

The Bloomsbury Handbook of
**STUDENT POLITICS
AND REPRESENTATION
IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

Edited by Manja Klemenčič



BLOOMSBURY

*The Bloomsbury Handbook of
Student Politics and Representation in
Higher Education*

ALSO AVAILABLE FROM BLOOMSBURY

The Bloomsbury Handbook of Theory in Comparative and International Education, edited by
Tavis D. Jules, Robin Shields and Matthew A.M. Thomas

The Bloomsbury Handbook of Culture and Identity from Early Childhood to Early Adulthood,
edited by Ruth Wills, Marian de Souza, Jennifer Mata-McMahon, Mukhlis Abu Bakar and
Cornelia Roux

The Bloomsbury Handbook of Global Education and Learning, edited by Douglas Bourn
The Bloomsbury Handbook of Gender and Educational Leadership and Management, edited by
Victoria Showunmi, Pontso Moorosi, Charol Shakeshaft and Izhar Oplatka

The Bloomsbury Handbook of Popular Music Education, edited by Zack Moir, Bryan Powell
and Gareth Dylan Smith

The Bloomsbury Handbook of Solitude, Silence and Loneliness, edited by Julian Stern,
Christopher A. Sink, Malgorzata Walejko and Wong Ping Ho

The Bloomsbury Handbook of Rural Education in the United States, edited by Amy Price
Azano, Karen Eppley and Catharine Biddle

The Bloomsbury Handbook of Reading Perspectives and Practices, edited by Bethan Marshall,
Jackie Manuel, Donna L. Pasternak and Jennifer Roswell

The Bloomsbury Handbook of Religious Education in the Global South, edited by Yonah
Hisbon Matemba and Bruce A. Collet

*The Bloomsbury Handbook of
Student Politics and Representation
in Higher Education*

EDITED BY
Manja Klemenčič

BLOOMSBURY ACADEMIC
LONDON • NEW YORK • OXFORD • NEW DELHI • SYDNEY

BLOOMSBURY ACADEMIC
Bloomsbury Publishing Plc
50 Bedford Square, London, WC1B 3DP, UK
1385 Broadway, New York, NY 10018, USA
29 Earlsfort Terrace, Dublin 2, Ireland

BLOOMSBURY, BLOOMSBURY ACADEMIC and the Diana logo are
trademarks of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

First published in Great Britain 2024

Copyright © Manja Klemenčič, 2024

Manja Klemenčič has asserted her right under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act,
1988, to be identified as Editor of this work.

For legal purposes the Acknowledgments on pp. xxviii–xxxi constitute an extension of this copyright page.

Cover image © smartboy10 / Getty Images

The Work is published open access subject to a Creative Commons
Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives v4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0)
licence (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-ncnd/4.0/>). You may re-use, distribute, and
reproduce this work in any medium or format for non-commercial purposes, provided you give
attribution to the copyright holder and the publisher and provide a link to the Creative Commons licence.

Bloomsbury Publishing Plc does not have any control over, or responsibility for, any third-party
websites referred to or in this book. All internet addresses given in this book were correct at the
time of going to press. The author and publisher regret any inconvenience caused if addresses have
changed or sites have ceased to exist, but can accept no responsibility for any such changes.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

ISBN: HB: 978-1-3503-7597-0
ePDF: 978-1-3503-7598-7
eBook: 978-1-3503-7599-4

Typeset by Integra Software Services Pvt. Ltd.

To find out more about our authors and books visit www.bloomsbury.com
and sign up for our newsletters.

Contents

List of Figures	ix
List of Tables	xi
List of Contributors	xii
Foreword, <i>Hector Enoc Ulloa Chinchilla</i>	xxvii
Acknowledgments	xxviii

Introduction <i>Manja Klemenčič</i>	1
-------------------------------------	---

PART I: KEY CONCEPTS IN THE STUDY OF STUDENT POLITICS AND REPRESENTATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

1 The Key Concepts in the Study of Student Politics and Representation in Higher Education <i>Manja Klemenčič</i>	7
---	---

PART II: EMPIRICAL RESEARCH ON STUDENT POLITICS AND REPRESENTATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

A TRANSNATIONAL REPRESENTATIVE STUDENT ASSOCIATIONS

2 The All-Africa Students Union (AASU) in Perspective: The Trajectory of the Continental Student Movement, from 1972 to 2022 <i>Peter Kwasi Kodjie, Elorm Mawuli-Kwawu, Awurama Safowaa Kyei-Baffour, Abdul Karim Ibrahim, Bismark Amefianu Kudoafor, and Rexford Akrong</i>	41
3 The Commonwealth Students' Association: Journey of a Newly Established Multi-Regional Student Organization <i>Musarrat Maisha Reza, Eileen Y.L. Goh and Odayne Haughton</i>	52
4 The European Students' Union: The Adaptive Nature of a European Interest Organization <i>Martina Darmanin, Jakub Grodecki, Martin Hammerbauer, Kristel Jakobson-Pallo, and Matteo Vespa</i>	65

- 5 The Emergence of the Global Student Forum and Prospects for Increased Student Participation within the International Education Polity *Sebastian Berger, Giuseppe Lipari, Georgia Potton, and Carmen Romero* 83
- 6 A Regional Student Movement in Latin and South America: The Organización Continental Latinoamericana y Caribeña de Estudiantes—OCLAE (Latin American and Caribbean Continental Student Organization) *Bianca Borges dos Santos, Giuseppe Lipari, and Carmen Romero* 103

B STUDENT POLITICS AND REPRESENTATION IN AFRICA

- 7 Student Politics in Africa in the Twenty-First Century *Thierry M Luescher* 116
- 8 Student Representation in Higher Education Governance in (English-Speaking) Cameroon: The Politics, Challenges, and Way Forward *Emmanuel Shu Ngwa and Novel Lena Folabit* 129
- 9 Influence of Political Parties on the National Union of Ghana Students: A Study of Contemporary Trends *Samuel Sasu Adonteng, James Kodjie, Emmanuel Nuvi Junior, and Georgia Potton* 147
- 10 Students' Power and How It Has Changed in Kenya *Mary Adhiambo Ojwang* 161

C STUDENT POLITICS AND REPRESENTATION IN ASIA, THE GULF STATES, AND THE PACIFIC

- 11 Contemporary Student Representation and Organization in Southeast Asia *Claryce Jiawen Lum* 182
- 12 Aotearoa New Zealand: Exploring Myths of Egalitarianism in Students' Associations *Ellen R. Dixon, Nkhaya Paulsen-More, and Liam Davies* 205
- 13 Student Representation in China's Higher Education *Fan Li, Panpan Yao, and Wei Huang* 225
- 14 On the Meaning of Student Elections: The Case of an Indian Campus *Jean-Thomas Martelli* 241
- 15 The Omani Model of Student Representation in Higher Education *Faisal Al Balushi* 260
- 16 History of Student Representation in Pakistan and Future Prospects for a New Kind of Student Union *Muhammad Arfan and Muhammad Usman* 277

- 17 Singapore: The Metamorphosis of Student Unions *Musarrat Maisha Reza and Eileen Y.L. Goh* 288
- 18 Finding a Way Forward amidst the Contemporary Challenges to Sri Lankan Student Politics *W. Sachinda Dulanjana* 307

D STUDENT POLITICS AND REPRESENTATION IN THE CARIBBEAN, LATIN AMERICA AND NORTH AMERICA

- 19 The Construction of a Political Actor in a Post-Dictatorship and Neoliberal Context: Persistence, Success, and Challenges of the Chilean Student Movement (1990–2020) *Cristián Bellei and Cristóbal Villalobos* 328
- 20 The Role of CONFECH in the Fight for Education in Chile *Carla Trigo Argomedo, Javiera Aymara Molina Barboza, Nicolás Javier Carrancio Fuentes, María Josefa Guzmán, Giuseppe Lipari, Cresente Cristóbal Lizarbe Luna, Josefa Javiera González Palma, and Igor Gonçalves Pereira* 346
- 21 Colombian Student Movement: A Force for Dialogue and Struggle in Colombian Politics *Amanda Harumy* 365
- 22 The New Governance at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras, the Restoration of Student Representation, and the Challenges Facing the Neo-Interventionism of the State in Higher Education *Moises David Cáceres* 383
- 23 Student Representation in Higher Education in Jamaica: The Case of the Mona Guild Council at The University of the West Indies, Mona *Christina Williams* 392
- 24 College Student Activism in the United States *Jerusha Conner, Rachel Stannard, and Angela Upright* 404

E STUDENT POLITICS AND REPRESENTATION IN EUROPE AND IN RUSSIA

- 25 Student Representation at the Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB): The Case of the Bureau des Etudiant.e.s Administrateur.trices *Hélène Mariaud* 418
- 26 Student Representation in the Czech Republic after 1989: The Unbearable Lightness of Student Influence? *Martin Hammerbauer, Damir Solak, Diana Hodulíková, and Lukáš Lang* 427

27	Student Politics in Contemporary Estonia: Predominance of Representation over Activism <i>Allan Aksiim, Kristel Jakobson-Pallo, Karl Lembit Laane, Kristin Pintson, and Helo Liis Soodla</i>	436
28	Which Model for Student Representation in France? <i>Quentin Genelot</i>	450
29	Strategies and Actions of Student Organizations for the Conquest of Representativeness: The Case of the French Student Elections <i>Quentin Genelot</i>	468
30	Inspired by Student Politics in Italy: A Proposal for a New Typology to Classify Student Collective Actors <i>Matteo Vespa, Mattia Sguazzini, and Ruben Pratisoli</i>	482
31	Student Politics in Italy: Continuities and Discontinuities across Three Eras <i>Matteo Vespa, Mattia Sguazzini, and Ruben Pratisoli</i>	494
32	Student Representation as a Driver of Europeanization in Post-Communist Romanian Higher Education <i>Stefan-Marius Deaconu, Tamara Ciobanu, and Horia-Șerban Onița</i>	513
33	Legacy, Bureaucracy, and Meritocracy of Leviathan: Student Representation in Post-Soviet Russia <i>Dmitry Efimov</i>	531
34	Historical Evolution of the Legal and Political Framework for Student Representation in Spain <i>José-Luis Parejo</i>	550
35	The Student Participation in the Governance of the Complutense University of Madrid <i>Jorge-Antonio Fernández de los Ríos and Enrique Maestu Fonseca</i>	562
36	Student Representation in the UK: In the Face of Criticism and Maintaining Legitimacy <i>Mike Day</i>	575
	Conclusion: A Historical and Global Comparison <i>Manja Klemenčič</i>	591
	Index	599

Figures

9.1	Membership structure of the National Union of Ghana Students (NUGS)	151
9.2	Structure of the National Union of Ghana Students (NUGS)	152
12.1	Horizontal engagement between the five national students' associations, where the New Zealand Union of Students' Associations (NZUSA) has typically acted as the intermediary	208
12.2	The horizontal model at the Victoria University of Wellington between the general students' association and then interrelated student bodies	209
13.1	Structure of student government in China's higher education institutes	228
13.2	Structure of the student union and the number of student cadres	230
13.3	Tri-angle relationship after the introduction of the university student congress (USC) in student government	234
14.1	Lexical specificities of student organizations in the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) (organized by topic)	251
14.2	School-wise distribution of vote patterns at the 2004, 2012, and 2014 elections for central panel in the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU)	252
14.3	Organization-wise distribution of panel votes at the 2004, 2012, and 2014 elections for central panel in JNU	253
14.4	Organization-wise distribution of panel breaks and quasi-panel at the 2004, 2012, and 2014 elections for central panel in JNU	254
14.5	School-wise distribution of vote patterns at the 2012 and 2014 elections for school panel in JNU	254
14.6	School-wise distribution of vote patterns at the 2012 till 2015 elections for GSCASH in JNU	255
14.7	Distribution of freeze votes at the 2012, 2013, 2014, and 2015 elections for GSCASH in JNU	256
19.1	Number of university protests by year, 1990–2019	332
19.2	Average number of participants in each university protest, per year (1990–2019)	332
19.3	Student protests, by tactics (1990–2019)	333
19.4	Total number of people injured (right axe) and arrested (left axe) per year in university protests	334
22.1	Parity representation in university shared governance after the Legislative Decree No. 52, 1958	386
22.2	Representation at the University Council, according to the Organic Law of the National Autonomous University of Honduras (UNAH) 2004 (Organic Law 2004)	388

Figures

27.1	Structure of EÜL (spring 2022). The graph boxes of purple are for elected bodies and boxes in lighter blue indicate either Federation of Estonian Student Unions [Eesti Üliõpilaskondade Liit, EÜL] members (student body through student councils) or unelected staff of EÜL	440
27.2	Visualization of number of students in Estonia (Statistics of Estonia, 2022)	442
30.1	Graphical representation of the standard model (or alternative features)	489
30.2	Graphical representation of the hybrid model	489
30.3	Examples of the two models	490
31.1	Overview of the student collective actors during the Italian republican period (in brackets their closeness to political parties)	499
31.2	Axes classification	504
32.1	Average expenditure in Romania on student support services and scholarships between 2013 and 2020	524
33.1	Dynamics of influence of students at universities according to a survey of rectors	539
35.1	Central Student delegation composition chart	570

Tables

1.1	National systems of student representation (further developed from Klemenčič, 2012)	23
5.1	Student participation within international organizations and levels of political responsiveness	97
11.1	Typology of national student organization (NSO) characteristics	187
11.2	Typology of national systems of student representation and interest intermediation	189
11.3	Typology of national systems of student representation and interest intermediation in Africa, Europe and Southeast Asia	190
11.4	Data on key types of student representation organizations in each ASEAN member state (AMS)	191
11.5	Typology of national student organizations (NSOs) and systems of representation in Southeast Asia	195
16.1	Ideological categorization, structure, and organizational capacity of student organizations at national level	279
28.1	Main characteristics of French student organizations	460
29.1	Student elections results at University of Lille, 2019	476
29.2	Conseil d'administration	480
29.3	The education and university life commission (CFVU)	481
30.1	Klemenčič's typology of national student associations	483
30.2	Klemenčič's typology of national systems of student representation	484
30.3	Klemenčič's typology of national systems of student intermediation	485
30.4	The "axes" typology	492
31.1	Axis framework classification	512
33.1	Origins of student representation in Russian universities	535
35.1	Active student associations at the University Complutense of Madrid (UCM) by year between 2011 and 2022	568

List of Contributors

Samuel Sasu Adonteng is Programmes Officer for Education and Students' Rights at the All-Africa Students Union. Samuel is AASU's primary contact with the UNESCO Covid-19 Global Education Coalition and the focal person for the Union at the Education Cannot Wait's Youth Subgroup. Samuel also volunteers as the Business Development Manager for the National Union of Ghana Students. He has been a part of the Ghanaian student movement since 2015, having served on different student boards. Samuel holds a Bachelor of Business Administration from the University of Professional Studies, Accra, Ghana, and an MBA in Total Quality Management from the same University.

Allan Aksiim is the former president of the University of Tartu Student Union (2018–20) and Public Policy Advisor of the Federation of Estonian Student Unions (EÜL). While in office in University of Tartu, Estonia, he partook in the university science funding committee work, represented the student voice in science prodean meetings (in things related to PhD students), dealt with cases of academic misconduct where the official student opinion was need and in general tried to insert the student voice in all relevant documents and decision-making bodies where possible. Previously he has been involved in the student movement in several roles during multiple years. In EÜL with the help of previous experience and competencies, he advised the board and member unions on topics from academic politics to the latest relevant research related to students in Estonia and abroad.

Rexford Akrong is currently a Programs Officer at the Education and Students Rights Department of the All-Africa Students Union. Before joining the All-Africa Students Union, he worked as an independent consultant for international organizations including the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), the Africa Leadership Academy (ALA), and the Startup Lounge. He has a track record of publishing in different internationally recognized peer-reviewed journals. Mr Akrong holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Economics from the University of Cape Coast, Ghana, and an MSc. Agricultural and Applied Economics from the University of Nairobi, Kenya and is currently a PhD candidate at the School for Development Studies at the University of Cape Coast, Ghana. His research interests are in the areas of student governance, labor, youth employment, smallholder agricultural commercialization, climate change adaptation, and sustainable agriculture. rexakrong@aasonline.org/akrongrexford@yahoo.com

Faisal Al Balushi from Oman obtained PhD from the School of Social Sciences at Cardiff University, UK. He started working as a lecturer in a technical college in Oman in 2010. Then, in 2014, he joined the quality department and worked on fostering a quality assurance culture in the college, and this is where the idea of his research started. While there is a substantial effort to involve various stakeholders in quality processes, authentic student involvement was missing. Therefore, his PhD research is focused on HE student advisory councils, student voice and representation in Oman.

Bianca Borges has a Law Degree from the University of Sao Paulo, Brazil, and is the member of the Executive Secretariat of the Latin America and Caribbean Continental Organization of Students for the southern cone region. She is also a director of the National Students Union (UNE) of Brazil. Involved in the student's movement since high school, she held different leadership positions at the local, national, and international level and is currently a member of the Steering Committee of the Global Student Forum.

Muhammad Arfan has a PhD in IWRM with a research interest in water governance and public policy. He joined National Students Federation Pakistan in 2007 during the martial law regime of General Pervaiz Musharraf. He actively participates in the reorganization of NSF across the country. He was elected as the NSF Punjab president in 2011 and was also the central organizer for NSF Pakistan. He has been involved with several rights-based organizations (Awami Workers Party, Pakistan Mazdoor Kisan Party), which focus on farm labor and women's issues. Currently, he is a reference-group member of Collective of Agrarian Scholar-Activists from the South. He writes about water, climate, and community collective action and tweets at @Muhamma04818452.

Carla Trigo Argomedeo, twenty-five years old, born and raised in northern Chile, Public Accountant and Auditor at the University of La Serena, where she was a student leader from 2018 to 2021, holding the position of President of her career and Vice President of the Federation of Students. At the same time, CONFECH Spokesperson and representative of several gender spaces, forming part of the drafting and modification commission to the "Protocol of Harassment, Abuse and Arbitrary Discrimination of the University of La Serena." Today, public worker and specialist in Government; master's candidate in Government and Public Policy at the Alberto Hurtado University, Chile. Carlatrigo.contacto@gmail.com

Javiera Aymara Molina Barboza (1994) Sociologist from the University of Valparaíso, Chile. He has studied public innovation, inclusion, coaching, and leadership. During her undergraduate training, she was elected Secretary General of the Federation of Students of the University of Valparaíso (2019–20) and spokesperson for CONFECH. She currently lives in the Valparaíso region and works as an independent researcher. Email: JAAVIERA.MOLINA@GMAIL.COM

Sebastian Berger is Executive Director of the Global Student Forum (GSF). He is a former Vice President of the European Students' Union (ESU) and a founding member of the GSF Steering Committee. Sebastian has been an active member of the international student movement for years, holding various leadership positions on the local, national, and international level. He holds the Co-Chairmanship of the Education and Academia Stakeholder Group in the United Nations and serves as a trustee and as the treasurer of Nobel peace laureate Kailash Satyarthi's 100 Million Campaign Foundation. Sebastian holds a bachelor's degree in political science from University of Vienna and is completing a master's degree in International Relations and Security Studies at NUP Cyprus.

Moises David Cáceres is Sociologist from Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras (UNAH), Honduras, and a master's student of FLACSO's Human Development Program. He

conducted research on the reforms to university governance at UNAH. His service roles include Co-founder and leader of the Federation of Student Associations 2011, member of the Sociology Student Association 2013, leader of the 2013 Student Organization Initiative, of the 2014 Student Organization Project, and of the 2014 University Student Constituent Assembly. He was expelled from UNAH in 2014 for his fight for the democratization of the university's government and prosecuted by the university authorities on three occasions. Currently, he serves alternative measures to prison due for three-years sentence to prison.

Cristián Bellei Carvacho is Associate Researcher at the Center for Advanced Research in Education, University of Chile, and professor at the Institute of Educational Sciences, Austral University of Chile. He has been Tinker Visiting Professor at Stanford University, USA. He is a Sociologist from the University of Chile, Master of Education Policy and Doctor of Education, both from Harvard University. He has published extensively about Chilean education, mainly regarding education policy, school change and improvement, school segregation, privatization, and school choice. His last book is "Education, the broken promise. Effort, fears and hopes of Chilean families in the educational market."

Tamara Ciobanu is studying International and Comparative Business Law within the "Babeş-Bolyai" University of Cluj-Napoca, Romania. She is the current Vice president for International Relations of the National Alliance of Student Organizations in Romania. Her activity in the field of student movement began in early 2017, within the Student Organization of Babeş-Bolyai University (OSUBB), where she outlined a passion for the educational dimension. Tamara has been an expert evaluator for the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education since 2018 and she had been Vice President for Education for two years, deciding afterwards to get involved at the international level.

Jerusha Conner is Professor of Education at Villanova University, USA. Her research focuses on youth activism and organizing, student engagement, and student voice. She is the author of more than forty journal articles and book chapters, two edited collections (*Contemporary Youth Activism*, 2016 and *Student Voice in American Education Policy*, 2015), and *The New Student Activists* (2020).

Martina Darmanin is a graduate of the University of Malta, holding a bachelor's degree in Applied Biomedical Sciences and a master's degree in food studies and environmental health. She has been active in student representation on the local, national, and European levels. From 2021 to 2022 Martina was President of the European Students' Union and co-chair of the Bologna Follow-Up Working Group on Social Dimension. Having also represented students in the Scholars at Risk Network and the Global Campaign for Education, Martina furthered ESU's work on access to education, academic freedom, student agency in education governance, and international cooperation on education.

Liam Davies was the 2021 National Vice President of the New Zealand Union of Students' Associations (NZUSA) and the NZUSA Representative on the Committee for University Student Pastoral Care. Liam was the 2020 Engagement Vice President of Massey University At Wellington Students' Association. He was a former Youth Councillor for Hastings District Council in

2017 and Wellington City Council from 2018 to 2020. Liam holds a Diploma in Professional Speaking and an Associate Diploma in Public Speaking and Communication Performance from Speech New Zealand, and a Bachelor of Communication from Massey University where he was Valedictorian. liamdaviesnz@gmail.com

Mike Day is a graduate of the University of Lancaster, UK. He works as an International Learning and Development Consultant and has worked within the student movement at a local, national, and international level for nearly forty years, supporting elected student officers. He specializes in learning and development, influencing and international relations. His publications include Chapter One of “Student Feedback, Context Issues and Practice” (CVCP 1993), “NUS90—A History of NUSUK 1922–2012” (2012), “Dubious Causes of Little Interest to Students” (2012 *European Journal of Higher Education* edited by Manja Klemenčič), “The National Union of Students and Devolution” (2018 in *Students in the C20th* edited by Jodi Burkett) and “David vs Goliath—the past, present and future of students’ unions in the UK” with Jim Dickinson (2018 Higher Education Policy Institute).

Ștefan-Marius Deaconu is the former president of the National Alliance of Student Organizations in Romania (2017–18), having previously been vice-president for educational affairs. Between 2019 and 2020, he was Vice President of the Romanian Youth Council. Ștefan-Marius has a rich experience in representing students, being a member of various structures such as the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education or the National Council of Ethics and University Management. Ștefan-Marius is a PhD candidate in History and a research assistant at the University of Bucharest. He is an advisor to the Minister of Education in Romania (2022-present) and works at The Executive Agency for Higher Education, Research, Development, and Innovation Funding since 2019.

Cristobal Villalobos Dintrans is Sociologist and Social Worker from the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile, master’s in applied economics from the Alberto Hurtado University and Georgetown University, and PhD in Social Sciences from University of Chile. Currently, he works as Lecturer in Faculty of Education and Deputy Director of the Centro de Estudios de Políticas y Prácticas en Educación (CEPPE UC) of the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile. His research topics include educational inequities, citizenship education, social movements for education, and elite education. He has published more than sixty articles in indexed journals, as well as more than thirty book chapters.

Ellen R. Dixon was a former Steering Committee at the Global Student Forum (2021–2022; 2022–2023), and is the 2023 National President of the New Zealand Union of Students’ Associations (NZUSA). She is a member of the UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report Advisory Board, was the SDG Student Program Global Project Lead at the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network Youth, and was the Interim Youth/Student Representative on the Education 2030 High Level Steering Committee Sherpa Group. Ellen is a Massey Scholar and a Wellington Doctoral Scholar. She holds a first-class Bachelor of Arts in Sociolinguistics from Massey University, and a Master of International Relations and Diplomacy with Distinction from the University of Canterbury.

W. Sachinda Dulanjana is Attorney-at-Law with extensive experience as a student leader. He served as the “Social and Welfare Secretary” of the Sri Lanka Law Student Union and as the “Asia Regional Representative” of the Commonwealth Student Association. Additionally, Sachinda held prominent positions such as the speaker of the Sri Lanka Youth Parliament and the official Sri Lankan youth delegate to the 71st UN General Assembly. As a Chevening alumnus, he completed his MSc. in International and European Politics at the University of Edinburgh, where he also served as the “Social Secretary” of the Edinburgh Political Union and as the “Policy Officer” of the Sustainable Development Association. Sachinda also holds a master’s degree in human rights from the University of Colombo and has worked as a visiting lecturer in “Leadership” at the University of Peradeniya. Currently, he works as a training consultant to empower youth.

Dmitry Efimov is Unit Head at the HSE University (Moscow, Russia) Centre for Institutional Research. He has bachelor’s and master’s degrees in political science from HSE University. Previously he held different positions in HSE University Student Council—coordinated the institutional reform in 2015 and managed academic affairs in 2016–18. Now he coordinates university-wide system of student evaluation of teaching (SET) and some other student-related regular university feedback surveys. Dmitry is a PhD candidate at HSE Institute of Education, and researches student representation, student experience, and student evaluation of teaching. His research interests also include authoritarian regimes and electoral studies.

Jorge-Antonio Fernández de los Ríos is a teacher in the Department of Education of the Faculty of Languages and Education of the Nebrija University, Spain. He holds a PhD in Education (with Honors) from the Complutense University of Madrid (Spain). He also holds a master’s degree in quality and improvement of education from the Autonomous University of Madrid, a degree in pedagogy and a degree in psychopedagogy from the University of Malaga and a degree in Primary Education from the Nebrija University. He has worked in the educational field with various groups and in different training, research, and educational innovation experiences at the University of Malaga, the Ministry of Education, the National Institute of Public Administration, the Bertelsmann Foundation, and the Complutense University, among others.

Enrique Maestu Fonseca is a pre-doctoral researcher at the Complutense University of Madrid, Spain, in Political Science and International Relations. He holds a degree in Political Science and a degree in Philosophy with a Masters in Politics and Democracy. Militant in the student movement between 2007 and 2014, he took part in the anti-Bolstein movement and was part of the youth collective Juventud Sin Futuro. She has worked in the European Parliament in the committees of Employment and Social Affairs and Education and Culture (2016–18) and in the Ministry of Universities (2021–2). His current areas of research are the study of Spanish political culture, sociology of the Millennial generation, and his thesis on the Spanish conservative field.

Nuvi Emmanuel Junior is M.A. International Affairs student at Legon Center for International Affairs and Diplomacy (LECIAD) with a research interest in African governance and development. He is also a graduate research intern at the All-African Students Union on Pan-Africanism and Culture. He doubles as a language teacher at Alliance Francaise Accra, working as an English tutor and a liaison between the language and the cultural departments. He holds a bachelor’s

degree in Arts Education from the University of Cape Coast (UCC), Ghana. Emmanuel is a researcher at the National Union of Ghanaian Students.

Nicolás Carrancio Fuentes is twenty-four and lives in the Maipú district of Santiago de Chile. He studied Commercial Engineering at the Metropolitan Technological University of Chile. In the student movement he played an articulating role representing students affected by the pandemic and social crisis between 2019 and 2020, in the board of CONFECH. He focused on giving a voice to students usually excluded from the public debate, focusing on participation in the technical and related training centers.

Novel Lena Folabit is a former Vice-President of the All-African Student Unions-AASU Central African Region and a former member of the Global Student Forum-GSF Steering Committee. As a GSF SC member, she was in charge of the Portfolio on Education for All and Membership. She mobilizes and motivates students to uphold the entrepreneurial mindset to fight unemployment in Africa and her country, Cameroon in particular. She has a Masters in University Governance and the Development of Local Institutions from the University of Yaoundé II-Soa, Cameroon, and currently a PhD candidate of Higher Education at the University of Kwazulu-Natal, South Africa.

Quentin Genelot is a PhD student in political science at the University of Bourgogne-Franche-Comté, France. During his master's degree, he completed two dissertations on student engagement, working on student elections and the role of student representatives in universities. His PhD aims at describing and analyzing the contribution of student organizations to public policy, using the French example.

Eileen Y.L. Goh is an international development professional focused on youth and sustainable development policies and challenges. With the Commonwealth Secretariat, Eileen develops programs to mainstream young people into formal institutions and provide an equal platform for youth leaders to voice and address important issues. She manages the capacity building of young people from across the Commonwealth, including efforts to grow and provide advice to the Commonwealth Youth Networks, a family of youth-led structures that lead on thematic issues and implement programmatic-solutions across the themes such as education, gender equality, health, sports, human rights, climate change, and sustainable urbanization.

Jakub Grodecki has an academic background in engineering at the University of Science and Technology (AGH) in Kraków, Poland. Former International Officer of the Students' Parliament of the Republic of Poland and Vice President of the ESU, where his primary focus was HE policies of the EU, quality of Higher Education, and the Bologna Process. Along with being in ESU is also a member of the Advisory Council on Youth in the Council of Europe. Previously, he also worked in the field of Quality Assurance at the Polish Accreditation Committee (PKA), ESU QA Pool of Experts, and in EQAR Executive Board.

María Josefa Guzmán (1999), Political Scientist at the Catholic University of Temuco, Chile, has completed certifications in prevention of gender violence, leadership and is currently pursuing a diploma in Public Policy. During undergraduate training, María Josefa was

CONFECH Spokesperson and member of the Student Federation of the Catholic University of Temuco (2018–20), being the first nonbinary person to represent both organizations. María Josefa currently lives in Temuco, La Araucanía Region, and works as a political and communications advisor.

