

Toward a model of effective student involvement and participation in University governance: lessons learned from the case of Greece

Executive Summary

Objective of this report is to overview student participation in University governance and management in Greece over the 1982 – 2011 period. After a brief Introduction, the report becomes a brief storyteller of student involvement (pre 1982 era, 1982 – 2011, and orientation toward the future) and then proceeds to place student participation and involvement in context via a structured model. The model associates participation with University governance, Student Management Intelligence and University funding and briefly explores all the factors and forces that place an impact on student participation in governance and management. Then SWOT analysis is used to highlight the key findings from the Greek experience. The report concludes with a brief overview of a SIGMUS agenda of action.

This report is part of chain of reports to follow and SIGMUS activities to be completed. It contributes to Report (or Deliverable 1.1) and it provides input to report (or deliverable 1.2: Integration of models), to report 2.1 (Assessment and design for Serbia) and supports WP 3 in view of the envisaged Faculty / Students workshop in summer 2011 at Crete (Technical University of Crete).

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1. Introduction

Greece is a relatively small country, which occupies the south part of the Balkan area. To the east it has extensive land and sea borders with Turkey, to the south the country sails into the Aegean, Cretan, Libyan and the Mediterranean sea, to the west it shares sea borders with Italy and to the north, going from East to West it shares borders with Bulgaria, the Former Yugoslavic Republic of Macedonia and Albania.

The country in its current form has a rather short historical profile. Current borders were established after the Second World War with the addition of a complex of twelve islands in the southeast frontline (the Dodecanese).

In the modern era, the first University, which was established, was the National University of Athens in 1837, and at that time, this was the first University in the Balkan and the southeast Europe (<http://www.uoa.gr/>).

In the almost 145 years from 1837 until today (2011) students have played important role in the social, political and democratic evolution of the country. In recent years the student movements in 1972 and 1973 contributed greatly to the ending of the seven years long dictatorship. The aforementioned movements crossed the border of university – student requests and linked with the social call for freedom and democracy. The leading role of students contributed to high social perception about student activism and placed students in the frontline of social fights for improved working conditions and salaries.

This report corresponds to WP1 of SIGMUS and it is part of D1.1 compilation. It is structured in distinct sections. Section 2 provides a brief historical record of student participation in University Governance. Section 3 introduces the key dimensions of an “ideal” model of student participation in University Governance and with the aid of this model a retrospective SWOT¹ analysis of the case of Greece is provided in Section 4. Section 5 concludes the report by introducing an agenda for SIGMUS action.

2. Brief historical overview

Until 1982 student participation did not exist. Student Unions were quite strong and involved into University and social affairs. The ending of the seven years long dictatorship in July 1974 placed the country in a transition period. The years between 1974 and 1981 were characterized by the effort of the conservative governments at the time to place

¹ Strength, Weakness, Opportunity and Threat Analysis. It is a widely used tool in system analysis assessment. See also: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SWOT_analysis

Greece within the European Economic Community (EEC as EU was named at that time). Indeed Greece succeeded and became the 10th member of the Union on January 1, 1981. A wide reform that the Government tried to enforce in 1980 (Law 815) was in effect cancelled by the student unions acting together with other University stakeholders.

