force on Higher Education and Society 2000). Classic works on student activism (see e.g., Altbach 1991, 1992, 2006) show that students' movements have often disrupted the functioning of higher education institutions, obstructed national and higher education reforms and exerted pressure for social change. In Africa in general, and in Kenya in particular, boycotts remain recognizable features of campus life but the dynamics of student protests vary significantly across space. This means that it would be rather myopic to assume that the existence of unresolved students' grievances and a student government is sufficient to cause a student protest and/ or boycott. In our considered opinion, the quality and integrity of the student leadership is important. Where student leaders are the product of flawed (often rigged) elections, are easily compromised and/or have been co-opted by management, the mobilization necessary for a student strike or protest may be lacking. Furthermore, the level of student apathy could also be a major determinant as to whether or not mobilization for strikes and protests can be effective.

Student protests range from cooperative to confrontational forms. Less confrontational forms have the objective to inform, educate and instigate debate (Luescher-Mamashela 2005). Confrontational forms, normally referred to as 'student unrests', are geared towards, and often result in, the breaking of institutional rules. They assume forms such as mass meetings, rallies, protest marches, street demonstrations and strikes and, class and examination boycotts (Luescher-Mamashela 2005; Maseko 1994; Adu Boahen in UNESCO 1994).

Normally university management will respond to violent protests by inviting the police to intervene, a response that can easily lead to bloodshed and the loss of student lives. Within the African context, student unrests date back to the late 1960s and 1970s, when universities were being established following independence from white rule (Mohamedbhai 2016). With growing student numbers, coupled with declining quality of teaching and learning facilities (lecture halls, laboratories, libraries, student residences, etc.), student unrests on African university campuses have become a common occurrence. Most recently, in February 2016 a wave of student riots swept through South Africa, leading to the closure of the North-West University (NWU) at Mafiking in Potchefstroom, the University of Pretoria (UP) at Hatfield and Groenkloof as well as the University of the Free State (UFS) in Bloemfontein (Azikiwe 2016). The effectiveness of student protests is dependent on the response they receive from within the higher education institution and from the wider society (Luescher-Mamashela 2005). Strikes have also been a common feature of university education since independence (Kiboiy 2013; Mohamedbhai 2016).

Relationship between University and Student Leaderships

Leadership was earlier defined as people who include the leader and the followers working towards a common goal. It is about working together towards a goal and forming a relationship that will foster the right environment to achieve the goals (Rost, 1993). For the purpose of this study, when we speak about university and student leadership we are referring to the relationship between university management and its followers (including students) as well as that between student leaders and the student followers.

Existing evidence tends to suggest that the relationship between university management and the student body has been characterized by frustration and mistrust that in extreme cases has resulted in student riots (Luescher-Mamashela, Kiiru, Mattes, Mwollo-Ntallima, Ng'ethe and Romo 2011; Otieno 2004). Recent evidence also indicates that the practice of student leadership in African universities is a mirror of the political national leadership which in most countries in Sub-Saharan Africa is characterized by allegations of corruption, ethnic inclinations, managerial incompetence and mismanagement of resources (Mapundo 2007). A recent survey on democratic citizenship and universities in Africa conducted in three universities posits that while there was overwhelming student expressing support for students' participation in representative management systems, the existing student unions faced a crisis of legitimacy. According to the study, student leaders were the least trusted people on campus an observation that was made in the light of disputed election results and accusations of corruption (Luescher-Mamashela *et al.* 2011).

With reference to Kenya, Obondo (2000) found that in most cases university senates, faculty and management board and committee structures do not include students, or even when they do, they are integrated as tokens rather than active participants in decision-making. As a result, students constitute one of the most vulnerable and least empowered groups of actors who must be involved in the transformation of Kenyan universities.

According to Obondo (2000), as avenues through which student interests are articulated to the university administration, students' associations remain an important but untapped resource in university efforts to confront the governance crisis. Despite this, the associations are not vibrant in our public universities, which may be a reflection of the quality of leadership they enjoy. He further argued that the lack of adequate involvement of ordinary students in decision-making is normally reflected in the tendency of students to reject and to react negatively toward policy statements from the university authorities and/or decisions by their own leaders. He pointed out that recurrent student unrest and staff disenchantment are reflections of demands for their involvement in campus governance. Therefore, it is imperative that university managements widen the representation and the active participation of students (and staff) in governing bodies and strengthen students' (and staff) associations if they wish to strengthen democratization of university governance. This will in turn increase their propensity to identify with outcomes of the governance processes in these institutions and reduce the incidences of student and/or staff conflict with management.