Martin Hammerbauer is a former member of the Executive Committee of the European Students' Union, having finished his second term in June 2022. Before that, he represented the Czech Student Chamber of the Council of Higher Education Institution (SK RVŠ). He holds a master's degree in International Trade from the Prague University of Economics and Business, where he received an award for a thesis in experimental economics. He has experience from the financial sector and consulting and helps to foster international cooperation through organizations such as the Asia-Europe Foundation or the Council of Europe.

Odayne Houghton is Manager of Data Governance and Quality at the National Commercial Bank Financial Group, and a faculty member in the Department of Manufacture Advanced Design Engineering Cymru at the University of the Wales Trinity St. David, UK. He currently holds two Masters of Science degrees, in Digital Business and Innovation and Information Systems. Odayne is a passionate contributor to nation and region-building, working closely with the Commonwealth, CARICOM, and UNESCO on several developmental projects. He has served on the first Executive Committee of CSA from 2015 to 2018 and as the strategic advisor to the second Executive Committee from 2018 to 2022.

Diana Hodulíková has been working for UN—UNICEF in Ethiopia since June 2022, advocating for equal conditions and human rights of marginalized children. She holds a degree in Architecture and Urban Design from the Faculty of Architecture, Brno University of Technology, Czech Republic. During her studies represented students in the Academic senate and SK RVŠ. Besides, she studied at Politecnico di Milano, Italy, and Southeast University, Nanjing, China. She is interested in the overlap of architecture and urban design with humanitarian action.

Wei Huang is a professor at School of Economics and Management at Changsha University of Science and Technology (CSUST), China. He is also the co-director of Educational Economics and Fiscal Institute of Hunan Province (EEFI). Previously, he completed his PhD in Economics at the Education Science Institute of Huazhong University of Science and Technology (HUST) in 2005. Currently, his research focuses on improving the effectiveness of college student (financial) aid and its implications for public policy in China's higher education. He is also interested in developing theory-driven, rigorously tested experimental studies to promoting college student psychological and behavioral development.

Abdul Karim Ibrahim is Research & Communications Coordinator at the All-Africa Students Union. He is also a broadcast journalist, and a Graduate Student at the Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana. Abdul Karim has provided research support to scholars from the Universities of Western Australia and Manchester across various policy domains. Related to his work as a broadcast journalist, Abdul Karim has close to a decade's wealth of experience at the forefront of policy analysis, advocacy and civil society activism in Ghana

and Africa. In 2020, he led investigations to uncover how several high-profile Ghanaians including Speaker of Parliament, Alban Bagbin, and former Vice Chancellor of the University of Ghana, Professor Ebenezer Oduro Owusu were defrauded in the infamous “Dr UN Awards” scandal.

Kristel Jakobson-Pallo obtained her Bachelor Degree in Governmental Sciences at the University of Tartu, Estonia in 2019. As of 2022 she is enrolled in Tallinn University, Estonia doing her Masters in Political Sciences. She has been active in student level politics throughout her studies, as a vice-president of University of Tartu Student Council, vice-chairperson of Federation of Estonian Students’ Union, and a senate member of Tallinn University Senate. During the mandate from 2021–2, she acted as a member of the European Students’ Union Executive Committee.

Manja Klemenčič is Associate Senior Lecturer in Sociology and in General Education at Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Harvard University, USA, and Senior Researcher at Faculty of Education, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia. Manja’s main research is on student agency and student impact on higher education. She also works on student-centered learning and teaching, and a broad range of other higher education topics. She is Editor-in-Chief of *European Journal of Higher Education*, Co-Editor of *Understanding Student Experiences of Higher Education*, and Co-Editor of *Higher Education Dynamics*. Manja won multiple awards for excellence in teaching at Harvard and serves as a consultant to international organizations and governments. During student years, from 1999 to 2001, she was Secretary General of the European Students’ Union.

James Kodjie is Programs Officer in charge of Democracy and Good Governance at the All-Africa Students Union (AASU). James holds a Bachelor of Arts in Integrated Development Studies (Social and Development Administration) from the University for Development Studies (UDS) Tamale-Ghana. He has been engaged in student leadership since his tertiary Education. He oversaw democratic elections that elected student leaders for the University of Development Studies in 2018. Before this, he served as the Secretary of the Judicial Board of the Students Representative Council. James is very passionate about youth development policies.

Peter Kwasi Kodjie is currently the Secretary-General of the All-Africa Students Union (AASU). Peter has variously represented the students of Africa on the Tuning Africa Project Advisory Group (TAPAG) Phase II and is presently an advisory board member of the Harmonization of African Higher Education Quality Assurance and Accreditation (HAQAA) Initiative, and the Africa Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF). Peter is a founding Trustee of the 100 million Campaign (founded by the Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, Kailash Satyarthi). Peter is also a founding member of the Global Student Forum (GSF) and serves on the Governing Council of the Magna Charta Observatory (MCO) as the global student representative. Peter has a strong passion for leadership, youth empowerment, and human rights.

Bismark Amefianu Kudoafor is currently the Programs Officer in charge of Capacity Building at the All-Africa Students Union (AASU) and the Project Officer for the Global Student Forum (GSF). Bismark has a strong interest in student leadership, developed from leading students from

high school to university through to the regional and global levels. Bismark has been involved in professional and entrepreneurial capacity building for students, student leaders, and youth across Africa. He has been instrumental in putting TVET training and twenty-first-century skills at the center of government policy to curb youth unemployment. Bismark holds a Bachelor of Business Administration from the University of Professional Studies, Accra, and is currently a final-year postgraduate student offering International Relations at the University of Ghana.

Awurama Safowaa Kyei-Baffour served as the Executive Assistant to the Secretary-General of the All-Africa Students Union. She holds a bachelor's degree in Political Science and Philosophy, and a Bachelor of Laws Certificate, and is currently pursuing a master's of Business Administration. She wields over seven (7) years of corporate work experience in different fields, including academia, business, and law. Awurama drew early attention to her leadership potential since her childhood days, right from the primary level through the Tertiary level. Her work experience began in 2014, and at present, she works with the Global Student Forum as a Project Officer.

Lukáš Lang studies at the Faculty of Education, University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice, Czech Republic, with a focus on English language and Social Science. He serves in the academic senate of the university and also as its delegate in the Student Chamber of the Council of Higher Education Institutions (SK RVŠ) since 2020. He also studied at the Bishop Gosseteste University in Lincoln, UK as a part of the Erasmus+ programme.

Karl Lembit Laane is the former vice president (2018–19) and president (2020–1) of the University of Tartu Student Union (UTSU) and has also been a member of the University Senate and a student representative in the University of Tartu Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies, where he also obtained his bachelor degree in political science. As UTSU's vice president, his focus was on students' mental health and the quality of studies. As president, the attention shifted more toward the needs of students with disabilities and the university's doctoral reform, besides the everyday work of leading the organization. Currently, he is a student representative in the University of Tartu Institute of Philosophy and Semiotics, where he studies philosophy as a graduate student, as well as a member of the General Assembly of EÜL.

Fan Li is an associate professor in College of Economics and Management at Huazhong Agricultural University, China, and a senior researcher at Development Economics Group in Wageningen University, the Netherlands. He received his PhD from LICOS-Centre for Institutions and Economic Performance, KU Leuven, Belgium in 2017. His research interests are mainly focusing on education and human capital development in China, and recently he has been focusing on conducting field experimental studies and using quasi-experimental methods in educational policy impact assessment.

Giuseppe Lipari is a researcher and activist from Sicily, Italy. Involved since high school in social movements, he has served in the Board of OBESSU (2018–20) and in the first Steering Committee of the Global Student Forum (2020–2). Giuseppe is currently a PhD Student at Scuola Normale Superiore (Florence-Italy) and his work is focused on the student movement of secondary education.

In this publication he has contributed to the studies on student confederations at the national level (Chile), at the regional level (OCLAE) and at the global level (Global Student Forum).

Thierry M. Luescher works in the Human Sciences Research Council of South Africa. He is also Adjunct Professor of Critical Studies in Higher Education Transformation at Nelson Mandela University. Thierry has a PhD from the University of Cape Town. His research focuses on higher education development and student politics in Africa, the student experience, and student affairs. Thierry's publications include *#FeesMustFall and its Aftermath: Violence, Wellbeing and the Student Movement in South Africa* (HSRC Press, 2022, with A. Wilson Fadji, K. Morwe and others) and *Reflections of South African Student Leaders* (African Minds, 2020, with D. Webbstock and N. Bhengu).

Claryce Jiawen Lum is a content specialist who has worked in education, government, social enterprise, communications and technology in Singapore, Jakarta, and Berlin. She received a bachelor's degree in English Literature from National University of Singapore, a postgraduate diploma in Education from Nanyang Technological University Singapore, and a master's degree in Global Studies from Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin Germany and FLACSO Argentina. She currently works at a global technology company, developing and enforcing policies that protect the public interest and promote trust and safety in the online information ecosystem.

Cresente Cristóbal Lizarbe Luna (22) is an undergraduate student of Engineering in International Trade at the Metropolitan Technological University. He has excelled in student representation since 2020, initially collaborating with his alma mater and, subsequently, with the Confederation of Students of Chile (Confech), evolving into the role of National Spokesperson of Lucha Baes, in favor of educational accessibility. Cresente has a Diploma in Citizenship and Human Rights by the UTEM, and was involved in diverse forums of the United Nations. He had the honor of representing Chile in the Organization of Caribbean and Latin American Students (OCLAE) during the year 2021. He is co-founder of the Youth Parliament of Chile initiative and, in 2023, he was selected to integrate the 6th cohort of the UNAOC (United Nations Alliance of Civilizations) Young Peacebuilders program, actively contributing to the organization of the International Peace Festival 2023, promoting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), respect, interculturalism and peace. He is currently working as an activist for Peace and the SDGs in several Latin American organizations. He lives in Santiago de Chile. Email: cresente.lizarbe@gmail.com

Jean-Thomas Martelli is a mixed methods ethnographer in political science and sociology. He focuses on educated youth, representation, and the politics of becoming in contemporary India. His current interdisciplinary project explores the effects of political language on democracy when it transitions to authoritarianism. He is a research fellow at the International Institute for Asian Studies as well as a visiting fellow at the Department of Anthropology, Stanford University. Dr. Martelli was previously a postdoctoral fellow at Sciences Po Paris and co-headed the Politics and Society research division at the Centre de Sciences Humaines in New Delhi. He holds his doctoral degree from the King's India Institute. His research repository is found here: jtmartelli.com.

Hélène Mariaud is a PhD candidate in Arts and Cultural Management at the Université Libre de Bruxelles, Belgium. Her research focuses on artistic work and employment and artists' statuses, working conditions, and their relation to their careers. She obtained a bachelor's Degree in Photography from ESA Saint-Luc Tournai in 2015. She also holds a master's Degree in Arts and Cultural Management from ULB, which she finished in 2019. From 2015 to 2018, she was an elected member of the executive committee of FEF (Fédération des Etudiant.e.s Francophones), the Belgian French-speaking national student union. In 2018 she became Equality Officer for the European Students Union, and one year later became a member of its executive committee. As a student representative, she worked mainly on issues linked to accessibility, inclusivity, and quality of Higher Education.

Elorm Mawuli-Kwawu is the Head of Research and Communications at the All-Africa Students Union (AASU). In this role, he brings his years of experience in brand communications, advertising, and public relations, a diverse range of communications and creative skills, and an established base of corporate and media contacts to drive AASU's brand image, press relations, continental, and global advocacy strategy across key audiences. Elorm has a multi-disciplinary background in Communications, International Affairs, Diplomacy, International Economic Policy, Emerging Markets Analysis, and African Development Policy. Elorm holds an MA in International Affairs from the Legon Center for International Affairs and Diplomacy (LECIAD), a BA in Communication Studies from the Ghana Institute of Journalism and currently is an MPhil candidate in African Studies at the University of Ghana. Elorm is a certified Trainer of Trainer (ToT) having undergone a Norwegian-funded fellowship with ACCORD, in South Africa.

Emmanuel Shu Ngwa [PhD] is a university lecturer of Education. His research interests include: Higher Education Management, policy issues, school leadership, and inclusive education. From 2008 to 2017, Dr. Ngwa volunteered as Sighted Reader and Research Assistant for scholars with visual impairments in Cameroon and Nigeria, where he undertook undergraduate and postgraduate studies respectively. Between 2019 and 2020 he served as an international academic staff at the Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Ndufu-Alike, Ebonyi State, Nigeria. He's been a civil rights activist right from university days as a student representative. He's currently a senior lecturer at the University of Bamenda, Cameroon.

Mary Adhiambo Ojwang is Masters Student at the Institute of Development Studies, University of Nairobi, Kenya. She is also the Team Leader and Founder, Women Students Mentorship Association (WOSWA). Mary Ojwang has over eight years of experience in gender justice and human rights advocacy.

Amanda Caroline Harumy Oliveira is twenty-nine years old and holds a degree in International Relations from the Federal University of São Paulo (2015), Brazil, and a master's degree in Latin American Integration (PROLAM-USP). She is a PhD student in Latin American Integration (PROLAM-USP) and holds several other expert, teaching and research positions, including Member of the General Secretary of the Latin American and Caribbean Continental Organization of Students (OCLAE), and Researcher at the José Bonifácio Chair—USP. She was the most voted candidate for the position of Student Representative of the University Council of USP in

2019 and 2020. She is also a member of the USP Graduate Council and currently occupies the general board of the USP Graduate Students Association.

Horia-Șerban Onița holds an Undergraduate diploma in Law and is admitted as a lawyer in Bucharest Bar. Horia was president of the National School Students' Council (2015–16), Vice President of the Romanian Youth Council (2016–17), Vice President for Education of ANOSR (2017–2020) and president of ANOSR (2020–2), while currently he is Vice President of the European Students' Union (ESU). He was also member of Board of the National QA agency (ARACIS), the Social and Economic Council of Romania, BFUG Working Group on Social Dimension (currently as co-chair), and other national and international structures active in higher education.

Josefa Javiera González Palma (22, Recoleta, Santiago de Chile) is a high-level technician in Tourism from the School of Gastronomy and Tourism at AIEP. Pedagogy student in Physical Education and Health at the School of Movement and Sports Sciences at the Silva Henríquez Catholic University (UCSH). Secretary General of the Student Federation of the Silva Henríquez Catholic University (FEUCSH). Spokesperson for the Federal Board of Mental Health (“safe space”) of the UCSH. Representative of the 2021 generation of EFI at UCSH.

José-Luis Parejo is Lecturer in Pedagogy at the University of Valladolid (Spain) and member of the research group ICUFOP at the University of Granada. He has a BA in Pedagogy from the University of Salamanca, an MA in Participative Investigation and a PhD in Theory and History of Education (with Honors) from the Complutense University of Madrid, with a dissertation on student participation policies in the Bologna Process in Spain (1999–2010). He was previously a technical advisor to the State Council of University Students. He was the UNESCO Chair in University Policy and Management at the Madrid Polytechnic University. He also obtained a postdoctoral fellowship at the University College of London in 2019.

Nkhaya Paulsen-More (Ngāti Maru [Hauraki], Ngāruahine, Ngāti Pūkenga) was the 2021 Tumuaki Takirua of Te Mana Ākonga (National Māori Tertiary Students' Association). Nkhaya was also the 2020 Tumuaki (President) of Te Waka o Ngā Ākonga Māori at Massey University Albany, New Zealand. She was the IIML's 2021 recipient of the Letteri Family Project Scholarship, and holds a Bachelor of Arts in English and Creative Writing from Massey University, and a Master of Arts in Creative Writing with Distinction from the International Institute of Modern Letters at Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington. She has written for Massive, Te Pararē, and Turbine | Kapohau. npaulsenmore@gmail.com

Igor Gonçalves Pereira is Professor of History. Graduated in History from the Federal University of Fluminense, Brazil, was a scholarship holder of the Extension of the State University of North Fluminense Darcy Ribeiro (UENF) and is currently pursuing his second degree as a bachelor in History from the Federal University of Fluminense (UFF), and holder of the Scientific Initiation Program of the UFF (PIBIC) and teaching in World Political Economy at the Federal University of ABC (UFABC). He was a member of the National Secretary of Formation of the

Federation of the Student Movement of History (FEMEH) (2019–21), alternate member of the University Council of the Fluminense Federal University (2020) and currently chairs the Carlos Marighella Academic Center of the Federal University History Course Fluminense—Campos dos Goytacazes (CAHIS) (2019–22).

Kristin Pintson is the current vice-chairperson of the Federation of Estonian Student Unions (EÜL). She has a long experience in student representation. She was elected to student council already in the fourth grade and has represented students since then. Kristin has a background as a former Chairman of the Board of Estonian School Student Councils' Union which is the organization who represents school students on national level in Estonia and works closely with EÜL. Kristin is developing her leadership skills also through her studies: she is a bachelor's student in choral conducting in Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre. Within those ten years of representing students her favorite topics have been organizing events, members' development, and students' mental health. Currently in EÜL she manages members, international relations, and social-political topics.

Georgia Potton is working in the Secretariat of the Global Student Forum and is the Head of Activism for the 100 Million campaign, a global youth and student-led organization defending the rights of children and young people to freedom, safety, and education. She has supported successful mobilizations for education and social justice across the world, from informal settlements in Kenya to the German Parliament. Georgia is an expert in meaningful youth and student-led activism, self-organization, democratic representation and governance, and played a key role in the formation of the Global Student Forum. She has an academic background in international politics and strong experience in fighting for the inclusion and leadership of those who are systematically marginalized or exploited.

Ruben Pratisoli studies French and German Cultural Studies at the University of Milan, Italy. He was active at UDU Unione degli Universitari from 2018 until 2022 where he has been International Officer from 2020 until 2022. He was Erasmus student at the Heidelberg University and specialized in Human Security at Paris SciencesPo University. Within the European Students' Union, he was member of the Task Force for the writing of the new Policy on Housing and Transport and was a Board Member for Italy at ESU from 2019 until 2022. Since 2022 he has been volunteer rescuer at the Italian Red Cross.

Musarrat Maisha Reza is Senior Lecturer in Biomedical Sciences at University of Exeter, UK, and received her PhD from Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. Outside academia, Dr. Reza remains stalwart in her advocacy for youth rights and participation in decision-making. She has served as the Chairperson of the Commonwealth Students' Association from 2018 to 2022, working to unify and represent national student councils in the Commonwealth. She has also served as the Youth Representative on the UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report Advisory Board. Dr. Reza represents young people on high-level international panels across the Commonwealth and to decision-makers globally.

Carmen Romero has a BA in Political Science and Public Administration from Complutense University of Madrid, Spain, and an MA in Political Science (focus on European Institutions) from the Free University of Brussels, Belgium. She started being a student activist in high school but it was in University when she held different leadership positions at the local, national, and international level. She is passionate about the role of students in shaping educational policies and the organizational development of civil society organizations. In this publication, she has contributed to analyze the role of student-led organizations at the regional level (OCLAE) and at the global level (Global Student Forum).

Mattia Sguazzini is a PhD candidate at the University of Genova (Italy) in Security & Strategic Studies. He holds a BA in Political Science and International Relations and an MA in Government and Public Policy from the University of Pavia (Italy). From 2012 until 2016 was in the secretariat of the “Coordinamento per il diritto allo studio—UDU Pavia,” the local section of the national students’ union “UDU—Unione degli Universitari.” From 2015 until 2018, he was part of UDU’s national executive committee. Between 2012 and 2020, he held students’ representative positions at local and national level.

Damir Solak studies in a PhD Study Programme in Financial Law and Financial Sciences at the Faculty of Law, Masaryk University in Brno, Czech Republic. His research topic is funding of public service media. He is active as a student representative in the academic senate of the university. He has been a member of the Council for Higher Education Institutions since 2018, where he now holds the position of Vice-president of the Student Chamber (SK RVŠ) for International Affairs.

Helo Liis Soodla is the former vice president of the University of Tartu Student Union (2019–21) and has also been a member of the University of Tartu Senate. During her term as vice president, she focused on providing input for creating quality assurance systems and reforming doctoral studies, as well as enforcing equal treatment principles. At national level, she has been most involved with advocating for international students’ rights and welfare in Estonia. Having pursued two bachelor’s degrees—in psychology and philosophy—her passion for improving mental health services led Helo Liis to start a psychology PhD program at the University of Tartu, Estonia, in autumn 2021. She is currently a member of the General Assembly of EÜL.

Rachel Stanndard is a former teacher who recently completed a Master of Arts in Education from Villanova University, USA. She currently works in North Carolina State University’s College of Education helping educators become licensed to teach.

Hector Enoc Ulloa Chinchilla is a former student leader from the Honduran student movement where he served as Vice President of the Law School Students Association and as nationwide spokesperson for the Honduran University Movement (MEU). He has an academic background in law with a Master’s in public administration from the University of Bergen. After moving to Norway he became the first ever foreign president of the Norwegian Students’ and Academics’ International Assistance Fund, where worked with national and international advocacy on the right to education, academic freedom, and human rights. He also served as a Steering Committee member

of the Global Student Forum in the 2022-2023 period. Currently he works as Policy Advisor at Skatteforsk - Centre for Tax Research, and serves as board member of Debt Justice Norway (SLUG) and Executive Committee member of the United Nation's Education Cannot Wait fund.

Angela Upright (she/her) is Assistant Director of the Ursinus Center for Advocacy, Responsibility, and Engagement and Bonner Coordinator at Ursinus College, USA. Most recently, she graduated from Villanova University with a Master of Arts in Education, focusing on systems of oppression in higher education and student advocacy.

Muhammad Usman is a PhD student at North Dakota State University, Fargo, the United States. He remained active with student movements in Pakistan from 2009 to 2016 in different capacities.

Matteo Vespa obtained his bachelor's Degree in Political Sciences at the University of Cagliari in 2018; in 2020 obtained his master's Degree in International and Diplomatic Sciences at the University of Bologna, Forlì campus, Italy. In 2019 he published the book "Europa e India: partiti a confronto." From 2016 until 2022 he was involved in Unione degli Universitari, Italian main student union, and ESU: as a member of UDU's delegation at ESU Board (2016–18), as President of UDU Cagliari local union (2018), as UDU's International Officer (2018–20), as a member of ESU's Executive Committee (2021–2) and finally as President of the European Students' Union (2022-3). Since 2023, he works as Policy and Project Officer at Civil Society Europe.

Christina Williams, a proud Jamaican, has degrees in International Relations, Policy and Law from the University of the West Indies and a Post Graduate Diploma in Global Leadership from the UN established University of Peace. She has been an active champion of student development, having served on numerous student-led groups as well as government and international bodies on education. She served the largest student population in the English-speaking Caribbean during the onset of the COVID 19 pandemic as student president and her successful interventions earned her a global award alongside leaders like Greta Thunberg in 2021. She later transitioned to becoming the first female President of her country's tertiary student union helping to produce landmark policies which helped her to attain the Princess Diana Award for 2023.

Panpan Yao is a PhD candidate in Business Administration at Changsha University of Science and Technology (CSUST), China. Previously, she obtained her master's degree in Educational Economic and Management at CSUST in 2018. Her research interests are mainly focusing on student governance, student leadership, and social identity in China's higher education. She is currently conducting a large-scale undergraduate study, assessing the role of student government and its influence on college student development.

Foreword

For more than sixty years, the Norwegian Students' and Academics International Assistance Fund (SAIH) has engaged globally with diverse issues based on a desire to show the power of international solidarity and a belief of education as a tool to change societies and raise the critical questions required for human progress. This time has allowed us to acknowledge the critical role that students play in ensuring education becomes a tool for transformation and liberation.

History has shown us that students have risen to the challenge and fought for democracy, human rights, and freedom of expression many times. Today, as the world experiences a global decline in democracy, student governments and student activism represent a much-needed ray of hope but unfortunately, that also means that students have become targets for authoritarianism. The risk of being a student representative would seem to have increased considerably in recent times; to fight back, there is a need for more knowledge production about student activism and students' role in shaping society. Only then will advocacy efforts foster the required support from other sectors.

The Bloomsbury Handbook of Student Politics and Representation in Higher Education provides us with useful insights into students' political agency and empirical evidence of their capacity to shape higher education across different contexts and time periods. Such insights are useful to raise awareness about how student activism and student representation are fundamentally linked to academia and play a role in strengthening higher education institutions' knowledge contribution to society. Therefore, a vibrant student movement should never be perceived as a disruptor of academic activities but as a milestone of a nourishing and engaged academic environment. After all, the conquests by the student movement have very often gone over the walls of educational institutions and reshaped society as a whole.

The broad scope of this Handbook provides an unprecedented radiography of the diverse forms of student governments and methods of engagement. The knowledge generated through this research reaffirms the positive impact that students have had in the evolution of the higher education sector and further solidifies the arguments supporting students' legitimate right to participate in decision-making processes related to their education. We welcome this amazing contribution and encourage everyone to dig deep into it in order to get a better understanding of education's biggest stakeholder.

Finally, SAIH believes in the reshaping of the higher education sector toward a more inclusive and open space where new knowledge can be developed and easily accessed by all groups in society. It is therefore an honor for us to be able to support this initiative's efforts of being an Open Access publication and intersect, in a historical moment like few others, with two of the most promising projects to strengthen student representation in the past decades: the Global Student Forum and the Student Impact in Higher Education Globally research project.

Hector Enoc Ulloa Chinchilla
President (SAIH)

Acknowledgments

The Bloomsbury Handbook of Student Politics and Representation in Higher Education is a result of unprecedented global research collaboration through a research project “SIHEG—Student Impact in Higher Education Globally”. The project commenced in June 2021 when Manja Klemenčič, as principal investigator, and Sebastian Berger, the Executive Director of the Global Student Forum (GSF), signed a *Memorandum of Understanding* to proceed with research collaboration leading to the publication of this Handbook. The collaboration was endorsed and supported by the leaders of the four regional student federations which founded GSF: Peter Kwasi Kodjie, Abdul Karim Ibrahim, and Elorm Mawuli-Kwawu (All-African Students Union – AASU), Musarrat Maisha Reza (Commonwealth Students’ Association – CSA), Martina Darmanin, Jakub Grodecki, Martin Hammerbauer, Kristel Jakobson, and Matteo Vespa (European Students’ Union – ESU), and Bianca Borges dos Santos (The Organización Continental Latinoamericana y Caribena de Estudiantes—OCLAE). The collaboration was also supported by the Steering Committee members of the Global Student Forum who actively participated in it: Georgia Potton, Giuseppe Lipari, and Carmen Romero. Sebastian Berger, and the aforementioned leaders of the regional federations and the Steering Committee members were a driving force in identifying and supporting student leaders contributing to this Handbook. They also helped organize research training workshops, online writing retreats, and meetings in small regional groups to discuss research progress and preliminary findings.

Collaboration on a global scale and with so many people involved was a demanding but also a highly rewarding process. The Handbook has strengthened and expanded the community of academics working on student politics and representation across the world. It has inspired new research questions and opened new avenues for research collaboration in the future.

Student leaders involved in the project obtained training in social science research methods to conduct rigorous research into student politics and representation. My hope has been to empower student leaders to learn how to conduct research to generate original knowledge on contemporary student politics and representation worldwide and not only serve as subjects of research conducted by others. By building their capacity to conduct independent research, knowledge they generate will also help them as leaders of their organizations and to foster organizational learning of their student organizations. In other words, if student leaders were to embrace research as a form of leadership practice, the research findings could inform their institutional development and their political action repertoires.

My approach training student leaders included instructional scaffolding methods I apply in the research-intensive courses I teach at Harvard. It involves breaking down the research project into several smaller assignments, providing clear guidelines and ample feedback at every stage of the project so as to help researchers towards research independence. In addition to the online workshop where I presented the methods, I also prepared research and writing guides for student leaders. Jointly we worked on survey and interview protocols for national and local student representatives, and on categorizing key documentary sources. We created a shared library with relevant publications on student politics and representation from across the world. We also had

a project online depository with all training materials, recordings from training sessions and presentations, and a dashboard on progress on the chapters. Language barriers were notable, especially with Latin American contributors. GSF kindly provided interpreters for the meetings, and Giuseppe Lipari and Carmen Romero helped with chapter writing.

All contributors, both scholars and student leaders - researchers, submitted research proposals and received feedback. Then they submitted chapter outlines including a review of literature and description of research methods, and again received feedback before proceeding with field work. While established researchers just submitted full chapter drafts, student leaders first presented preliminary findings in regional groups to receive peer feedback and feedback from me before submission of the first draft. Each chapter went through one or more rounds of revisions based on my feedback. Admittedly, not all contributors succeeded. Some were unable to complete the chapter and very few did not reach the accepted academic standard and their texts were recommended to be featured elsewhere.

This has been the most demanding and most complex research project I have ever conducted. The sheer length of the Handbook demanded massive editorial work, and the time investment on my part was substantial to say the least. If I were to do it again, I would have engaged a much larger editorial team. However, I did not expect such a high response from student leaders to contribute, which was undoubtedly a reflection of the immense efforts by Sebastian Berger and the leaders of the Global Student Forum. It was Sebastian and the core research group that made it possible for me to edit the chapters alone since they took the lionshare of supporting work tasks.

Having worked so closely with the Global Student Forum for almost three years now, I realize what a professional and impactful global student organization this is. While working on our research project, Sebastian and the student leaders of the Global Student Forum have been building global student representation within the global education policy regimes. Within these three years they have managed to consolidate the position of the Global Student Forum as the global union of school and university students, an umbrella organization of the world's major representative, independent and democratic student unions defending the educational, cultural, economic and social interests of more than 300 million learners worldwide in the decision making spaces of the international community. I have witnessed the strength of the multi-level democratic governance structure of the GSF and its impressive mobilization capacity across 197 student unions from 127 countries.

I wish to express my utmost gratitude to the core research group of the SIHEG project: Sebastian Berger, Peter Kwasi Kodjie, Abdul Karim Ibrahim, Elorm Mawuli-Kwawu, Musarrat Maisha Reza, Martina Darmanin, Jakub Grodecki, Martin Hammerbauer, Kristel Jakobson, Matteo Vespa, Bianca Borges dos Santos, Georgia Potton, Giuseppe Lipari, and Carmen Romero without whom this Handbook would not have come to light. I also wish to express my sincere admiration for their commitment to empowerment and amplifying student voices in higher education politics across the world and striving for educational justice, social equality, and the rights of students globally.