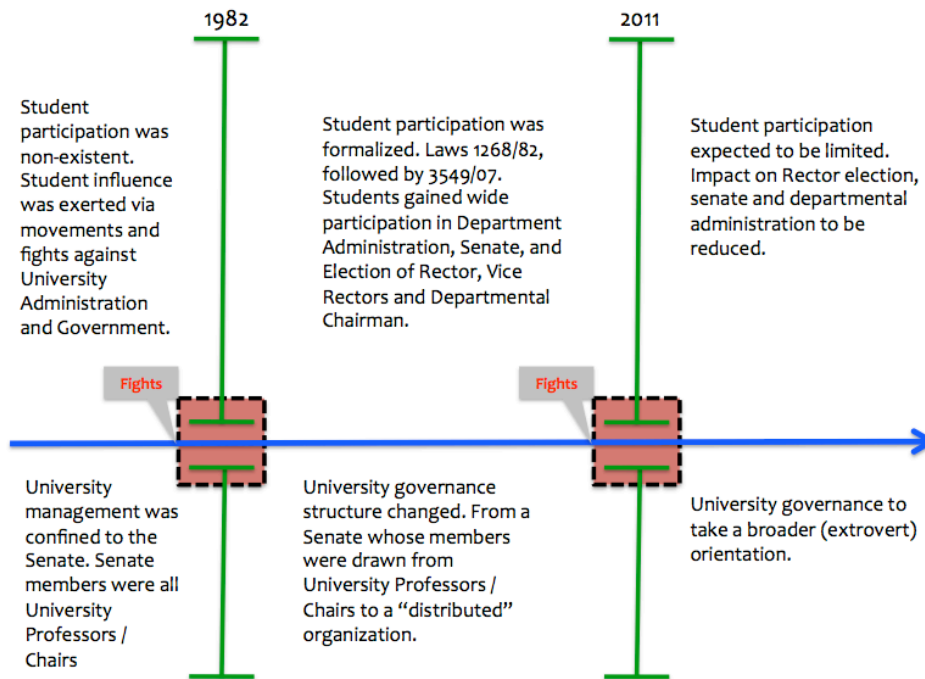


Figure 1. Student participation in University governance at a glance.

The 1980 fight against Law 815 along with the fights against the military junta in 1972 and 1973, and the continuing activism for democracy between 1974 and 1981 contributed to the formation of an informal coalition between students and university stakeholders such as Faculty, Lab technicians, Teaching Assistants, etc. This informal coalition held well and was again successfully mobilized in 1982 when the Socialist government of Andreas Papandreu (elected in October 1981) reformed Governance and structure in Higher Education.

The 1982 reform led to new legislation and the Law 1268/82, which to a large extent holds until today (2011). The Law enlarged participation and was also linked to a major transition in University structure and governance. Until 1982 Universities were structured as Federations of Schools, each School, in turn, structured as a Federation of University Chair Professors. A Chair Professor was leading a Chair Unit, which was assigned a broad scientific or technological domain, for instance Chair in Nuclear Physics. The Chair included a variety of staff members: administrative, technical (such as Laboratory technicians), teaching assistants, and researchers. Often teaching assistants and researchers mingled and involvement within the Chair unit was linked with PhD candidacy.

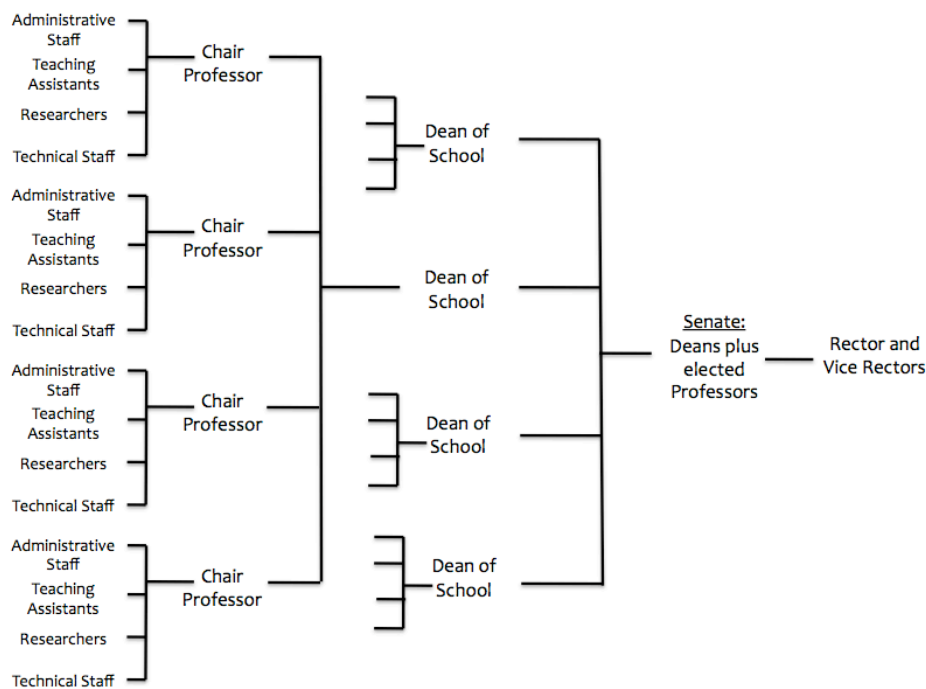


Figure 2. Schematic view of University structure and governance in the pre 1982 era.

The Professor leading the Chair was responsible for courses, laboratory operation, and for delivery of classes and grading of students. Course work was heavily assisted by Chair teaching assistants and researchers. There was a structure within the Chair (not all teaching assistants were at the same level – there were junior and senior assistants and something similar was held for researchers); however, this structure was to a large extent informal and borders between levels were blurred.