The Governance of University Education in Kenya

Universities in Kenya are administered through the Ministry of Education in accordance with the Universities Act No. 42 of 2012. Among other roles, the ministry is responsible for improving the quality, relevance, equity and access to higher education and technical training. The government agency mandated to regulate university education in the country, though, was initially the Commission for Higher Education (CHE). The commission was set up by the government in 1985 through an Act of Parliament and mandated to coordinate the development of higher education in the country. Within the context of the public sector, the Commission's responsibilities included the coordination of post-secondary education and training for the purpose of higher education and university admissions; long-term planning, programming, budgeting and financing of universities and other post-secondary institutions; student enrolment; scholarships; staffing and; the recognition of qualifications from other countries. The Commission's administrative mandate was functionally restricted to the regulation of private universities. It presided over matters of the physical development of private universities, quality assurance in private universities and

other privately owned institutions of higher education, awarding of letters of interim authority to new private universities and, their eventual confirmation as chartered institutions.

Under the Universities Education Act No. 42 of 2012, which brought the establishing, governance and administration of all universities in Kenya under the same legal framework, CHE's mandate was expanded to include both public and private universities and the Commission was renamed the Commission for University Education (CUE). Among others, the responsibilities of the renamed commission include overseeing the establishment of new universities, the accreditation of all universities, regulation of university education to ensure the maintenance of standards, accreditation of university programmes to guarantee quality and relevance, inspection of universities and the promotion of research and innovation (Commission for University Education 2014; Republic of Kenya 2012).

The second semi-autonomous government agency involved in supporting the University sub-sector in Kenya is the Higher Education Loans Board (HELB) (Ministry of Education 2012). This is a State corporation under the then Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology established by an Act of Parliament (Cap 213A) in 1995. Its mandate is to disburse affordable loans, bursaries and scholarship to students pursuing higher education in recognized education institutions in the country. In this regard, HELB's responsibilities include sourcing funds, establishing, managing and, awarding loans bursaries and scholarships to students pursuing higher education in recognized institutions (Ministry of Education 2012; http://www.helb.co.ke/about-helb/history/). Although the Board's mandate initially covered students studying in public institutions only, today that mandate has been expanded to include those in the private sector.

The University Act No. 42 of 2012 delineates the internal administrative structure of universities to include a Chancellor, University Council, a Senate, a Vice Chancellor assisted by a number of Deputy Vice Chancellors, Faculty Boards and Departmental Boards (Republic of Kenya 2012). The Chancellor is the honorary head of the university and, in the name of the university, confers degrees and awards diplomas, certificates and other awards of the university during graduation ceremonies. In public universities, Chancellors are presidential appointees whereas in private universities they are appointed by the Board of Trustees. The Act also authorizes the Chancellor to give any advice considered necessary for the betterment of the University to the University Council. On the other hand, the Vice Chancellor is the Chief Executive of the University. S/he is academic and administrative head of the University with overall responsibility for the direction, organization, administration and programmes of the University.

The Council is the overall administrative body of the university mandated to manage all its resources. It is charged with the responsibility of policy formulation, creation of faculties and departments and, the approval of the appointment of

university staff (Republic of Kenya 2012). The University Council has power to determine the method of recruitment, appointment and promotion of all staff of the university; to appoint and determine the terms and conditions of service for all staff of the university; to approve the budget; to determine, after considering the recommendations of the Senate, all fees payable to the university and; to constantly review the viability and financial sustainability of the University. In public universities or their constituent colleges, the University Council is made up of nine members appointed by the Cabinet Secretary in the Ministry of Education. These include a Chairperson, the Principal Secretary in the Ministry responsible for university education, Principal Secretary in the Ministry responsible for university financing, five members appointed by the Cabinet Secretary through an open process and the Vice Chancellor who is an ex-officio member and the Secretary to the Council (Republic of Kenya 2012).

