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THE ORIGINS OF STUDENT DISTURBANCES: THE KENYAN CASE

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By

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This paper presents a theoretical and empirical study of the student disturbances which increasingly seem to recur at all levels of the Kenyan educational system. Occurrences at the school place are not viewed as isolated incidents but rather as social phenomena which may help to explain the disturbances of the whole Kenyan society. In this respect, the paper first looks at the disturbances as a mirror of the society. The paper then looks at student disturbances as a 'mirror' of international phenomena in order to show that contemporary youth protest is not a peculiarly Kenyan phenomenon. It then presents a cross-section of 1980 student protests in different institutions of learning so as to highlight some of the issues which seem to lead to school strikes, or student disturbances to be dubbed in Kenya. The paper presents a theoretical framework as well as a methodology for the conduct of the study.

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THE ORIGINS OF STUDENT DISTURBANCES: THE KENYAN CASE

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John A. Nkinyangi

ABSTRACT

This paper presents a rationale and a methodology for the study of the student disturbances which increasingly seem to recur at all levels of the Kenyan educational system. Occurrences at the school place are not viewed as isolated incidents but rather as social phenomena which may help us to understand the social dynamics of the whole Kenyan society. In this regard, schools are treated as a mirror of the society. The paper first looks at student disturbances as a 'malaise' of international proportions in order to show that contemporary youth protest is not a peculiarly Kenyan phenomenon. It then presents a cross-section of 1980 student protests in different institutions of learning so as to highlight some of the issues which seem to lead to school strikes, as student disturbances have come to be dubbed in Kenya. Thereafter, the paper presents a theoretical framework as well as a methodology for the conduct of the study.

THE ORIGINS OF STUDENT DISTURBANCES: THE KENYAN CASE

Accustomed to a tradition which places schooling within the more privileged spheres of society and unaware of the history of academic turmoil and political activism in other lands, Kenyans are surprised, shocked and even angered by the eruption of protest in their institutions of learning. These concerns become even more pronounced since, except for some occasional aberrations, the student community is considered more or less passive and apolitical. There is then a heightened concern at all levels of the political system about the real cause of student disturbances and calls to amount a thorough probe into the origins of this educational problem.<sup>1</sup> This paper is a response to this challenge.

Our contribution is in the way of a research proposal to conduct an in-depth study into the origins of the student disturbances that have plagued different levels of education in Kenya in the last few years. By student disturbances we mean any kind of student protests which may include a mild form of defiance like refusing to sing in the chapel and not answering teachers' greetings to outright riot and violence involving the destruction of school property and/or an attack on the school personnel. The paper first looks at student disturbances as a 'malaise' of international proportions in order to show that contemporary youth protest is not a peculiarly Kenyan phenomenon. We then present a cross-section of 1980 student protests in different institutions of learning so as to highlight some of the issues which seem to lead to school strikes, as student disturbances have come to be dubbed in Kenya. Thereafter, we present a research methodology to conduct an in-depth study into the origins of student disturbances in the country.

1. A 'Malaise' of International Proportions:

Student rebellions against established authority have occurred in practically every country with significant student communities.<sup>2</sup> In fact, with the development of schooling as one of the most dynamic sectors of the modern capitalist enterprise, student protests of one kind or another seem to have become part and parcel of the "knowledge industry". Since the 1960's when major student disturbances erupted in a number of advanced capitalist societies, student revolt has gained international currency.

In France, for example, massive student demonstrations shook the foundations, of the Fifth Republic. They pressured organized labour into calling a general strike. They also forced the dissolution of the National Assembly and the holding of general elections. In fact, students were largely responsible for the subsequent fall of General Charles de Gaulle's government. The student uprising in France brought about no lasting social change, however. The old ills, such as overcrowded classrooms and miserable living conditions in the universities prevail, and to date, continue to plague life in the country's institutions of higher learning.

In Italy, students struck and continue to strike against an archaic system of higher education and to demand reforms and a voice in university administration. In Spain, students fought valiantly against the Fascist regime of Generalissimo Francisco Franco while in neighbouring Portugal they carried out an uncompromising struggle against unpopular colonial wars in Portuguese Guinea, Angola and Mozambique.