My deepest thanks go to each and every contributor to this Handbook for their commitment to this publication. I am grateful to my academic colleagues who accepted the invitation to contribute to this Handbook and are helping build our academic community of scholars working on student politics and representation. I am delighted to see so many graduate students choosing student politics and representation as their research topic, and several PhD dissertations completed as

part of this Handbook or on the way. Student leaders who chose to become researchers of student politics deserve our utmost respect. Their knowledge and experience is now translated into scholarly work to inform and inspire scholars and practitioners globally.

In many cases, their chapters are the first-ever research-based accounts of student politics and representation in their countries or regions. Their chapters are a powerful testimony of the impact students have and can have on their higher education systems and institutions and societies at large. Reading the chapters in this handbook, I was reminded of my younger self as a Secretary General of ESIB-the National Unions of Students in Europe (now European Students' Union), our political goals and actions which have been carried over by new generations of student leaders. While the fight for student rights and advocacy of student interest have largely remained unchanged, their political strategies and their organizational capabilities have become so much more sophisticated. For one, knowledge production through research is being incorporated into their political action repertoires and it contributes to student governments' (and student movements') institutional development.

Much appreciation goes to Hector Ulloa, the President of the Norwegian Students' and Academics' International Assistance Fund (SAIH) and the entire leadership of SAIH for making it possible (together with the GSF) for this Handbook to be published open access and thus freely available online to readers across the world. I thank Harvard University for providing me with research funding for student editorial assistance and for compiling the index. Cat Huang and Bridget Lee, graduate students at Harvard, provided editorial assistance typesetting and gently proofreading the final versions of the chapters before the submission. Furthermore, students at Harvard University contributed to this Handbook with research assistance. In Fall 2021, Alex Washington, Emily Rios, and Matt Freese, all Harvard undergraduate students, enrolled in Faculty Research Assistantship Program (SOCIO192r course) offered at Department of Sociology, at Faculty of Arts and Sciences. For course credit (and no remuneration), they participated in SIHEG project as research assistants, and assisted with data analysis from NAT-SIHEG survey and feedback on the chapter outlines. I am also grateful to the three generations of students in my courses at Harvard – SOCIO1104 Sociology of Higher Education, SOCIO1130 Student Leadership and Service in Higher Education, and GENED1039 Higher Education: Students, Institutions, and Controversies for our class discussions on student politics and representations, and for being interested in my research. It was my students that affirmed to me that this research matters and can have an impact on scholarship and practice of student representation across the world.

Alison Baker of Bloomsbury Publishers has been a source of unfailing encouragement and support throughout the making of this Handbook. She was the one who saw potential in my initial idea of an edited volume on student politics and representation, and guided me to preparing a proposal that obtained positive recommendations from external peer reviewers and approval by the Publishing Board. I am immensely thankful to Ally for her support and have utmost respect for her work as Senior Publisher in Education and Linguistics at Bloomsbury Publishing. Many thanks go also to Elissa Burns and her colleagues Hemavathy Ramamoorthy, Rain Goonetillake, Dharanivel Baskar and others for their great care and patience through the production process.

In all those many hours of developing and conducting workshops and meetings with contributors, reading and offering feedback on chapters, and writing my own chapters, Khaled El Rouayheb and our children Ajda and Rami have been by my side showering me with love

and believing that my research matters (even if they have heard more about student politics and representation than they ever wanted to know). They rejoiced with me (and were as relieved as I was) when this massive book was finally submitted, and again when the first and second round of proofs were delivered to the Publisher at long last. For almost three years, the ideas for and actual chapters for this Handbook have traveled with me between Cambridge, MA and Slovenia. Khaled, Ajda and Rami and our two cats lovingly pulled me away from the SIHEG project and the Handbook in the making, and led my hand back to it when I needed to get back to hard work.

Manja Klemenčič

In Cambridge, MA October 2023

Introduction

Manja Klemenčič

The Bloomsbury Handbook of Student Politics and Representation in Higher Education is the first comprehensive, global comparative account of student political agency and representation in higher education (HE). It is first of its kind in its broad geographical coverage and first one to feature the transnational regional representative student associations and the Global Student Forum. The Handbook is unique in bringing together established scholars and a highly diverse group of current and former student leaders, specially trained to conduct research for this Handbook. Student leaders' voices bring authentic perspectives to the study of student politics and representation. The Handbook result from the research project "SIHEG—Student Impact in HE Globally" which was the first large-scale global collaborative research on student political agency and student impact in HE. Facilitated by the Global Student Forum, the SIHEG research project has not only generated original knowledge on contemporary student politics and representation worldwide but has also built the capacity of student leaders and their associations to conduct research. In other words, the SIHEG project enabled student leaders to conduct *research as a form of leadership practice* to help them develop as leaders of student organizations and to foster organizational learning and development of student organizations.

This is a major contribution to the study of HE, HE politics, and HE governance with focus on student political agency, student representation, and student impact on HE. The Handbook challenges the established scholarship in HE studies which focuses primarily on the effects that HE has on students. Instead, the Handbook advances the proposition that students are agents in HE with influence on HE institutions in which they study and societies in which they live. The Handbook offers ample evidence supporting the thesis that students have capabilities to intervene in and influence HE structures and policies and are not merely affected by these. Student representation is the foremost form of students' enacting political agency to influence every aspect of HE as a social institution. And student politics is a major facet of HE politics.

Student representation and student activism present two interlinked facets of student politics through which students enact their political agency, sustain their social and political lives, and build their social and political worlds during studentship in HE. Study of student politics has largely focused on student activism and neglected study of student representation. Study of student representation has attracted surprisingly little attention even though student representation in HE has existed since the mediaeval universities and that in some form it exists in every HE institution in the world. Students have for centuries organized into representative student associations, "nations" in mediaeval universities and student governments, councils, boards, parliaments, and similar representative bodies in contemporary HE. These representative student associations, or student governments as they are referred to in this Handbook, are a

distinct form of political institutions which organize, aggregate, and intermediate the interests of higher education students, provide services for students, and organize student activities. Students elect their representatives to student governments to advocate for their interests and fight for their rights. Student representatives do so through formal representational structures, such as participating in governing bodies of HE institutions, or if “board politics” fails, they resort to activism.

This Handbook gives special attention to student representation as the less explored facet of student politics compared to student activism. It seeks to capture both the similarities and variations in student politics and representation in HE. To do so, the Handbook includes a systematic and structured range of specially commissioned chapters reflecting on the history, contemporary practices, and current debates on student politics and representation in twenty-five countries and in five transnational HE governance regimes.

The section on student politics and representation in the transnational HE governance features chapters on The All-Africa Students’ Union (AASU), The Commonwealth Students’ Association (CSU), The European Students’ Union (ESU), the regional student movement in Latin and South America: *Organización Continental Latinoamericana y Caribeña de Estudiantes*—OCLAE and the Global Student Forum (GSF). The chapters on student politics and representation in institutional and national HE governance and HE politics are divided into four global regions: (1) Africa, (2) Asia, the Gulf States, and the Pacific, (3) the Caribbean, Latin America and North America, and (4) Europe and Russia. The chapters explore student politics, analyze the organizational characteristics and political activities of representative student associations, and map opportunities for student representatives to influence HE institutions and HE policies. In addition to describing student politics more generally, the chapters explore the two conditions of student representation: the formal channels of representation in HE governance, and the existence and organizational characteristics of student governments.

The empirical chapters are informed by the theoretical foundations presented in the theoretical chapter. The Handbook re-examines and further develops the existing theoretical concepts and analytical lenses in current research on systems and organizations of student representation as part of study of student politics. It offers an overview of the key concepts in the study of student representation, focusing on the two conditions of student representation: (i) student authority in HE governance as legitimate rights of students to participate in decision processes, and (ii) the organizational characteristics of student governments. The Handbook draws on and advances *the theory of student impact on HE* which challenges and corrects the existing one-directional perspectives of the effects of HE on students. It seeks to explain the overarching mechanisms of students’ effects on HE through student political agency. It also advances the proposition of the dynamic nature of student politics and representation in HE and that “*new policies create a new politics.*” In other words, new HE policies with new political objectives create new political opportunities, afford new political resources, and affect the balance of power between different political actors in HE, including student governments. The chapter provides theoretical foundations to the empirical chapters in this Handbook while noting that many empirical chapters also offer theoretical propositions advancing, complementing, or correcting those presented in the theoretical chapter.

The Handbook is a result of unprecedented research collaboration between established and emerging scholars of student politics and representation. Fifty-seven out of seventy-six

contributors to this Handbook are emerging scholars all of whom are current or former student leaders. These student leaders are authorities in student politics with substantial and procedural knowledge, experiences, and networks. The involvement of the emerging scholars was facilitated through the Global Student Forum. The Global Student Forum (GSF) is the global representative student association founded by transnational regional student associations with the purpose to foster student solidarity across the world, advocate for student interests, and fight for student rights in the context of global HE governance regimes.

The idea for research collaboration emerged in discussions between Sebastian Berger, the Executive Director of the GSF and Manja Klemenčič, a scholar of student politics and representation (and long ago a student leader who was a Secretary General of the European Students' Union). The SIHEG—Student Impact on Higher Education Globally—was to examine student political agency and map existing opportunities for students to influence higher education and their societies. The research questions guiding the research project were twofold: (1) How do students enact political agency in higher education and society at large? (2) How student organizing, student representation, and student politics compare across countries worldwide? The project sought to map the practices of student representation in HE governance globally. The objective was to advance the understanding of student political agency in higher education and the impact students have on higher education and their societies through student representation.

The research project was endorsed by the Steering Committee of the GSF. In June 2021, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between Manja Klemenčič, as the Principal Investigator, and Sebastian Berger on behalf of the Steering Committee of GSF. A core research team was constituted with the principal investigator, student leaders of regional student associations, and those represented in the Steering Committee of the Global Student Forum: Peter Kwasi Kodjie, Abdul Karim Ibrahim and Elorm Mawuli-Kwawu (AASU), Musarrat Maisha Reza (CSA), Martina Darmanin, Jakub Grodecki, Martin Hammerbauer, Kristel Jakobson and Matteo Vespa (ESU), Bianca Borges dos Santos (OCLAE), Sebastian Berger, Georgia Potton, Giuseppe Lipari, and Carmen Romero (Global Student Forum).

The core research team prepared and distributed a call for contributors among student representatives from the GSF membership to join as researchers in the SIHEG project, participate in training workshops, and contribute a chapter to a joint project publication. The core research team developed the project methodology, including the NAT-SIHEG survey instrument to capture perspectives of national student leaders and the LOC-SIHEG survey for local student leaders. These surveys (often translated into native languages) served as a data collection instrument for researchers involved in the project. The team also prepared guidelines on data collection through interviews and relevant documentary sources required for research chapters (e.g., national HE legislation, statutory documents of student governments, etc.).

The core research team facilitated the training workshops on research methods for the study of student representation in HE which were led by the principal investigator in summer of 2021 via Zoom. These workshops were attended by more than eighty student leaders from thirty GSF member countries. The GSF provided interpreters for sessions with Latin American student leaders. Furthermore, the core research group organized several online meetings between regional groups of researchers and the principal investigator: to identify specific research questions for each chapter, identify relevant literature and define research design for empirical data collection (Spring to Fall 2021), for a collective writing retreat (Fall 2021), and for presentations of chapter

outlines (Winter 2021/2022). The core research group met in person only once, in May 2022 in Paris at the meeting of the Global Student Forum and 40th Anniversary of the ESU.

The chapters in this Handbook are based on rigorous research. The contributors of the empirical chapters draw on interviews, formal documentary sources, and datasets from NAT-SIHEG and LOC-SIHEG surveys to offer in-depth analyses of student politics and representation in their respective countries, institutions, and within transnational governance regimes of the African region, the Commonwealth, the European Union and the European Higher Education Area and the Latin American and Caribbean region. The chapters written by student leaders also depict the lived experiences of student leaders, their passion, and their struggles, and at times personal risks, and even threat of persecution. Admittedly, the choice of contributors who are not established academics did pose challenges. We worked together to ensure that the contributions from emerging scholars achieved a balance between affirming the authentic voices of student leaders and respecting the norms of academic rigor expected in scholarly publishing.

The contributors to this Handbook have not merely followed the pre-existing conceptual frameworks but have challenged these and offered revised and novel frameworks and explanations on student politics and representation and its many facets, such as student elections or relations between student representative associations and political parties. What emerges from this Handbook is not only an authentic global empirical account of practices on student politics and representation, but also revised and novel conceptual frameworks to study student politics and representation in a global comparative perspective.

This Handbook lays the foundations and will serve as a reference for the future studies of student politics and representation in HE. It documents the dynamic and potent nature of student politics. It highlights the permanence of student representation as a political institution in the context of HE politics. And it reflects the transformations in student politics and representation in transnational, national, and institutional contexts prompted by ongoing reforms of HE. The Handbook depicts the generic features of student politics and representation across the world as well as points to their many variations.

PART I

Key Concepts in the Study of Student Politics and Representation in Higher Education

1

The Key Concepts in the Study of Student Politics and Representation in Higher Education

Manja Klemenčič

Introduction with Definition of Key Terms

Since the emergence of the first mediaeval universities, students in higher education (HE) have always been a distinct social category, with distinct social identity, social roles, and rights.¹ A right for free access to HE or favorable taxation for student work or government-subsidized student loans or discounted public transportation are some examples of such rights. Students have also been regarded a distinct consumer group. Commercial companies offer students discounts on products and services. Companies devise targeted marketing strategies for student consumers, such as employing “student ambassadors” on college campuses to market their products or employing “student influencers” for online marketing. Students emerge also as a distinct political group with common political orientations and group-based political behavior, which is especially visible in student movements with protests and other forms of contentious collective action. The propensity to collective student political engagements lies in the characteristics of studentship as a life stage, which is (for most but not all) that of “being free and becoming” (Barnett, 2007, p. 3). Developmentally, studentship (as emerging adulthood) has been associated with higher levels of cognitive, emotional, and practical maturity and with nurturing idealist (and abstract) ideas (Jensen, 2008). HE institutions with multiple and overlapping social networks and culture of free and critical inquiry and exchange of ideas are fertile grounds for the cultivation and organization of student interests.

Students have emerged as a distinct social and political class with various forms of *student capital* (Altbach, 1989, 1991, 2006; Lipset, 1967; Lipset and Altbach, 1969) as a currency for student representation and having effects on HE. *Student capital* includes: (1) students’ expert knowledge and first-hand information about HE students which can be valuable as input to decision processes in HE; (2) political resources to legitimize adopted HE decisions and policies, exercise social control over member students and perform accountability checks; and (3) provision of services to students (instead of or on behalf of HE institutions).

The notions of students as a distinct social and political class lead us to the conception of a *student estate* (Ashby and Anderson, 1970) as a set of rights, roles, and authority, and forms of organization of student interests that are common to collectives of students within HE institutions or HE systems. Student estate is a part of the political organization of HE institutions and HE

systems which is manifested in governance and management arrangements. Student estate is itself a political institution. Student estate as a political institution is depicted in the existence of formal documents that stipulate *rights of students*, be that national HE laws and regulations and/or statutory or other formal documents of HE institutions. This is the case even if students are not organized into representative student associations, that is, even if student estate is not incorporated into an organizational form of a representative student association.

Students' collective rights, roles, and authority are derived from the legal position of students stipulated in the HE laws and regulations and translated into institutional statutory and strategic documents. Legal provisions also regulate the formation and operations of representative student associations, either explicitly or implicitly with the regulations on non-governmental civil society organizations. The same formal documents that stipulate rights of students typically also discuss expectations of students' behavior as students, that is, their roles and responsibilities.

The most common definition of *students* is that these are persons that are enrolled at a HE institution in a study program pursuing a degree at that institution. This definition distinguishes HE students from other learners who are following a professional development program or are involved in other educational activities, such as microcredentials, short from pursuing a degree study program. These learners and other individuals in HE institutions too have rights and roles, but these are different from the HE students' rights and roles.

Since the mediaeval universities, students have engaged in student politics through collective action in movements and organizations through which they have enacted their political agency, sustained their social and political lives, and built their social and political worlds. *Student politics* refers to the students' political activities associated with the organizing of the student body and its influences on the HE institution, HE systems, and wider society (Klemenčič and Park, 2018). Student politics has also been defined as the set of organizational structures, action repertoires, and master frames used by students to promote their claims (della Porta, Donatella and Guzmán—Concha, 2020). Student politics is both a manifestation and source of students' political agency. *Student agency* refers to students' capabilities to navigate and influence HE and broader social environments. Student politics is a specific kind of politics that is embedded in politics of HE institutions and politics within national and transnational HE systems. Student politics has connections to broader national political developments. In mass and high-participation HE systems, students are a large (and expanding) and potent political group. These connections are further accentuated in countries where student representatives and organizations have explicit party-political affiliations or where they have close ties to the trade unions. Student representation and student activism are two distinct yet interlinked facets of student politics.²

Through *representation*, students engage in claim making through collective action by way of their democratic *student governments* (as proxies) and formal representational structures (such as having a seat in the university governing body or membership in the National Higher Education Council). Students have for centuries organized into representative student associations, "nations" in mediaeval universities and student governments, student councils, student boards, student advisory committees, student parliaments, and other forms of representative student bodies in contemporary HE. These *representative student associations, or student governments* as they are referred to in this Handbook, are a distinct form of political institutions which organize, aggregate, and intermediate the interests of HE students, provide services for students, and

organize student activities. Their core purpose is to advocate for student interests and fight for student rights—both within the realm of HE and within society at large.

The typical strategies of representation involve participation in “board politics”: attending and contributing to meetings of governing bodies, task forces, and committees, as well as the activities around lobbying and issue advocacy (Klemenčič and Park, 2018). Students elect their representatives to student governments to advocate for their interests and fight for their rights. Student representatives do so through formal representational structures, such as participating in governing bodies of HE institutions, or if “board politics” fails, they resort to activism. Student governments typically present an overarching framework of *student governance* within a HE institution or a HE system.

Student governance refers to the structures and processes of decision-making on the strategic agenda and the operational programming of the organized collective of students which shape student politics. Through a system of rules, norms, and organized practices, student governments effectively provide a framework for student political and social activities. Student governance is integrated into the broader HE governance. Student estate as a set of students’ rights, roles and authority, and forms of organization of student interests is inherent to student governance. *Student authority* refers specifically to formal students’ rights for co-decision in the context of shared governance in HE, and specific governing structures and processes implementing these student rights. As will be discussed later in the chapter, these rights can range from being consulted on need-basis, to having a permanent seat in governing bodies without a vote to having voting rights equal to other members of governing bodies. Student authority varies across different contexts and is an inherently dynamic concept.

Student governments are also one of the prime intermediate organizations that constitute *civil society* in a country or in a transnational political regime. As part of the civil society student governments depict institutions outside direct government control. In fact, student governments and student movements have often been sources of political dissent and oppositional politics against governing regimes (Altbach, 1989, 1991, 2006; della Porta, Donatella and Guzmán—Concha, 2020; Klemenčič and Park, 2018). Student activism is sometimes initiated by student governments, sometimes by students outside student representation and sometimes also by students outside student governments and against student governments.

Through *activism* students engage in claim-making outside of formal decision structures. In most of the older literature, activism has been associated with contentious politics and noninstitutionalized forms of claims making, of which protests are one of the main forms, and others include boycotts and campaigns. While most of the work on student activism portrays it as antagonistic relations between students in opposition to university or state authorities and synonymous with contentious politics, this conception has changed since the 1990s. In democratic countries, student activism has been associated with much of progressive political and social change that occurred throughout history, including civil rights movements, independence movements, and movements against authoritarian rule. In many countries, the historic role of student activists in driving these social changes has depicted student activism in a positive light. It has also secured students political rights for association into representative bodies and decision rights in governance of HE. This has been the case, for example, in Eastern and Central European countries after the transition to democracy and in African countries after they gained independence from the colonial rule. This is not to forget, of course, that throughout history

student activism was also associated with oppressive social movements and regimes, such as, for example, the Nazi regime in Germany and Maoist cultural revolution in China.

In democratic countries today, nonviolent student campus activism is recognized as a legitimate form of student political behavior and even acknowledged as a form of civic learning for students (Broadhurst and Martin, 2014). The definition of student activism has also changed. From being defined as deviant behavior that must be controlled and sanctioned, student activism is increasingly conceived as any political engagements of students to bring about political and social change. Thus, volunteering in public service roles or participation in student organizations which have some political or social agenda can often be referred to as forms of student activism. The violent and destructive forms of student activism continue to be regarded as deviant and illegal behaviors and are sanctioned. The conception of student activism (in any form) as deviant behavior continues to prevail in authoritarian regimes, while attempts to repress activism also exist in illiberal democracies and in countries experiencing an erosion of democratic values.

This chapter offers an overview of the key concepts in the study of student representation as the less explored facet of student politics compared to student activism. Essentially, “representation as a form of student politics presupposes the simultaneous existence of two conditions: first, that student representative or other student interest associations exist; and second, that formal channels of representation and interest intermediation are instituted” (Klemenčič and Park, 2018, p. 468). Most of empirical chapters in this Handbook address these two conditions of student representation. They focus on the organizational side of student representation and explore the organizational characteristics of student governments. And they explore student authority in HE governance as legitimate rights of students to participate in decision processes impacting students and the representational structures and processes that enable them to do so.

This theoretical chapter and the following empirical chapters are grounded in the *theory of student impact on HE* which challenges and corrects the existing one-directional perspectives of the effects of HE on students. *The theory of student impact on HE* seeks to explain the overarching mechanisms of students’ effects on HE through student political agency. The chapters highlight students enacting their *political agency* to challenge and change the existing structures and practices of HE and instigate broader political and social changes in their societies.

Student political agency refers to students’ capabilities for influencing policies and decisions in governance of higher education institutions or national and supranational policies through direct interactions with authorities such as institutional leaders, the government, and international organizations and collective political action. The concept of student political agency is related to student civic agency. Student civic agency refers to capabilities that students direct to civic engagements within their university communities or local communities and other institutions and spaces within civic society. These students’ engagements, such as, for example, volunteering in student groups or student civic initiatives, too can have an impact on higher education and possibly even instigate political changes, but these are not necessarily their primary objective.

The chapters in this Handbook are also grounded in and advance the proposition that “*new policies create a new politics*” (Schattschneider, 1935) and that “policy choices are highly consequential for political life” (Hacker and Pierson, 2014, p. 1). With new policies comes

“policy feedback” (Pierson, 1993) signaling policy objectives and resources, that is, expected policy benefits or burdens, which stakeholders interpret into political opportunities to pursue their interests. HE policies not only influence HE practices that are object of these policies, but also intentionally or unintendedly shape a wide range of political forces from the organization and mobilization of (student) groups, to the formation of (student) political identities, and to the strategies of students as political actors (cf. Skocpol, Weir and Orloff, 1989). In other words, changing HE policies, change formal and informal powers of students as political agents, their political identities, and political agency (Raaper, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023).

This chapter provides theoretical foundations to the chapters featured in this Handbook. It is divided into four sections. The first section discusses student political agency and presents the theory of student impact on HE. The second section explores the key concepts in the study of student governments as organizations. The third section explores student authority in HE governance and management, including the arguments in favor or against students having rights to co-decide on HE decision processes. The chapter concludes with a discussion on development of student representation until present times.

Student Agency and Theory of Student Impact on HE

Student agency refers to students’ capabilities to navigate and influence their learning and education pathways and environments. These capabilities are conditioned by agentic opportunities that emerge for students from the external environment, from the HE “structures and processes” and agentic orientations that are internal responses of the student to the HE environments. In interactions with and engagements in the HE environment, students enact their agency toward specific goals. Depending on these goals, we differentiate between *student self-formation agency* and *student political agency*. Students’ self-formation agency is enacted for purposes of individual self-formation, such as gaining a degree or getting a job. Students enact political agency—individually, collectively or through proxies—toward changes in HE environments (i.e., institutional changes) or toward changes in society (i.e., societal changes) which serve collective/public good (not merely an individual interest). In the case of instigating institutional changes, students’ objective is to transform situational constraints and opportunities for agency achievement. In simpler terms, students often enact political agency to demand more rights for student representation. Stronger representation in HE governance can, in turn, enable students to better advocate for their interests, such as for quality, access, and social welfare provisions, which in turn create better conditions for students to study and achieve desired self-formation.

In the case of social changes, students’ goals are in agency achievement for general (societal) well-being (cf. Sen, 1985) as a precondition for agency achievement in other areas of functioning, such as for agency in HE. In other words, in authoritarian regimes, students enact agency toward societal changes in terms of respect for human rights and civil liberties. These societal changes, in turn, contribute to academic freedom, institutional autonomy, and democratic governance of HE institutions. In both cases, enactments of students’ political agency toward institutional or societal changes can also result in improved study conditions for all students, and in student leaders’ self-formation, possibly even at an accelerated rate. In other words, through campaigning

for institutional changes or through activism, student leaders are “learning-by-doing” important political lessons on citizenship, political campaigning, teamwork, etc. These lessons can diffuse also onto students not directly involved in student representation or activism. This is how students’ self-formation is facilitated even when they enact agency for public good.

Student agency is premised on agentic possibilities and agentic orientations. The *student’s agentic possibilities* are positive freedoms and opportunities within structures and processes of HE or broader societal ecosystems for the student to do and to be what they have reason to value (cf. Sen, 1985). These structures and processes also contain students’ rights and responsibilities which determine student autonomy. *Student autonomy*, as a student’s freedom to be, think, and act, implies the degree to which the student’s behavior is experienced as willingly enacted. If student rights for co-decision are equal to those of other members of governing boards, and if students are conceived as partners and equal members of the university community, such structural conditions grant students a greater freedom to act as student representatives. In contrast, if student rights are severely limited, if students are considered as potentially disruptive or even dangerous to the “peaceful state” of the university, if student representatives fear disciplinary action or retaliation in case of dissent with university leaders, their autonomy is severely curbed.

The *student’s agentic orientations* reflect human diversity along a range of variables, such as gender, personality traits, cognitive abilities, and intellectual, political, and civic dispositions, prior academic achievement, and socio-economic background. These are endogenously constructed—they represent the student’s internal responses to external state of affairs. The student’s will to action for a set goal is derived from these background characteristics and a specific lens through which the student interprets own role in the given social situation or setting and acceptable ways of behavior. This is what Bourdieu (1984, 1988, 1996) refers to as “habitus.” Swidler (1986, pp. 280–4) highlights the importance of cultural repertoires that help individuals navigate their social contexts, make decisions about their actions, and make predictions about the future. Swidler (1986, p. 280) refers to these individuals’ “toolkits for action” as a “set of knowledge, skills and symbols which provide the materials from which individuals and groups construct strategies of action.”

Addressing orientations relevant to students’ political engagements, Altbach (1991, pp. 252–253) suggests that politically engaged students tend to come from: (1) upper-middle-class, urban families with educated and liberal parents; (2) minority groups; or (3) social sciences, humanities, and mathematics concentrations (rather than professional fields). The scholarship that followed Altbach continues to investigate the socio-demographics of politically engaged students (see Fisher (2012) for the US context). What is undoubtedly common to students enacting political agency through representation, activism, or volunteering (civil service) is that *all tend to display a heightened sense of civic responsibility and civic consciousness*. They differ, however, in their attitudes toward authorities. *Student representatives have more cooperative orientations toward authorities and student activists have more antagonistic orientations towards authorities*. The differences may also be in their political ambitions. Student representatives and activists are more politically ambitious than those in civic service—volunteering roles. In other words, student representatives, activists, and students in service and leadership roles all enact political and/or civic agency, which refers to student capabilities to act in collective interest toward public good. Sense of citizenship, belonging, efficacy, and public service dispositions shape student agentic orientations to having impact on learning and educational pathways and environments.

Agency is not something the student possesses once and for all. Rather, student agency refers to capabilities that the students can develop from their agentic orientations in interaction with “structures” in HE environment: the student’s capabilities can be extended or constrained by these structures, and the student can also—by enacting agency—have effects on these structures and processes. Again, student agency can be enacted individually (by an individual), collectively (as part of movements or groups), or by proxy (by conferring rights onto elected student representatives to act on behalf of individual students and the collective body of students).

The “HE structures” referred here are those that enable persistent patterns of behavior and interactions within HE institutions (Hurtado, 2007, pp. 99–100) and as such have “treatment effects” on student outcomes. These social structures include (Hurtado, 2007): (1) formal academic context, (2) informal academic environment, (3) formal social context, including structural features of HE institutions, and (4) informal social context. Formal academic structures include institutional rules and procedures recorded in statutory documents and policies concerning institutional mission, study programs, student rights, and responsibilities, etc. Informal academic structures are often referred to as the “hidden curriculum,” that is, implicit rules that govern academic life. Formal social structures refer to structural features of colleges such as institutional size, residences, student organizations, etc. Informal social structures include peer groups, social nature of student behavior and interactions, such as personal friendship groups. As suggested by Swidler (1986, p. 273), culture does not influence action by simply prescribing values or end goals; instead, it provides a “toolkit” of skills, habits, rituals, and views that enable individuals to navigate these various HE structures, situations, and scenarios.

A Theory of Student Impact in HE

A theory of student impact on HE seeks to explain the overarching mechanisms of students’ effects on HE through student political agency.³ This theory challenges the one-directional scholarship on the “college effects on students” which is one of the most prolific and influential domains of inquiry within sociology of HE and HE studies more broadly. The entire field of inquiry on “college effects on students” is devoted to the question how HE processes and structures impact student outcomes, such as student graduation rates or student employability. Yet, this scholarship tends to ignore that students also have agency which they enact toward their own learning and educational goals, their own “self-formation” or to bring about changes in HE environments and societies.

Students are agents of political changes in HE and societies. Although HE structures and processes have effects on students, students do not only passively adapt to the evolving HE policy regimes, and do not only react to the political opportunities and political resources afforded to them. Students are also agents, that is, political actors within HE politics that initiate and drive HE transformations. Students exercise their political agency to instigate policy changes.