The University Senate is the overall academic authority of the university and is responsible for academic matters, including control of instruction, examination, the award of degrees and, the direction of research (Republic of Kenya 2012). The membership of the Senate include the Vice Chancellor (as Chair), Deputy Vice Chancellors (the Deputy Vice Chancellor in charge of Academic Affairs serve as the secretary to the Senate); Principals of constituent colleges; Deputy Principals; Deans of faculties and Directors of schools, institutes and other academic units; Chairpersons of the teaching departments; all Professors or their representatives and; student representatives, among others. The functions of the Senate are wide and varied (Republic of Kenya 2012). They include: setting the dates of the academic year and determining the schedule of academic programmes within the academic year; approving all syllabi of the university; making regulations governing methods of assessing and examining the academic performance of students; evaluating academic records of both undergraduate and postgraduate candidates for the purpose of admission into the university and; regulating the conduct of examinations. The Senate is also expected to appoint internal and external examiners and recommend to the Council the terms and conditions for their appointment; to approve the award of degrees including the award of honorary degrees and other academic distinctions; promote research and innovation work in the University and; to determine the procedure to be followed in the conferment of the degrees and other awards, among many other responsibilities (Republic of Kenya 2012). Finally, faculty boards and departments are responsible to the Senate, oversee instruction and administer examinations.

In Kenya, initially, the internal governance structures of private universities could differ from those of their public counterparts. However, since the enactment of the Universities Act No. 42 of 2012 with the objective to bring the establishing, governance and administration of all universities in the country under the same legal framework, the internal governance structures of both public and private

universities are progressively converging as private universities revise their charters to include all the structures prescribed by the Act. The CUE requires all private universities to adhere to the Act by ensuring that the governance structures include a Chancellor, a University Council, a Senate, a Vice Chancellor assisted by a number of Deputy Vice Chancellors, Faculty Boards and Departmental Boards.

At the realm of governance practices in general and the involvement of students in particular, the existing evidence tends to suggest that the Kenyan situation is not much different from the situation in the rest of the African continent. Although a visionary, creative and inclusive leadership is essential to the success of university education, in Kenya, poor leadership (read poor governance) prevails across most public universities (Mutula 2002; Obondo 2000). In principle students are expected to participate in decision-making at the different levels of university governance. However, in practice the authoritarian paternalistic model of governance (Klemenčič 2014; Leuscher-Mamashela 2013) eclipses the participatory governance model (Johnson and Deem 2003; Klemenčič 2012b; Leuscher-Mamashela 2013), thereby reducing students to unequal partners in decision-making. This is contrary to the expectation that universities should grant students co-decision-making rights.

Kenyan universities have in principle taken some steps to enhance the democratization of decision-making within the university by promoting wider representation of staff and students in key governing bodies and by allowing senior staff a say in the selection of senior university administrators (Mwiria, *et al*, 2007). The shift from government appointed top managers (that is, Vice Chancellor and Deputy Vice Chancellor) to a competitive system of appointing the same, as well as from the Head of State (the President) being the Chancellor of all public universities is a step in this direction. Despite this, much work is needed to actualize shared governance in which stakeholders have co-decision rights. A study conducted by Obondo (2000) found the decentralization of leadership and accountability to be the greatest management challenge to the governance of universities today. The study showed that the management in universities remains largely hierarchical and continues to be portrayed as centralized bureaucracies practicing centralized decision-making. There is absence of mechanisms for consultation, consensus building, open discussions, and the delegation and spread of authority. This is typified by lack of a collaborative, active and widespread participation by stakeholders, including, students, academic staff and support staff (Obondo 2000). The study also revealed that universities lacked proper and established structures for consultation, thereby rendering their management inaccessible except during crises when they make appearances to consult. Based on these findings, Obondo (2000) identified facilitation of greater involvement of stakeholders in university affairs in Kenya as a serious administrative and leadership problem.

One of the indicators of poor governance in higher education in Kenya is political meddling. To streamline governance requires less government meddling in the affairs of universities (Mwiria *et al.* 2007). This calls for greater autonomy for universities, with government providing the regulatory framework and ceasing to be an intervention force. In Kenya, the Universities Act No. 42 of 2012 was a step in this direction. However, higher education in the country, particularly the public sector, continues to be the subject of much political manipulation and intervention (Mwiria, Ngethe, Ngome, Ouma-Odero, Wawire and Wesonga 2007). This undermines the quality of governance in universities. Consequent from the poor governance in universities is indiscipline among students that has pervaded the sector over the years, thus resulting in frequent student strikes, demonstrations and riots from time to time (Kiboiy 2013; Mohamedbhai 2016; Mutula 2002). These in turn lead to closures that prolong the time required to complete degree programmes, thereby disrupting academic life and driving some students and staff to local private and overseas universities.