In the United States, students held violent demonstrations against the war in Indo-China and protested against social conditions at home. In many developing countries, student disturbances, and the general unrest and instability accompanying them, were directly responsible for the fall of many regimes. Some old and recent examples: Cuba, Turkey, South Korea, South Vietnam, Indonesia, Bolivia, Venezuela, Ethiopia, Liberia, Ghana.

After the tempest of the 1960's, there was a general lull in student activism in most Western campuses during the 1970's. In fact, if "To the Barricades!" was the mobilization cry of the 1960's, the unspoken battle (or is it survival?) slogan of the 1970's was to be heard and seen in a general student apathy and retrenchment from things political. In the developing countries, however, students' riots, strikes, boycotts, demonstrations and other forms of disturbances have continued unabated. In the last two or three years, for example, there have been recurrent violent student uprisings in different parts of the African continent.<sup>3</sup>

In 1978, for example, students at Ghana's University of Science and Technology in Kumasi gathered at a busy traffic intersection near the university and hurled missiles at passing motorists and other passers-by, according to the police, "for no apparent reason". At about the

same time, police were dispatched to the Accra campus of the University of Ghana after students there had reportedly set off three powerful bomb explosions. Police said that students were rioting for "no apparent reason other than ill-conceived motives". Meanwhile, at the University of Cape Coast, students clashed with the police at a demonstration at which they sang war songs and carried placards protesting against living conditions at the university.

In Nigeria, the government ordered the closure of all colleges of technology following the decision by students to boycott classes and leave college premises in protest against the government's action introducing a single-tier system of technical education. In explaining its decision, the government argued that the students' action was not only "unjustified" but also constituted "an unwarranted challenge to authority". Elsewhere in Nigeria, student disturbances also continued to plague educational provision. At Ahmadu Bello University in the northern part of the country, people were reportedly killed following a clash between students and the combined forces of the army and the police. At about the same time, the shooting of one student by police at Lagos University led to sympathy strikes and demonstrations at Bayero University and at other campuses at Benin and Ibadan.

In Tanzania, the government ordered the immediate dismissal of at least 350 students at the University of Dar es Salaam, the Water Development Institute and the Ardhi (Land) Institute for taking part in a protest demonstration. The students had protested against recruitment into the national service and against newly announced privileges for Members of Parliament, Cabinet Ministers and Chama Cha Mapinduzi functionaries. In the Malagasy Republic, there were serious mob riots lasting for two days as a result of student demonstrations to protest the "lowering of standards in secondary schools". It seems that students first started the disturbances and then the masses took over to air their own grievances. Meanwhile, in the Ivory Coast, the government accused "extremists" (meaning students) of plotting to create a blood bath in the country (meaning revolution) as a justification, said Press commentaries, for stepped up reprisals against Ivorian students both in the country and in France.

In the then Central African Empire, hundreds of students were killed by police during riots to protest against former Emperor Bokassa's decree requiring them to buy and wear special uniforms. In Liberia, many of those killed in the Monrovia "rice riots" of Easter 1979 were in fact students. The Liberian government accused students of "chanting (on the streets) not always with a clear idea of what they were protesting about" (sic). President Tolbert ordered the closure of the University of Liberia which he said was being used as a "base for subversive ideas and ideologies".

In 1980, a primary school strike in one of Senegal's regions over alleged misconduct and embezzlement of school funds by a school head erupted in violence after secondary school and university students joined the protest in sympathy. In Mali, security forces wounded 10 students when they opened fire during secondary school riots. Students were protesting against the dissolution of their students union by the government. They were also demanding what they called the "immortalization" of one of their comrades who was killed/died while in police custody.

As in other countries, school campuses in Kenya have become like dormant volcanoes likely to erupt at any time. In 1980, for example, there was at least one reported strike each day somewhere in the primary schools, secondary schools, institutes of technology and seminaries of Kenya, not to mention the University of Nairobi and its constituent Kenyatta University College.<sup>4</sup> To undertake a survey of some of the apparent sources of some of these disturbances during 1980 alone is like to recite an endless litany of ills. In our opinion, however, such an overview is a useful starting point for a serious inquiry into what may be the malaise afflicting the country's institutions of learning.