If successful, policy changes may also expand students’ agentic opportunities by granting them extended roles and authority in HE. Drawing on Archer’s (1995, 2000, 2003) social realist explanation, the relations between student estate (as a social institution) and HE (as another social institution in which student estate is embedded) are thus one of alternation between the conditioning of student estate by “structures of HE” and the elaboration of “structures of HE” by

student estate (cf. Archer, 2003). Students enact their agency when demanding more rights for student representation or fight, for example, against tuition fee increases. Their political action might be directed at different causes. Yet, as in the case of student activism in the 1960s and 1970s, if successful, student political action, regardless of the cause, also strengthens student estate.

Student impact theory explains student political agency as enacted toward HE authorities in the context of HE institutions. It includes four propositions:

- (1) *HE institutions do not only have effects on students but students directly and purposefully co-shape social structures, social life, and institutional decisions of HE institutions. The “high student impact roles,” i.e., roles with high potential for students to have direct effects on HE institutions, exist in student representation, voluntary service and leadership roles in student groups, on-campus jobs, and through student activism.*

Students join representative student associations, run for leadership positions in student groups, or join student movements with an expectation that these roles will afford them political agency to serve in the interest of others. In contrast, students that seek campus employment do not necessarily do so with motivations of public service; however, campus jobs can also present opportunities for enactment of political agency. In these various roles that afford students opportunities for enacting political agency, students may also have indirect effects on political developments beyond HE institution.

- (2) *Students influence social structures and institutional changes also indirectly: through expressions of individual and collective (consumer) preferences and through patterns of individual and collective (consumer) behavior.*

Students have effects on institutional decisions and practices through signaling enrolment preferences and enrolment choices. For example, HE institutions invest into luxury housing or recreational facilities if they have reasons to believe that students have preferences for such amenities and having such facilities will attract (fee-paying) students. Market research is performed to understand prospective HE student (consumer) preferences and institutional research to understand preferences and satisfaction of enrolled HE students.

- (3) *Student impact occurs along a continuum: different roles afford different (potential) degrees of impact, and the same student role affords different (potential) degrees of impact at different times.*

Student groups and organizations may have either more service or more political (advocacy) agenda. Depending on the agenda of these groups, students have motivation and potential for effects on institutional decisions and practices. Student representation presents high-impact roles in HE. Campus jobs too can grant students voice in decisions. Consumerism as such is not a role that students choose purposefully but it is students' social status which comes with consumer rights, especially notable in the institutions that harbor the conception of students as consumers.

- (4) *Degree of student impact depends on student agency—agentic opportunities and agentic orientations.*

Institutional structures (including rules, processes, and culture) can enable (empower) or limit student impact opportunities. HE institutions where student voice in decision processes is appreciated and affirmed as an important aspect of that institution's mission tend to offer more opportunities for students to contribute to decision processes across

the different operations. In contrast, the opportunities for student voice and thus students' effects on HE tend to be limited in authoritarian-paternalistic settings where students have limited rights for political participation and/or fear disciplinary sanctions or retaliation for voicing dissent. Sense of citizenship, belonging, efficacy, and public service dispositions shape student agentic orientations toward enactment of political and civic agency.

Representation offers, arguably, one of the most high-impact roles for students to have effects on HE institutions or HE systems. Student representation, per definition, exists for students to co-shape social structures, social life, and institutional decisions of HE institutions (or HE policies in (trans)national polities in the case of (trans)national representative student associations). Student representation is a formalized, and institutionalized form of student voice enabled by two conditions: first, that there exists a representative (democratic and autonomous) student government, and second, that formal channels of representation and interest intermediation are instituted within the HE governance (Klemenčič and Park, 2018). As presented in the empirical chapters of this Handbook, the practices of student representation in the governance of HE institutions vary significantly across countries, and across private and public HE institutions. By comparison to student representation, student effects through campus jobs are confined to the units where students work, and effects through student leadership are limited to issues and members of the respective student group. Depending on the political context, student governments resort to activism to pursue their political goals or use expert or administrative roles to exert influence.

In HE contexts where students are conceived as consumers and there is a presumption of a symbolic contractual relationship formed between the individual students enrolling and the institution providing education services, student political agency tends to rest stronger in (individual) student consumer rights than within (collective) student representation (cf. Raaper, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023). Typical for such context is the adoption of New Public Management principles to HE governance. In such governance arrangements, decision authority rests less in democratic internal governing bodies (such as academic senates) and more in external boards of overseers where students are either not represented at all or are represented in small shares along with many other external stakeholders. Furthermore, authority, as the legitimate right to decide, tends to be concentrated in the hands of HE administrators (managers) who can delegate it to academic staff, and possibly students, but retain the final say. As in the case of many private HE institutions following this model, students might be consulted, but do not hold any decision authority in governing bodies. The neoliberal policies that reinforce student-consumer conceptions thus have significant implications on student political agency within HE (Raaper, 2020, p. 202, 2022, 2023).

Student Authority in HE Governance and Management

Students as a collective body have *authority* in the context of HE management and governance. Authority is the legitimate, that is, socially approved right of individuals to (co)decide on issues with impact on others (cf. Christiano, 2020). In the case of students, authority then implies students' legitimate right to representation in governing bodies and/or in management decision-processes at HE institutions and/or in (trans)national HE political processes. Authority is a

separate, but related concept to power. Whereas authority is inherent in a particular position or function and gives rights to the holder to act, power is relational capacity or ability to act. Authority bears with itself responsibilities to act, power (unlike a right) does not imply such responsibilities.

Critical condition for authority is *legitimacy*. Authority gets legitimated by (1) rules and regulations (“bureaucratic authority”) as described by Weber (1918), by (2) the rulers (“conferred authority”) when those in authority decide to share authority with others and thereby confer certain rights to others; and (3) by invoking certain social norms and values common to the organization or system (cf. Christiano, 2020). In case of student representation, legitimate right comes from the belief of both students themselves and belief of other HE stakeholders that students have rights to be represented in governing structures and processes (cf. Peter, 2017). Such belief is distinct but often related to the perceived legitimacy of representative student associations which is discussed in the section on student governments.

Governments typically define the extent to which student representation is “formally secured through legislation, or whether their involvement is more dependent on traditions, culture and informal arrangements” (Stensaker and Vabø, 2013, p. 259). The more formalized the rules, the stronger is the legitimate power of student governments and the higher is the propensity for students to influence policy process. Lack of formal provisions on student representation implies that each new generation of student leaders needs to rely on informal arrangements and potentially (re)negotiate the terms of student representation.

There are two overarching approaches to understanding the legal position of students. These two approaches are embedded in the conceptions of HE as a public or private good. They define the practices of student representation in institutional context and in national HE politics. One approach is common to countries which conceive HE as a public good and thus hold it a right (in some countries even constitutional right) for students to access HE. There is an implicit social contract between state and students evident in HE legislation, which stipulates that access is granted to all that are academically apt and aspire to HE. The presumption here is that HE not only confers private benefits to graduates in terms of employability and earnings, but that there exist also significant societal benefits of HE (Teixeira and Klemenčič, 2021). One notable implication of such a social contract is democratic governance of HE institutions with student representation as its integral part.

Largely a consequence of 1960s protests calling for the democratization of university governing structures, the democratic governance model places significant decision authority in the hands of academic staff and students as key internal constituencies of HE institutions. In such a model, significant decision authority rests with senate-type bodies that always include representatives of the academic staff and typically also students. On a (trans)national level, such an approach is also reflected in more neo-corporatist arrangements in state-society relations with more direct civil society engagement in public policy processes. Furthermore, the state establishes, possibly owns, and necessarily provides funding to public HE institutions with the expectation that HE institutions will deliver expected socio-economic outcomes. In turn, public HE institutions are held accountable to deliver quality education by the state that funds them and all other relevant stakeholders including students. Accordingly, enhanced accountability measures are a generic practice across public HE institutions and are also required of private HE institutions to gain accreditation to provide higher education services.

The second approach is built on the notion of HE as a private good and HE provision as a service to fee-paying student customers. It is built on the premise that upon a student enrolling in a HE institution an implicit contract is created between the student and the institution through which the HE institution has obligated itself to provide a certain standard of quality of education provision to the student and the student has committed to payment of necessary fees for this education provision (Buchter, 1973). Even if no specific contract document is signed at the time of admission, the admission itself can be regarded as a formation of a symbolic contractual relationship between an individual student and the HE institution as a corporate body. This contractual relationship is in the sense a promise of providing quality educational experiences to the student; however not a promise of necessarily conferring that student a degree in case the student does not fulfill academic obligations. This symbolic contractual relationship is implied in the various university publications, such as course catalogues, student handbooks, institutional policies, and websites. These publications include disclaimers of obligations of the institution toward students and the requirements and expectations of the student.

Implied in this approach is that the institutional governance and management arrangements tend to follow the managerial–corporatist model. In this model, considerable executive powers are in the hands of HE professionals which are not necessarily academics, nor are they necessarily elected from among the academics (and students). In many countries, board-type governing bodies do not include students. If student representatives are appointed to the governing board, they tend to be *ex officio* without voting rights. Rationales for student representation in this model are based on student capital as valuable for efficient decision making. Students tend to be engaged through advisory, expert, and service roles. Common initially to the Anglo-American context and to the private HE sectors worldwide, with New Public Management doctrine implemented by many countries, this model is diffusing also into the public HE sectors worldwide.

Arguments in Favor and against Student Representation in HE Governance

Arguments in Favor of Student Representation in HE Governance

Four overarching arguments in favor of student representation in HE governance emerge from the literature (Lizzio and Wilson, 2009; Luescher-Mamashela, 2010, 2013; Menon, 2005; Pabian and Minsova, 2011; Zuo and Ratsoy, 1999).

Student Democratic Right for Representation

First, in line with democratic ideals of HE governance, students are the primary benefactors of the education provision and as such, they are the main internal constituency, indeed the main stakeholder. This position gives students a democratic right to be represented in the decisions that will ultimately affect them. Thus, institutions must ensure that students can safeguard their interests in decision processes, which is important both for the legitimacy of these decisions and for community building and student sense of belonging. This rationale for student involvement in HE governance is typical for the HE systems with the democratic governance model as

described above and especially for public HE institutions in social welfare countries and countries where HE is considered a public good. This democratic right for representation tends to be reflected also in national public policy processes which have neo-corporatist type of state-society relations.

Student Input Useful for Effective Decision-Making and Service Delivery

Second, as far as students are the primary beneficiaries of the education provision and are also directly affected by the quality of the education provision, students have first-hand information on the effectiveness of institutional practices and policies. A better understanding of the demands and experiences of students yields better decisions to meet these demands. Hence, student representation is helpful for effectiveness of decision-making and public policy processes and their implementation. This rationale is evoked in board-based institutional governance and management arrangements and precludes student advisory, expert, and professional/administrative type of involvement without democratic rights of co-decision. This argument is also used to justify (or at least does not preclude) students offering services to other students and otherwise participating in activities set out by the authorities.

Both two arguments affirm the case of student involvement as important or necessary for the legitimation of decision processes and outcomes. Whereas the latter allows for weaker forms of involvement only seeking student data or consultation with students for efficient decision-making, the former makes the case for necessary democratic involvement.

Student Representation as Deterrent of Student Oppositional Forces and Unrest, also Relevant in Authoritarian and Totalitarian Regimes

Third, student representation exists also in authoritarian and totalitarian regimes. In these regimes political power is centered around a dictator or a party leadership. These tend to establish their own student bodies or take control over the existing bodies with hand-picked students to serve as student representatives. In other words, in such systems it is common for the authorities (at the national level and/or within institutions) to—in corporatist fashion—establish or facilitate establishment of a student body with limited or no autonomy, that is, fully controlled by the authorities.

These regime-controlled student bodies are used to suppress oppositional student movements or discredit democratic student organizations. The regime-controlled student bodies have political power in decision processes, whereas democratic student bodies, if these even exist, do not—they are either suppressed or their activities restricted to service-provision without political powers. This is a well-rehearsed political strategy of autocratic regimes to curb any social developments that might eventuate in oppositional movements and challenge the regime in power and the regime's absolute power. Student representation in such regimes is to control the student body, suppress oppositional forces and/or deter unrest. The appointed student representatives participate in governance also to maintain the appearance of legitimate decision making. The

narrative of students having formal channels of voicing their concerns—through the puppet student representative bodies—is also to serve as a deterrent for student unrest.

Regime-control student governments are more possible within authoritarian than totalitarian regimes since totalitarianism tends to suppress any form of traditional social organizations of special interests, including student governments. In contrast, authoritarian regimes allow for limited social organization of special interests and seek to control it. However, totalitarian regimes often copy governance structures in non-autocratic regimes, including some form of student representation, to create the appearance of legitimate structures of HE governance. They seek to create a facade of student representation through student governments without autonomy. Student representatives are controlled by and pledge allegiance and loyalty to the regime, be that institutional leaders and/or regime rulers. Student governments are effectively an extended instrument of the ruling political party or dictator for social control, political indoctrination, and recruitment for members and/or future officials (i.e., future political elites).

Student Representation as Form of Citizenship and Civic Education

Fourth, student representation in HE governance contributes to the learning objectives of developing students' dispositions toward and skills for active citizenship and civic involvement. When HE institutions create pathways for student representation in HE governance, they effectively enable students to exercise active citizenship and learn from these lived experiences. In other words, democratic forms of student representation are for the elected student representatives, and by association for the student electorate, a democratic citizenship education in practice; which is, arguably, much more effective than teaching democratic citizenship education through courses. Student representation in HE governance reinforces the conception of HE institutions as sites of citizenship and civic involvement.

Both the third and fourth arguments are premised on the notions that student representation in HE governance gives students a sense of efficacy in institutional matters and thus can strengthen students' sense of ownership of and of belonging to the HE institution.

Arguments against Student Representation in HE Governance

There exist *several arguments against granting students the authority* to be represented in institutional or national decision processes as well as arguments that favor weaker forms of student representation in HE governance.

Student (Lack of) Expertise, Self-Interest, and Short-Time Perspectives

First, students' ability to effectively contribute to decisions has been questioned on several grounds. The transient nature of studentship prevents students from having the expertise that is gained with experience and results in a lack of a long-term institutional vision. Students have, it has been argued, difficulty in understanding the complexity of factors that affect institutional performance and the multiple demands coming from various stakeholders. Furthermore, students'

preferences in institutional decisions might be clouded by their immediate self-interest, which can go against the need for long-term quality improvements.

Student Threat to Consensual Decision-Making

Second, students often hold adversarial positions that disrupt or stall the consensual mode of institutional decision-making. The more formal powers student representatives have, the more disruptive to decision processes they can be.

Lack of Legitimacy

Third, student governments often lack external legitimacy to represent the student body. The voter turnout in student elections is typically low. Student governments can be tainted by poor governance practices, financial mismanagement, or lacking autonomy from being “domesticated” by institutional leaders or political parties or the state. The more domesticated student representatives appear vis-a-vis institutional leaders, and the less internal legitimacy student representatives have vis-a-vis the student body the less engaged student body is with the student government and the student representatives.

Student Representation in HE: Institutional, National, and Transnational Levels

Student Representation in HE Institutions

There exist two main models of student representation in institutional governance (and management) of HE institutions. First, *the democratic participatory governance model* places crucial decision authority in the hands of academic staff and students as key internal constituencies of HE institutions. In such a model, significant decision authority rests with senate-type bodies that include representatives of the academic staff and typically also students. There might be a prescribed share of student members, and students have either full voting rights or no voting rights or only voting rights on issues directly relevant to students. Students can also have a vote in the election of academic leaders, such as rectors or deans. Public institutions in most parts of the world tend to broadly follow this model, and in many countries, such arrangements are stipulated in HE legislation. This model is a consequence of 1960s protests calling for the democratization of university governing structures (De Groot, 1998; Luescher-Mamashela, 2010, 2013; Klemenčič and Park, 2018).

Second model exists in *the corporate type of shared governance arrangements* common to private HE institutions. In such governance arrangements, the authority lies in the board-type bodies, such as board of overseers or board of regents, which appoint academic and professional administrators. Academic (“faculty” in the United States) councils and student representative bodies have only consultative roles. In some cases, the executive leaders delegate authority to academic committees and these can further decide to involve students. However, the executive leaders retain authority for final decisions on the recommendations or policies prepared by the consultative

bodies. While such HE boards tend to have more diverse membership, which often also includes external members, student participation is, however, not a given. In many countries and institutions, board-type governing bodies do not include students. If student representatives are appointed to the governing board, they tend to be ex-officio to inform the decisions but without voting rights.

In terms of *degrees of intensity of student representation in institutional governance*, we distinguish four levels:

- (1) There is no involvement of students in decision-processes.
- (2) In need-based consultation, student representatives are invited to voice student concerns in a departmental academic meeting or to university leaders. Such consultation can be initiated by either party, but the ultimate decision for involving students in governance rests with the departmental or institutional leaders, not the student representatives.
- (3) Structured dialogue is a form of student representation whereby formalized procedures for student representation in governing bodies and processes exist. This means that there exist some agreements—written or informal—that specify the rules for student representation. However, students are typically only observers, asked for input but do not hold voting rights.
- (4) Students are considered full partners in shared governance arrangements when they are given seats and voting rights in decision-making processes, and when they can introduce issues to the agenda like any other members of the governing bodies. Such rights are typically formalized in legal and statutory documents.

Student Representation on National Level

National HE policy governance is becoming more like “policy network”: less hierarchical, with policy decisions being negotiated and mediated among several stakeholders rather than simply imposed by the authorities. Within such policy networks, student governments have opportunities for representation as one of the key stakeholders. The core assumption of policy network governance is resource dependency: political resources are dispersed over several public and private actors, thus forcing a government or university leaders to include these actors in decision-making in the interest of effective policy formulation, legitimation of adopted policy, and accountability (de Boer, Enders, and Schimank, 2007; Olsen, 2005). Student governments stand in implicit or explicit exchange relationships with authorities whom they seek to influence. In this relationship, student governments possess and can supply important resources: professional expertise, legitimation of policy outcomes, social control of their members, and services valued by the authority. Authorities in turn provide funding and other material or symbolic resources. They also define the relational structures through which student governments can formally and informally intermediate their interests.

The role of national student associations in national level HE governance is typically less formalized and less institutionalized than student representation on institutional level. The *systems of student representation* and *systems of student interest intermediation* on national level largely depend on the nature of state-society relations as well as existence on national level (or in federal systems, state-level) representative student associations. *The system of student representation* depicts the number of representative associations active on national (or state)

level and whether the state has granted any of these representational monopolies. The distinction here is made between *neo-corporatist*, *pluralist*, *corporatist*, and *statist/ clandestine* systems of student representation (see Table 1.1). The *system of student interest intermediation* reflects the characteristics of public policy processes, and whether there exist formal structures and/or processes for student interest intermediation, that is, student representation in public policy processes. The distinction here is made between *more formalized and informal systems of student interest intermediation* or *systems exclusively based on contentious politics*, that is, protest as the main form of political action by students.

In *neo-corporatist systems of state-student interactions*, one or few privileged intermediary student associations are involved in public decision-making concerning student issues. Here student representation is based on informal agreement or simply unquestioned tradition, or it can be formalized in national legislation. A formal stipulation of these organizations' representational monopoly is typically backed by compulsory or automatic membership of the entire student body, and with specified state financial provisions ensuring financial sustainability of representative student associations. These associations typically also have the exclusive right to nominate their representatives to the permanent governmental consultative structures and are invited to participate in ad hoc working parties. Hence, such organizations not only possess significant legitimating resources and formal channels of influence, but typically also sustained financing and well-established institutional structures.

There are two extensions of this model. In one model, two or more *functionally different* but complementary student associations share representational monopoly over student representation. Most notable examples are associations representing university students and associations representing students from other types of higher education institutions in binary HE systems. Another model depicts federal HE systems in which different territorial subunits (province or state) have their own (*territorially distinct*) representative student associations. In federal policy processes, these student associations share representational monopoly.

In *pluralist systems of state-student interactions*, the state does not grant official recognition for student representation to one organization, but there may be several organizations (national-based or institutional-based and sometimes party-political) that claim such representation and compete for access to policymaking and financial resources provided by the state. The Schmitter and Streeck's (1999, p. 48) description of pluralist associational systems is valid also for systems of student representation: "the number of constituent units is unspecified; identical functions are performed simultaneously by several associations in competition with each other; associations determine their tasks independently without taking into account the tasks performed by other associations; and no association is in a position to exercise hierarchical control over others."

In *corporatist systems*, typically in countries run by authoritarian regimes, one compulsory, non-competitive national student organization with a deliberate representational monopoly is imposed and controlled by the regime (cf. O'Donnell and Schmitter, 1986). The main characteristic of such system is that student representation associations exist and may be involved in public policy processes, but they are not autonomous from the regime. In countries that transitioned to democracy the state corporatist arrangement was changed to societal neo-corporatism, which allowed for autonomous student organizations. However, there are some countries in which institution-based student governments and/or political-party based student organizations failed

Table 1.1 National systems of student representation (further developed from Klemenčič, 2012)

	National systems of student representation			
	Corporatist	Neocorporatist	Pluralist	Statist/Clandestine
Number of student representative associations in national-level politics	One compulsory, non-competitive national student organization with a deliberate representational monopoly is imposed and controlled by the regime.	One or few privileged intermediary student associations are involved in public decision-making; autonomous from the state; functionally differentiated or territorially differentiated	The state does not grant official recognition student representation to one organization, but there may be several organizations (national-based or institutional-based and sometimes party-political) that claim such representation.	The state does not recognize representative student associations or explicitly prohibits and threatens national-level student associations. If these exist, they operate in hiding.
State - formally or informally - grants or monopoly of student interest representation	Yes, and the association is controlled by the state.	Yes. Often accompanied with secure administrative funding arrangements	No. Administrative and funding arrangements can exist, but associations compete for access to policymaking and financial resources.	No. State does not recognize and may explicitly prohibit national-level student representative associations.
Membership is national-level associations	Automatic or compulsory for all students	Automatic or compulsory for all students.	Typically, voluntary.	Typically, voluntary and clandestine.

to organize into a united national representation. This resulted in a fragmented pluralist system of student representation lacking a national representative association.

The fourth model is a statist/clandestine model in totalitarian regimes in which representative student associations are neither recognised nor involved in policy making (statist model) or are explicitly prohibited and operate in hiding (clandestine variation of the statist model). In such systems policy making on higher education is exclusively controlled by the state and students have no formal involvement in decision processes (Luescher and Klemenčič, 2016).

While intermediary student associations are largely focused on influencing policy outcomes or bringing issues of student concern onto the political agenda, there are notable differences in the structures underlying the political process and formal channels of student influence. Neo-corporatist, pluralist, and corporatist systems of student representation can display

more *formalized or more informal arrangements* depending on whether and which legal and constitutional mechanisms of student representation in policymaking are employed. In general, the most common legal or constitutional mechanisms of student representation in national policy making are: (i) laws on the representation of students within a national HE council or other decision-making, advisory or evaluating bodies relevant to HE; and (ii) rules governing consultation procedures or meetings with the Ministry responsible for HE (Persson, 2004). A more formalized and institutionalized model of student interest-intermediation in the policy process is through a government council which serves as a consultative body to the government, typically presided over by government representatives and includes government officials as well as representatives from institutions, industry, and students.

In contrast, *the informal state-student interactions* are conducted predominantly through informal consultations and seminars, representation on non-permanent working groups or projects of the Ministry, informal contacts with Ministry officials, written or oral contact with members of parliament and representation in national councils, agencies, or committees in charge of student affairs, and quality assurance (Persson, 2004). Student party-political associations often use informal channels—via political parties—as a way of interest intermediation.

The level of formalization cannot, however, be understood as indication of actual student influence. A governmental advisory council for student affairs with a high share of student representatives may not have any real influence in the policy process. In contrast, student representatives working primarily through a dense web of regular and frequent informal interactions, for example through political parties, might indeed be very influential.

Finally, state-student interactions can also be solely characterized by *contentious politics*. In statist/ clandestine systems where the state does not recognise student representative associations or explicitly prohibits these, students resort to protest, and boycotts, and similar forms of contentious political action. Such political actions are typically repressed by the regime, and student activists sanctioned for their activism (Kapit, 2023).

Student Representation in Transnational Governance of HE

Student representation exists within the multilevel governance and management of HE and thus also within supranational and transnational HE policy governance regimes. The involvement of transnational student associations in transnational HE policymaking can be attributed to the evolving nature of transnational governance regimes in which participation of transnational student associations not only brings expertise to but also aids the legitimacy of the policy processes and outcomes.

Student representation in supranational polity resembles the systems of student representation and systems of student interest intermediation discussed earlier. Like on national level, in transnational governance, student representation too is conditioned on resource dependency and student governments' student capital. International organizations or other bodies facilitating intergovernmental policy processes engage stakeholder associations to aid the efficiency of policy-making processes and policy implementation. Student associations possess specialized knowledge, information, and implementation agency. To gain access to the policy processes, students also tend to appeal to the principles of participatory democracy, representation, and democratic accountability as relevant for the legitimacy of public policy processes in transnational context.

As in national policy processes, there exist some structures or processes through which student representatives funnel student interests into policy processes. These structures and processes can be formalized, that is, defined in statutory documents of policy regimes or established through informal practices, for example when student representatives get routinely, but informally invited to meetings. The differences in formalization of pathways for student interest intermediation can be significant between different policy regimes, and these can privilege some associations over others. Furthermore, the structures and processes that allow for student interest intermediation can change over time. This is especially the case in international regimes, in which the traditional “bureaucratic idea of organising” with state actors as rule-setters is dissolving toward the policy-networks governance (Gustafsson and Hallström, 2014, p. 2). As the rules of governance continue to evolve, this creates conditions for stakeholders, such as students, to try to influence “rules of the game” in a way that would allow them to partake in policy decisions.

Student Involvement in Quality Assurance

Apart from governing bodies, student representatives are often involved in quality assurance (QA) structures and processes within HE institutions but also in national and transnational QA bodies. QA structures and procedures have been strengthening across the world. They have always been an important aspect of private HE with a more corporate-managerial type of governance. In the public HE sectors, the state has been granting HE institutions more autonomy, but imposing more accountability checks for these institutions to demonstrate that they fulfill the “societal” expectations for students being able to access quality HE and complete such education. Given the implicit social contract between the state and the students, the accountability checks necessarily require some form of student involvement. The key questions here are in which domains of QA students are involved and in what role, for example, in QA committees within HE institutions, in evaluation panels evaluating HE institutions, in policy processes defining standards and guidelines for QA, etc.

There exist *four degrees of intensity of student involvement in quality assurance*:

- (1) to provide information, that is, students serve as data source for data collected through student surveys;
- (2) to conduct quality assessment, that is, students serve as expert evaluators in QAA panels;
- (3) to contribute to quality improvements, that is, students serve as consultants in institutional QAA bodies; and
- (4) to develop QAA systems, that is, students serve in a political role in developing HE policies and strategies.

In practice, these degrees of intensity of involvement are interlinked and students can also be simultaneously involved in several of these processes albeit in distinct roles and with different degrees of authority.

Given the increasingly important role of QA in HE, the question emerges who the students are serving in QA bodies: are these elected student representatives delegated from the student

governments or these are student experts or student professionals selected and appointed into these roles by the HE authorities (bypassing the student governments' involvement). These questions are at the forefront of the evolving governance and management regimes, and relevant for the future involvement of students in QA in HE.

Student Governments

Student governments are a distinct type of student organizations. *Student organizations* are enduring collectivities of students that are autonomously governed and managed by students, have different degrees of formalization and institutionalization of governing structures and processes, and are established with the primary purpose of serving students. There is a vast array of student organizations active in HE institutions across the world. The most common types include:

- (a) representative student associations, that is, student governments (e.g., student parliaments, student councils, and student unions);
- (b) advocacy and affinity groups (e.g., first-generation student associations or undocumented students' associations);
- (c) religious and political party groups;
- (d) social clubs (e.g., fraternities and sororities);
- (e) athletic and cultural and art groups;
- (f) pre-professional groups (e.g., computer society or medical students' association);
- (g) community service groups (e.g., student volunteer groups in schools, homeless shelters, or in natural disasters);
- (h) student newspapers and publishers; and
- (i) student-run campus business organizations (e.g., student cafes, travel agencies, printing service).

These organizations can be distinguished according to their purpose and formalization, institutionalization of their decision-making processes, and organizational forms. According to their purpose, student organizations can be more political or more service-oriented. Most often they have a mix of purposes that change based on the makeup of their membership and political developments within their institution or beyond. Second, in terms of formalization and institutionalization of cooperation, student organizations range from informal student groups with minimal formalization of decision-making to highly formalized and institutionalized student organizations, such as student governments or student-run business organizations. Formalization means that students make decisions on how their collectivity will be governed and managed and the purposes it will serve, that is, they formally adopt governance procedures and record these in statutory documents. Defining governing procedures can further lead to institutionalization of procedures whereby students agree on and establish governing structures and other organizational structures, such as an executive board or a presidency and task committees, to enable them to take decisions collectively and implement agreed-upon activities. Accordingly, these organizations display different levels of organizational stability and continuity. The more

formalized organizations typically also have better organizational resources including offices and paid employees, and more stable and larger financial resources obtained from their universities or other income.

Student governments are the most common and most prominent type of student organizations. *Although they exist in different forms and designations—for example, student unions, councils, parliaments, board, guilds, committees, associations—student governments effectively operate as “governments”;* they present a system of rules, norms, and institutions by which the student body within an institution or nation is organized and indeed governed. They are political institutions through which collective student interests are aggregated and intermediated to other actors within the higher education or wider political context. Their primary aim is to represent and defend the interests of the student body. They do so especially by seeking representation in governing bodies and processes of HE institutions (or within national-level or supranational HE governance structures). Student governments provide a framework for student social and political activities within the academic community. They also have a professional function: they provide academic and welfare support services to students and manage student facilities and sometimes business operations (for example, travel agencies, publishing houses, clubs, and restaurants). In short, student governments organize, aggregate, articulate, and intermediate student interests in the context of a HE institution or a HE system, along with providing numerous services and organizing student activities.

