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# **STUDENT INVOLVEMENT IN UNIVERSITY DECISION MAKING**

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# Student Centered Learning

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- Do not force children to learn using force and brutality, but rather direct them to learn choosing subjects close to their spirits.

**PLATO**

- Real teaching starts when the teacher starts learning from his student putting himself at his place, so that he can understand what the student learns and how he understands.

**SOREN KIERKEGAARD**

# The Idea of University

- **AT THE UNIVERSITIES, PEOPLE ARE UNITED BY THE AIM TO SEEK THE TRUTH AND TEACH THE TRUTH USING SCIENCE.**
- Therefore, **research** is the primary duty of the Universities, and **teaching** is their second duty. Having in mind that the transmission of mere knowledge and skills would be insufficient for understanding the truth, **education** is the essence of both research and teaching.
- There exists an **inseparable unity** between the aims of research, teaching and education.

**KARL JASPERS**

# Student Involvement in University Decision Making

- **13<sup>th</sup> century:** Sorbonne, Bologna  
Student rectors, Student guilds: dominant influence of students
- **Until 20<sup>th</sup> century:** student university gradually failed
- **In the 1960s and 1970s:** University democratization  
Consequence: extension of membership of diverse committees to students
- **In USA:** *Joint Statement on rights and Freedoms of Students*
- **In Europe:** Transformation more dramatic; tripartital model of University governance

# Student Involvement in University Decision Making

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- **In the 1980s and 1990s:** Emergence of managerial-run universities

University executives as professional managers

Students appear mostly as clients

**Strong student influence:** social issues, student affairs, educational and pedagogical issues

**Weak student influence:** finances, employment of teaching staff, degree and admission requirements

- **Recently:** student involvement in quality assurance matters

# Student Involvement in University Decision Making

## ■ 1) The politically-realist case: students as “*stakeholders*”

Students as a powerful political actor: student protests

Students as internal “stakeholders” or a politically significant constituency of the university ought to be involved in governing the university (constitutive institutions)

**Basis:** *consent of the governed* (J. Locke)

**Consequence:** replacement of “antiquated formal hierarchies” and dispersion of power

**Opposition:** forming of private caucusing, lack of public discussion and creation of inner circles; also, co-optation of students in university committees implies disruptions

# Student Involvement in University Decision Making

- **2) The consumerist case: students as “clients” and “consumers”**

**Students as clients, users and consumers of higher education**

**Political economy in student-university relations:**  
university is viewed as a service provider in a contractual relationship with students (an exceptional kind of clients)

**Limits student involvement to short-term interests**

**Activist student leaders as “quality makers” voicing their interests:** *their rights are secure when they stand up for them*  
**(J. S. Mill)**

# Student Involvement in University Decision Making

- **3) The communitarian case: students as “*full members of the university community*”**

**Justification by virtue of students being members of the community (persons united by collective understanding, communal goals, reciprocal obligation and the desire of preservation of the community)**

**However:** they are only transient members of the community, at best novices and junior members in a rigid professional guild hierarchy

*Popular participation in government can hardly be here established on the basis of the competence of ordinary citizens (Aristotle)*



# Student Involvement in University Decision Making

## ■ 4) Political socialization as reason: *“future elites” and “citizens”*

In democratic societies the purpose of higher education is not limited to preparing students to the roles in the labor market only

*The function of higher education is also to provide students with certain generic skills, opportunities for personal growth and development, and above all with the capacity of critical thinking and deliberating skills in preparation for democratic citizenship (S. Bergan)*

**Students have to learn:** 1) *how* democracy works and 2) *that* democracy works by their own experience

# Student Involvement in University Decision Making

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Students are considered as members of the broader political community within which the university is embedded - as citizens of the political community **BEYOND** the university

It is not the involvement of students in university decision making *per se*, but involvement in a culture of governance, that is compatible with democratic values

**Caveat:** this function may be appealing in less democratic societies as an instrument for domination

**Additional questions:** how the increasing internationalization of higher education influences democratic socialization

# Student Involvement in University Decision Making

- **5) The consequentialist case: “*benefits of student involvement in decision making*”**

**Widening the circle of participants in university decision making to include students may have positive effects in different respects:**

**a) benefit of students themselves   b) improvement of the quality of decisions**

**The inclusion of students contributes to the pursuit of the university purposes – better quality and peaceful campus environment.**

# Applications

- **Governance of teaching, learning and research**

Consideration of students' expertise as junior members of the academic community and users of educational services

The involvement vary with regard to setting (**classroom, department, university**), nature of issues (**staffing, timetables, teacher awards, quality assurance**) and seniority (**undergraduate, postgraduate**)

- **Governance of student affairs**

Co- and extra-curricular student affairs – **recreation, sports, residences**, etc.

Students are here the most interested and affected members of the community

# Applications

- **Institutional finance, policy and strategy**

**In general affairs (financing, planning, strategy) there are reasons for and against student involvement**

**Student involvement in this domain may involve the recognition of certain participatory rights of students as adults and citizens, although the increasingly dominant conception of students as transient users and consumers makes such participation only marginal**

# Higher Education Reform

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- **STUDENTS AS SUBJECTS OF HIGHER EDUCATION**
- **PROCESS WHICH HAS TO BE FOLLOWED AND PERMANENTLY CONTROLLED**
- **ECTS SYSTEM, INTRODUCED BY LAW, SHOULD BE ANALYSED FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF ESSENCE: relation between the required and the possible**

# Higher Education Reform

- **LEARNING OUTCOMES AND COMPETENCES**
- **QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK:**  
participation of the academic society, employers and the state
- **TRANSPARENCY: mutual recognition of degrees**
- **IMPORTANT ACTIVITY: CONTINUOUS ADAPTIVE MODIFICATIONS OF THE LAW ON HIGHER EDUCATION**
- **NEW LAW ON STUDENT ORGANIZATION**

# Higher Education Reform

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IT IS THE BELIEF OF  
THE NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR HIGHER  
EDUCATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA  
THAT THE **TEMPUS** PROJECTS  
**SIGMUS** AND **GOMES**  
ARE GOING TO PROVIDE A SIGNIFICANT  
CONTRIBUTION TO THE  
**STUDENT CENTERED REFORM**  
OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION OF SERBIA