All Chair Professors were part of the School Senate and elected the Dean of the School. Deans along with few elected Professors formed the University Senate, which elected the Rector and the Vice Rectors. All elected Professors had a short term (ranged between two and three years) and re-election to the same position was not possible until some rotation rounds – see also Figure 2.

This system worked well for several decades and until it became prisoner of its own inertia and nepotism. There were notorious stories of a University Chair position passed to a close member of the family or to the person who got married with the daughter of the incumbent professor. In addition, opening of a new Chair was a difficult process and subject to approval by the Ministry of Education.

Thus the reform in 1982 was, to some extent inevitable. The reform demolished the existing governance and management model and replaced it with a model, which gave the chance of all actors to be involved in governance. In addition to that, the era of the

single Chair Professor ceased to exist and was replaced by a tenure track faculty system with four distinct levels: Lecturer, Assistant Professor, Associate Professor and Professor.

Characteristic	Until 1982	1982 – 2011	Future
% participation in Senate	0	About 30%	Expected to be minimized.
% participation in departmental administration	0	50%	
% participation in Committees	0 (or ad hoc)	25 – 40%	
% participation in elections of administrative bodies	0	50%	
Autonomy	High	Moderated by compromise	? (expected High)
Means of achieving	Fight	Voting - Fighting	? (expected Fight)

Figure 3. Salient aspects of the 1982 reform.

As shown in Figure 3, reform gave the chance to students to participate in the Senate and in the departmental general assembly² as well as in a variety of formal committees and ad hoc such as the Student Affairs, Library, Disciplinary Action Committee, etc.

Therefore, one may argue that the role of students in University governance developed to become an important factor given the relative weight of student vote in the Senate, the Departmental Assembly and the election of Rector, Vice Rectors, Deans and Departmental Chairman.

A realistic view of the process is depicted in Figure 4.

The schematic view of Figure 4 takes a negative view about student involvement. Likewise with the pre 1982 era the system again became prisoner to itself and students and not to blame for it. In fact they may hold the minimum percentage of accountability

² Part of the 1982 reform was the formation of Departments (such as Department of Physics). The General Assembly of the Department is responsible for the Academic Program (undergraduate and postgraduate studies), Faculty promotion, allocation of resources given to the Department, etc. The General Assembly, chaired by the Chairman, consists of all Faculty members, one representative of the Administrative Staff, one representative from Technicians, and students (appointed by the their Union) equal to 50% of Professors.

for the failure, because the system has failed. Failure can be attributed to a syndrome of symptoms, which will be explored in Section 4, herein.

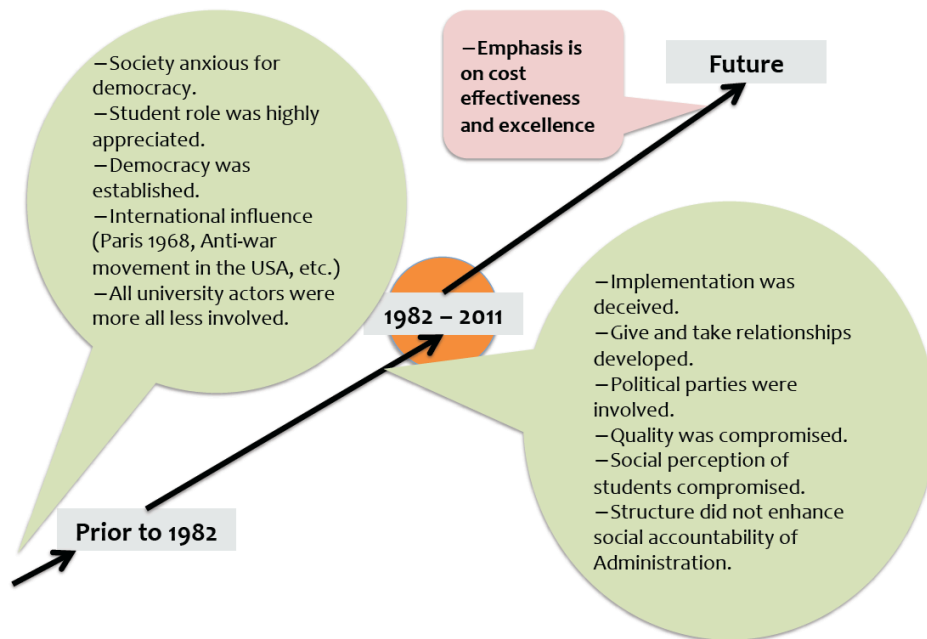


Figure 4. A snapshot view of reform process and student involvement.