While the existence of student governments at HE institutions is almost universally accepted, the existence of national (or regional) platforms of student representation is much less widespread. Governments are aware of the political potency of organized student interest groups on the national level. History offers ample lessons of organized students forming an influential oppositional force and bringing about regime change. Therefore, in countries under totalitarian or authoritarian rule, national student associations have been either prohibited or—in a corporatist fashion—fully controlled by the regime. In transitional countries, governments tend to opt for a pluralist approach: addressing several student groups, prompting them to compete against each other for influence, thus deterring possible mass collective action through the principle “*divide et impera*.” However, there also exist countries with powerful national student associations, who hold a long tradition of student unionism, automatic or mandatory student union membership, and ample financial and other organizational resources. These national student associations are powerful political institutions that cannot easily be ignored by authorities. Through various social networks, they are often also closely connected to different actors within the government and political parties. National student associations have a tradition of being the training ground for future political leaders (Luescher—Mamashela and Mugume, 2014).

Finally, closest to student governments, and sometimes competing with them for representative voice are other student groups with political agenda, such as sectorial (discipline-specific), party-political, affinity and religious, and other types of student interest or advocacy groups. Yet, the student governments are distinct in terms of their openness to represent *all* students. There are also many other primarily service-oriented student organizations which can at times also have political agenda, such as social clubs (e.g., fraternities and sororities), athletic, cultural, and art; pre-professional, and community service groups, student newspapers, and publishers; and student-run campus business organizations. These other types of student organizations often

have some formal relationship to the student governments. For example, the student government manages and distributes funding to other student organizations, or the student government owns student-run campus business organizations.

Purposes of Student Governments

Student governments organize students in different domains and on different levels of multilevel governance of HE: from student dormitories to study programs, within departments, faculties, and schools, or within university alliances, to national-levels and supranational HE policy making. Student governments within HE institutions can be organized either within the university governance structure (effectively as a unit of higher education institutions) or as legally independent entities. In some countries, these two types of student representation co-exist, whereby the councils have a role in governance of HE institutions and unions are responsible for student social welfare, including funding student groups and student activities.

National student associations are formed by the collective action of institution-based student governments which choose to cooperate and coordinate their activities in national HE politics. Similarly, transnational student associations are formed by national student associations and target supranational HE policy processes and institutions (Klemenčič and Galan Palomares, 2018). There exist also transnational representative student associations that are active in global regions.⁴ Transnational student associations are “meta-associations” founded by national associations. They operate in transnational HE governance regimes: their political activities are targeted toward supranational and transnational organizations and institutions, and their geographic level of mobilization is transnational.

Student governments aggregate students’ interests. They do so by a way of descriptive representation vested in the elected student representatives. There exists an implicit expectation that student representatives reflect the social characteristics of the student body that elected them, understand students’ interests and are willing to act on behalf of students. How students are elected to the positions of student representatives matters for the alignment between political preferences of the student body and those of the elected representatives. Student elections create incentives for the candidates to fully understand the interests of the student body and commit to act on behalf of the student body. However, student-elected representatives’ tenure tends to be relatively short, that is, for one or two years. This is due to the limited nature of studentship. Limited time as students is also the reason why student representatives often do not seek re-election. Student governments also aggregate student interests directly through polling or surveys, referenda, or town halls.

Student governments intermediate student interests to HE authorities and into HE decision processes through formal and informal channels of student representation or expert or professional-administrative roles or activism.

Student governments also provide services to students (Cuyjet, 1994). Student governments’ activities range from organizing social events, to tutoring services, organizing student travel, offering printing and publishing services to managing and distributing funding for student groups, programs, and activities in cultural, educational, social, recreational, and other domains. They also manage student facilities and operate student-run businesses.

Key Organizational Capabilities of Student Governments

Student governments, by the very nature of their role, must balance between what Schmitter and Streeck (1999) call the “logic of membership” and “logic of influence.” The organizational characteristics and political agenda of student governments are inevitably defined by and determined through both logics.

Membership is a defining characteristic of student governments as associations of members. Student governments exist to serve their constituency, the collective student body which founded them. The student body elects student representatives to student governments and mandates them to act on their behalf and in their interest. Members define the governance arrangements of the student government. These members have made a collective choice to cooperate and coordinate their collective action through joint institutions. Members also supply funding and delegate political authority to elected representatives to represent them toward HE authorities and act on their behalf in decision processes in HE.

Membership structures of student governments are relevant for student representation since they define student associations’ mobilization potential, determine their representativity, and may influence their financial resources. Student governments are essentially associations of individual students and/or of student groups and organizations. Membership in student governments is hence one of the essential features of student governments’ organizational capabilities. Within HE institutions, members of student governments are students enrolled at that institution.

Membership in a student government can be universal (every student enrolled at the institution is automatically a member), mandatory (by default students are members but they can opt-out), or voluntary membership (students opt-in to become members). Tied to membership is payment of membership fees which is a crucial revenue source for operations of the student governments. Revenue streams play an important role not only in organizational capabilities of these organizations but also in maintaining organizational autonomy. National and transnational student associations typically have voluntary membership and selection procedures with predefined criteria for candidates to be accepted as members. They are funded through membership fees and seek external funding through administrative grants or projects to fund their operations.

Membership defines the student government’s governing bodies (such as an assembly or board or parliament) consisting of elected student representatives or delegates from member student governments. This is the highest decision body in a student government which decides on governing structures, political agenda, and modes of action. These decisions are implemented by an executive body which is formed from elected representatives, and, if resources enable this, by an executive office which includes (non-elected, paid) staff members. Governance structures impact efficiency of decision procedures and democratic legitimacy. Executive offices and permanent staff are important for maintaining institutional memory which is relevant given the relatively high turn-over among student representatives. Employed staff in the secretariat aids institutional memory and professionalization. Budgets determine financial resources available for political activity and condition sustainability of student governments.

Next, student governments exist to intermediate the interests of the student body to an authority, a HE institution or a government. Therefore, student governments inevitably must relate to that

authority, engage with its structures and agenda, and engage in its policy networks. Student governments' organizational capabilities are also defined by the conditions in the political context in which student governments seek to exert political influence: within HE institutions or HE systems. This is how *logic of influence* shapes organizational structures of student governments. Student governments adapt their structures and processes to better perform their representative function. For example, they create working groups or committees to address a particular policy issue.

The success of stakeholder associations in establishing legitimate power to participate in policy processes and to successfully influence policy outcomes depends largely on the exchange resources that the different actors can bring to the table, that is, student capital. Student governments claim monopoly over student capital. In turn, student governments expect access to decision-making, funding, and other material or symbolic resources (Klemenčič and Galan Palomares, 2018). As discussed above, organizational resources such as membership, financial resources, employed staff, and governance structures are significant for student governments' capabilities, that is, capital for interest intermediation, as well as for the provision of student services and activities. Significant are also student associations' capabilities to generate expertise, gather information, and send informed and competent representatives to meetings with university or national officials. Interest intermediation depends on internal policy processes to formulate policy positions and policy papers. These processes in turn depend on organizational capabilities to generate expertise, gather information, conduct policy implementation, and be able to publicize political activities through effective public relations.

Student representatives act simultaneously in "*two-level*" *games* between members whom they seek to represent and with HE authorities whom they seek to influence. In HE contexts where student governments have direct links to political parties or youth organizations (e.g., are members of national youth councils) or other political actors (such as trade unions), negotiations on their policy positions happen also in those contexts. These affiliations or close relationships add a "*third-level game*" to policy processes of student governments. Intense socialization between student representatives and the HE authorities they seek to influence or other organizations (e.g., political parties) raises challenges to autonomous student representation. Like other political institutions, student governments too are a relatively enduring collection of rules and organized practices embedded in structures of meaning and resources that are relatively invariant in the face of the turnover of individuals and relatively resilient to the idiosyncratic preferences and expectations of individuals and changing circumstances (March and Olsen, 2008, p. 3). However, given the rapid turnaround of elected officials and the transient nature of studentship, student governments tend to be more susceptible to change under the influence of individual "agents" or external circumstances.

Student governments' political potency, especially if validated through high election turnout or activist mobilization, gives these representative bodies strength in claim-making on behalf of students. However, student governments also face numerous challenges to their internal and external legitimacy, which limits their ability to perform the representative function. Again, as featured in this Handbook, the organizational resources of student governments as well as their bureaucratic structures vary significantly across, and within countries. New HE policies and resulting changes in the institutional governance arrangements can alter both the formal and the symbolic authority of student representatives to partake in institutional decision processes. Key premise of the theory of student impact in HE is that students can enact political agency to change

HE institutions, for example, demand more rights for student representation. Hence, the relations between students (or student governments) and HE institutions are one of *alternation between the conditioning of student representation by structures of HE and the elaboration of structures of HE by student representation*.

The relations between student representatives and student governments are also one of *alternation between the conditioning of student representatives' actions by structures of student government and the elaboration of structures of student government by student representatives*. Student governments house resources that enable elected student representatives to act on behalf of students and distribute resources (typically funding) to student organizations and various student initiatives and activities. Their purpose and mission, structures, processes, and rules are stipulated in statutory documents and their political agenda is recorded in policy papers. As political institutions, student governments develop their own cultural frames, that is their own interpretative lenses about the social world around them and their own narratives. Furthermore, they encompass distinct repertoires of action as toolkits of habits, skills, and styles which shape the strategies of those students who wish to run for positions in student government (cf., Swidler, 1986). For example, in many countries, it is common for political parties to be involved in student politics, especially through funding candidates in student elections. Those students who aspire to serve in student representation thus need to understand how to engage with political parties as an essential “toolkit for action” to get elected. In contrast, if a student body is against party-political involvement, or if party-political involvement is prohibited in student politics, this context presents a different cultural repertoire for aspiring student leaders to navigate.

Like any social institution, student governments incorporate symbolic boundaries, that is, visible barriers between those who can serve as student representatives and those who cannot. The inclusion of students from minority groups among the elected student representatives is one relevant issue here (Goodman, 2021). Another issue pertains to gender balance among elected representatives and, in some contexts, the underrepresentation of women in student politics (Miller and Kraus, 2004). Yet another issue is whether students from lower socio-economic backgrounds have access to public service roles in student representation. This issue is related to the question of whether student government roles are remunerated (or not) or whether students can obtain course credit for such public service roles. Serving in student government has several benefits for personal and professional development (Downey, Bosco and Silver, 1984; Kuh and Lund, 1994; Rosch and Collins, 2017). However, voluntary public service roles in student government inevitably present significant opportunity costs to paid student jobs. Consequently, these roles can be less accessible to students who need earnings to support themselves or their families while they are studying, which is a vast majority of students across the world. Cultural capital and social capital can present barriers to access to student governments and how well the elected representatives reflect the diversity of the student population (Brooks, Byford and Sela, 2015). If calls for candidates are not open and transparent, and if it depends on whom you know to get into the student representation, these practices present barriers to access.

Student representatives can be co-opted to support the agendas of others by socializing into the values, norms, and interests of the communities of practice they have joined or simply out of self-interest expecting personal benefits for cooperative behavior. Rules on preventing a conflict of interest in student representation are important in addressing these challenges. The positions advanced by student representatives need to be checked against the mandate they obtained from

their constituency to ensure that student interests are represented truthfully and competently. Finally, students with public service and civic dispositions are drawn to student leadership roles. Their sense of citizenship and belonging to the university offers further motivation for enactment of political agency. Students' sense of efficacy, that is, the sense that they can effect change through their action, can also add to motivation to act against feelings of powerlessness and futility.

Typologies of Student Governments

In the first existing typology of national student association, Klemenčič (2012) distinguishes between two ideal types of student associations on a spectrum. Interest-group-like student organizations are characterized by hierarchically ordered organizational structures with strong centralized coordination, secure funding, political agenda focused on HE issues and lobbying and political advocacy as the main mode of political action. Student-movement-like student organizations tend to be organizationally more network-like, loosely integrated, with less secure administrative funding, transversal political agenda, and non-institutionalized forms of claim making, such as protests.

Jungblut and Weber (2015) added a hybrid organizational type to capture student governments which transition from student-movement-like to a more professionalized form of an interest-group-like student organization. Vespa et al. (2024) have since developed a more comprehensive depiction of the "student politics system" which reflects six axes of student collective actors' orientations: 1) relationship with political parties (affiliation vs. independence); 2) relationship with non-youth stakeholders (integration vs. isolation); 3) organizational structure (movement vs. organization); 4) conception of representation at the national level (unitary vs. plural); 5) mode of action (institutional representation vs. activism); 6) nature of the set of claims (corporatist vs. political). This typology can be applied both to (neo)corporatist systems with only one representative student association as well as pluralist systems with many representative student associations. These organizational characteristics, especially funding, legal status, and relationship to third parties, are relevant for the autonomy and legitimacy of student governments.

Autonomy and Legitimacy of Student Governments

Autonomy of student government refers to student representatives within the student government having full decision-making competences and being exempt from external interference and constraints on the actual use of such competences. Autonomy of student governments pertains to policy autonomy (ability to decide on its own political and professional agenda); governance autonomy (ability to decide on internal structures and processes), and managerial autonomy (discretion over financial matters, human and other resources). The latter includes financial autonomy (conditions imposed through funding), legal autonomy (legal status), and "symbolic" autonomy (in particular, relations to political parties). In the case of student governments, external interference typically stems from the state, political parties, and/or HE institutions in which they are located.

The state can (and often does) regulate through legislation the terms of the relationship between student governments and their home institutions. The sticking points in such formulations are

several: whether membership in student governments is automatic (or mandatory) or voluntary, how student governments are funded (through mandatory student fees or through voluntary contributions of students), and what the legal status of student governments is (are student governments legally independent or integrated into governing structure of the university they belong to). The expectation here is that the less dependent student governments are on their home institutions, the freer they will be from possible intervention and control from the institutional leadership. As discussed earlier, the state can create its own representative student associations and/or exerts direct control over such associations. External interference can come from political parties through funding of political candidates, as it is the case in many African countries (Luescher and Klemenčič, 2016; Luescher and Mugume, 2014). In some countries, student groups have overt party-political designations and thus direct links to political parties. In Italy, for example, this is reflected in a pluralist system of student representation with many competing party-political student groups both within the institutions and at national level (Vespa et al., 2024).

Autonomy of student governments relates also to the student rights to organize, to assemble and to peacefully demonstrate, and to voice student grievances and interest through advocacy and research, representation, and lobby, and through nonviolent activism. Violations of student rights can also occur through more covert actions by HE institutions or governments, such as implicit threats, intimidation, or coercion, or other ways of discrimination or through retaliation, including withholding opportunities to student leaders. However, student governments too can take measures to prevent student representatives from acting in representative roles when there exists a possibility for conflict of interest. For example, student representatives should not seek letters of recommendations, internships, or other personal benefits or opportunities from the institutional leaders or government officials with whom they interact in an official capacity as representatives of students. This is to prevent these representatives from entering situations where they could be co-opted by others to derive personal benefit from actions or decisions made in their official capacity as student representatives.

The perceived autonomy of student governments affects student governments' internal and external legitimacy. *Legitimacy* of representative student associations refers to the belief of the student body that the student association is representing their interest truthfully and effectively, is governed democratically and according to the principles of good governance. If students hold such beliefs, then they are willing to trust it, engage in it, and obey the rules set by it. This is the *internal legitimacy* aspect of student representative associations. *External legitimacy* of student representative associations is reflected in beliefs of stakeholders other than students, that is, university leaders, academic staff, government officials, that student associations can truthfully and effectively represent student interests, are governed democratically and according to principles of good governance and can effectively contribute to the decision and policy processes. External legitimacy is often assessed by representativity, structural and procedural democracy, but also expertise, constructiveness, reliability, and trustworthiness of elected student representatives. Relationships to external actors, in particular political parties, are also relevant to legitimacy (Luescher and Klemenčič, 2016; Luescher and Mugume, 2014). While student governments may form alliances with political parties or other actors, or sympathize with some informally, the contentious question is whether their structures and processes are strong enough to prevent their primary locus of interest and activity to be moved from students to the

outside actor. This would, of course, undermine student governments' unique ability to perform representational functions.

Conclusion

This chapter offers an overview of the key concepts in the study of student representation as the less explored facet of student politics compared to student activism. It discusses student authority in HE governance as legitimate rights of students to participate in decision processes and the organizational characteristics of student governments. Both are conditions for student representation in HE.

The chapter is grounded in the *theory of student impact on HE* which challenges and corrects the existing one-directional perspectives of the effects of HE on students and seeks to explain the overarching mechanisms of students' effects on HE through student political agency. It also advances the proposition of the dynamic nature of student representation in HE which is highly conditioned on “*new policies [which] create a new politics.*”

The chapter provides theoretical foundations to the empirical chapters in this Handbook while noting that many empirical chapters also offer theoretical propositions advancing, complementing, or correcting those submitted in this chapter.

Notes

- 1 This chapter draws from and builds on the following individually authored publications by the author: Klemenčič (2012, 2014, 2015a,b, 2017, 2018, 2020a, b, c, d, e, f, 2023a, b, 2024). Any references to the author's co-authored publications are cited in the text.
- 2 Scholars have used different terminology to draw the same distinction: such as the institutionalized and noninstitutionalized forms of student politics (Weinberg and Walker, 1969), ordinary and extraordinary student politics (Pabian and Minksová, 2011), and associational politics and protest politics (della Porta, Donatella and Guzmán—Concha, 2020) (cited in Klemenčič and Park, 2018).
- 3 Student enactment of political agency can also result in students' self-formation, possibly even at an accelerated rate, but self-formation is not the purpose, only a possible consequence of enactment of political agency.
- 4 In 2020, five regional student associations have formed the Global Student Forum: All-Africa Students Union (AASU), European Students Union (ESU), Commonwealth Students Association (CSA), Organizing Bureau of School Students Unions (OBESSU), and Organización Continental Latinoamericana y Caribeña de Estudiantes (OCLAE).

References

- Altbach, P.G. (1989). Perspectives on student political activism. *Comparative Education* 25(1): 97–110.
- Altbach, P.G. (1991). Student political activism. In Altbach, P.G. (ed.), *International Higher Education: An Encyclopedia* (pp. 247–60). New York, NY: Garland.

- Altbach, P.G. (2006). Student politics: Activism and culture. In Forest, J.F. and Altbach, P.G. (eds.), *International Handbook of HE* (pp. 329–45). Dordrecht: Springer.
- Archer, M. (1995). *Realist Social Theory: The Morphogenetic Approach*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511557675>
- Archer, M. (2000). *Being Human: The Problem of Agency*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Archer, M. (2003). *Structure, Agency and the Internal Conversation*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139087315>
- Ashby, E., and Anderson, M. (1970). *The Rise of the Student Estate in Britain*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Barnett, R. (2007). *A Will to Learn*. Berkshire, UK: Open University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. 1984 [1979]. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*. Translated by Richard Nice. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. 1988 [1984]. *Homo Academicus*. Translated by Peter Collier. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1996 [1989]. *The State Nobility: Elite Schools and the Field of Power*. Translated by Lauretta C. Clough. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781503615427>
- Broadhurst, Christopher and Martin, Georgianna L. (2014). “Part of the ‘Establishment’? Fostering Positive Campus Climates for Student Activists.” *Journal of College and Character* 15(2): 75–85.
- Brooks, R., Byford, K. and Sela, K. (2015). Inequalities in students’ union leadership: the role of social networks. *Journal of Youth Studies* 18(9): 1204–18. doi:10.1080/13676261.2015.1039971.
- Buchter, J.F. (1973). Contract law and the student-university relationship. *Indiana Law Journal* 48(2): 253–68.
- Christiano, T. (2020). Authority. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2020 Edition). Edited by Edward N. Zalta. <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2020/entries/authority/>>
- Cuyjet, M.J. (1994). Student government as a provider of student services. *New Directions for Student Services* 1994(66): 73–89. doi:10.1002/ss.37119946608.
- de Boer, H.F., Enders, J. and Schimank, U. (2007). On the way towards new public management? The governance of university systems in England, the Netherlands, Austria, and Germany. In Jansen, D. (ed.), *New Forms of Governance in Research Organizations. Disciplinary Approaches, Interfaces and Integration* (pp. 137–52). Springer.
- de Boer, H.F. and File, J. (2009). *Higher Education Governance Reforms across Europe*. Brussels: ESMU.
- De Groot, G.J. (1998). *Student Protest: The Sixties and After*. Abingdon: Taylor & Francis.
- Della, Porta, Donatella, Lorenzo Cini and Guzmán- Concha, César (2020). *Contesting Higher Education Student Movements against Neoliberal Universities*. Bristol: Bristol University Press.
- Downey, R.G., Bosco, P.J. and Silver, E.M. (1984). Long-term outcomes of participation in student government. *Journal of College Student Personnel* 25(3): 245–50.
- Fisher, Dana (2012). Youth political participation: Bridging activism and electoral politics. *Annual Review of Sociology* 38(1): 119–37.
- Goodman, M.A. (2021). Openly gay undergraduate men in student government: Out, visible, and elected. *The Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*. doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000273
- Gustafsson, I. and Hallström, K.T. (2014). Constructing authority in transnational governance: Rationality, hierarchy and state involvement in the world of certification standards. Paper presented at The Phenomenology of Organizations: A SCANCOR Celebration of the Work of John Meyer. September 25–27, 2014, Boston, MA.
- Hacker, J.S. and Pierson, P. (2014). After the “Master Theory”: Downs, Schattschneider, and the rebirth of policy-focused analysis. *Perspectives on Politics* 12(3): 643–62. doi:10.1017/S1537592714001637.
- Hurtado, S. (2007). The study of college impact. In Gumpert, P. (ed.), *Sociology of Higher Education* (pp. 94–112). Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Jensen, Arnett Jeffrey (2008). Emerging adulthood: A theory of development from the late teens through the twenties. *American Psychologist* 55(5): 469–80. doi:10.1037/0003- 066X.55.5.469.

- Jungblut, J. and Weber, R. (2015). We are one, but we're not the same: Explaining the emergence of hybrid national student unions. In *Student Engagement in Europe: Society, HE and Student governance* (pp. 269–81). Strasbourg: Council of Europe.
- Kapit, A. (2023). *Activism Under Attack. Understanding the Repression of Student Activism*. Oslo: SAIH – the Norwegian Students' and Academics' International Assistance Fund.
- Klemenčič, M. (2012). Student representation in Western Europe: Introduction to the special issue. *European Journal of HE* 2(1): 2–19.
- Klemenčič, M. (2014). Student power in a global perspective and contemporary trends in student organising. *Studies in HE* 39(3): 396–411.
- Klemenčič, M. (2015a). Student involvement in quality enhancement. In Huisman, Jeroen, de Boer, Harry, Dill, David and Souto-Otero, Manuel (eds.), *The Handbook of HE Policy and Governance* (pp. 526–43). London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Klemenčič, M. (2015b). What is student agency? An ontological exploration in the context of research on student engagement. In Klemenčič, M., Bergan, S. and Primožič, R. (eds.), *Student engagement in Europe: society, higher education, and student governance*. Council of Europe Higher Education Series No. 20. Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing.
- Klemenčič, M. (2017). From student engagement to student agency: Conceptual considerations of European policies on student-centered learning in higher education. *Higher Education Policy* 30(1): 69–85.
- Klemenčič, M. (2018). The student voice in quality assessment and improvement. In Hazelkorn, Ellen, Coates, Hamish and McCormick, Alex (eds.), *Research Handbook on Quality, Performance and Accountability in HE* (pp. 332–43). Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Klemenčič, M. and Galán Palomares, F.M. (2018). Transnational student associations in the European multi-level governance of HE policies. *European Educational Research Journal* 17(3): 365–84.
- Klemenčič, M. and Park, B. Y. (2018). Student politics: Between representation and activism. In Cantwell, B., Coates, H. and King, R. (eds.), *Handbook on the Politics of HE* (pp. 468–86). Cheltenham: Edward.
- Klemenčič, M. (2020a). Student activism and student organizations. In David, Miriam E. and Amey, Marilyn J. (eds.), *The SAGE Encyclopedia of HE*, 5v. Washington, DC: SAGE Publishers.
- Klemenčič, M. (2020b). Students as actors and agents in student-centered HE. In Hoidn, S. and Klemenčič, M. (eds.), *Routledge International Handbook on Student-Centered Learning and Teaching in HE* (pp. 75–92). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429259371-7>
- Klemenčič, M. (2020c). Student governments. In Shin, J.C. and Teixeira, P. (eds.), *International Encyclopedia of HE Systems and Institutions*. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Klemenčič, M. (2020d). HE institution governing boards: Student board members. In David, M.E. and Amey, M.J. (eds.), *The SAGE Encyclopedia of HE* (5 volumes). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Klemenčič, M. (2020e). Student employees. In Shin, J.C. and Teixeira, P. (eds.), *International Encyclopedia of HE Systems and Institutions*. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Klemenčič, M. (2020f). Student politics. In J.C. Shin and P. Teixeira (eds.), *International Encyclopedia of Higher Education Systems and Institutions*. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Klemenčič, M. (2023a). The rise of the student estate. In Amaral, A. and Magalhães, A. (eds.), *The Handbook on Autonomy and Governance of Higher Education Institutions*. Chapter 29, Cheltenham: Edgar Elgar Publishing.
- Klemenčič, M. (2023b). A theory of student agency in higher education. In Baik, C. and Kahu, E. (eds.), *The Research Handbook on the Student Experiences in Higher Education*. Chapter 3. Cheltenham: Edgar Elgar Publishing.
- Klemenčič, M. (2024). Student agency and student impact through representative student associations. In Conner, Jerusha, Raaper, Rille, Guzmán-Valenzuela, Carolina and Gauthier, Launa, *The Bloomsbury International Handbook of Student Voice in Higher Education*. Chapter 18. London and New York: Bloomsbury Publishers.
- Kuh, G.D. and Lund, J.P. (1994). What students gain from participating in student government. *New Directions for Student Services* 66: 5–17.

- Lipset, S.M. (1967). *Student Politics*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Lipset, S.M. and Altbach, P.G. (eds.) (1969). *Students in Revolt*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.
- Lizzio, A. and Wilson, K. (2009). Student participation in university governance: The role conceptions and sense of efficacy of student representatives on departmental committees. *Studies in HE* 34(1): 69–84.
- Luescher-Mamashela, T.M. (2010). From university democratisation to managerialism: The changing legitimation of university governance and the place of students. *Tertiary Education and Management* 16(4): 259–83.
- Luescher-Mamashela, T.M. (2013). Student representation in university decision making: Good reasons, a new lens? *Studies in HE* 38(10): 1442–56.
- Luescher-Mamashela, T. M. and Mugume, T. (2014). Student representation and multiparty politics in African HE. *Studies in HE* 39(3): 500–15.
- Luescher, T.M., Klemenčič, M. and Jowi, O.J. (eds.) (2015). Special issue: Student power in African HE. *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa* 3(1): 1–116.
- Luescher, T.M., Klemenčič, M., and Jowi, O.J. (eds.) (2016). *Student Politics in Africa: Representation and Activism*. Cape Town and Maputo: African Minds.
- Luescher, T.M. and Klemenčič, M. (2016). Student power in twenty-first century Africa: The character and role of student organising. In Brooks, R. (ed.), *Student Politics and Protests* (pp. 166–86). Abingdon: Routledge.
- March, James G. and Olsen, Johan (2008). “Elaborating the ‘new institutionalism’.” In Rhoades, R.A.W., Binder, Sarah A. and Rockman, Bert A. (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Political Institutions* (pp. 3–20). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Menon, M.E. (2005). Students’ views regarding their participation in university governance: Implications for distributed leadership in HE. *Tertiary Education and Management* 11(2): 167–82.
- Miller, C. and Kraus, M. (2004). Participating but not leading: Women’s under-representation in student government leadership positions. *College Student Journal* 38(3): 423–7.
- O’Donnell, G.A. and Schmitter, P.C. (1986). *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Olsen, J.P. (2005). The institutional dynamics of the (European) University. Arena Working Paper No. 15, University of Oslo: Arena.
- Pabian, P. and Minksova, L. (2011). Students in HE governance in Europe: Contrasts, commonalities and controversies. *Tertiary Education and Management* 17(3): 261–73.
- Peter, F. (2017). Political legitimacy. In Zalta, Edward N. (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2017 Edition). <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2017/entries/legitimacy/>.
- Persson, A. (2004). Student participation in the governance of higher education in Europe: Results of a survey. In Bergan, S. (ed.), *The University as Respublica: Higher Education Governance, Student Participation and the University as a Site of Citizenship* (pp. 3182). Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing.
- Pierson, P. (1993). When effect becomes cause: Policy feedback and political change. *World Politics* 45(4): 595–628.
- Raaper, R. (2020). Students’ unions and consumerist policy discourses in English HE. *Critical Studies in Education* 61(2): 245–61.
- Raaper, R. (2021). Students as “animal laborans”? Tracing student politics in a marketised HE setting. *Sociological Research Online* 26(1): 130–46.
- Raaper, R. (2022). Freedom, fragmentation and student politics: Tracing the effects of consumerism in english students’ unions, in R. Watermeyer, R. Raaper and M. Olssen (eds.), *Handbook on Academic Freedom* (pp. 288–303). Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.
- Raaper, R. (2023). *Student Identity and Political Agency: Activism, Representation and Consumer Rights*. London: Routledge.
- Rosch, D.M. and Collins, J. D. (2017). The significance of student organizations to leadership development. *New Directions for Student Leadership* 2017(155): 9–19. <https://doi.org/10.1002/yd.20246>

- Sen, A. (1985). Well-being, agency and freedom. The dewey lectures 1984. *Journal of Philosophy* 82: 169–221. <https://doi.org/10.5840/jphil198582466>
- Schattschneider, E.E. (1935). *Politics, Pressures, and the Tariff: A Study of Free Private Enterprise in Pressure Politics*. Old Bridge, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Schmitter, P.C. and Streeck, W. (1999). The organization of business interests: Studying the associative action of business in advanced industrial societies. MPIfG Discussion Paper, 99/1.
- Skocpol, T., Weir, M.M. and Orloff, A.S. (1989). *The Politics of Social Policy in the United States*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Stensaker, B. and Vabø, A. (2013). Re-inventing shared governance: Implications for organisational culture and institutional leadership. *Higher Education Quarterly* 67(3): 256–74. doi:10.1111/hequ.12019.
- Swidler, Ann (1986). Culture in action: Symbols and strategies. *American Sociological Review* 51(2): 273–86.
- Teixeira, P.N. and Klemenčič, M. (2021). Valuing the civic role of university education in an age of competition and rapid change. In H. Van't Land, A. Corcoran and D.C. Iancu (eds.), *The Promise of HE* (pp. 145–51). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-67245-4_23.
- Vespa, M., Sguazzini, M. and Pratissoli, R. (2024). Inspired by student politics in Italy: A proposal for a new typology to classify student collective actors. In Klemenčič, M. (ed.), *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Student Representation*. Chapter 30. London: Bloomsbury Publishers.
- Weber, M. (1918). Politics as a vocation. In Gerth, H.H. and Mills, C. Wright (eds.), (1970), *Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (pp. 77–128). Abingdon: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Weinberg, I. and Walker, K. (1969). Student politics and political systems. *American Journal of Sociology* 75(July): 77–96.
- Zuo, B. and Ratsoy, E. (1999). Student participation in university governance. *Canadian Journal of HE* 29(1): 1–26.