II. 1980 Student Disturbances in Kenya: A Litany of Ills and a Predictable Prognosis?

Students at Lari Secondary School in Kiambu district set their school ablaze and stoned anyone in sight. Damage to school property was estimated at more than KShs. 150,000. The destructive riot was sparked off by a girl who refused to obey instructions of her religious studies teacher. When the teacher reprimanded the girl, the whole class shouted down the teacher. The girl who spurred the pandemonium had reportedly been writing two-to-three words to a line in her exercise book. At Mary Leakey Girls Secondary School, also in Kiambu district, students staged a riot setting a school library and several classrooms ablaze. The damage was estimated at more than KShs. 3.5 million.\*\*\* The disturbances occurred after some students were expelled from school for reportedly refusing to answer "morning greetings" from their deputy headmistress. The students' angered non-response to greetings followed claims by students that they had been insulted by the school's cateress.

In Bungoma district, students at Teremi Secondary School set the headmaster's house ablaze and destroyed other school property all worth more than KShs. 220,000. The headmaster claimed that he did not know the motive behind the students' action. Meanwhile, at St. Andrew's High School in Kisumu district students damaged school property worth more than KShs. 37,000. The students were protesting the punishment of some of their colleagues for arriving late at school reportedly "drunk and disorderly".

Students at Kisumu Day Secondary School were sent home after they had held a strike to complain that they were behind the syllabus in a number of subjects as a result of a shortage of qualified teachers in their school. They also complained against a tyrannical rule by prefects and demanded the removal of their headmaster. The headmaster dismissed the reasons behind the strike as trivial. For readmission to the school, students had to apologize to the headmaster and accept to be caned before their parentss. They had also to confess "why they had gone on strike" (sic).

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\*\*\* In an unexplained Press statement, the Minister for Higher Education exonerated the students from blame for the fire.



At Maralal Secondary School in Samburu district, students were also expelled from school after holding a protest demonstration over a shortage of teachers in their school. The headmaster and the District Education Officer claimed that the school was well staffed and dismissed their complaints as "not genuine". Students at the Kirinyaga Technical Institute in Kirinyaga district were met by the same fate after they had held a demonstration demanding the removal of their principal and a number of other academic members of staff. They argued that the principal was not technically qualified to run the institute and that some members of staff were "academic rejects". Moreover, they complained that due to a shortage of certain teaching materials, their training had been interrupted for at least two weeks.

In Nairobi, students at Evelyn College of Design boycotted classes demanding to be addressed by their principal. They claimed that the college was filthy and did not have enough teachers or training facilities despite the fact that they paid a high tuition of KShs. 3,000 per term. The principal denied that she had refused to meet with the students. She said that it was very unfortunate for students to boycott classes "without any genuine reasons" (sic).

At Miwani Secondary School in Kisumu district students staged a strike complaining about "harsh conditions" at the school, a poor diet and insufficient food and lack of proper sanitation in the institution. Local newspapers reported that after the strike action "the school looked like the scene of a battle". Meanwhile, at Keneloi Secondary School in Nandi district, students destroyed school property and overturned their headmaster's car. They visited the house of the school accounts clerk to "give him a piece of their mind" but on not finding him they strangled his chicken instead. A councillor from the local county council blamed the disturbance on "a few lazy students from well-to-do families". The cause of the disturbance was not reported, however.

Students at Kiambu High School in Kiambu district were expelled from school after they had staged a demonstration to protest that their diet had been changed without their consent. They boycotted a breakfast of porridge demanding one of eggs, tea, bread and fruits. Meanwhile, at

the Kiambu Institute of Technology, students were dismissed from the institute after they had refused to eat yellow maize meal. After the principal and the local District Commissioner had failed to convince the students that there was a general shortage of white maize meal in the country and the students had to be content with the imported yellow maize meal, police had to be called in to disperse students. Elsewhere, at Tiva Secondary School in Kitui district, a Resident Magistrate had to order the caning of students after they had refused to eat yellow maize meal.