3. Student participation in context

The fact that student participation is not the same across the world indicates that there is a wide range of dimensions (factors), which affect it. However, almost all Universities support a scheme of student participation in governance; this comes as acknowledgement of the fact that students are the *sine qua non* of university existence.

There exist factors, which influence participation directly and forces, which place an indirect impact. Direct forces include:

1. University governance – the statute, which guides governance and management at University level.
2. Management intelligence, which students themselves carry and bring into the process.
3. Higher education funding, which embraces the sources of funding that are used to support University operation.

The three direct forces (dimensions or factors) are, in turned, guided (or affected) by a wide range of factors, which are summarized in Figure 5.

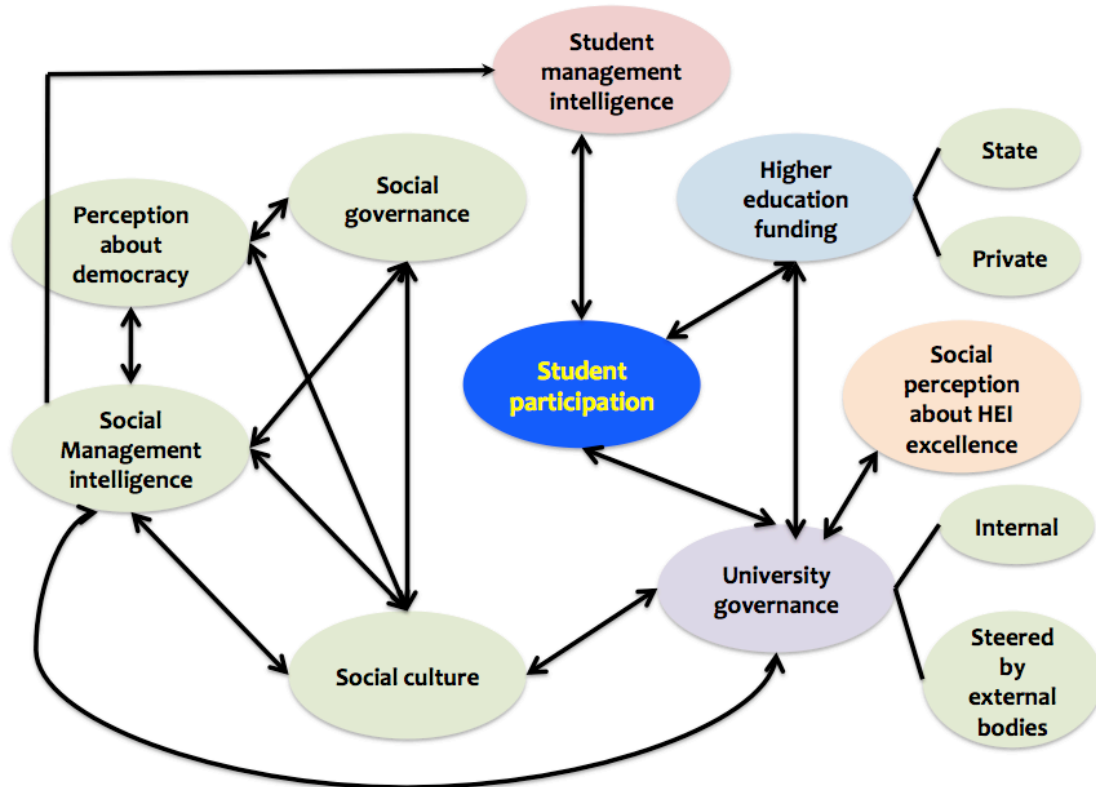


Figure 5. Student participation in University governance in context.

In the sequel we will examine the impact on the three aforementioned main forces one-by-one and then we will integrate results.

3.1 University governance

University governance captures legislation and specific formal (and sometimes informal as well) guidelines, which support governance and management. A University is involved in three main types of activity:

1. Education (undergraduate, postgraduate, lifelong)
2. Research
3. Management of resources

Ideally, governance should be in tune with the level of activities the University is involved – ideally, governance should be seen as a facilitator or enabler of the aforementioned activities.

Governance at University level is affected by Social Management Intelligence (SMI in short). SMI is a composite factor and can be linked to the notion about Social Intelligence as introduced by Goleman and used by numerous authors³. SMI reflects public's perception about management values and practice.