The intensity and frequency of student strikes in Kenya has increased steadily over the years, as students express their disaffection with the management of the university and the country as a whole and university lecturers and students clamour for academic freedom. These have resulted in frequent closures and, consequently, in prolonging of the minimum period required to graduate; in public universities some students take up to six years to complete what should be a four-year basic degree (Mutula 2002). Between 1969 and 2000, for example, 69 student strikes were recorded in all public universities. Of this total, 31.9 per cent (22) occurred during a span of 20 years, between 1969 and 1989, compared to 68.1 per cent (47) which were recorded between 1990 and 2000 (Kiboiy 2013). During this period one of the most noticeable student unrests occurred in 1982 when students supported and participated in the aborted military coup of August 1, 1982 to express their disaffection with the management of the university and the country as a whole. The coup was staged by some officers in the Kenya air force who attempted to overthrow the government of President Daniel Arap Moi. During 2007/2008, in the wake of the disputed presidential elections, student unrest and rioting, leading to closure of several campuses, occurred in the country (Mohamedbhai 2016). Similar unrests occurred in March 2009 leading to the closure of Kenyatta University, with students protesting over the set deadline for examination registration. The incidents occasioned the death of one student and the serious destruction to university property. In May 2010, the University of Nairobi closed down indefinitely after violent unrest and looting in the streets by students over disputed students' elections. According to Mohamedbhai (2016), the disturbances were allegedly caused by external interference of local politicians in the students' elections. Whereas the genesis of students' unrest are many and varied, lack of involvement of students in decision-making is a leading factor; other factors that include poor living conditions, autocratic administrations, rising cost

of education and living and, lack of factual information about the relevant issues, among other causes. In this regard, the double intakes that force cohorts to take long vacations to allow others to be on campus have provided a major catalyst.

Attempts have also been made to strengthen staff and students' associations to enable them play an enhanced role as buffers between staff and students on the one hand and the university administration on the other (Mwiria *et al.* 2007). Staff unions, especially those in the public sector are expected to extend their mandates beyond clamouring for salary increases to include checking the excesses of administration, monitoring the use of resources and, promoting the improved quality of education. Similarly, students' associations are expected to be responsible for ensuring that students are committed to their studies and project a good image in the eyes of the wider public (Mwiria *et al.* 2007). While these are noble steps in the enhancement of the democratization of governance in universities in Kenya, the extent to which the governance climate facilitates their effective implementation remains debatable. To echo Mutula (2002), bureaucratic systems in public universities continue to keep students out of touch with authorities whenever they wish to have discussions to address matters of interest to their studies. Whereas the top managements of universities have in principle embraced the tenet of shared governance, in practice they continue to undermine it by meddling with the activities of staff and students' associations, including stage-managing (or even rigging) elections and the intimidation, compromising or, in some cases, the co-optation of the leadership of staff and student self-governance bodies.

Some scholars have suggested that considerable differences exist between governance models and practices in public and private universities in Kenya (Mutula 2002; Task Force on Higher Education and Society 2000). According to Mutula (2002), for example, private universities have a democratic system of governance, where students are routinely involved in decision-making processes. The institutions are characterized by continuous dialogue among administrators, teaching staff and students, leading to reduced tension that may result in strikes. While this might be true in principle, the practice in many private universities puts to question the extent to which the governance processes are truly democratic. Like in public universities, students in private universities do not enjoy the kind of access to and participation in decision-making structures envisioned by the shared governance principle of good governance in universities.

Research Issues

The preceding historical development of student involvement in university governance presented earlier brings to light several issues that need to be further interrogated and earmarked for research work that will add to the understanding and improvement of students' self-governance in the university setting in Africa. Presented below is a profiling of some of the leading issues.

Policy on Students' Involvement

The area of policy is central because the existence of policies that favour the involvement of students in decision-making affirms the university commitment to the principle of student involvement in governance both in academic and administration matters. Further, explicit laws and guidelines give the university stakeholders an idea of their rights and responsibilities in the governance arrangement ensuring good governance is achieved (Lizzio and Wilson 2009).The importance placed on students' participation in governance and the nature of this participation is usually articulated in university governance policy documents that include university acts at the State level, institutional statutes, vision and mission statements, strategic plans and student handbooks. While evidence suggests that top university policies in the form of acts and statutes support students' involvement in governance, the levels of involvement at the various organizational structures need to be determined and the other support policy structures like strategic plans that are now operational in most African universities need to be cross-examined to determine their status on this subject. For example, it is important to ascertain whether support for the offices of student affairs and dean of students is provided for in the strategic implementation plans.