At St. Paul's Theological College in Kiambu district, students were sent home after a three day boycott of classes to protest against the suspension of a fellow student on the accusations of alleged "rudeness, arrogance and for reporting to college late". In Laikipia district, students at Nanyuki Secondary School were expelled from the school after they had demanded that they be allowed to wear long trousers in the evening. In Nyeri district, students at the Kimathi Institute of Technology boycotted classes and were later expelled for holding a demonstration to assert their "rights to be free from supervision by night watchmen". The students said that they had a right to receive and entertain visitors of either sex in their rooms at any time. They argued that they were mature people and demanded to be treated as adults.

At Loreto Girls Secondary School in Kiambu district, students damaged school property and threw stones at the nuns who run the institution. The girls were incensed at the remarks of the headmistress (a nun) who had castigated them for "having no manners" when they refused to stand up for her when she entered a classroom. Meanwhile, at Kiburia Girls High School in Kirinyaga district, students were expelled after they had staged a protest against a rule requiring them to wear brassiers. The school administration considered it "indecent" and "immoral" for girls not to wear brassiers.

At Kenyatta University College, more than 500 second year students barricaded their principal and some members of the administration in their offices for nearly the whole day in a bid to force their demands. The students were demanding higher students' allowances and improvement in the "teaching practice" that they undertake as part of their training programme. Three weeks later, students at the University of Nairobi

went on a rampage, smashing windows and breaking plates and cups at the University's Central Catering Unit. The action forced the closure of the university for nearly a month.

The disturbances at the University of Nairobi were a protest against poor catering services and food that students claimed was "unfit for human consumption". The students also complained that the utensils used at the catering unit were "from the 19th Century". However, students' spokespersons claimed that the main reason underlying those disturbances was the lack of a representative student body to discuss student welfare since the government dissolved the Nairobi University Students Organization in October 1979.

Sometime later, President Moi told a political rally in Kiambu that he was aware of a group at the campus calling itself the "Magnificent Five" that was being used as puppets to disrupt peace at the university. Subsequently, the President warned that secondary school students who were found to have participated in strikes and riots might not be admitted to the university.

### III. Theoretical Framework and Research Methodology:

Since the 1960's, extensive literature has sprouted on student activism.<sup>5</sup> Most of this work has been concerned with the sociological and psychological analyses of contemporary student protest and is based on the experience of the industrialized countries. While much of this writing is of excellent quality especially in explaining student motivation, for rather obvious reasons, its findings are not easily generalizable to developing countries. Moreover, many of the accounts are descriptive and not analytical. A few studies that exist on the experience of developing countries do not treat the problem in depth. Two studies that have been conducted in the East African region suffer from a weak theoretical framework and an inadequate research methodology. Both John Anderson's study in Uganda and Kabiru Kinyanjui's study in Kenya do not establish adequate linkages between school and society within a theoretical framework which tries to explain the phenomenon of school strikes.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, in the context of contemporary experience, the two studies are a little dated.

In Kenya, scholars seem to have ignored student activism as a field of serious study despite many calls to do so.<sup>7</sup> While research has been undertaken into various aspects of the educational system,<sup>8</sup> research has not yet begun to look at student culture as a social phenomenon. What's more, students are never seen as a "force of change" except of course within the framework of established authority .... 'the youth are the future leaders of the country' syndrome. But as DeConde<sup>9</sup> has said, students have always functioned as barometers of deep-seated unrest and social change. In fact, where students have rebelled against the prevailing social order, they have gone on to become agents of intellectual and social ferment. Those who **rejected** their traditional elitist cultural heritage (some examples: Marx, Lenin, Trotsky, Mao, Castro, Che Guevara, ...) went on to supply the revolutionary cadres and the leadership that later overthrew or tried to overthrow the old order.

