



HERANA

Higher Education and Democracy in Africa:

Democratic citizenship and national legislatures

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THE DEMOCRACY IN AFRICA RESEARCH UNIT (DARU)

Housed within UCT's Centre for Social Science Research (CSSR), DARU's mission is to strengthen empirical social science capacity in Africa by supporting and conducting research on citizens, political institutions and the survival and quality of democracy in Africa.

The **Afrobarometer** is a regular survey of Africans' attitudes toward democracy, civil society and the economy. The Afrobarometer is now conducted in 18 countries in sub-Saharan Africa, and three surveys each have been conducted in 12 countries between 1999 and 2005 giving us the very first longitudinal understanding of the dynamics of African public opinion (see Afrobarometer: www.afrobarometer.org). Along with the Department of Political Science at Michigan State University, the University of Cape Town's Democracy in Africa Research Unit (DARU) will be a *support unit* providing the Afrobarometer network with a range of training, capacity building and analytic services.

The **African Legislatures Project** is a comparative, ongoing study of legislatures across the African continent. Its aim is (1) to assess the extent to which legislatures in Africa are able to represent citizens, make laws and oversee the executive; and (2) to identify the factors that explain why some legislatures do better or worse in fulfilling these key responsibilities. ALP data enables comparison across legislatures and legislators to determine which factors are most important in facilitating or impeding their institutional capacity and performance and thus the stability and quality of democracy in Africa. ALP is located at the Democracy in Africa Research Unit (DARU) at UCT and receives technical assistance from the Center for Legislative Studies at Bridgewater State College in the United States.

AREAS OF RESEARCH ON DEMOCRACY AND HIGHER EDUCATION

DARU will conduct two types of research concerning the connection between higher education and democracy in Africa.

Higher Education and Democratic Citizenship

At least since the 19th century, formal education (including higher education) has held a privileged position in the work of classic democratic theory. An informed and participatory public, sceptical of government, but tolerant and trusting of other citizens has widely been seen as essential to make democracy come to life, and to safeguard it against other contending forms of political regimes (see Diamond, 1997 for a review of this literature).

Yet while education has been a common theme of democratic theorists, it has not played such a central role in empirical work, especially outside of the industrialized West. Modernization theories of economic, political and social development, for example, pay attention to education, but bundle it together with larger set of issues like growth, urbanization, industrialization, secularization, and the creation of a middle class (see Lipset, 1959; Inkeles and Smith, 1974). Indeed, latter day modernization research simply concludes that education is merely a marker of more important influences on pro-democratic values, such as greater material security (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005).

And while political scientists and sociologists have unearthed a great deal of evidence for the linkages between education, participation and democratic values in the West, and increasingly in Eastern Europe, recent reviews of the subject conclude that there is surprisingly little evidence from developing country contexts (Evans and Rose, 2007).

One of the main reasons for this has been lack of good micro level data. This is beginning to change, however, with the development of various cross-national, longitudinal survey projects in the developing world. The most relevant for our purposes is the Afrobarometer. In the first book length analysis of this data, conducted by Bratton, Mattes & Gyimah-Boadi (2005), the authors demonstrate that formal education (and an associated range of cognitive skills) are essential components of popular *demand* for democracy. As important as this finding is, it merely scratches the surface and begs a range of subsequent questions.

Thus, we will conduct a fuller exploitation of existing Afrobarometer data (and other survey where appropriate and available, for example, the African portion of the World Values Survey) to trace out a more complete description and explanation of the role of education in African attitudes to democracy.

First, we propose to begin by conducting a thorough review and critique of existing literature, tracking arguments and theories about the connection of education, and higher education, with democracy, as well as of actual micro and macro level evidence to the existence of these connections.

Second, we would then begin a sustained empirical analysis of the impact of formal education in general, and higher education in particular on a range of important public attitudes by using existing primarily Afrobarometer data, and where appropriate World Value Study data. We will investigate the linkages between education and (1) public *demand* for democracy (the extent to which people prefer democracy and reject non democratic alternatives), (2) the perceived *supply* of democracy (the extent to which people think their country is democratic and are satisfied with the current state of democracy), (3) *participation* (the extent to which people voter, contact officials, or meet with other citizens about public issues), (4) their *evaluations of government* (the extent to which people are cynical, sceptical or place blind trust in their leaders and institutions), and (4) the *basic political values* (the extent to which they see themselves as agents, demand equality and rights, and are willing to call their leader to account).

Across these basic lines of analysis, we will focus on a range of key questions. (1) Does formal education have an independent impact on these attitudes, net all the other usual demographic indicators (e.g. age, gender, socio-economic status, health status and class)? (2) If it does, to what extent can we identify a distinct impact of higher education? (3) To what extent are any identifiable impacts due to the kinds of cognitive skills imparted by higher education, versus the content of the curriculum? (4) To what extent to these impacts differ by national higher education systems? (5) Do the impacts of formal education and higher education differ by various types of public attitudes, and if so why?

Third, we will carry out a macro-level analysis to determine whether there is country level evidence of these linkages. For instance, net the effects of other developmental factors (wealth, growth, infrastructure etc...), is there any evidence that the stability and quality of democracy is associated with the overall number of universities and university graduates in society? Is there some critical mass of higher levels of human capital which are necessary to sustain democracy, if only by producing enough

skilled people to serve in government bureaucracies, or by performing research for government, or finally, by serving as a platform for critical monitoring and evaluation of government performance?

Higher Education and National Legislative Institutions

A second possible link between higher education and democracy may run via the ability of national university systems to supply the human capital to run the institutions of democracy. While these institutions could include a wide range of law enforcement and service delivery agencies, our interest lies in the key institutions of horizontal accountability, particularly the national legislature and its staff. Recent research on African legislatures suggests that a key constituency of democratic reform lies in cohorts of younger legislators with university educations (Barkan, 2007).

In order to investigate this linkage, we will use the researchers and data collection instruments of the African Legislatures Project network across 18 sub Saharan countries (the same ones covered by Afrobarometer) which includes desk top research of publicly available data (Constitutions, Standing Orders, relevant legislation, country level data bases), observational research of legislative proceeding and behaviour, and interviews of random samples of legislators. We will collect appropriate data and then analyze it to answer a range of relevant questions. (1) To what extent are political parties able to bring university graduates into the legislature as MPs? (2) To what extent is the legislature able to recruit highly trained specialists to work as administrative and research staff? (3) How can national university systems better support national parliaments? (4) What are MPs views of the importance of higher education? (5) What have national legislatures actually done with respect to higher education in terms of law making, oversight, and representation?