Further, actual implementation of these policies in terms of the nature of students' involvement in governance at the specific universities, whether private or public, needs to be established to inform future transformations in this area (Mwiria *et al.* 2007). Specifically for Kenya, the gains made in terms of supportive policies for students' participation in governance may have been eroded by ongoing revisions of the institutional statutes of the respective public universities, which process has been alleged to be non-participatory.

Organizational Structures and Nature of Students' Involvement in Governance

The organizational structures are important instruments in university governance because they are instrumental in the attainment of institutional goals. However, effective structures are those which allow the constituent groups to formally and informally dialogue and guarantee a flow of information among them (Mwiria *et al.* 2007; Saint 1992). Universities in Kenya, like others the world over, have similar governance structures that consist of a board of trustees or directors, university councils, chancellors and vice chancellors or rectors and their deputies and the senate. Below this, we have schools or faculties which are headed by deans and departments which are headed by heads of department. Student matters are handled by deans of students (in public universities) and deputy vice chancellors (student affairs) in private universities who work in collaboration with student unions as mediators between students and the administration (Mwiria *et al.*

2007). Research on this issue indicates that decision-making under this structure is committee-based with particularly low engagement of students' representatives at the departmental level in some universities in the European experience, indicating that actual participation of some levels of decision-making and formal involvement as equal partners is not guaranteed (Persson 2003).

The relationship between formal provisions for participation and the actual practice at different levels needs to be investigated further, especially in African contexts where research is currently limited. Further research is also required in terms of which issues students are involved in when decisions are made and whether ordinary students have their issues addressed during these forums. Going by Sifuna's (1998) account of low involvement of staff in the decision-making in faculty and departmental meetings that are held irregularly in the Kenyan context, there are limited possibilities for the participation of students in such forums. Deans and departmental heads set the agenda of these meetings (Sifuna 1998). According to Obondo (2000), reports from Kenya show more influence of student leadership on social and environmental issues and less on issues relating to pedagogical work. The reports also show limited engagement between ordinary students and decision-making mechanisms. Hence, levels of consultation between student leaders and other students and the role of student unions need further scrutiny.

The Role of Student Governance Bodies and their Support Systems

Student unions or governments represent the most efficient way of involving students in university governance given that all students cannot be directly engaged by the administration. However, while 80 per cent of university students in South Africa support the idea that students should be represented at all levels of decision-making, the disjuncture between student demand for representation and the reported lack of trust and faith in student leadership points to inefficiencies in the student leadership (Luescher-Mamasheala 2005). This is further exemplified by data from Kenya where recurrent student riots and unrest in public universities is an indicator of the low levels of communication and interaction between student leaders and the students they represent on the one hand and, on the other hand, university administrations. This is further demonstrated by the tendency of students to reject policies that are developed by universities especially in relation to fees revisions and curriculum changes (Sifuna 2001; Obondo 2000). There is, therefore, need to check the selection processes of the student leaders to determine whether the criteria used are issue, project or popularity based.

Student leaders may be lacking the capacity to adequately represent students on complex matters or translate these issues into projects that address existing problems facing students. One such research should, therefore, check whether the support systems in terms of leadership training are adequate in preparing

students to perform their intermediary role between the students and the administration effectively. Based on the experiences of students in Tanzania and Europe respectively, the short period in office for student leaders and low participation in elections by the general student body are other issues that need further exploration in relation to the quality and support systems available to student leaders (Persson 2003; Kamuzora and Mgaya n.d.). Support for student leaders, according to the 2003 Bologna report, should relate to the motivation of these students in terms of compensation for the time used for leadership activities and access to information and knowledge related to their role (Persson 2003).