The present effort is an attempt to formulate a theoretical framework as well as a research methodology to study student disturbances within an overall context of the Kenyan society. In this regard, we see schools as a mirror of society and do not treat occurrences and circumstances at the school place as isolated incidents but rather as social phenomena which may help us to understand the social dynamics of the whole society. This is particularly important especially in underscoring the historical process through which social change takes place.

DeConde<sup>10</sup> says that the records of medieval universities are filled with accounts of clashes between students and professors on the one hand and the townsfolk on the other. He argues that this animosity often had deep underlying causes, such as differences over how much freedom students and faculty had from local law, or whether town or university authorities had jurisdiction over students' activities outside the classroom. Students generally had a privileged status that gave them freedoms and prerogatives ordinary people were denied. Similarities in background, outlook and environment often built up a sense of community among students that placed a wall of antipathy between them and the older non-student generation. Even their sense of alienation from their families and society set them off as a unique culture group. The townsfolk resented their privileged, elite status; trivial incidents frequently

brought this feeling to a boiling point and violence soon followed.

If the history of Western Europe is anything to go by, we learn that as these countries entered the era of mass education and universities opened their doors to the sons and daughters of shopkeepers and workers, students saw their elitist status eroded. They also lost power as individuals. To regain their identity, many turned to a deeper, more broadly organized activism which challenged established policies and traditions. What one really sees in historical terms is a class struggle; the privileged classes fighting to preserve their privileges and prerogatives and the underprivileged to erode them and to capture a better deal for themselves. Schooling just becomes one of the arenas in which these struggles are waged. The parallel with what has happened in the developing countries with the 'democratization' of schooling especially after colonization is quite close. As Munro<sup>11</sup> has said for Kenya:

The rise of educated Africans within a reformed system of local government during the inter-war period both grew out and further reinforced African desires for access to formal education. In most parts of the highlands, including areas where education had hitherto been little prized, Africans became increasingly aware that education held a key to understanding, using, and possibly even controlling the political and economic systems introduced under colonial aegis. The success of the favoured few who, by accident or design, had been the first to obtain schooling, to gain entry to the better paid or most esteemed occupations, and to acquire familiarity with new institutions and technology, resulted in greater numbers taking to education.

The awareness that Munro talks about did not come about automatically but was the result of many years of struggle against colonial oppression and against a racially segregated educational system that favoured Europeans and Asians. After independence, school enrolments rose considerably. Now, not only did the social status of educated people fall considerably (as manifested by ever rising numbers of 'educated' unemployed) but also the quality of schooling in the schools catering for the peasants and workers. In an increasingly socially stratified society, the distribution of material and pedagogical resources to schools was subject to determination by social class interests as in other areas of production in the society. But unlike the students of contemporary Western Europe and North America, student unrest in Kenya does not seem to stem from a desire for academic power or involvement

into a deeper, more broadly organized activism which tries to challenge established policies and traditions.

Students appear apolitical. There seems to be no real political or ideological differences among students, faculty and the administration of the university or other institutions of learning. When students engage in political deliberations they do not discuss issues but personalities. When they rebel, they do so for immediate practical reasons: food and conditions in the dorms, student allowances, lack of this or that facility, shortage of teachers,.... Boisterous and mischievous, just like their European counterparts in the medieval times and in the 19th Century, they riot in the old tradition of university or school versus the townsfolk. They insult passers-by, stop cars, stone anyone in sight ... Their riots are spontaneous and are not part of any well organized student movement for some articulated wider social goals.

At this historical conjuncture, however, student disturbances in Kenya may be seen as a general malaise that afflicts the whole Kenyan society. That much of the contemporary discontent in the Kenyan schools is centred on such issues as poor food and bad learning conditions and the establishment's refusal to accept even the validity of some of the grievances, is indicative of the class nature of the struggle that is being waged at the school place. This is the case since the struggles seem to be taking place in institutions catering for the lower social classes (i.e. pre-university). At the university, the situation is a little more complex and will be looked at a little more closely further below.