SMI affects, and at the same is affected by, (a) Social Culture, (b) Social Governance and (c) Perception about Democracy (see Figure 5). The three interrelate with each other. For instance, one would not expect a high degree of Social Culture in a society in which perception about democracy is limited. The scheme of student involvement in Greece, as developed after 1982, was strongly supported by a wide perception according to which "more participation" in management is linked with "better democracy". At the time control, ownership and management in many private companies passed from individuals to the state. In addition, participation of worker unions and local society officials in the management board of these companies was legitimized and it look natural the same to hold for Universities as well. Thus, Perception about Democracy (factor c, above) translated to group decision-making and voting.

In the past 1982 era University governance was widened in participation. For instance, a University with (let us say 10 academic departments) would have a Senate in the following composition:

- Rector and two Vice Rectors (3)
- Chairman of each department (10)
- One Faculty member from each department (10)⁴
- One student (appointed by the Student Union) from each department (10)
- One representative of Laboratory technicians (1)
- One representative of Administrative Staff (1)
- Two representatives from the Postgraduate Students Union (2)

This yields a total of 37 Senate members. Decisions are made by majority vote (50% + 1) and vote from all members has equal weight. On top of the Senate is the Rector's Committee with members the Rector and the two Vice Rectors, one student appointed by the Students Union and the University Head of Administrative Services; five members in total.

In practice the Senate holds is the single source of decision-making authority. The Rector's Committee or the Rector himself possesses limited decision-making authority,

³ Goleman, D. *Social Intelligence*, New York: Random House, 2006.

⁴ Faculty members to become for a one-year term Senate members are elected by the Departmental Assembly of each department. Election follows a rotation scheme to ensure that there is an almost optimal representation of all academic levels (Lecturer, Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, and Professor).

which is granted via delegation by the Senate. Figure 6 provides a schematic overview of the management structure.

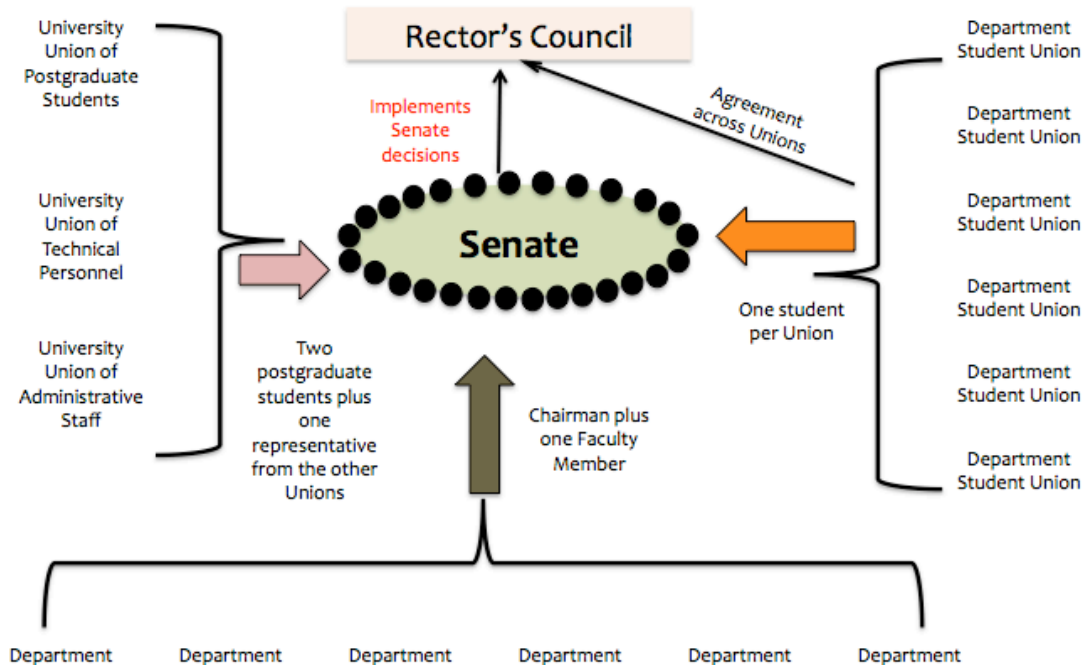


Figure 6. Academic departments feed into the Senate two Faculty members each. One is ex-officio and is the Chairman and the other is elected on a one-year term from the Faculty members. Each department has its own Student Union, which feeds the Senate with one student (undergraduate) member – one-year term. After agreement between all Student Unions one student is appointed as member of the Rector’s Council (one-year term). Postgraduate students have one Union, which operates at University level. From that Union two students are appointed as Senate members for a one-year term. Finally, the Unions of Technicians and Administrative Staff appoint each one Senate member for a one-year term.