Inclusiveness of Students' Involvement in Governance

Given the increased diversity of students joining university education as a result of the expanded access opportunities, it is important to ensure that governing arrangements cater for their unique needs. In the Kenyan setting, pointers to the fact that governance conditions, perhaps, do not address students' special needs are inherent in the general poor levels of access to university education and retention of students with disabilities and those from poor and rural backgrounds (Wawire and Elarabi 2010; Obonyo 2013). To enhance retention and quality of education for these groups of students, there is need to ensure that student governments have mechanisms of ensuring that concerns of international students, students with disabilities, students of different academic levels and disciplines, mature students attending evening and weekend classes and those from disadvantaged backgrounds are addressed. This is glaring a gap in the literature that this study aimed to address.

Theoretical Framework

The study utilized the democratic theory to explain students' participation in university governance, zeroing in on how key decisions are made and who makes them. The term democracy, which originates from the Greek words *demos* ('the people') and *kratein* ('to rule'), has been used to refer to 'people rule'. Schumpeter (1950: 269) defined democracy as 'that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote'. According to Fung (2007:444), democracy is about non-tyranny or the principle that 'no individual or group should decide collective issues regardless of others' interests and preferences'. Underpinning democracy are values such as popular representation; universal suffrage; freedom of speech; assembly; organization and the press (Thierborn, 1977:4); accountability; self-government; reasoned rule; common good, and; self-actualization (Fung 2007), among others. Relative to other forms of governance, democracy is preferable because it renders the leadership accountable to its stakeholders.

Democratic theory is concerned with processes by which ordinary citizens exercise a relatively high degree of control over leaders (Dahl 2006). It examines structures and processes of decision-making from the student perspective to assess whether they are participatory. Democratic theories identify 'democracy' with political equality, popular sovereignty, and rule by majorities. This was clearly illustrated by Aristotle in the *Politics* when he wrote:

> The most pure democracy is that which is so called principally from the equality which prevails in it: for this is what the law in that state directs; that the poor shall be in no greater subjection than the rich; nor that the supreme power shall be lodged with either of these, but that both shall share it. For if liberty and equality, as some persons suppose, are chiefly to be found in a democracy, it must be so by every department of government being alike open to all ; but as the people are in the majority, and what they vote is law, it follows that such a state must be a democracy (cited in Dahl 2006:34).

Similar sentiments have been expressed by many others. For instance, De Tocqueville (2003) in *Democracy in America* wrote that: "The very essence of democratic government consists in the absolute sovereignty of the majority; for there is nothing in democratic states which is capable of resisting it".

Theorizing on democratic practice in society has its roots in Aristotle's work on political theory. In comparing the governing systems of his time, Aristotle singled out democratic rule as the most effective when compared to aristocracy or even monarchy (Rabb and Suleiman 2003). In democratic environments people determine public policy, laws and actions of their state together. Building on Aristotle's political ideas, *participatory democracy* or decision-making was born out of the need to explain how ordinary citizens should be involved more in deciding their collective affairs. Participatory democracy has the advantage of ensuring equity, self-determination, sense of community, acceptability and, relevance of the decisions made by the key stakeholders of the organization. Participation grows transparency by opening up policy formulation and implementation processes to all stakeholders through direct or representative involvement. Through the participatory processes, practical 'people-based' knowledge is shared, debated, combined with technical knowledge and built into the policy process. Participation also increases the bargaining power of stakeholders (Wainwright 2005). This occurs mainly because participation tendens to redistribute power among stakeholders. Participatory democracy enables stakeholders to monitor the work of the executive and other top managers/ administrators. Popular participation lets people, as well as officials, decide the detail on how broad policy commitments are carried out (Wainwright 2005), meaning that how public policy is administered is not value-neutral. The legitimacy of participatory democracy lies in the high degree of activity of what is likely to be a minority through institutions that are transparent, open to all and, based on mutually agreed rules.

According to Wainwright (2005), participatory democracy provides a real alternative, or complement, to elected power: a distinct and organized public sphere in which the demands of the people can be articulated, developed and negotiated between each other, and finally negotiated with the local or other relevant institutions. However, for participatory democracy to be feasible, attain legitimacy, and reinvigorate democratic practices as a whole, certain conditions are required. First, the structures for participation should be open at their foundations to everyone affected by such decisions – even if only a minority participate. As Wainwright (2005) underlined, 'openness is not just a formality; it needs to be worked at'. While not everyone may directly participate, all stakeholders need to be in contact with someone who participates. In the case of this study, this means that while not every student must be involved in decision-making directly, all students need to be connected to someone who is involved; that is student representatives or leadership. Second, participatory democracy requires mutually agreed and openly negotiated rules to regulate the interaction among and behaviour of stakeholders.