In pre-university institutions, it seems to us that the authorities' refusal to even acknowledge student grievances do exist is grounded in good political consciousness for their class interest. Acceptance of the validity of students' grievances might lead to the next logical conclusion ... the alleviation of those ills. But then this would mean smashing the structured educational system and the hierarchical society upon which it is based. Probably, the spokespersons of the established order realize this and instead of squarely facing the issues which plague Kenyan schools, resort to deviationist tactics: 'blaming the victim' as Kabiru Kinyanjui has correctly stated, relegating blame on 'politicians who try to confuse students', 'malcontents' and even 'foreign ideologies'. Often, they will dismiss the grievances as downright "silly", "not genuine", or just "trivial".

Analysis of student disturbances in Kenya has therefore to be carried out within a wider context of the Kenyan society and the social dynamics which are shaping it at the present time. Among these should be a rigorous investigation of the social class structure which is evolving, how it is observable even at the school place and how the school has rapidly become another arena of the expression of the class struggle.

This should first entail a careful analysis of the social class composition of schools and how the class nature of the school influences allocation of material and pedagogical resources to it. Subsequently, analysis should explore how these processes are understood by students and how they are perceived as influencing their life chances. Within this framework, we should be able to study the effects of unequal distribution of educational resources as some of the germs leading to disturbances in pre-university institutions of learning.

The nature and the manner in which student discontent is expressed in pre-university institutions seem to indicate that students do not generally understand the historical and contemporary social arrangements which underlie the plight in their schools. Hence, in the schools catering for the lower social classes, students complain about "harsh conditions" or about a shortage of teachers and school materials in their particular school without appreciating that this is a generalized malaise afflicting the schools catering for their class. Yet, at another level, students, even those from the lower social classes, are very privileged people in the present historical conjuncture of the Kenyan state. The country spends nearly a third of its annual budget in educational provision. This is to the detriment of the provision of other social amenities such as health facilities, clean water, better communications, etc. While students are generally assured of at least three meals a day, their parents (i.e. those of the lower social background) are not even assured of one decent meal a day.<sup>12</sup> At a time when the country was faced with a general food shortage in 1980 and had to import maize meal, one was therefore quite astounded to hear of students going on strike because they didn't like yellow maize meal.

One was also tempted to think that maybe students were really ignorant about the food situation in the country. But then how is this possible? Didn't they read newspapers or were they skeptical of their accounts? Or did they simply feel that they are above common folks and have to receive special attention even at times of national shortages? A study of student disturbances in Kenya therefore also calls for an analysis of students' level of social and political consciousness.

At the university, the incidence of student disturbances may in fact be an expression of very deeply rooted alienation among the faculty and students. We will briefly trace some theoretical aspects that relate to this alienation and how it is concerned with our research questions. Part of the political rhetoric that accompanies university education in developing countries is that in order to justify its existence, the university should address itself to the fundamental issues which face the nation. In Kenya, as in many other developing countries, there is much variance between the theory and practice. Despite the fact that the majority of students are born, raised and educated in rural areas, after being processed through the university they stay on to work in the urban areas. That students study in the town and later remain to work there means that the bulk of the "development experience", as conveyed in the classroom, is rarified, or that much 'removed from reality'. This in effect means that the university is producing "intellectuals en chambre". This may explain university students' concern with matters that pertain to their welfare instead of broad issues that affect the Kenyan society. A number of other social conditions may be at the root of a climate which encourages student disturbances at the university.

The majority of students are from peasant background and may therefore not have had the necessary social guidance for adjustment to town life. Moreover, prior conditions from a generally deprived socio-economic background ---- lack of supplementary books and other reading materials, reading space, and maybe even encouragement to read out of the textbook-context --- may explain the observable lack of enthusiasm with books unless the examination is around the corner. Sense of boredom ---- or the 'civil-service' notion that the day begins at 8.15 AM and ends at 4.30 PM ----- that is notable among many university students may be the



result of a lack of experience in 'managing time'. This problem may possibly be accentuated by individuals as well as the university's lack of funds for socio-cultural activities.<sup>13</sup> Hence, no wonder that one often reads in the student newspaper, The Anvil, "Beer Flows with Boom". Boom is the code-name for students allowances. Drunken brawls are often the end result of certain disturbances.<sup>14</sup>