Structure and participation (as depicted in Figure 6) sound ideal; however, they are not. Senate bodies become populous and often prove impractical. For instance, the Aristotelian University of Thessaloniki (<http://www.auth.gr/home/>) has 45 departments; Senate membership exceeds 100 persons.

In addition, by placing Faculty and Students in group decision-making does not create an ideal environment; at least this is what practice over about 30 years has proved.

Contemporary University governance and management should seek to create an environment in which all academic members can contribute to the limits of their abilities.

To top up discussion, “participatory” democracy in university governance is also twisted by the way Rectors, Vice Rectors and Departmental Chairmen are elected. As indicated in

Figure 3 student vote comprises 50% of the total regardless of the number of students participating in the vote!

Consider the scenario in Figure 7. Two candidate Rector / Vice Rectors (1 + 2) groups compete: Candidate A and Candidate B. Group B receives 2/3 of the Faculty vote and a small percentage of the Students vote (28.57%). Group A receives 1/3 of the Faculty vote and scores a landslide victory over Students with 71.43%. Student participation is minimal and limited to 10% of the total population. Yet Candidate A wins the election and then proceeds to University Management for a four years term!

	Total	Vote	% weight	
Professors	100	90	0.5	The University:
Students	3500	350	0.4	
Non-academic staff	200	180	0.1	

	Candidate A	Candidate B	Total	% participation	
Professors	30	60	90	90.00%	The election:
Students	250	100	350	10.00%	
Non-academic staff	90	90	180	90.00%	

	Candidate A	Candidate B
Professors	33.33%	66.67%
Students	71.43%	28.57%
Non-academic staff	50.00%	50.00%

And the winner is:	Candidate A	50.24%
	Candidate B	49.76%
		100.00%

Is this a good result ??? Or, is this result compatible with current or evolving social dynamics?

Figure 7. A possible result. Candidate group (Rector plus Vice Rectors) A although a minority in Faculty wins over Candidate group B, which scores a landslide victory in Faculty preference.

Situation is even worse than it looks when taken into consideration that student vote is highly political influenced⁵⁶.

Needless to mention that participatory democracy and governance did not extend to the details of resource management (which still remains complicate and unnecessarily complex) nor to the specifics of research.

⁵ The election dynamics represent an amendment of the original 1268 (of 1982) Law – Law 3549 of 2007. In 1268/82 student vote was cast via delegates appointed by the Student Unions. So, if the University had 100 Faculty members then all Student Unions would appoint 50 delegates. Then it was even worse because each Candidate group would try to secure delegate vote via political (partisan) agreements. It was usual for instance to have a Candidate group supported by a major political party and another Candidate group supported by another political party and so on.

⁶ If more than two Candidate groups participate in the election the process is repeated, if necessary, between the leading two parties because 50%+1 majority is necessary for election.

The aforementioned management, governance and election processes suffer from several deficiencies and at the time of this writing the Greek government is seeking to introduce new legislation⁷. New legislation attempts to introduce full autonomy to University governance, to enhance social accountability and to promote international academic excellence⁸.

3.2 Student management intelligence

Student management intelligence (or SMINT for short) plays a very significant role. To exemplify consider Laws 1268/82 or 3947/07 – as presented in Section 3.1, herein. Both legislative actions gave the chance to students to play a key role in University governance and management. However, situation degenerated to pedestrian trade-off relations between Professors, incumbent Rectors / Vice Rectors and Chair Persons. Students are the least to blame. In most cases it is the Professors who tried (and unfortunately succeeded) putting in effect “divide and conquer” strategies and practices. Political parties joined forces with Professors.

Alas the system might have worked very well should students have possessed sufficient SMINT. Yet the system did nothing to enhance SMINT skills. Students come to the University at the age of 18 without any knowledge about the complexity of University governance and management.

3.3 Higher education funding

Higher education in Greece is governed by the Constitution (article 16), which specifies that it should be public and made available for free to students. Tuition and fees apply only to selected postgraduate programs of study, mainly focusing in Business Administration and Management⁹.

Thus in their vast majority students pay no fees and can complete a program of study in twice as many years as it specified by the Department, which offers the program¹⁰.

⁷ Draft has been around since September 2010; however, final pre-statutory issuance is still pending.

⁸ New legislation will be included in a follow-up SIGMUS document as it becomes available.