PART II

Empirical Research on Student Politics and Representation in Higher Education

Part A

Transnational Representative Student Associations

2

The All-Africa Students Union (AASU) in Perspective: The Trajectory of the Continental Student Movement, from 1972 to 2022

Peter Kwasi Kodjie, Elorm Mawuli-Kwawu, Awurama Safowaa Kyei-Baffour,
Abdul Karim Ibrahim, Bismark Amefianu Kudoafor, and Rexford Akrong

Introduction

The All-Africa Students Union (AASU) has been at the forefront of student activism and representation in Africa since its establishment in 1972. Although one of the oldest regional student organizations in the world, the Union has rarely attracted much-needed academic interest. Thus, issues relating to the structure and operations, history, successes, challenges, and relations with international organizations have been largely understudied. In this chapter, we discuss the All-Africa Students Union (herein referred to as AASU) as the regional student organization in Africa to explore its historical and contemporary status within regional and global higher education policies. Our research is guided by the following questions: What is the organizational structure and capacity of AASU? What is the nature of the relationship between AASU and national student unions? And what relationships does AASU have with regional higher education bodies and international organizations?

The All-Africa Students Union is the umbrella organization for national student unions in African countries, and thus, for all African students from the basic level to higher institutions of learning. Since its inception in 1972 with just ten members, AASU in 2021 has seventy-five member unions across the African continent, representing over 170 million students in Africa and the diaspora. The Union is wholly student-run and student-led, autonomous, representative, and operates according to democratic principles. AASU has diplomatic status with the Government of Ghana and is headquartered in Accra (Brandful, 2013).

The Union played an essential role in the struggle against colonialism and the ending of apartheid in South Africa (AASU, 2022). At present, AASU's core activities focus on its seven Strategic Priorities—Education & Students' Rights, Capacity Building, Gender Advocacy, Environment & Climate Action, Pan-Africanism & African Culture, Migration & Mobility, Democracy & Good Governance. To help shape education policy, AASU works closely with the Education Division of the African Union, UNESCO and other UN Agencies, International

Non-governmental Organizations (INGOs), African Governments, and Civil Societies (AASU Annual Report, 2020). The strategic priority areas are chosen based on the converging aspirations of member unions in tandem with contemporary global issues. The Secretariat, under the guidance of the Executive Committee, prepares and submits the priority areas and proposals to Congress, the Union's highest decision-making body, for final adoption and subsequent action.

AASU's main activities focus on advocacy, influencing policy, capacity development, networking, and building partnerships. AASU campaigns actively in defense of students' rights, and the passage of policies on the need for the democratization of education across the Continent, with emphasis on access, equity, and equality. AASU is involved in several joint European Union-African Union projects on the harmonization of the higher education ecosystem in Africa: in the Tuning Africa Project Advisory Group (TAPAG) Phases I and II and as an advisory board member of the Harmonization of African Higher Education Quality Assurance and Accreditation (HAQAA) Initiative, and the Africa Continental Qualifications Framework (HAQAA2, 2019). AASU has an accredited status with UNESCO and has active relations with UN agencies such as UNDP, UNHCR, and UNCCD, among others, with representation on most of the working committees. In the year 2000, the United Nations (UN) awarded AASU a certificate of merit in recognition of the Union's efforts at advancing students' rights and championing the democratization of education across the African Continent.

AASU also facilitates education and training to build the capacities of students through conferences, seminars, training programs, and educational materials to enhance the potential of graduates to access decent jobs, develop their leadership skills, and significantly improve their skill sets. It offers a platform and environment for networking amongst members aimed at building closer relations for healthy partnerships. AASU constantly seeks out collaborative partnerships with like-minded organizations such as the 100 Million Campaign, Global Student Forum (GSF), Education International, Teach For All, European Students' Union (ESU), Commonwealth Students Association (CSA), Commonwealth of Nations, The African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Conflicts (ACCORD), Snake Nation, Global Campaign for Education, Global Partnership for Education, Education Cannot Wait, International Association of Universities (IAU), Education Sub-Sahara Africa, Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), Commonwealth of Learning, Oxfam, Campaign for Female Education (CAMFED), Action Aid, Save the Children International, Care International, Plan International, and the Association of African Universities (AAU), to advance progressive agendas.

The organization has over the years received grants and technical assistance from reputable organizations like the Open Society Foundation, Action Aid, Global Campaign for Education, Oxfam, 100 Million Campaign, and UNESCO, to undertake campaigns in the spheres of children's rights, girls' unbridled access to education, university autonomy, and sustainable financing of education.

This chapter reviews the AASU constitution, summit and annual reports, congress reports, project reports, press releases, newsletters, policy briefs, and press statements. The authors also consulted the published documents of the Union's partners, including governmental organizations (ministries) and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), which contain information on the Union. Emphasis was placed on published documents within five years (i.e., January 2017 to December 2021). Regarding international partners, this chapter relied on a documented history of activities of partnerships, collaborations, and shared projects to

establish a relationship and a continuous commitment to work together. We presented evidence of such a relationship through sourced publications from the official websites of AASU and other partners like the African Union, United Nations, United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), OXFAM, the Kailash Satyarthi Children’s Foundation, as well as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration of the Republic of Ghana. These partners have a long-standing relationship with the Union and frequently participate in the flagship projects of the Union. Over the past five years, AASU has engaged these organizations in flagship activities, including annual summits, webinars, campaigns, and training.

The chapter begins with a review of the literature on AASU and student governance broadly in Africa to provide context for this research. The chapter proceeds with a discussion of the organizational structure of AASU, governance, secretariat, and funding, and concludes with AASU’s relationship with partner organizations.

Literature Review

The lack of research on regional student movements in Africa, in the particular instance of AASU, is recognized by scholars and international organizations (Commonwealth Students Association, 2016, Grønne, 2017; UNESCO, 2013). To date, as noted by Grønne (2017) there is little record of scholarly work exclusively dedicated to studying and understanding the history and contemporary operations and the role of AASU within the broader students’ governance framework in Africa and the world. Grønne (2017) surmises that there is recognition of AASU’s partnership with the African Union, the Association of African Universities, and UNESCO, their evidential collaborative works are virtually extinct in academic and popular literature. This chapter attempts to fill that gap. One notable exception is the literature on West Africa Students Union (WASU) (Boahen, 1994) as a major political force during the anti-colonial struggle in British colonial Africa.

Generally, the student movements’ activities span three major areas: a) representing the interests of students, b) the provision of political and social activities such as leadership development, and c) the provision of welfare services (Lowe, Shaw, Sims, King and Paddison, 2017). These activities are directly consistent with the core mandate of AASU which emphasizes capacity development for student leaders while ensuring access to quality education across the Continent.

Student unions are important stakeholders in the education ecosystem in Africa. Across the world, student unions, under different names—student parliament, student council, student boards, and student associations (Klemenčič, 2014)—operate primarily as the voice or representatives of the interests and aspirations of students (Klemenčič, 2012, p. 2). The evolution of student unions in sub-Saharan Africa mirrors greatly that of several other non-governmental organizations, such as, for example, trade unions.

As with many interest-based groups, student unions in sub-Saharan Africa have a rich history of revolutionary activities. At their nascent stages, student unions, especially in post-independence Africa, were primarily a rallying point for students and young people. Nkinyangi

(1991) explains that the revolutionary traits were a result of the times, a period when political activism became increasingly stifled. Student unions or, in some cases, the student intelligentsia remain important actors within the larger educational political space as well as the political and social development of countries. Still, as observed by Zielig (2009), events of recent history have shaped student unionism and political activism differently. The neoliberal onslaught of the 1980s and its accompanying structural adjustment policies greatly changed higher education and student governance. According to Zielig (2009), as national universities lost funding and became increasingly difficult to run, student unionism and political activism have been negatively affected.

Student unions remain extremely important in sub-Saharan Africa despite the changes in the higher education sector. Whereas the state of unions and their activism may differ, student unions are generally ubiquitous in sub-Saharan Africa. This is evidenced in the operations of the All-Africa Students Union across fifty-four African countries. Although local politics sometimes present unique situations relative to the presence and appeal of various student unions, AASU, the largest student organization in Africa, has at least one-member union in every African state.

While Klemenčič, Luescher and Mugume (2016) are right about the general lack of clarity on the status of a national student representative organization within the broader statutory recognition of many African states, the case of AASU takes a slight departure. The All-Africa Students Union enjoys significant recognition from the African Union and African governments, as evidenced in the headquarters agreement with the Government of Ghana (AASU, 1987). Notably, the Republic of Ghana recognizes AASU as a key foreign policy feature and, as a result, captures it as a government-subsided institution under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration (Brandful, 2013). This may explain why contrary to common practice as pertains to the National Union of Ghana Students (NUGS) and other similar student associations in Ghana, AASU is in the purview of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration instead of the Ministry of Education (Brandful, 2013).

This chapter draws on reports and official accounts from local and international organizations and media reports to provide a comprehensive account of the organizational characteristics and activities of AASU. While the extant academic literature on student governance in Africa largely fails to capture the All-Africa Students Union, we find it a welcoming challenge to fill this gap.

Organizational Structure and Capacity of AASU

The All-Africa Students Union operates as a continental entity, much like the African Union. In this framework, AASU sits atop the students' governance hierarchy with national student unions as grassroots constituents and members of the organization. Currently, AASU has a presence in all fifty-four African states through the seventy-five member organizations that the Union represents. Regarding decision-making and administrative processes, Article 5 of the AASU constitution stipulates the nature of AASU membership with a specific focus on rights and obligations. It categorizes membership into three tiers: full membership, associate membership, and members with consultative status. Only full and associate members enjoy voting rights and can be voted for executive leadership positions in the Union (AASU Constitution, 2000). The AASU constitution

highlights that “any national student organization with a national character (encompassing the broad spectrum of students and geographically representative) is eligible for full membership” (AASU Constitution, 2000, p. 3). It further describes a national student organization as one with a broad-based structure which provides a fair representation of students in a given country and is wholly run by students, at the back of democratic principles.

Full members of AASU are eligible to receive delegate status at all AASU congresses and have the right to vote and be voted for in AASU elections. AASU, as part of its democratic structure, allows members to be represented in meetings of any of the Union’s governing bodies to which it is not represented or elected whenever issues concerning it are being discussed.

Associate membership is open to two or more student organizations of a given country which fulfill all the criteria for a national student organization except representing a broad and diverse base. A national youth organization with a student section involved in education work or championing student rights may also be admitted as an associate member where no organized student structure exists. Membership with consultative status is open to all organizations who intend to maintain working relations with AASU whether or not they meet the criteria of an associate or full member. Members with consultative status may only enjoy observer status during AASU congresses.

Governance

Article 6 of the AASU constitution recognizes three major decision-making bodies in the order of authority: Congress, the Executive Committee, and the Secretariat. Congress is the highest decision-making body of AASU (AASU Constitution, 2000). It is composed of delegates from full or associate member organizations of AASU. Congress operates democratically and has the power to amend the constitution under laid down procedures. It also has oversight responsibility over the work of the Executive Committee and, by extension, the Secretariat. This further implies that Congress, comprising delegates from full or associate member organizations, is an autonomous decision-making body of AASU. Exercising a country one-vote per-country nomenclature, the Union replicates the African Union spirit of fairness and equality, regardless of size and might. The one vote per country is a franchise that is exercised by the full member of a country and only in the absence of the full member is the associate member eligible to take the vote as circumstances may determine. Congress is convened every four years by the Executive Committee under the leadership of the President. Among others, Congress has the mandate to a) elect executive members; b) amend the constitution, c) enact policy, standing orders, and by laws; d) review the work of the Executive Committee and the Secretariat; e) ratify new members and review the status of existing members; f) make the final disciplinary decisions following the recommendation of the Executive Committee; g) take decisions on annual membership dues and other financial levies, and have final authority on all matters before it.

After Congress, there is the Executive Committee in the order of hierarchy. The Executive Committee comprises the President, the five Regional Vice Presidents (representing North, South, West, East, and Central Africa), the five Executive Committee Representatives of the five geographical regions of Africa and six officers of the Secretariat; the Secretary-General, Deputy Secretary-General, and Secretaries for Education and Students Rights, Press and Information,

Gender and International Relations, and Finance and Administration. Among others, the Executive Committee provides political leadership and assumes responsibility for the execution of all policies and programs adopted by Congress; reviews the work of the Secretariat; examines membership applications, and makes recommendations to Congress.

Secretariat

The Union has a functional Secretariat situated in Accra, Ghana. The Secretariat is the headquarters of the organization from where the day-to-day operations of the Union are carried out. AASU's staff comprise six tenured staff elected by Congress (non-established posts) and locally recruited permanent staff (established posts). The tenured staff (non-established posts) refer to democratically elected officers who serve in specific positions mandated by Congress in line with the Constitution. They include the following officers; Secretary-General, Deputy Secretary-General as well as Secretaries for Education and Students Rights, Press and Information, Gender and International Relations, and Finance and Administration.

The permanent staff roles (established posts) also apply to technical officers recruited by the Secretariat under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration of the Republic of Ghana. It is worth recalling that the All-Africa Students Union is classified as an international organization subvented under the Republic's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration. By Ghanaian statutory provisions, subvented institutions are supported by the central government. In effect, the technical staff of AASU are civil servants under Ghanaian laws (Brandful, 2013). This category of AASU staff work broadly under Finance, Audit, Human Resource, Operations, Technical, Programs, and Research and Communications. Annually, several personnel undergoing mandatory national service are also assigned to the All-Africa Students Union to work for a year.

Funding

While AASU is a nonprofit organization, it relies primarily on funding from the Government of Ghana. The Union also attracts donor support from international organizations like the Open Society Initiative of Southern Africa (OSISA), the 100 Million Campaign, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the African Union, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), Global Campaign for Education (GCE), Association of African Universities (AAU), UNESCO, Action Aid and OXFAM to embark on projects. Aside from these sources, other African governments like the Kingdom of Morocco, Sudan, Libya, and Rwanda also provide support to the Union to organize programs and activities. Despite AASU's dependence on states and international non-governmental organizations, the Union is still autonomous in its operations and decision-making. This arrangement makes AASU largely neo-corporatist (Klemenčič, 2014) in that, although it receives financial assistance from external entities, the Union remains autonomous. The Government of Ghana deems AASU worthy of support as it recognizes AASU as a key partner in the mobilization of students and student organizations on the African continent in the struggle for national and social liberation, democratization of education and student rights and interests (AASU-Government of Ghana MOU, 1987).

Nature of Relationship between AASU and National Unions

Since its inception in 1972, the All-Africa Students Union has formed a cooperative bond with its member unions. While member unions enjoy considerable autonomy in their respective jurisdictions, at the continental level, they defer to the All-Africa Students Union as the umbrella student organization tasked to promote unity among student organizations in Africa; advocate for equal access to education, university autonomy, and academic freedom as well as broadly representing the rights of students and championing their socioeconomic, political, and cultural aspirations. Viewed critically, the relationship between AASU and its member unions follows the steps of federalism (Elazar, 1987). Although the center wields broad mandates to represent the constituent unions, the latter is primarily responsible for overseeing student welfare issues in their respective countries.

Where necessary, the All-Africa Students Union steps in to galvanize the needed support or mediate with national governments or international organizations to safeguard students' interests. Toward this end, AASU has historically led continent-wide struggles to champion the cause of African students and young people broadly. One example is AASU's political role in solidarity with students of South Africa to fight against apartheid.

In contemporary times, AASU has been fighting vigorously against brazen human rights violations in the form of police and military brutality. In several African countries, state security forces, armed variously with guns, whips, and tear gas, have been beating, harassing, and, in some cases, killing students who oppose dictatorial governments. We have rallied broad local coalitions and international solidarity to fight for the rights of students who have been unlawfully detained or imprisoned on account of their human rights activities. AASU rallied broad support (including our global allies, the European Students' Union and the Global Student Forum) for the release of Patrick Zaki, who was detained by Egyptian security authorities for his human rights activities. In Zimbabwe, AASU continues to fight alongside the national student union, Zimbabwe National Student Union (ZINASU) and the Amalgamated Rural Teachers Union of Zimbabwe (ARTUZ), as they call for affordable and quality education. The crackdown on free speech and active citizenship participation has led to repeated arrests of leaders of ZINASU and ARTUZ, prompting AASU to use its mobilizing power to build international solidarity and, in some instances, even going a step further to offer both material and moral support to detainees.

AASU joined hands with students in South Africa to demand affordable education through the #FeesMustFall campaign. In 2022, with funding from OSISA, AASU is embarking on an ambitious campaign to demand quality, affordable internet service in Africa to aid education, especially during the period of Covid-19 (All-Africa Students Union, 2021). In this campaign, AASU works closely with constituent unions to engage respective governments on the need to regard internet access as a rights-based issue to make education inclusive. When necessary, AASU issues press statements addressing a wide range of issues that affect students across Africa. Examples, in the recent spate of kidnappings in Nigeria, coup d'états in Mali, Guinea, and Sudan, and political tensions in The Gambia, Zambia, and Eswatini (AASU, 2022). Among other actions, AASU issued strongly worded statements calling for the cessation of violence and the restoration of peace and stability to ensure the safety of students and young people (AASU, 2022).

Notwithstanding the above, the relationship between AASU and the constituent unions suffers occasionally. Constrained by its bureaucratic bottlenecks, the relative autonomy of member unions and complete jurisdictional control in their respective states present a challenge for AASU. This, in some instances, puts a limitation on the influence AASU has on these member unions. Also, cooperation from member unions is not always a given. Sometimes, member unions are nationalistic and protectionist in their outlook and fail to be fully supportive of the causes of AASU if they do not find immediate benefits for their respective unions. Over the years, AASU has contended with this challenge. Ironically, political processes like congress and democratic elections also present constant difficulties to the Union (Global News Network, 2021).

Political Activities of AASU

In the late 1990s and early 2000, AASU's role in the area of environment was focused on monitoring the process of the implementation of the United Nations' Agenda 21. Many reports that were issued were garnered from the monitoring projects of AASU in many parts of Africa. In addition to this, AASU is one of the Major Groups under the UN Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD), which oversaw the implementation process of the Rio de Janeiro Agreement on Environment and Sustainable Development.

AASU was a fore player in drafting the Student Declaration that was presented to the UNESCO conference on Higher Education in July 2009 in Paris. The Union was also active in drafting the student declaration "Opening the Big Door" at UNESCO's World Conference on Higher Education Meeting in Paris in 1998. This position paper won commendations for reflecting the various shades of issues confronting Higher Education in all parts of the World.

In April 2010, the Youth Unit of the Division for Social Policy and Development, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), also awarded AASU and thirteen other youth-based groups in Africa the United Nations World Youth Award for their contributions to the United Nations World Program of Action for Youth. Other agencies like UNESCO also have a longstanding relationship with AASU toward fighting the common cause of education in Africa. This culminated in the recognition of UNESCO and acceptance of the same by AASU in 2013 as the Africa Educational Support Organization of the Year. The All-Africa Students Union presented an award to UNESCO citing how UNESCO had been instrumental in acts, services, and achievements that exemplify and support students/youth organizations in Africa and for supporting initiatives to empower millions in Africa through education (UNESCO, 2013).

As a member of the Global Education Coalition, AASU continues to work with UNESCO and other organizations worldwide to address inequality in education, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic (UNESCO, 2020). AASU was officially invited to join the coalition in 2020. Since then, it has been campaigning with the 100 Million Campaign and with over sixty youth and student activists to ensure that girls' education is not truncated during and after the Covid-19 pandemic (UNESCO, 2021). The campaign especially recorded successes in Kenya and Uganda.

AASU's footprint in education transcends students' politics and governance to related issues of social justice and inclusion for marginalized communities in many respects. It continues to work closely with the Nobel Laureate Dr. Kailash Satyarti through the 100 Million Campaign and

the Kailash Satyarthi Children's Foundation to protect the world's most marginalized children (Moodley, 2022).

Over the last few years, AASU leadership has intensively challenged nationalist tendencies, thus setting the stage for increased global cooperation. In the erstwhile International Union of Students (IUS), the All-Africa Student Union mainly served as the vehicle for student mobility (from Africa to Europe), exchange programs, and peer learning. Very recently, the Union played a key role in the formation of the Global Student Forum (GSF), with what has been noted as the constitutive meeting leading to the founding of the GSF convened in 2019 in Accra, Ghana and later in Rabat, Morocco.

Transnational student organizations like the Global Student Forum (GSF) and its allied members, Commonwealth Students' Association (CSA), European Students' Union (ESU), Organizing Bureau of European School Student Unions (OBESSU), Organización Continental Latinoamericana y Caribeña de Estudiantes (OCLAE) work closely with AASU to advance the cause of students in Africa and elsewhere. AASU and GSF have collaborated recently to provide capacity-building workshops for student leaders via the Academy in Activism, Leadership, and Advocacy (GSF, 2021). The academy is composed of online master classes aimed at supporting student representatives in developing their competencies for quality advocacy and successful campaigning as well as mobilization and leadership of membership-based organizations. The GSF has also collaborated with AASU and other student organizations to undertake campaigns for climate action, against the unjustified incarceration of student leaders and writers.

On the quality assurance front, AASU is a key player in the African Union's efforts to create the Pan-African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework (PAQAF), and its agency, the Pan-African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency (PAQAA). PAQAF is the African Union's flagship framework for harmonization in the higher education sector and a cornerstone of the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA). The Union was also fully involved in the drafting of the African Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ASG-QA) and other tools and approaches for the recognition of academic qualifications across the Continent, to support the effective implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). To support these continental efforts at an internal level, the Union is rolling out the Student Quality Assurance Experts Pool with the support of the European Students Union (ESU). At the global level, AASU is leading the efforts by the Global Student Forum to campaign vigorously for member states to ratify UNESCO's Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the position of the All-Africa Students Union within the context of student governance in Africa. While student unions are ubiquitous in Africa and continue to attract scholarly interest from researchers in politics and higher education, the All-Africa Students Union remains largely understudied. This chapter offers an overview of the affairs of AASU, establishing its organizational structure and capacity, the relationship between AASU as

a regional student organization and its constituent national unions, and the relationship between AASU, states and international non-governmental organizations.

The chapter notes that AASU has a strong presence in all African states. Again, we find that the operations of AASU follow a democratic order with Congress (a representative forum of all member unions) as the most powerful decision-making body within the organization. Further, the chapter finds that AASU draws support from the Government of Ghana and other international agencies and organizations yet remains largely autonomous in its affairs.

This chapter points to several openings for more thorough and critical research in future. Scholars in student politics and governance may need to focus on interrogating more critically such matters as the autonomy of AASU within the context of its relationship with African states. Further, it would be important to also investigate the impact of AASU on education policy in Africa after half a century in operation.

References

- All-Africa Students Union (AASU) (1987). Agreement between the Government of Ghana and the All-Africa Students Union.
- All-Africa Students Union (AASU) (2000). AASU Constitution.
- All-Africa Students Union (AASU) (2020). AASU Annual Report.
- All-Africa Students Union (AASU) (2021). About Digital Inclusion Campaign. Retrieved from Digital Inclusion Campaign. <http://dicampaign.aasuonline.org/>
- All-Africa Students Union (AASU) (2022). AASU Press Statements. <https://web.facebook.com/AASU1972>
- All Africa Students Union (AASU) (2022). History of AASU. www.aasuonline.org
- Boahen, A.A. (1994). Introduction: The role of African student movements in the political and social evolution of Africa from 1900 to 1975. *The General History of Africa: Studies and Documents 12*: 9–23
- Brandful, W.G. (2013). *Personal Reflections of a Ghanaian Foreign Service Officer-Whither Ghanaian Diplomacy?* Pittsburg, PA: Dorrance Publishing.
- Commonwealth Students Association (2016). *The State of Student Governance in the Commonwealth*. London, UK: Commonwealth Secretariat.
- Elazar, D.J. (1987). *Exploring Federalism*. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press.
- Global News Network. (2021, December 27). At AASU 13th Congress in Accra Ghana, Liberia Elected President. Retrieved from GNN Liberia. <https://gnnliberia.com/2021/12/27/at-aasu-13th-congress-liberia-elected-president-in-ghana/>
- Global Student Forum (2021). The GSF Academy in Activism, Leadership and Advocacy. Retrieved from GSF Academy | GSF (globalstudentforum.org)
- Grønne, V. (2017). Global Students Cooperation “Prospects for increased cooperation”. https://issuu.com/viktorsmithgronne/docs/170914_global_student_cooperation_- (Accessed September 1, 2022)
- HAQAA2 (2019). Harmonization of African Higher Education Quality Assurance and Accreditation (HAQAA) Initiative Phase 2. <https://haqaa2.obsglob.org/about-us/>
- Klemenčič, M. (2012). Student representation in western Europe: Introduction to the special issue. *European Journal of Higher Education* 2(1): 2–19.
- Klemenčič, M. (2014). Student power in a global perspective and contemporary trends in student organizing. *Studies in Higher Education* 39(3): 396–411.

- Klemenčič, M., Luescher, T.M. and Mugume, T. (2016). Student organising in African higher education: Polity, politics and policies. In Luescher-Mamashela, T., Klemenčič, M., Otieno Jowie, J. (eds.), *Student Politics in Africa: Representation and Activism* (pp. 9–26). Capetown, South Africa: African Minds Publishing.
- Lowe, T., Shaw, C., Sims, S., King, S. and Paddison, A. (2017). The development of contemporary student engagement practices at the University of Winchester and Winchester Student Union, UK. *International Journal for Students as Partners* 1(1): 132–44.
- Moodley, F. (2022). All Africa student leader says political will, collective action, education and social packages can end child labour. Retrieved from Inter Press Service News Agency. <https://www.ipsnews.net/2022/05/africa-student-leader-says-political-will-collective-action-education-social-packages-can-end-child-labour/>.
- Nkinyangi, J.A. (1991). Student protests in sub-Saharan Africa. *Higher Education* 22(2): 157–73.
- UNESCO (1994). *The Role of African Student Movements in the Political and Social Evolution of Africa from 1900 to 1975*. Paris: UNESCO.
- UNESCO (2013, September 10). All-Africa students' union presents UNESCO with the "Africa Educational Support Organization of the Year" award for 2013. Retrieved from UNESCO. <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/all-africa-students-union-presents-unesco-africa-educational-support-organization-year-award-2013>.
- UNESCO (2020). Global Education Coalition. <https://globoeducationcoalition.unesco.org/members/details/141>.
- UNESCO (2021, September 14). Youth and students across Africa take action for girls' education through UNESCO's campaign. Retrieved from UNESCO. <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/youth-and-students-across-africa-take-action-girls-education-through-unescos-campaign>
- Zeilig, L. (2009). The student-intelligentsia in sub-Saharan Africa: Structural adjustment, activism and transformation. *Review of African Political Economy* 36(119): 63–78.

3

The Commonwealth Students' Association: Journey of a Newly Established Multi- Regional Student Organization

Musarrat Maisha Reza, Eileen Y.L. Goh and Odayne Haughton

Introduction

The Commonwealth is a value-based, voluntary association of fifty-six independent countries, and home to 2.5 billion people, of which, over 60 percent are under the age of thirty (The Commonwealth, 2022a). It includes thirty-two small states, many of which are developing and/or island nations. The Commonwealth Secretariat is the principal intergovernmental organization of the Commonwealth, which implements the collective decisions of its fifty-six member governments. The secretariat supports governments to achieve sustainable, inclusive, and equitable development by providing guidance on policymaking, technical assistance, and advisory services (The Commonwealth, 2022b). Most notably, the Commonwealth Secretariat convenes regular meetings across policy makers for Commonwealth Heads of Government to Senior Officials, regionally and at pan-Commonwealth level. Under the secretariat, the Commonwealth Youth Program is the only intergovernmental youth program in the Commonwealth and one of the first set up globally fifty years ago with a dedicated focus on youth development. One of the ways the Commonwealth Youth Program engages youth across the Commonwealth is via the thirteen Commonwealth Youth Networks (CYN), which the secretariat supported in setting up, and continues to provide administrative and technical support. The Commonwealth Students' Association (CSA) is one of the thirteen Commonwealth Youth Networks (The Commonwealth, 2022c).

The CSA represents student organizations across the fifty-six Commonwealth countries, acting as a platform that encourages students to engage in all aspects of their education as well as in wider social contexts. Unlike most student-representative bodies, CSA represents student organizations that span across the five regions and hence, an unparalleled level of diversity amongst its student population. As a multi-regional advocacy organization, CSA aims to amplify student voices, diversely and inclusively, to decision-makers and stakeholders within the education arena.

This chapter explores the strategic formation of the CSA as a multi-regional student representative body, the establishment of partnership with Education Ministers and allies of the Commonwealth, the challenges it has faced in maintaining legitimacy as an advocacy body, developing a strong membership base and mapping out a sustainable growth strategy. This is

the first academic paper published on the CSA and the chapter draws on published literature, unpublished internal reports, and direct working experiences from the authors of the chapter who were members of the first (Odayne Haughton, 2015–18) and second executive committee (Musarrat Maisha Reza, 2018–22) of CSA and the Commonwealth Secretariat (Eileen Goh, 2020–23) with CSA as their main portfolio.

Who Are the Members of CSA?