Moreover, while lacking these prior advantages and even though being products of a repressive secondary school education that gave them little independence or preparation for it, students arrive at the university where, presto, they are supposed to digest their 'new found freedom' and still act like stiff, dignified gentlemen. In addition, there are a number of very serious contradictions. On the one hand, the Kenyan society stands on the stilts of a meritocratic ideology while on the other it consistently blames university students for absorbing and acting out according to the tenets of this incipient philosophy. But if university students do in fact accept that they are above the common person, it is the result of the social attributes of a class society. But it is also the result of a kind of false consciousness which derives directly from the drought and sterility of university life. The working conditions of faculty and other staff contributes directly to the alienation of students. A generalized situation of intellectual flax and estrangement of the university from the society contributes to it. Political witch-hunting and stepped up accusations against faculty for harbouring "foreign ideas" and "preaching foreign ideologies" are undoubtedly part of this estrangement process.

Analysis of the origins of student disturbances at the university has therefore to take into consideration the particularity and specificity of educational provision at the university and the overall societal context within which it takes place.

At the same time, it needs to be recognized that although most of the student protests in Kenya are presently not expressed as coherent political struggles, a lot of disturbances seem to be an expression of a power struggle between students and the established authority as well as an attack against outmoded ways of school behaviour and social

etiquette. Let us consider several scenerios from Kenyan schools:-

1. Students demand a meeting with their school head/principal, etc., to discuss some outstanding grievances. The administration perceives this as a challenge to its authority and refuses to have a meeting with students. Students stage a riot or boycott classes. Police are called in and the institution is closed. After sometime, students are asked to reapply and in the process of readmission the bad guys are weeded out.
2. Students refuse to answer teachers' morning greetings or to stand up when a teacher enters a classroom. They are accused of being "mannerless". They object strongly and the same process as in Scene One repeats itself.
3. Some girls think it is no business of school teachers or of good morals or decency that they wear brassiers. ~~There~~ is no concurrence in views and the students are the losers in the protest than ensues.

Probable despair or impatience with the establishment's as well as the school administration's pace of effecting reforms may have led students to believe that only dire force can shake them out of their buddha-like silence. Use of force could also be a spontaneous response to deeply-rooted frustrations and feelings of powerlessness. Research needs to find out at what stage dialogue or possibilities for dialogue cease(s) and students decide to engage in violence or destruction of property. Hence, we need to study the chrcnology and different stages of school strikes and the kind of issues which lead to school disturbances.

Analysis of student revolts in other countries has shown that the activists themselves are few although their goals appeal to a broad cross-section of students. In the case of Kenya, we need answers to a number of rather important questions that seem to be pertinent to the local scene: What is the social and political motivation behind apparent student solidarity during school strikes or when some students are singled out for expulsion or disciplining? Who ~~are~~ the leaders of school revolts? What is their social background? What are their social aspirations and expectations and what is their general political

orientation? While we do not want to provide a dossier to make it possible for the forces of law and order to muscle objective social dissent, we also recognize the importance of providing some useful information on youth cultures, the forces which propel youth protests and how these are related to the general dynamics which hinder or foster social change.

How will this research project be actualized? Through the issues we have raised and the questions we have asked, it is hoped that we have given a clear indication as to our theoretical framework and an idea as to some of the data that will be gathered. And how will the study be operationalized? The study will sample from the reported list of school strikes during school year 1980 for the schools to be studied. These schools will be selected in such a way as to represent the historical stratification of schools along social class lines, sex, rural/urban status, regional location, and other appropriate criteria of representativeness. Within the schools, a questionnaire will be administered to a representative number of students who were at the institution during a disturbance during school year 1980. These will be chosen on a random basis.

The students' questionnaire will have items on students' social background, previous education, aspirations and expectations for the future and perceptions about the educational system ---- education content and its suitability, systematic differentiations among schools, etc. Appropriate questionnaire items will also be developed to gauge students' attitudes about strikes as well as about the nature of students' grievances, knowledge about similar problems in other schools, districts, etc., and the kind of scenario which leads to a school disturbance. In as far as possible, information gathered by questionnaire will be supplemented through unstructured in-depth interviews with students, teachers and school administrators. An effort will be made to make contact with students' leaders. Much use will also be made of participant observation as well as a thorough study of case material from previous student disturbances.

