

New book on student politics in Africa

In mid-June 2016, 'Student Politics in Africa: Representation and Activism', edited by Thierry M Luescher, Manja Klemencic, and James Otieno Jowi, was launched. The book has brought together the work and questions of eighteen scholars who are concerned with the issues of higher-education development, governance and student politics in Africa.



Taabo Mugurre, Sam Masingi, and Dr Thierry Luescher at the launch of the book, Student Politics in Africa: Representation and Activism

Photo: Hatsu Mphatsoe

Dr Luescher is an assistant director in the Directorate of Institutional Research and Academic Planning (DIRAP) on the UFS Bloemfontein Campus.

The book focuses on the generation of new knowledge about student politics in Africa. Dr Luescher explained that the inspiration behind the book was based on the importance of how the voice of students is represented in higher education. Steady increase has been seen over the decades across Africa of students being involved in the decision-making structures of universities.

Dr Luescher says, “#FeesMustFall is an example of student activism in response to the problem where student leaders have not been heard about student funding, especially assistance to poor and middle income students. The book shows that the

South African student movement is not unique, but actually part of a continent-wide – indeed a global – resurgence of student opposition against neo-liberal policies in higher education.”

Another question raised focused on ensuring a healthy relationship between student activism and political parties. It was explained as being a different process across different African countries. “While both go hand-in-hand, it is important to ensure that there is a regulation between the two so that student leaders do not become captive to parties and are indebted to them,” said Dr Luescher.

The book will serve as a great way for both student activists and the structures that exist in institutions to gain an understanding of each’s perspective and how to have a more amicable relationship.

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