It is useful to begin this section by defining National Student Organizations (NSOs) and Student Unions (SUs). According to the “Building Our Future” (2018) toolkit, co-developed by the National Union of Students UK and the Commonwealth Secretariat, an ‘NSO is an umbrella organization consisting of students unions and other student representative bodies that seek to provide capacity-building support for its members and national representation for its members and their student beneficiaries, advocating on behalf of students at a national level’. On the other hand, SUs are defined as representative bodies of students at specific institution of higher education. Although SUs may engage on both national and local/institutional levels, NSOs are identified as the official student representation on the national level, having capacity to influence national level policies (Building Our Future, 2018).

CSA’s governance mirrors that of the wider Commonwealth, and only student organizations from Commonwealth countries are eligible as members. To be inclusive to the different configurations of student-representative organizations across the Commonwealth, the CSA’s constitution recognizes multiple levels of membership and partnership statuses; (a) Full Members, (b) Associate Members, and (c) Observer status (Commonwealth Students’ Association Constitution, 2015).

CSA’s mandate is primarily toward NSOs and hence, only NSOs are granted full membership. The constitution allowed, that SUs from various institutions within the country can be engaged with, only where NSOs do not exist. Where there is multiple or competing NSOs in countries, they are each granted associate membership and are required to make collective decisions for any electoral proceedings, enabling the “one country-one vote” policy. The student congress is the highest body of the CSA where full members and associate members are invited to speak and vote. The congress consists of nominated individuals or heads of delegations from each member NSO and SU. While mandated to become a separate and independent legal entity, currently, all CSA activities are funded by the Commonwealth Youth Program, under the Commonwealth Secretariat, with a dedicated Youth Fund replenished annually by member states in the Commonwealth. Both NSOs and SUs must meet four criteria before being granted full and associate membership respectively; (a) their organizations must be governed by students, (b) represent significant number of students in their country, (c) the leadership body (executive committee/council) must be elected via a democratic process, and (d) organizations must formally commit to the CSA constitution.

Partner organizations are granted the Observer status if they are regional student bodies, international thematic student organizations, or international organizations advocating for education, particularly those that the CSA collaborates with, namely, the All Africa Students

Union (AASU), European Students' Union (ESU), Global Student Forum (GSF), Continental Latin American and Caribbean Student Organization (OCLAE), Organizing Bureau of European School Student Unions (OBESSU), and the 100 Million Campaign.

Since CSA is bound by the governance of the Commonwealth, if a Commonwealth country withdraws its membership, the NSO or SU in that country ceases to remain a member of the CSA. For example, when Maldives re-joined the Commonwealth in 2020, only then was the Maldives National University Students Association subsequently granted membership within the CSA.

Formation of the CSA, a Brief History

The Commonwealth hosts a triennial Education Ministers meeting, known as the Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (CCEM), which has a long-standing tradition of engaging and involving self-funded or government-funded student leaders from the Commonwealth, who physically attend these meetings. In 2009, at the 17th CCEM hosted in Malaysia, student leaders successfully recommended and lobbied for a pan-Commonwealth platform that would become the official student voice of the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth Students' Association (CSA) was subsequently established in Mauritius, with the support of education ministers who were present at the 18th CCEM in 2012 (The Nassau Declaration, 2015).

Leading up to the 19th CCEM, CSA's steering committee independently set up and led a taskforce, comprising of student leaders from across the five regions, nominated by their NSOs and leads of regional student organization such as the All-Africa Students Union and the Pacific Students Association. Their role was to refine CSA's draft constitution which was then ratified and adopted at the inaugural Commonwealth Student Congress at the 2015, 19th CCEM in the Bahamas. It is this constitution, the official governing document of the CSA, that affirmed CSA's mandate to continue developing and strengthening NSOs and SUs within the Commonwealth. In Bahamas, the first CSA Executive Committee (EXCO) was elected, consisting of student leaders, aged between eighteen and twenty-nine years, to lead the organization for a non-renewable three-year term.

During the 19th CCEM, education ministers reiterated their pledge and commitment in empowering students to participate in forums like CCEM and to enable their active engagement in decision-making processes in the Commonwealth. In the final communiqué entitled, "The Nassau Declaration" (The Nassau Declaration, 2015, p. 3), ministers highlighted the significance of the CSA in achieving this goal and extended their commitment for partnership by directly highlighting the role of students in the communiqué: "Ministers acknowledge the important role that can be played by appropriate cooperation and collaborative national student associations, and commit to supporting and partnering with such bodies to ensure a student voice in education policy, and fit-for-purpose education" (The Nassau Declaration, 2015, p. 3). This was a landmark milestone for students across the Commonwealth and the CSA in receiving formal and collective support of the education ministers for partnership with student associations. The ministers further acknowledged in the Declaration, the potential of youth in becoming social change makers and peace-builders. Therefore, they expressed their support for school programs and policies that actively involved students in developing peace-building skills, tolerance, inclusion, and respect as a mechanism to combat school-based violence and extremism.

Furthermore, the Ministers acknowledged a need for a platform uniquely for students, separate from the youth: “Ministers also endorse a name change for the CCEM Youth Forum to the Commonwealth Students Forum and commit to supporting young student delegates to attend” (The Nassau Declaration, 2015, p. 3). This was another landmark commitment as students have often been associated interchangeably with youth and do not get a separate, dedicated platform.

Although student and youth issues often overlap, a dedicated students’ platform provides student associations greater influence and draws political attention to student issues and the concerns of higher education. With support from the Commonwealth Youth Programme, the Commonwealth Youth Forum, convened in conjunction with the biennial Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings, became a distinct forum from the Commonwealth Student Forum, which convened in conjunction with the triennial CCEMs. This officiated CSA as the student voice of the Commonwealth and offered its members a unique and dedicated platform to voice specific concerns of students directly to education ministers. Katherine Ellis, former Director of Youth at the Commonwealth Secretariat, reaffirmed that “Students are the most significant stakeholder group when it comes to education, yet wide-ranging policy changes are often agreed without consulting them ... This is increasingly important considering the current global rate of change, and the constant rise of new technologies.” (The Commonwealth, 2016a).

Establish CSA’s Legitimacy

While the collective declaration and support by the ministers across the CCEMs and the proactive support from the Commonwealth Secretariat had laid the foundation for the establishment of the CSA, the organization has faced a myriad of challenges over the past nine years. The main challenges are discussed in greater detail below.

Congress, Representation, and Constitutional Changes

Prior to 2018, when the 20th CCEM was held in Fiji, of the Pacific region, representation of student leaders in CSA and at Commonwealth meetings was primarily from the Africa and Caribbean regions, with representation from Asia and the Pacific regions being significantly lower. The CSA constitution aimed to ensure inclusive representation by mandating regional rotation of the Chairperson in every tenure and by establishing regional representative positions for all regions of the Commonwealth. When CSA was established in 2012, the Commonwealth regions were divided into four regions; Africa and Europe, Asia, Caribbean and Americas, and the Pacific instead of the current five regions (Africa and Europe have been named as two independent regions). George Stanley Njoroge, from Kenya, was the very first Chairperson of the CSA Steering Committee, accompanied by two regional representatives for each of the four regions, making up a nine-member Steering Committee.

In the Bahamas in 2015, the CSA Congress (formerly known as the Commonwealth Student Forum as named by education ministers) composed of primarily student representatives from

Caribbean Commonwealth countries due to travel constraints faced by student leaders globally. As explained by George Stanley Njoroge:

There was a global glitch in travel for student leaders during the first CSA Congress in the Bahamas. Most African student leaders were to travel via the USA to enter the Bahamas but did not receive their US visas. As a result, most of them could not participate in the CSA Congress. The CSA Congress was made up of mostly Caribbean student leaders and the representation from other regions was very poor such that during the first Executive Committee election, the Asia regional representative seat was left empty as there were no representatives standing for election from the Asia region, nor were there Asian NSOs or SUs to cast their votes.

In fact, in 2015, the Chairperson was to be elected from Asia, following the alphabetic rotation of regional leadership from Africa onto the next of the four regions (Africa and Europe, Asia, Caribbean and Americas, and the Pacific). However, there were no Asian representatives physically present at the congress which prompted the CSA Congress along with the Commonwealth Secretariat to make a collective decision to move the rotation to the next region and elect a Chairperson from the Caribbean and Americas region.

At the same congress, several changes were also proposed and made to the Constitution, re-shaping some foundations of the CSA.

- A Vice-chairperson, Democracy and Participation was elected to work on developing the CSA membership base.
- A Vice-chairperson, Advocacy and Partnerships was elected to lead the vision for CSA to become a recognized and legitimate advocacy body.
- Each region only elected one regional representative instead of two, to enhance regional portfolios and accountability.

The most prominent change to the constitution was the establishment of voting rights of associate members in countries that did not have NSOs. In the original 2012 constitution, associate members, which represented almost half of the Commonwealth countries, did not receive voting rights, which were granted only to full members of the congress, who were NSOs. Associate members could not nominate candidates for election either as those rights were reserved only for full members who were recognized NSOs. The constitutional change in 2015 (CSA Constitution, 2015, Article 9) altered this to allow associate members to nominate candidates for election at the CSA Congress. This amendment had significantly changed the rights of associate members, bestowing them the same rights as that of full members.

This change clearly reflected the self-interest from the Caribbean countries present at the congress since out of the eleven Commonwealth countries in the region, only one country, Jamaica, had an officially recognized National Student Organization, the Jamaica Union of Tertiary Students (JUTS) (The Commonwealth, 2016b). If the 2012 Constitution were to be adhered to, only Jamaica would have been able to nominate candidates for the election and have had voting privileges among all Caribbean countries. This would mean excluding the democratic representation of half of the student voice across the Commonwealth and most of the Caribbean countries during the 19th CCEM. This triggered the collective decision to allow nomination

of candidates and provide voting rights to student leaders from associate member countries. While extending voting rights to all members, it was maintained that each country would only be allowed to cast one vote, regardless of the number of associate members from a country.

This herculean challenge of ensuring full representation of student leaders across the Commonwealth continued into the 20th CCEM in 2018, held in Fiji. Operational issues such as visa issues coupled with expensive, long-distance flight costs meant that every CCEM had an underrepresentation of student leaders from specific regions that were geographically distant. Hence, due to the location of the meeting in Fiji, the CSA witnessed an unprecedented level of attendance from student leaders of the Pacific member states for the first time in CSA's history of student representation. However, as expected, very few student leaders from other regions were represented. Those that did attend were either funded by their governments or had sponsors covering their travel expenditures.

The congress realized the benefit of the "Revised Constitution" in 2015, as nine of the eleven countries in the Pacific region, other than Australia and New Zealand, had no NSOs and hence, would not have had voting and nomination rights according to the 2012 Constitution. The revised 2015 Constitution was also important in providing student leaders from the Pacific Island states the right to vote and speak in Congress.

Challenging the Constitutional Definition of NSOs

It is important to reiterate the multi-regional nature of the CSA as it needs to take into consideration the vastly different political environment across regions, unique student issues, varying student governance structures and support infrastructures available for the student voice to be heard in an inclusive and representative manner. The CSA EXCO noticed discrepancies and deviations in structures, titles, levels of recognition, and legitimacy between different student organizations and against the definition of NSOs in the CSA Constitution.

As an example, Jamaica Union of Tertiary Students (JUTS) is the legitimate umbrella body representing student voices from all tertiary institutes in Jamaica. Although no government documents have directly acknowledged JUTS as a recognized national body, Everton Rattray, the ex-President of JUTS shares the purpose of its formation,

'The government saw the need for a national body to coordinate and represent all student movements on a national level. A similar body was formed at the secondary level, we have the National Secondary Students' Council (NSSC), that is also housed at the Ministry of Education's Head Office. They (the government) recognize and financially assist us with executing our programmes and projects, while also paying for the JUTS' and NSSC' programme directors.'

JUTS is recognized as the parent representative by all higher education institutes in Jamaica, and its close working relationship with the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Information in Jamaica affirmed that JUTS qualify as an NSO according to CSA's Constitution.

However, in the Asia region, after numerous discussions, the EXCO determined that no national student representative bodies in Asia can be recognized as an NSO. The next section will explore two examples from the region: Malaysia and India.

In Malaysia, the National Union of Malaysian Muslim Students (PKPIM), which is the oldest student organization, is an independent NGO and receives an annual grant from the Ministry of Youth. PKPIM is a permanent member of the National Youth Consultative Council, which is the highest body of representatives for youth and students in Malaysia, and registered under the youth development act, which gives them legitimacy for representation and acknowledgement from the government. However, although PKPIM is recognized by the government and is also acknowledged in official government documentation (note, JUTS was not recognized in official government documents), they could not be recognized as an NSO and full member of CSA as they only represent Muslim students and exclude non-Muslim students across Malaysia. Various other student organizations represent the non-Muslim students in Malaysia but are not officially recognized or captured in governance documents. Hence, none of the students' unions that represent different groups of students across Malaysia could be granted full membership. Hence, PKPIM was granted the associate member status.

India, on the other hand, has a unique model of student representation, where there are multiple NSOs, but each one affiliated to a political party. Deva Darsan, student leader of the National Student Union of India, shares:

We have multiple national student unions and do not directly represent student interests in higher education because we are each a student or youth wing of a specific political party. Neither do the national student unions represent the majority of students within India. Our NSO agenda is usually closely linked with our affiliated party ideology and are recognized as such. We are not consulted or have the capacity to represent student voices at the highest levels unless our parent party forms the government.

In such an environment, there is no single organization that can represent the majority or all students in India nor do these organizations have student issues or interests as their main agenda. It is therefore challenging to unify all student unions and organizations from across India due to their political affiliations. Like Malaysia, organizations like the National Student Union of India can only be granted the status of an Associate Member.

Establishment of a New NSO—Guyana, a Success Story

One of the legacies of the CSA is its direct collaboration with Guyanese student leaders to form the Guyanese National Student Organization (GNSO). This process was accelerated by the outgoing Caribbean and Americas representative for CSA, Benjamin Fraser, who organized a regional tour and a series of capacity-building workshops to improve CSA's engagement, development, and support for the student leaders in the region, supported strongly by the Commonwealth Secretariat.

The two-year long engagement series included over 100 student and youth leaders, twenty-six strategic partners, and six national media houses from across six Caribbean countries. This was followed by CSA's co-design and implementation of a twelve-month strategic roadmap toward the establishment of an NSO in Guyana, supported by a crucial alliance between CSA and a

senior student leader in Guyana, Umadevi Bux, who not only had an in-depth understanding of Guyana's national governance structures and barriers to setting up an NSO, but had a strong reputation and influence amongst student leaders in Guyana. GNSO was officially launched in May 2020, amidst the Covid-19 pandemic with the British High Commissioner to Guyana, GNSO EXCO, CSA EXCO, OCLAE EXCO, and student leaders from across Guyana.

While Guyana is a CSA success story, the experience and process of establishing GNSO also taught the EXCO many lessons such as understanding the multiple intersecting factors in establishing an NSO. The CSA, being an external and multi-regional body, did not have control over many factors such as influence within a country and political will of their government. This also exemplified that there is no single recipe for the establishment of NSOs across the Commonwealth given the widely varying nature of student leadership in different regions as well as the political climate within countries. Despite outright verbal commitment at the 2015 CCEM, ministers are not bound by their declaration, nor are they required to support the establishment of NSOs. The support relies largely on incumbent governments who can choose to be enablers or create hurdles for student leaders trying to establish NSOs. For example, despite Belize having an NSO, they were not recognized as the official student voice of Belize by their government until the most recent Belizean elections in 2020 when they received the status as the legitimate NSO, exemplifying how governments and their agendas are major gatekeepers for the recognition of student voices within the country. In spaces where the environment is not conducive for NSO formation, it becomes even more challenging for CSA to intervene at the national level directly. While challenging, this reinvigorates CSA's vision to be an empowering advocacy body for all student leaders and providing them the knowledge and tools to navigate the challenges of setting up a unified and strong student voice in their countries.

Hence, the current EXCO decided to alter their direction from the focus of establishing an additional NSO per region, which was CSA's goal at the beginning of the tenure, at CCEM 2018, to one largely on advocacy and capacity building of student leaders. This was a unanimous decision that the EXCO had taken mid-term during the CSA Strategic Planning Meeting in 2019, after understanding the limitations CSA faces as an external umbrella body organization, in power and capacity.

Commonwealth's Soft Power Strategy

As an organization under the Commonwealth, CSA inevitably inherits the soft power strategy that its parent organization uses to engage member countries and agree toward common goals. Soft power refers to "the use of a country's cultural and economic influence to persuade other countries to do something, rather than the use of military power" (Foreign Policy Centre, 2021). In the case of the Commonwealth, it is to use a set of shared values and commitments that member countries agree upon to achieve common goals, through declarations or communiqués in high level meetings such as the CCEM. For instance, it was in the "Nassau Declaration, 2015" that the education ministers committed to supporting the development of national student associations and partner with students to deliver education goals of the Commonwealth.

Although these declarations are not binding or do not hold countries accountable, the declarations provide a useful framework for the Commonwealth to use its soft power strategy to

push forth the implementation of their commitments. Some examples of that include showcasing best practices from member states and sharing knowledge and resources in achieving those goals. It could be described as positive peer pressure. Zooming in on education policy which is the focus of CCEMs and the student movements in the Commonwealth, one of the approaches of soft power would be through educational cooperation. Educational cooperation has been increasingly used by trans-regional organizations like the Commonwealth to enhance educational goals across member states (Jules, 2018). Soft power as a strategy is useful not just in education but in global affairs like culture, science, technology, climate, etc. (Altbach and McGill Peterson, 2008) to find a common path.

Despite the lack of accountability mechanisms in the Commonwealth, soft power and wanting to maintain positive collaborative relationships among one another may be a good tool to encourage countries to work toward common goals. The CSA also uses the soft power and diplomatic approach with all their members to ensure that all student organizations registered under the CSA are adherent to the principles and values outlined in the Constitution.

Legal and Financial Status

The CSA, like the Commonwealth Youth Council (CYC), the official Commonwealth youth voice, was intended to be registered in the UK as a separate, legal entity, possessing their own bank account and providing financial audits according to the law of the UK. Although, according to the constitution, CSA is positioned to be registered as a nonprofit organization, currently, the CSA is not a registered entity yet and hence, not fully independent. In fact, the Steering Committee since 2012 had a goal to incorporate CSA as an organization under the relevant laws of any Commonwealth country, while allowing its membership and activities to have a global scope.

This has remained one of the primary obstacles of the CSA. Given that CSA's EXCO will always be based across multiple Commonwealth countries every tenure, finding a specific country where the organization could be incorporated has been exceptionally challenging as the EXCO is renewed every three years. The CSA constitution closely resembles that of the CYC, which has been incorporated in the UK but has seen multiple issues where CYC executives have struggled in maintaining sufficient resources and funds to upkeep the entity.

The current CSA EXCO has decided to lower the priority of registering CSA as a separate legal entity, primarily due to the lack of readiness for fundraising and fund management, lack of resources and administrative support to engage in paperwork for registration and time needed for this process, which would become a significant diversion from the committee's primary goal of advocacy, capacity building of student leaders, and building membership of student representatives.

Currently, all CSA activities that require funding are funded by the Commonwealth Youth Programme. This arrangement has not posed significant challenges for the smooth functioning and success of the organization. The funds under the Commonwealth Youth Programme are replenished annually by member states in the Commonwealth. However, without full

independence and limitations such as the autonomy and access to a bank account, CSA is unable to receive grants and funds directly from funders or donors. Hence, any external agencies that CSA engage with are paid directly by the Commonwealth Secretariat or alternatively, CSA relies on partnerships with other organizations that can support and co-fund CSA's projects and initiatives. CSA's EXCO recognizes that the growth and activities of the CSA will be more significant and efficient should CSA successfully become independent with a robust and sustainable fund-raising model.

Future Directions

During the 2019 CSA Strategic Planning sessions, the EXCO realized through multiple discussions that one of the key priorities for the leadership team would be to create lasting initiatives that build the legacy of the CSA, and the team agreed that to do that through the building of partnerships with organizations that were aligned with the values and goals of CSA, and also through increasing advocacy efforts to impact and develop student leaders who will be empowered to make positive impact within their countries. As part of the team's overarching advocacy and partnerships plan, the CSA has formed strong partners and worked together on various timely initiatives. Two examples are highlighted below:

Founding the Global Student Forum

CSA and its partner organizations identified a gap in an official, unified global student voice and came together and founded the Global Students Forum (GSF). The GSF was founded primarily by the AASU, CSA, ESU, OBESSU, OCLAE, and various NSOs with a current membership of 202 student unions from across 122 countries. It is the "umbrella organization of the world's major representative student federations and the only independent, democratic and representative student governance structure dedicated to promoting the rights and perspectives of student organizations and movements on the global level." (Global Student Forum, 2022). The CSA has a permanent spot on the GSF Steering Committee, representing the voices of students across the Commonwealth on the global student platform.

Most recently, the GSF along with the founding partners (including CSA) worked together through 2021 and 2022 to organize a series of regional consultations involving over 200 national student delegations across ninety countries to formulate the UNESCO World Higher Education Conference 2022 Global Student Declaration. The declaration was a comprehensive document entitled "Nothing about us, without us!" with nine main themes representing the needs and aspirations of students across the world: student participation, institutional democracy & governance, student academic freedom, academic citizenship, financing higher education as a public responsibility and common good, inclusive higher education, academic mobility, and internationalization, inclusive, fair, and democratic digital learning, climate change, and environmental justice, the impact of Covid-19 on higher education (Global Student Declaration, 2022).

Advocacy Campaign: 100 Million Campaigns

The CSA has been invited by the 100 Million Campaign to join organizations such as OBESSU, ESU, AASU, and the GSF along youth activists to be on the Board of Trustees and provide strategic direction for this NGO that has been registered in The Netherlands. The aim of the organization aligns closely with the goals of CSA to push for the right of children to be free, safe, and educated and to engage them in decisions that will impact their future (100 Million Campaign, 2022). Another shared value would be to empower youth in marginalized communities to improve their situation and encourage them to be passionate advocates for social justice. Together with the 100 Million Campaign, CSA and partner organizations supported and advocated strongly in summits such as the Laureates and Leaders for Children Summit on the Fair Share for Children in 2020. The CSA was vocal on leaving no one behind and pushed governments to ensure that a fair share of their Covid-19 budget is allocated to the world's most marginalized. The Chairperson of CSA highlighted that "if 20 percent of the \$5 trillion announced by G20 countries in March were allocated to children, it would fully fund the United Nation COVID-19 appeals and save over 70 million lives" (Global Issues, 2020). The CSA further challenged world leaders to take responsibility for the amplified inequalities due to Covid-19 and urged leaders to focus on the marginalized and vulnerable communities, as well as the millions of children who were out of school without basic reading skills (Global Issues, 2020).

Future Strategies

The two examples above reflect strongly on CSA's position on becoming the advocacy body of student representation in the Commonwealth and exemplify the focus on partnerships and collaborations with established regional student organizations as well as global NGOs. Reflecting on the journey of CSA since its inception in 2012, the CSA has now a well-developed structure with clear goals and vision. The CSA leadership and their members have clear understanding of capacity and limitations of this multi-regional representative body that spans across fifty-six Commonwealth countries. As students increasingly become more vocal about issues that not only affect them but also the world, student movements will continue to face barriers just like any other critical voices.

CSA has an opportunity to help overcome these barriers through five overarching strategies. Firstly, building capacity and advocacy skills of student leaders so that they become effective advocates and communicators of the causes they represent, and to be innovators of practical and effective solutions. Secondly, continuing to strengthen CSA's partnerships not only within the education arena, but across sectors and industries relevant and beneficial to the causes and goals of students globally which will enable us to overcome sensitive and political challenges and amplify the impact of student leaders. Thirdly, CSA should continue to create platforms and opportunities for student leaders to gain access to government leaders and policy makers by emphasizing the importance of and inclusion of student voices in high-level meetings and international platforms.

Fourthly, the CSA needs to focus growing and strengthening its membership base while concurrently rejuvenating relationships with all members across the Commonwealth both of

which are undoubtedly challenging for each executive team as well as heads of NSOs/SUs since most student leadership tenures, including that of NSOs and SUs, last only for one or two academic years. This makes continuity one of the primary challenges. In the recent CHOGM 2022, Togo and Gabon, both who were not past British colonies, were accepted into the Commonwealth, making the membership rise from fifty-four to fifty-six Commonwealth countries. The CSA is now well positioned to engage with student unions from both Togo and Gabon, through the partnership of the All-Africa Students Union. Finally, the fifth strategy would be to grow toward independence and continue to push the Commonwealth secretariat to allocate greater administrative support through staff and funding for the registration of the CSA in the UK and management of all auditing processes. Registration will enable the organization to raise funds internationally to increase the scale and impact of the work carried out by the CSA.

With continued support of the Commonwealth secretariat and partner organizations, the CSA will continue to advocate on high-level platforms for students' rights and authentic partnership with student to decision-makers, government bodies, and education stakeholders. The next executive team must understand the nuances and complexities of a multi-regional organization such as the Commonwealth. While there is vast knowledge available on student leadership and activism through published literature as well as well-established national and regional student movements, the CSA is truly unique in its structure and organization, much like the Commonwealth. The challenges faced by a herculean organization like the Commonwealth and hence its constituent bodies are also unique. These complexities are further fueled by the Commonwealth's on-going process of decolonization and re-clarification of its values and purpose in the world. Despite the challenges, the Commonwealth is still a growing body with countries valuing the alliance and the network of countries working together toward common goals like the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

References

- 100 Million Campaign (2022). The 100 Million Campaign. <https://www.100million.org> (accessed August 1, 2022)
- Altbach, P.G. and McGill Peterson, P. (2008). America in the world: Higher education and the global marketplace. In Baker, D. P. and A. W. Wiseman (eds.), *The Worldwide Transformation of Higher Education* (pp. 313–35). Bingley, UK: Emerald Group Publishing Limited.
- Building Our Future Toolkit (2018). https://production-new-commonwealth-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/migrated/inline/P15764_FINAL%20CSA%20Buiding%20our%20Future%20Toolkit%20V5_GL%20%28003%29_LoRes.pdf (accessed August 1, 2022).
- The Commonwealth (2016a). Commonwealth report urges governments to strengthen student voices. <https://thecommonwealth.org/news/commonwealth-report-urges-governments-strengthen-student-voices> (accessed July 1, 2022).
- The Commonwealth (2016b). The state of student governance in the commonwealth. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/312164862_The_State_of_Student_Governance_in_the_Commonwealth (accessed July 1, 2022).
- The Commonwealth (2022a). Our member countries. <https://thecommonwealth.org/our-member-countries> (accessed August 1, 2022).
- The Commonwealth (2022b). About Us. <https://thecommonwealth.org/about-us> (accessed August 1, 2022).

- The Commonwealth (2022c). Commonwealth Youth Programme. <https://thecommonwealth.org/our-work/youth> (accessed August 1, 2022).
- Commonwealth Students' Association Constitution (2015).
- Commonwealth Students' Association Constitution (2021).
- Foreign Policy Centre (2021). Soft power and the UK's "force for good" ambitions. <https://fpc.org.uk/soft-power-and-the-uks-force-for-good-ambitions/> (accessed August 1, 2022).
- Global Issues (2020). Save 70 million lives through #FairShare of COVID-19 response fund, youth urge governments. <https://www.globalissues.org/news/2020/09/10/26817> (accessed August 1, 2022).
- Global Student Declaration (2022). UNESCO World Higher Education Conference 2022 Global Student Declaration. <https://www.globalstudentforum.org> (accessed August 1, 2022).
- Global Student Forum (2022). Global Student Forum. <https://www.globalstudentforum.org> (accessed August 1, 2022).
- Jules, T.D. (2018). Educational regime complexity: Nested governance and multistakeholderism in the fourth industrial revolution. In Wiseman, A.W. (ed.), *Annual Review of Comparative and International Education 2017* (pp. 139–58). Bingley, UK: Emerald Publishing.
- The Nassau Declaration (2015, p. 3). 19th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers. [https://production-new-commonwealth-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/migrated/news-items/documents/2015-06-26_2300_Draft%20Communique%20FINAL%20\(2\)%20Ministerial%20Changes%20-%20FINAL%20CHANGES_with%20titles%20\(1\).pdf](https://production-new-commonwealth-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/migrated/news-items/documents/2015-06-26_2300_Draft%20Communique%20FINAL%20(2)%20Ministerial%20Changes%20-%20FINAL%20CHANGES_with%20titles%20(1).pdf) (accessed August 1, 2022).

4

The European Students' Union: The Adaptive Nature of a European Interest Organization

Martina Darmanin, Jakub Grodecki, Martin Hammerbauer, Kristel Jakobson-Pallo, and Matteo Vespa

Introduction

In the last seventy years, Europe's success in creating a non-state policy-making field led to the development of the concept of "Europeanization of public policy" (Radaelli, 2003). Europeanization has been defined as "the set of the institutional, strategic and normative adjustment processes induced by European integration" (Eppie, 2007, p. 39, translation by the authors) which has created a European space "constituted by the progressive entanglement of the different local, national and supranational spaces of public policy, all aggregated around a specific item of public policy" (Eppie, 2007, p. 77, translation by the authors). This European space creates a set of evolving opportunities, which can be exploited by the actors of public policies, at the national as well as European levels (Eppie, 2007, p. 65).

Europeanization happens also in sectors where the EU does not have strong (or any) policy-making powers, yet the development of common normative reference frameworks, even if non-binding, still engenders shared traits in the direction of the policy reforms, in the methods, and in the outcomes (Eppie, pp. 63–4). In the last thirty years, this has been the case in higher education policies. In fact, since the 1980s the Council of Europe (CoE), outside the European Communities, has addressed issues concerning higher education. This work reached its peak with the Lisbon Recognition Convention in 1997 (see Council of Europe and UNESCO, 1997).

