

OF 165 architects currently registered to operate in Kenya, only 11 are Kenya Africans, the Registrar of the Board of Architects and Quantity Surveyors, Mr. Ngure Kairu, told me.

And this figure excludes an indeterminate number of unregistered foreign "junior" architects who may be working within private firms or on temporary work permits within the country. Only one other Kenya African who is eligible for registration has not yet registered.

These revelations come at a time when Nairobi University architectural students' grievances against the alleged "mass failures" in their examination led, with other problems, to the recent unrest on the campus.

Other complaints from students that there was "a foreign conspiracy to keep Africans out of the architectural profession," have been the cause of the unrest which led to the closure of the university, and the institution of an inquiry into the whole affair.

The Registrar of Architects' records show that, of the 165 registered architects, 100 are holders of British citizenship, 15 Danish, seven American, four Italian, three Norwegian plus two each of Austrian, Cypriot (temporarily registered), West German, and Israeli citizenships, and one each of Canadian, Indian, Iraqi, Iranian, Yugoslav and South African.

The records further show that there are four registered Uganda Africans, two Malawian Africans, one Ghanaian and Tanzanian African, and three Kenya Asians — such prominent architects as Mr. Braz O. Menezes, Mr. V.R. Shankerdass and Mr. M.A.S. Harunani. Only one Kenya African, Mr. J.G. Waweru, has to date managed to set up his own private firm. He qualified at the University of Nairobi.

Meanwhile, six of the 11 Kenya Africans (and the unregistered one) have qualified, at various times, from the University of Nairobi.

The Faculty of Architecture was started in 1956 and since then 11 Kenya Africans have successfully finished their course there. But four

THE ARCHITECTS

CONSTRUCTING THE FACTS OF THE CURRENT CONTROVERSY



Mr. Ngure Kairu.

cannot be registered until they pass a "Part 3" examination, set and marked by an examining body of professional practising architects. Many who have gone through it, and students who have yet to do it, are opposed to this examination.

Seven students failed the "Part 3" examination last year, one passed. Another one has failed that examination twice, Mr. Kairu said.

Mr. Kairu was once a student of the Faculty of Architecture at Nairobi University. He joined the faculty four years after its formation, "failed" to qualify there, but went on to qualify from Britain. But in those early days, too, students were dissatisfied with the running of the faculty.

"In 1963-64 when I was president of the architecture students' association, we had several delegations to the administration to protest about favouritism in examinations in the faculty," he said. Then, the complaint was that Europeans were "being passed" better than Asians, and Asians better than Africans.

"What we were saying in 1963 is what the students are still saying today, basically."

Architecture is, of course, a lucrative business and architects can play an important role in a nation's development.

These are factors that have led to architecture students seeking more assurance for better passes among

indigenous Kenyans.

That only one Kenya African registered architect has managed to set out on his own is the kind of statistic that has made many students, and members of the public, indignant in the face of the "mass failures" allegation. To highlight this, a favourite example that "it can be done here", indeed that "it should have been done here, too", has been that of Nigeria.

In one Nigerian university, the country's first Faculty of Architecture was started around 1961. In that country today Nigerian Africans are tutors of architecture and Nigerian Africans practise as architects. This is not an argument based on racial lines, but an argument highlighting the desire of people to "get on".

Students consider that the architectural development of a nation should be in the hands of the indigenous people for only they can really know the needs of the people. Only they are completely familiar with the local environment and the way it can be shaped to suit local needs.

Nairobi University administration gave statistics claiming 100 per cent overall pass rates in the architecture department in the final year exams in 1971-72, and 82 per cent overall pass rate in the departmental finals in 1972-73. Students called these statistics false, and went on to issue their own figures which the Registrar, Mr. S. Karanja, dismissed as

being untrue.

The students said that the present group of 18 fifth year students of architecture started as 80 in their first year. They argued that if 16 now passed the final, the pass rate should be worked out as 16 out of 80 and not out of 18, making the pass rate only 20 per cent.

While welcoming the setting up of the commission of inquiry to probe into the current campus crisis, several African architects joined ranks with trade union leaders and others, to criticise its make-up.

They maintained that professional architects ("definitely Africans") should have been chosen to head the inquiry. The probe, they said, needed people who had an understanding of the problems in that particular field.

• Earlier this week, Mr. Kairu, and several corporate members of the Architectural Association of Kenya, "dissociated" themselves from a statement made by the association's president Mr. Andrew Ligale, which stated that some of the students' claims "are clearly untrue and unfair to Prof. Jorgensen and also the local profession."

Speaking as a corporate member of the association, Mr. Kairu said: "I am of the opinion that the students have got a case, and it is in the interests of this country if facts surrounding the training of architects could be established and a permanent solution found to remedy this sad situation."

Report by Mugambi Karanja