For control purposes, a second questionnaire will be distributed to school teachers in the schools where the strikes took place as well as to teachers in matched-up schools where strikes did not take place. This questionnaire will try and gather information about schools material and pedagogical resources as well as its teachers' attitudes regarding school disturbances and their perceptions of the circumstances which lead to them. As before, the information gathered through this research instrument will be supplemented by data through in-depth unstructured interviews as well as participant observation. A great effort will be made to establish a rapport with students and school administrations as a way of understanding the agenda and the chronology of school strikes as perceived from both ends. Data on schools' material and pedagogical resources will be supplemented with information from official records.

A third questionnaire will be circulated to Ministry of Education officials and certain officials in government who have aired strong views about school strikes. These subjects will be chosen from reported cases. The questionnaire will have appropriate items to gauge attitudes and these officials' understanding of the forces which lead to student disturbances.

All the three questionnaires will be self-administered. It is hoped that they will have been pre-tested before administration for validation purposes.

Regular computer statistical packages such as SPSS will be used for analysis of data. This will be done rigorously in such a way as to combine the advantages of social science methods with a dynamic analysis of the school within the Kenyan society along the theoretical framework which has been outlined.

## NOTES:

1. See for example, the Daily Nation (Nairobi) editorial entitled "Riots in Schools Should be Probed", February 21, 1980.
2. For a review, see Philip G. Altbach, A Select Bibliography on Students, Politics, and Higher Education (Revised Edition) (St. Louis, Mo.: United Ministries in Higher Education and Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, Center for International Affairs, 1970). For a review in historical perspective, see Alexander DeConde (ed.), Student Activism: Town and Gown in Historical Perspective (New York: Scribner's & Sons, 1971).
3. Citations for these are from Africa Diary based on current newspaper accounts of those countries.
4. Information is from personal clippings from newspapers and from the library files of the local newspapers.
5. Some examples: Richard E. Peterson and John A. Bilorusky, May 1970: The Campus Aftermath of Cambodia and Kent State (New York: The Carnegie Foundation, 1971); Michael Miller and Susan Gilmore (eds.), Revolution at Berkeley (New York: Dell, 1965); John Searle, The Campus War: A Sympathetic Look at the University in Agony (Middlesex, England: Penguin, 1972); Donald Emmerson (ed.), Students and Politics in Developing Nations (New York: Praeger, 1968).
6. J.W. Anderson, "A Study of ~~disciplinary attitudes of~~ Boarding and Day Students in Some Ugandan Secondary Schools", unpublished M.Ed. thesis, Makerere University, 1971, and "School Strikes in Uganda", East Africa Journal, June 1972: 23 - 27; Kabiru Kinyanjui, "Secondary School Strikes: The Art of Blaming the Victim", Institute for Development Studies, Discussion Paper No. 243, November 1976. Kinyanjui's paper uses 1974 school data.
7. See Note 1. This is only one such call from the intellectuals of the establishment.
8. See for example, David Court, "An Inventory of Research on Education in Kenya" (University of Nairobi: Institute for Development Studies, Discussion Paper No. 108, 1971).
9. DeConde, op. cit., p. 4.
10. DeConde, Ibid.
11. J. Forbes Munro, Colonial Rule and the Kamba: Social Change in the Kenyan Highlands 1889 - 1939 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), p. 147.
12. A recent study by the Central Bureau of Statistics estimates that undernourishment is a serious problem in Kenya and that up to 30% of the Kenyan population may not be having enough to eat. Central Bureau of Statistics, Report of the Nutrition Survey 1978 - 1979 (Nairobi, 1980).

13. At a recent University Convocation, the Vice-Chancellor of the University had to appeal to the gathering to help raise money to buy the university's rugby team pairs of boots.
  14. One such recent example at the Kabete campus of the University of Nairobi resulted in much broken cutlery and other property damage.
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