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Our university : ethnicity, higher education and the quest for state legitimacy in Kenia

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Abstract

In East Africa, no other country has witnessed as great a surge in university institutions as Kenya. The intent of this paper is to explore the persistence of the ethnic configurations in the surge of higher education in Kenya, within the context of the country's history. Outlining the major flashpoints in the country's history will be significant in contextualizing the contemporary ethno-configurations of university developments. The thesis of the article is that the current development of universities along tribal (In this article, the terms ethnic and tribe are used interchangeably to denote the feelings of belonging based on identifiable attributes including kinship, commensality, and a common cult.) lines, though rationalized on a desire to meet increased demand and to provide high level manpower has historical antecedents, and is informed by the state's quest for political legitimacy. By tolerating ? albeit latently ? ethnic patterns to inform university development, the state, which has suffered a legitimacy crisis since independence, opens an avenue to justify its raison d'être and sustain mass loyalty. Therefore, despite repeated calls to enact policies and strategies that would stem the tide of mushrooming universities along ethnic lines, the state has only demonstrated a minimal political will

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to act. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)