⁹ In 2007 the Government attempted without success to change Article 16 of the Constitution. However, pressure from the European Union to accept Diplomas awarded from Private Universities Annexes (working via the franchise system, affiliated with European or USA institutions) has led to the creation of a “window” that makes private institutions legal or semi-legal. Reform under progress is expected to resolve the Higher Education scene, although without a change in Constitution no change is possible and the current Parliament Session does not have the authority to proceed with Constitution changes.

¹⁰ For instance, a program of study in Engineering extends over 10 semesters (or 5 years). A student has up to 10 years to complete. Failure to complete the program of studies in 10 years, would result to his / her dismissal.

University budgets rely to a large extent to public funding – research is minimally funded by the State and most research funds come via participation in competitive R&D programs. Public funding has contributed to loosening of governance and management and has facilitated mingling between Professors and Students. In the absence of accountability about spending Universities tend to make lucrative decisions without any consideration of marginal social benefit and cost or without any consideration to life cycle cost accounting¹¹.

If higher education funding was structured in a rational manner with due respect to social benefit, cost and accountability one may assume that situation would have had a different profile. In turn, students would have gained the opportunity to develop SMINT skills and culture, which would have benefited society, students and University governance and management.

4. Retrospective SWOT analysis of student participation in Greece (1982 – 2011)

It is generally acknowledged that participation upgrades organizational performance by inviting the entire community to review the available facts, to define the problems and to recommend alternative courses of action. Participation should couple with decentralization, which means the delegation of authority to the relevant individuals or groups in the arena of action. Both participation and decentralization imply confidence that the people involved can deliver.

However, participation of students in University governance and management in Greece failed to deliver the promised benefits. Instead it has contributed to the creation of a “dinosaur” structure, full of bureaucratic characteristics and inefficient to cope with modern era trends and challenges. Participation was built on loose definition of **values** and thus lent itself on numerous interpretations and meaning.

Professors finally understood participation as means to achieving their personal aspirations to be elected as Chair, Rector or Vice Rectors and students were trapped into it. Accompanied with political party intervention leading student figures tried to use activism as means to establish themselves in the party hierarchy. Result was that neither the University improved (despite sufficient funding made available) nor program of studies improved to provide added value both to society and to graduates. To make things even worse all governments in the last fifteen years established new Universities and Departments around the country in an effort to please society that all children can become University graduates. Today in the country there exist 24 Universities and 18

¹¹ Of course, there are noteworthy exceptions to this trend (or fashion). However, exceptions get lost in the sea of economic irrationality, which is the rule.

Higher Technical Schools – the latter enjoy an “equal” status with Universities and are considered part of the Higher Education System. About 90% of those who complete High School continue studying at a University or Higher Technical School¹².

SWOT analysis is a strategic planning method used to evaluate the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats involved in a project or in a business venture. It involves specifying the objective of the business venture or project and identifying the internal and external factors that are favorable and unfavorable to achieve that objective. The technique is credited to Albert Humphrey, who led a convention at Stanford University in the 1960s and 1970s using data from Fortune 500 companies.

A SWOT analysis must first start with defining a desired end state or objective. A SWOT analysis may be incorporated into the strategic planning model. Strategic Planning has been the subject of much research.

1. Strengths: characteristics of the business or team that give it an advantage over others in the industry.
2. Weaknesses: are characteristics that place the firm at a disadvantage relative to others.
3. Opportunities: external chances to make greater sales or profits in the environment.
4. Threats: external elements in the environment that could cause trouble for the business.

Identification of SWOT is essential because subsequent steps in the process of planning for achievement of the selected objective may be derived from the SWOT.

First, the decision makers have to determine whether the objective is attainable, given the SWOT. If the objective is NOT attainable a different objective must be selected and the process repeated.

The SWOT analysis is often used in academia to highlight and identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. It is particularly helpful in identifying areas for development¹³.

In the sequel we will attempt a SWOT analysis of student involvement and participation in Greece over the 1982 – 2011 time frame. Analysis will be based on the assumption that we have moved 30 years back in time and will help to flash out the benefits, initially contemplated and the drawbacks, realized in practice.

¹² This percentage is the highest in the European Union of the 27 countries.

¹³ Shaded text is adopted from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SWOT_analysis (visited in March 26, 2011).