The legitimacy of participatory democracy is also pegged on the autonomy of the participatory process from the State (Wainwright 2005), in our case the top managers/ administrators of the university. This is important because participatory institutions have the goal to eventually share decision-making power with government, to exercise some control over the work of State institutions and, to monitor the implementation of government's decisions. Such relationships, though, are contingent on equality, meaning that participatory institutions need to have their own life and dynamism, and to know that the top governance body respects this. A fourth condition for the legitimation of participatory democracy is that there must be genuine sharing of knowledge (Wainwright 2005). In addition, participation must be anchored on real resources that have significance to the lives of the stakeholders. In other words, the consultation must be a process that gets result and not just another consultation exercise leading nowhere (Wainwright 2005). The final condition enhancing the feasibility and legitimacy of the participatory process is the existence of a governance body that believes in it. Referring specifically to the university education environment, the argument here is that for participatory democracy to thrive the top administrator of the university must believe and have faith in this form of governance.

The main contention upon which the key theories of participatory democracy are based is whether citizens should make decisions for themselves through *direct democracy* or let others make decisions on their behalf through *representative (liberal) democracy* (Schmidt 2002). *Direct democracy* is characterized by direct participation of all the stakeholders in the decision-making processes including policy-making and determination of the actions to be taken by the governing body. While this is a practice that gives an opportunity to each group member

to exercise control of the direction their lives will take, its applicability has been curtailed by the large membership of most groups, rendering group decision-making inefficient and ineffective. Another criticism levelled against this mode of democracy is that the masses lack the time, wisdom and good judgement to make relevant decisions. James Madison, the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century American political theorist and statesman, was among those who developed and presented arguments against direct democracy. The opponents of direct democracy argued that the masses should be represented by governing elite groups of people elected to represent their interests in what is known as *representative or liberal democracy* (Baker 1997).

Liberal democracy is a form of government in which representative democracy operates under the principles of liberalism, i.e. protecting the rights of the individual, which are generally enshrined in law. Bollen (1990) defines liberal democracy as 'the extent to which a political system allows political liberties and democratic rule'. The existence of political liberties is reflected in the extent to which people enjoy freedom to voice their political opinions and to form and participate in political groups (Bollen 1993). Democratic rule, on the other hand, exists if the national government is accountable to the general population and individuals have the right to participate in government either directly or through representation (Bollen 1993). In a liberal democracy, among others, there are attempts to defend and increase civil liberties against the encroachment of governments, institutions and powerful forces in society; restrict or regulate government intervention in political, economic and moral matters affecting the citizenry; and, to increase the scope for religious, political and intellectual freedom of citizens (http://australianpolitics.com/democracy/key-terms/liberal-democracy).

Liberal democracy is hinged on the premise that governing power is not exercised directly by the whole body of stakeholders but by representatives elected by members through a voting system. Thus, legislative decision-makers should acquire political authority by means of a competitive but peaceful and legal struggle for the support of a majority of the electorate. Liberal democracy acknowledges the importance of civil society organizations (Wainwright 2005). This is based on the conventional acceptance that a strong civil society keeps elected representatives on their toes. This occurs through organized interest groups pressing their causes on government, sometimes through political parties, sometimes through independent lobbies. This form of democracy is a salient feature of the contemporary world; it has taken root in the Western democratic political systems, such as the United States, Britain, Germany, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Canada etc., and is being tried in many other countries (Bollen 1993).

We acknowledge that the benefits of both the direct and representative democratic theories can be maximized in organizational governance to enrich

participation experiences of key stakeholders. However, for the purpose of this study the liberal (or representative) democracy theoretical framework was utilized to isolate the governance structures, activities and, processes that enabled university students to participate in decision-making either directly or through representation. The study advances the view that, in principle, public and private universities have embraced the democratization of decision-making, in which shared (or participatory) governance is a common feature. In this scheme of things, students, as major stakeholders in universities, are expected to play a major role in policy-formulation and decision-making in these institutions. However, rather than rely on direct democratic governance in which all students are involved in decision-making (or make decisions for themselves), universities have adopted the liberal democratic model in which students participate in policy-formulation and decision -aking through elected (or in some cases appointed) representatives, who are expected to champion the interests of the total student community. Such representation occurs through structures such as student unions, clubs, committee membership and, voting for student leaders (Baker 1997).