<p><u>Strengths:</u></p> <p>To expand democratic frontier in University governance and management.</p> <p>To provide an effective forum for discussion of different points of view and plans to improve University operation.</p> <p>To enable students to cast their voice and opinion about their program of study.</p>	<p><u>Weakness:</u></p> <p>Management at group level when objectives and values of group participants are not clear is cumbersome.</p> <p>Conducive to the formulation of alliances and cliques between group members with objectives and aspirations, which are not linked to University continuous improvement.</p> <p>Makes the structure amenable to political party intervention.</p>
<p><u>Opportunity:</u></p> <p>To be able to steer participation in a productive direction.</p> <p>To learn from the mistakes made in the past and to exploit them effectively in structure re-orientation.</p> <p>To establish values that will guide future planning and practice.</p> <p>To shift from the introvert behavior of today to an extrovert orientation with enhanced social accountability.</p>	<p><u>Threat:</u></p> <p>Due to the blurred global financial future and the specific fiscal deficit of the country, wide participation may not be the best tool for making “difficult” decisions.</p> <p>It is not clear how the existing structure, governance and management can lead the University into the global scene for excellence.</p> <p>Funding cannot continue to come only from the government. It is not clear if funding sources (or agents) can cope with the current structure and governance.</p>

In context with SIGMUS, we close this section with a parable with the famous **Underground**¹⁴ movie of Emir Kusturica. Participation if not handled well and continuously monitored based on concrete social values and commitment to continuous improvement and adherence to social needs may well lead to an *underground* setting and then to resolve would be hard since it will not be easy to identify who is Marko, who is Petar, who

¹⁴ [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Underground_\(1995_film\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Underground_(1995_film))

is Natalija, who is Ivan, or who plays the monkey! Resolution in the movie was much easier!

5. SIGMUS agenda

A highlighted piece of text in Section 3.1 stressed that ...

Contemporary University governance and management should seek to create an environment in which all academic members can contribute to the limits of their abilities.

Student participation is important and carries with it the potential to improve University governance and management. Improvement is key and should be judged from the point of view of society, students, the university and the people working inside the university. Order is not random. Going from society to the people working inside the university is purposeful. Participation¹⁵ should not be seen as the ultimate objective. It should be seen as means for achieving objectives and reaching vision with due regard to widely accepted values. Without the triplet: **Values – Vision – Objectives** participation may become meaningless. Toward this end, participation should be approached with due regard to the basic processes of management: planning, organizing, directing and controlling.

Participation ought to be designed, implemented and assessed with due regard to the key **processes** of governance and management, namely: planning, organizing, directing and controlling. In the subsections, which follow we delineate key elements of management processes. Objective is to identify the areas in which student participation will, most likely, benefit all (create a win-win scenario). Section concludes with brief remarks that place this report and analysis in context with SIGMUS work tasks.

5.1 Planning

1. Decisions on important matters should be open to wide participation and be based on objective analysis of facts and expert recommendations / judgments made by qualified personnel.
2. The top man (be it a Rector or Department Chair) running the participative session (be it a Senate or a Department Assembly) should be alone responsible for making the final decision. He (or she) should be able to integrate the most valid views and to ignore subjective views or biases (of course including his / her own). After making the decision she remains solely accountable for the outcome.
3. Communication in participative planning should flow two ways. All persons involved (including students) should be aware of what it is they are working

¹⁵ Participation implies student participation. For reasons of brevity “student” is often omitted.

toward and why by occupying a central point in the flow of information. In other words, all persons involved should allow to access relevant information in order to intelligently plan and control their input to the process and their activities.

5.2 Organizing

1. Strategic and policy decisions should be formulated centrally by University Senate (or University Management Board) while Departmental decisions should be delegated to the Departments (or separate Faculties). Students involved in strategic decision-making and policy formulations should possess the skills to do so.

5.3 Directing

2. Supervision entails three distinct tasks: the management of academic activities, the management of ideas and the management of the program of study. The person assigned to supervise academic work should elicit participation, but on the other hand make clear the realm in which input is sought.
3. Academic administration should encourage exercise of initiative by people involved in participative activities.
4. Participation should not be associated to day-to-day supervision.

5.4 Controlling

1. Students should seek via participation continuous monitoring of academic activity.
2. Performance standards should, in as much as possible, be set and academic output regarding programs of study and further progress be assessed using formal methods.

5.5 Closing remark

This report was oriented toward a case presentation, the case being Greece. The country is already involved in a reform process and it is expected that governance, management and the role of students will change (perhaps dramatically). However, the case highlights strengths and weaknesses and may be used as example (even negative) for the Serbian reform (being the objective of SIGMUS).

Work reported herein will feed WP 2 of the project and specifically deliverable 2.1 to formulate a model of student participation for Serbia. In addition (and along with deliverable 2.1 – expected to be ready by June 30, 2011), it will be used to stimulate discussion during the workshops planned to take place at the Technical University of Crete (TUC) in summer of 2011.