Within the European Communities, the Europeanization of higher education developed from the late eighties. In the decade between late eighties and late nineties, the European Economic Community developed programs of university mobility between nonintegrated higher education systems. A new phase started in 1998 with the Sorbonne Declaration, to which the 1999 Bologna Declaration followed. With the Bologna Declaration the national ministers of higher education reacted to the initiatives of the Commission in the field of higher education by taking the lead of the integration process. Effectively, they sidelined the European Commission (which was not invited at the Sorbonne and was just an observer in Bologna) and triggered an integration process of the higher education systems beyond what the competences of the European Union would have allowed. However, with the beginning of the Bologna Process, the Commission regained its importance by giving its expertise and its financial support to the development and implementation

of the Bologna policies (Mégie and Ravinet, 2007, pp. 106–18). Since the 2001 Prague Ministerial Conference, the European Commission has been a full member of the Bologna Process, with an equal footing to the member States (Blättler and Imhof, 2019, p. 62). As of 2021, the Bologna-process sponsored European Higher Education Area (EHEA) comprises forty-nine countries. This has triggered a renewed interest in education also within the EU. The Lisbon Strategy in 2000 established the centrality of the European Council in setting up the objectives and in giving the Commission a more technical, benchmarking role (European Council, 2000). Afterwards, with the Europe 2020 Strategy the Commission took a more proactive role in shaping the vision (European Commission, 2010). Finally, the proposal to establish an EU-based European Education Area (EEA) by 2025 and the creation of the European Universities Initiative (*Official Journal of the European Union*, 2018) seem to have opened a new phase in the Europeanization of higher education, whose traits, including the relations between the EEA and the EHEA, are still unclear.

Within this field, interest organizations operate to influence policies at the European level (Vukasovic, 2017). Since the European public policy sphere is essentially a multi-level governance, also the European interest organizations tend to be multi-level, that is, their members are local or national non-state organizations which operate at their level of competence (Fumasoli, Stensaker and Vukasovic, 2018; Vukasovic, 2017). In the field of higher education, European student organizations are involved as stakeholders both within the Bologna process and the EU policy-making (Klemenčič and Galán Palomares, 2018), similarly to the organizations representing the interests of universities and rectors conferences (e.g., the European University Association—EUA), the teachers' unions (European Trade Union Committee for Education—ETUCE), the quality assurance agencies (the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education—ENQA).

Within this context, the European Students' Union (ESU) is one of the oldest student-led associations in Europe. Founded in 1982 as the Western European Student Information Bureau (Sundström, 2012, p. 5), in its forty years of existence ESU has been instrumental to the cooperation between democratically representative, mainly higher education focused student unions in Europe. ESU operates on the values of diversity, independence, and open-mindedness, and works to achieve solidarity within the students' movement for equal educational and social opportunities in an open and democratic Europe, where students shape a sustainable future and participate on the different levels and forms of governance. These goals, supported by the priorities laid out by ESU member unions (ESU, 2022a), are promoted through cooperation with institutions and in spaces such as the Bologna Process, the European Union, and the Council of Europe.

Through various literature, a membership survey (33 percent of members response rate), and expert interviews, the chapter offers an overview of European Students' Union's (ESU) role and political impact amidst the evolving history of European higher education. In particular, the chapter addresses the involvement of ESU in the Bologna Process and explores how ESU maintained influence in this policy-making processes while remaining relevant toward its constituency—the student movement. The issue of ESU's evolving legitimacy, as a platform for democratic student representation, is explored both internally (i.e., the structures and processes that make ESU a legitimate representative for its members) and externally (i.e., the expertise making ESU a legitimate actor for other stakeholders), and how the two reinforce each other. A comparison to ESU's role within the current developing European higher education environment, the European Education Area, and European Universities concludes the chapter.

At the time of writing, all the authors were involved in the Executive Committee of ESU: we strove to objectively present the data by surveying the existing literature on the role that interest organizations play within the Bologna process and the EU policy-making field in general, and in higher education in particular, as well as the existing literature on ESU; by conducting archival research on ESU's archives; by interviewing an expert, a stakeholder, and a policy-maker; by conducting a survey within ESU's full members on why ESU matters to them and what ESU's role should look like.

Student Politics and Representation within the European Higher Education Policy-Making Field

The European higher education policy field is mainly centered around two spaces: the Bologna Process and the EU. Klemenčič and Galán Palomares (2018) identified a different system of student representation between the EHEA and the EU: a formal neo-corporatist approach in stakeholder representation within the Bologna Process, where ESU has the monopoly of student representation, and a pluralist approach by the European Commission, where two student associations (ESU, Erasmus Student Network—ESN) are the relevant stakeholders for higher education policy. While ESN is involved in issues concerning the Erasmus+ program and student mobility, ESU also covers broader issues of higher education.

As described by the former head of the Council of Europe education department, since ESU gained consultative status in the Bologna Process, the EHEA has recognized ESU as the legitimate voice for students. That can be attributed to ESU engaging on all major issues with both a critical and constructive approach (S. Bergan, personal communication, 2022). Even if ESU and the other consultative members can speak but not vote, they have become increasingly important within policy-making. On the one hand, this is due to the consensus culture within the Bologna structures (Blättler and Imhof, 2019, p. 61), which aims to include the consultative members, even if they have no voting rights. On the other hand, while the representatives of many member States express themselves only when there is a clear national position on that specific topic, stakeholders (as well as the European Commission and Council of Europe) give their opinion on all issues (Blättler and Imhof, 2019, p. 73). In fact, ESU has not limited itself to typical student issues only, but rather also contributed to the development of the EHEA as a whole, which is particularly important to establish the credibility of consultative members (S. Bergan, personal communication, 2022).

As of January 2022, ESU participates in the main governing bodies of the Bologna Process (the Bologna Follow Up Group—BFUG, and its Board), as well as in almost all its working groups, including those on Social Dimension (which it co-chairs), on Learning and Teaching, on Fundamental Values, and on the different aspects of quality assurance. ESU represented the consultative members in the Drafting Committee of the 2020 Rome Communiqué (BFUG Secretariat, 2019). Ahead of each Ministerial Conference of EHEA, ESU publishes the report “Bologna with Student Eyes” (BWSE), which gives the student perspective on the main areas of the Bologna Process and the challenges to be better addressed.

In the EU policy space, ESU's work revolves mainly around the Directorate General for Education, Youth, Sport, and Culture (DG EAC) of the European Commission and formally participates in several of its experts groups: Europass Advisory Group, European Qualifications Framework Advisory Group, Working Group on Higher Education, and Working Group on the European Charter for Higher Education. ESU holds informal contact with several MEPs, especially working within the Committee on Culture and Education (CULT Committee), and cooperates with the European Economic and Social Committee through the Liaison Group with European civil society organizations and networks (European Economic and Social Committee, n.d.).

Additionally, ESU is also involved in the work within the Council of Europe (CoE). The related activities vary from the involvement in the projects, study sessions, and grants with the support of the European Youth Foundation of the Council, to the formal involvement in the CoE bodies. Through ESU's membership in the European Youth Forum (YFJ) over the years plenty of ESU representatives were elected on ESU's behalf to the Advisory Council on Youth, the nongovernmental partner in the co-management structure which establishes the standards and work priorities of the Council of Europe's youth sector. ESU representatives are also involved in the work of CoE's Steering Committee for Education (CDEDU), which oversees the Council of Europe's programs in the field of education and advises the Committee of Ministers on education issues, as well as in the Council of Europe Platform on Ethics, Transparency, and Integrity in Education (ETINED). The collaboration between ESU and CoE is also strong within the BFUG, where the CoE is a consultative member as well.

Organizational Capacity of ESU

Legal Form

In early years, WESIB and then ESIB were hosted by member NUSes and did not have independent legal status. Such status was first obtained in 1999 while ESIB—The National Unions of Students in Europe—was based in Vienna, Austria and hosted by its Austrian member. In 2000, the organization moved its secretariat to Brussels. When ESIB changed its name to ESU, the latter was registered in March 2008 as a Brussels-based international nonprofit association (aisbl) according to Belgian law (Kruispuntbank van Ondernemingen, n.d.). In both occasions, it took several years to dismiss the previous legal entity, the last dismissal happening with a merger between ESU aisbl and ESIB asbl in 2017 (Transition report ESIB asbl, 2017). As a result, nowadays ESU is an independent legal entity registered in Belgium as an international nonprofit association (aisbl).

Membership

From the seven founding member unions (NSU Norway, NUS-UK, SFS Sweden, SHÍ Iceland, UNEF-ID France, DSF Denmark, and ÖH Austria) back in 1982 (Sundström, 2012, p. 9), ESU expanded to forty-five full members from forty countries and one candidate member as of July 1, 2022, representing the interests of about 20 million students.

Since ESU's legitimacy and power derive from its members, the issue of membership in the organization is one of the most important internal affairs. ESU members must be student-run, democratic, representative, and open to all students regardless of their background, autonomous, and independent in their decision-making and having objectives in accordance with those of ESU (ESU Statutes, 2019).

In order to receive a full membership, a union has to obtain a candidate status first. This is done via an application containing a motivational letter, membership questionnaire, plan of work, and the constitution and standing orders of the organization in the original and English language. At the following Board Meeting (BM, the highest decision-making body of ESU, bringing together all its members), the Board can then grant the union a candidate status with a $\frac{2}{3}$ majority, which enables its representative certain participation rights. As the next step, the candidate organization hosts a study visit to allow an in-person review by an ESU delegation. The delegation then produces a Study visit report determining a candidate's eligibility for admission that is presented to the Board at the next BM before the vote on a full membership. With a $\frac{3}{4}$ majority, the candidate can be admitted as a full member and finally enjoy voting rights and other benefits. If the union fails to obtain a full membership, its candidate status is revoked and needs to re-apply, and an advisory partner from the Board can be appointed to maintain contact and help the applicant improve (Membership Strategy, 2021; Standing Orders, 2023).

The thoroughness of the membership application process is key to guarantee the respect of the membership criteria by the applicant organization, as the legitimacy of ESU rests in that of its member unions. Due to this, the results of applications vary. For example, Faroese National Union of Students (MFS) and Georgian Student's Organizations Association (GSOA) became full members in 2021 and 2019, respectively, and National Students' Assembly (NSA) of North Macedonia was granted candidate status in 2021. On the other hand, in 2021, Kazakh Student Association (KSA) was declined as a candidate member, just as LINK from Italy in 2019 and Kosovar Students' Union (USK) in 2017. Even several existing members had their membership dismissed for straying away from the membership criteria or other breaches, such as ASU and ASYOU in 2016 or UNEF in 2020.

If a student organization is active in at least eight countries of the European Cultural Convention, it can apply for an associate membership. An associate organization can collaborate with ESU on political, cultural, and other goals, reinforce each other's mission and make student movements in Europe more interlinked. At the moment, ESU has thirteen associate members with different focuses, which can possibly be divided into field-specific (such as medical or political science students) and social group-oriented (such as Jewish, deaf, or LGBTQ+ students). Recent examples of accession attempts are the unsuccessful application of the League of Romanian Students Abroad (LSRS) in 2019 and a successful one from the European Federation of Nurses Associations (ENSA) in 2016.

Finances

From 2016 to 2020, ESU reported a growth of income of 42 percent, which enabled it to accordingly expand on its activities. There is a notable increase of project funding in recent years, as it almost doubled from 2016 to 2020, covering 71.5 percent of the total income. The single

major contributors were the European Commission (through an operating grant and through project funding, both assigned via public calls) and Open Society Foundation, followed by the Belgian government (MARIBEL grant) and the Council of Europe, which provided funding for ESU's administration. Secondly, 22.3 percent came from member organizations in the form of fees for membership. The last notable category is then the revenue from the external pools of experts, representing 2.2 percent (ESU Financial Report, 2020).

Human Resources

ESU human resources have been growing and professionalizing since its foundation. While WESIB only had one director, the staff now comprises a secretariat team, comprising a Head of Secretariat, an Executive Assistant, a Communications and a Projects teams, as well as elected and selected representatives (together referred to as the "hacks" team).

The minimum criteria set to be a member of the hacks team is that a person should either be a student, an active student representative within a member NUS or an elected/selected representative of ESU at the time of election (ESU standing orders, 2023). The remuneration of the work carried out by the hacks team has been a recurring debate within Board Meetings in recent years to improve the working conditions of ESU's representatives as the organization grows and to prevent as much as possible the exclusion of students/student representatives who, due to economic barriers, would not be able to be active in the movement.

Governance

Due to the diversity (in terms of history, membership, and organizational models) of its member unions, ESU internal governance is characterized by a high level of formalization and complexity, in order to guarantee mutual checks and balances between the different bodies and a decision-making process which informally tends toward consensus. The main decision-making body of ESU is the Board, which consists of full member organizations and meets twice a year at Board Meetings. It abides by Statutes and Standing Orders, which it has power to change, and elects or dismisses ESU's executive body, the Executive Committee (EC). The EC has eight to ten members with one-year mandate who serve as ESU's external representatives, including three members called the Presidency (one President and two Vice-Presidents). While most of the EC members work remotely on a part-time basis, Presidency members are full-time employees who reside in Brussels along with the supporting staff members. The EC also selects the Coordinators, who are part-time experts focusing on areas of particular interest or complexity. As of 2022, there are three areas: Human Rights and Solidarity, Equality and Membership, and for each of them there is a dedicated strategic document which guides the person in charge.

To explore a particular issue further, the Board can also decide to establish two types of ad-hoc internal bodies, either led by an EC member (Task Force) or by a Board member (Working Group). In addition to that, ESU manages two groups of experts: the Pool of Trainers and the Quality Assurance Student Experts Pool. The former gathers individuals with the capability to help student representations in their development, while the latter provides student experts for

agencies performing QA reviews throughout Europe or for the reviews of the agencies itself conducted by ENQA. The QA Pool also has its separate Steering Committee led by an EC member, and runs independently of ESU's daily operations. ESU's functioning is then monitored by the three-body Commission for Internal Auditing, which interviews the staff, performs regular reviews on ESU's bookkeeping, and prepares a report for the Board.

Major Political Actions within the Bologna Process

ESU Maintains the Fundamental Values as an Area of Great Concern in the EHEA

One of the most historic achievements of ESU's lobby and policy impact is demonstrated in the 2001 Prague Communiqué. According to EHEA (2001), students were not only recognized as "full members of the higher education community" but that they should also "participate in and influence the organization and content of education at universities and other higher education institutions" (p. 1 and p. 3). Student participation in HE decision-making (from the institutional to the European levels) today is considered as one of the fundamental values of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA, 2018).

Despite this, in the last three editions of the BWSE, as well as by means of resolutions and solidarity statements co-signed by its member unions, ESU has recurrently reported several external threats to the autonomy of student unions and student representation in the governance of HE (ESU, 2015, 2017, 2018a, 2018b, 2019, 2020a, 2020b, 2021a, 2021b, 2021c). Those range from student repression to HE reforms decreasing the power of student representatives in university governing structures, to interference into student representatives' electoral processes and decision-making, by both state and non-state actors, together with a decrease in affordability of HE that would hinder student ability to participate in representation. ESU's role in defending fundamental values gained particular prominence through the consistent and extensive reporting of the Belarusian Students' Association (ESU member union) regarding the systematic repression of the Belarusian regime on the academic community that recently culminated after the 2020 Belarusian Presidential elections (Kuzmich et al., 2021). By relaying this information into the EHEA's governing bodies, ESU has been able to influence the BFUG to maintain the fundamental values as an area of great concern as well as their link with democracy (S. Bergan, personal communication, 2022).

In the 2020 Rome Ministerial Conference, twenty-four EHEA member states and six consultative members publicly condemned the attacks on students and academic staff in Belarus (BFUG Co-chairs, 2020; BFUG Secretariat, 2020). In the same Conference, the EHEA (2020) adopted a statement on Academic Freedom and asked the BFUG to develop by the 2024 Ministerial Conference "a framework for the enhancement of the fundamental values of the EHEA [...] to assess the degree to which these are honored and implemented in [the EHEA's education] systems" (p. 5). While, as of writing, ESU contributes to the BFUG Working Group on Fundamental Values in developing the aforementioned framework, the organization is also involved in an Erasmus+-funded project supporting the working group with research, and leads

a project funded by the Open Society Foundations on Academic Freedom to simultaneously collect the students' perspective while providing training on the topic. Aside from engaging constructively in protecting and promoting the fundamental values, ESU has, in two recent instances, supported actions taken against the Belarusian and Russian public authorities in the BFUG for their overt violation of fundamental values and democratic freedoms.

Firstly, the postponement of Belarus' Co-chairmanship of the BFUG was raised by ESU, following the consultation with ESU's Belarusian member unions and with the support of the other main HE stakeholders (the "E4"). The proposal was approved by a clear majority of the member countries (BFUG Secretariat, 2021; Upton, 2021). The Belarus-backed Russian invasion of Ukraine resulted in another non-consensus based decision as a clear majority of thirty-six EHEA member states, the European Commission, and six consultative members supported the call for the suspension of Russia and Belarus' membership in the EHEA (BFUG Secretariat, 2022; BFUG, 2022). During and since both actions, ESU has been liaising with the European Commission, the Council of Europe as well as EHEA member states that launched assistance programs in support of fleeing and at risk students from the concerning countries (European Commission, 2020; EU Neighbours East, 2021; Federal Foreign Office, 2021). These programs, along with existing ones such as the Norwegian Students at Risk program, contribute to ESU's lobby efforts, in cooperation with the European University Association and Scholars At Risk Network, for the creation of a Europe-wide program of scholarships for students at risk, part of ESU's vision for the European Education Area (ESU, 2021d; EUA, 2021; Høgsgaard, Ulloa and Vespa, 2021).

Student Participation in Quality Assurance of Higher Education

What makes the educational landscape in Europe unique is the strong position and often the leading role of the educational stakeholders in shaping educational policies. One such example is the informal cooperation between four European Higher Education stakeholders, namely: the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), the European Students' Union (ESU), the European University Association (EUA), and European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE), which are collectively called the "E4." The E4 were the authors of the report "Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area," defining common European policy for internal and external quality assurance of higher education, adopted by the Ministers as part of the Bologna Process (ENQA 2005), and which became the benchmark for quality assurance in Europe. Through this policy, ESU, with the support of the E4, was able to secure students as partners in quality assurance. This partnership constitutes in the student involvement in the design and approval of programs, in the provision of information for the effective management of their institution's programs and activities, and as members in external quality assurance processes.

Moreover, the E4 Group organizations founded the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) in 2008, a move that European ministers of education requested the E4 to further develop in Bergen (EHEA, 2005). The EQAR is the first legal entity created in the context of the Bologna Process and, in addition to the E4, has a number of signatory countries, BUSINESSSEUROPE and Education International (EI) as members.

Since 2005, considerable progress has been made in quality assurance as well as in other Bologna action lines such as qualifications frameworks, recognition, and the promotion of the use of learning outcomes, all contributing to a paradigm shift toward student-centered learning and teaching. Given this changing context, in 2012 the Ministerial Communiqué invited the E4 Group, in cooperation with (EI), BUSINESSEUROPE, and EQAR to prepare an initial proposal for a revised ESG to improve their clarity, applicability, and usefulness, including their scope. The current ESGs were revised and adopted in the Yerevan Ministerial Conference in 2015 (ENQA, ESU, EUA, EURASHE, 2015).

ESU Co-authors the Principles and Guidelines for the Social Dimension

For over two decades of the Bologna Process, data on students' socio-economic situation and their composition in the EHEA were well covered due to the Eurostudent project, where ESU serves as a member of the Steering Board (Eurostudent, n.d.). Despite this evidence as well as efforts to define and better develop the social dimension, socio-economic background was reaffirmed as the predominant factor for enrollment in the EHEA (EHEA, 2007, Hauschildt et al., 2019). Furthermore, Eurydice (2018) defined the attention which the EHEA's countries were giving to higher education retention and completion rates of students from under-represented groups by an overall "policy neglect" (p. 214).

The greatest progress on operationalizing it happened during the period of the BFUG Advisory Group 1 on Social Dimension (AG1) between 2018 and 2020 (S. Bergan, personal communication, 2022). As Co-chair of AG1, ESU played a key role in gaining the commitment of forty-nine EHEA Ministers to implement a set of ten Principles and Guidelines for strengthening the Social Dimension of HE (PAGs). Dr. S. Bergan (2022) recalls that "[the EHEA] wouldn't have gotten there without the constant advocacy of ESU" (personal communication). A strong alliance between the two co-chairs of AG1, ESU, and Croatia was further fostered through Erasmus+ projects that facilitated the work of AG1. In 2022, ESU and Croatia continue to co-chair the 2021–24 BFUG Working Group on Social Dimension, responsible for developing a monitoring system and framework of indicators to support and evaluate the implementation of the Principles and Guidelines in the EHEA. This work is further supported with an Erasmus+ project.

Between the Logic of Membership and the Logic of Influence in an Evolving Policy-Making Environment: The Diverse Legitimacies of a European Interest Organization

Klemenčič (2012a) applied to student unions the concepts, developed by Schmitter & Streeck (1999), of the "logic of membership" and the "logic of influence": on the one hand, structure, resources, political agenda, mode of action, and outputs are determined by the members of the organization ("logic of membership"); on the other hand, organizations tend to adapt their

structures and methods of work to the policy environment in which they operate, and frequent contact with that environment creates “socialization effects” which can bring them closer in ideas and style to those of the public authorities (“logic of influence”). This can create tensions between the two logics, especially when elected positions (traditionally closer to the “logic of membership”) work next to administrative staff (traditionally closer to the “logic of influence”).

Several authors agree in considering the EU policy-making field as an environment with its own specific rules. There is not a single EU policy style, apart from a general predilection for consultation (it differs between sectors and can evolve over time) (Richardson and Coen, 2009a, p. 346). However, there is a consensus that, for an interest organization to influence the EU policy-making (especially when dealing with the Commission, which has the monopoly of legislative initiative), it has to adopt a consensual, “technical” approach in advancing its own interests rather than a conflictual, “political” approach (see Courty and Michel, 2013; Michel, 2005; Richardson and Coen, 2009b; Robert, 2013). Holding a legitimacy coming from a broad membership can therefore be useful, but is not sufficient in order to be effective (Vukasovic and Stensaker, 2018). Interest groups can therefore be divided between “insiders,” who are granted direct access to the policymaking, and “outsiders,” who are excluded by it and opt to indirectly influence by public pressure and the use of the media (Vukasovic and Stensaker, 2018, p. 352). Even if an “insider” in the policy arena can still opt to use an “outsider” strategy (Vukasovic and Stensaker, 2018, p. 352), its use can damage its reputation toward the other actors of the policy-making field and endanger its “insider” status (for an account of a European interest organization which failed in directly influencing the policy making by not accepting the “codes” of EU lobbying, see Roullaud, 2017). That results not only in the risk of a rift between the group’s leaders and the representative role they should fulfill (Richardson and Coen, 2009a, p. 347), but also in inequalities of power within the membership of the European organization based on the familiarity, due to the national context, of some members to the kind of advocacy style that is effective in Brussels (for an account of that within the European Trade Union Confederation, see Wagner, 2013).

The logic of membership for ESU plays out, for instance, within the Bologna Process in advancing specific issues that are important for its membership: for instance, a stronger emphasis on the social dimension of higher education is due to ESU’s push within the Bologna structures (Blättler and Imhof, 2019, pp. 76–7, 84). In fact, ESU member unions support ESU work in promoting a more equal Higher Education framework in Europe and student involvement in Higher Education governance (ESU, 2022b). The logic of influence and the need to use the “codes” of the EU policymaking play out also for ESU: expertise, professionalism, lobbying, and seriousness have been the key to gain and maintain access to the Commission (Genicot, 2005). That has also been confirmed by the interviews with partner stakeholders and EU policy-makers, which underlined ESU’s informed contribution to the discourse on higher education policy as well as the importance of its legitimate representativeness of students.

First, ESU’s professionalism and informed contribution are noted in the work of the E4 Group: ESU’s participation there is described as “natural and needed” (M. Kelo, personal communication, 2022). ESU’s connection with the students on the ground has helped the European HE sector discussion to be “fresher” (M. Kelo, personal communication, 2022). This “freshness” in proposing new topics is matched with a balanced, informed, and professionally delivered response to the needs and requests received, which makes student involvement not

just a “ticking-box exercise” (M. Kelo, personal communication, 2022). This has led ESU to the concrete achievement of introducing the ESG standard 1.3—Student-Centered Learning into the ESG, gaining the agreement of the other E4 (M. Kelo, personal communication, 2022).

Second, ESU is recognized to bring the student voice to higher education policymaking within the EU, especially due to the fact that policies and programs of the European Commission are targeting students (Higher Education policy maker, personal communication, 2022). The areas of cooperation between ESU and the European Commission are the Bologna Process, the European Education Area governance, and the Working Group of Higher Education. ESU is recognized for its critical but constructive stance in policy processes (Higher Education policy maker, personal communication, 2022). In recent years, ESU’s input on bettering the situation of students within the European Universities Initiative, one of the EU’s flagship higher education initiatives, has been especially noted by the European Commission (Higher Education policy maker, personal communication, 2022). It is key for any stakeholder involved in the EU policymaking to truly represent the perspective of their wider constituency (besides their informed opinion as experts) (Higher Education policy maker, personal communication, 2022). Thus, ESU’s strength lies in its representative legitimacy of the student constituency in the different European HE fora (Higher-Education policy maker, personal communication, 2022). Relaying knowledge from what is happening on the ground level to shape European level policymaking and vice versa is crucial in maintaining ESU’s legitimacy (Higher Education policy maker, personal communication, 2022). Participation in shaping the Bologna process, implementing the European Strategy for Universities, support for the education sector in Ukraine, and other key initiatives such as Joint European Degree or Microcredentials are considered the main scope of common work between the Commission and ESU in the upcoming years (Higher Education policy maker, personal communication, 2022).

Is there a tension between the logic of membership and the logic of influence for ESU? A study by Vukasovic (2017) did not find any strong tendencies toward homogenization of policy issues, preferences, and normative bases between ESU, the other European higher education stakeholders and the EU institutions, apart from reaction to the policies brought forward within the policy cycles. ESU members expect the organization to play an effective advocacy role within the EU and EHEA structures, which entails adapting to their codes in order to succeed (ESU, 2022b). However, the logic of influence as well as the structure of being an umbrella organization risks creating a distance between ESU’s leadership and its constituency, that is, students, with negative effects to its representativeness. This has been visible a few times in the history of the organization, for instance when a European group of students against the Bologna Process (the “European Education Forum”) contested ESIB’s representativeness (Genicot, 2005, p. 120), or when ESIB attended the ceremony in Vienna in 2010 for the “entering into the EHEA” (a Viennese dance party) while on the streets “spontaneously formed radical student groups demonstrated against growing ‘Bologna style neoliberalism’” (Zgaga, 2014, p. 8).

Evidently, the history of the organizational and policy development of the European Students’ Union, from an informative meeting point to a fully fledged, multifaceted organization with political influence, is strictly intertwined with the growth of the Europeanization of the Higher Education policy-making field. As the importance of the European Economic Community (EEC) grew, an internal discussion within WESIB started in 1987 between those that wanted the organization to take on advocacy work toward the EEC and those that favored maintaining

the role of information bureau. However, with the fall of the Eastern bloc and the birth of the European Union, the change of name to ESIB—the National Unions of Students in Europe—signaled the interest in becoming an umbrella organization with the aim to represent the student unions as the legitimate voice within an environment (in the 1990s) where other student groupings at the European level were emerging (Grogan, 2012). The Bologna Ministerial Declaration in 1999 was a key moment for the political development of ESIB: the clear will to be represented within the summit and an autonomous reflection on the Bologna process (the “Bologna Students” Declaration), together with the lobbying of ESIB’s national member unions, resulted in ESIB’s Chairperson addressing the plenary of the Bologna summit. ESIB’s role as the sole representative organization of students in these initial years (1999–2001) depended both on the policy expertise of the European organization and in the support of the national members. The lobbying of ESIB national members toward their governments in support of ESIB established a first contact between the organization and the EU Council, as well as succeeded in making ESIB the sole representative of students within the Bologna process, as recognized by the Prague Ministerial Summit together with the more general principle of student involvement in the Bologna process (Genicot, 2005; Klemenčič, 2012b).

The organizational development followed a similar path. 1980s WESIB was a loose organization completely based on consensus, while the politically strengthened ESIB of the mid-1990s established a small organizational fixed structure in Vienna, managing to have a two-and-a-half staff team. The increased importance of the European level in Higher Education policy making in late 1990s was accompanied by a reform of the organization, which strengthened the linkage between the European structure and its national members, as well as the significant moving of the Secretariat from Vienna to Brussels (Klemenčič, 2012b, p. 23; Sundström, 2012, pp. 13–15). In 2005, the Secretariat was composed of one full-time employee, two part-time, two stagiaires, while the lobby work was carried out by thematic Committees composed of five people (Genicot, 2005). The transformation of ESIB into ESU in 2008, the restructuring of the internal executive structure with a clear leadership in Brussels (President, Vice-Presidents) together with a single Executive Committee and a professional Secretariat of six people signal the increased role ESU has gained in the last decade within a strengthened European policy-making field of Higher Education.

Conclusion

The chapter analyzed student representation and the role of the European Students’ Union within the Higher Education policy-making field at the European level, using the literature on European interest organizations as a reference point. The current structure of ESU was analyzed, as well as its role in the Bologna process. The theoretical framework of the logic of influence and logic of membership was used to analyze how ESU adapted its structure to the strengthening European policy-making field of Higher Education, and an assessment of the possible tension between the two logics was performed. From the experts’ interviews and the membership survey it appears how the agenda setting role is recognized by the other stakeholders and policymakers, and that the membership request to effective advocacy at the European level entails the adaptation to the

codes of the European policy-making style. At the same time, the representative legitimacy of ESU and its connection with the “ground” are considered as an important asset also by the other stakeholders and policymakers, as it allows the debate to evolve in new directions. On September 26, 2017, the French President Emmanuel Macron gave a speech at the Sorbonne on his vision of Europe. In that speech, he proposed the establishment, by 2024, of at least twenty “European universities,” which would be networks of universities where the student body would study abroad, take classes in at least two languages and be the drivers of educational innovation and excellence (Macron, 2017). Three months later, the European Council endorsed that vision at the Gothenburg Summit (European Council, 2017). The initiative was integrated within the proposal of the Council of the EU to establish a European Education Area (EEA) by 2025 (*Official Journal of the European Union*, 2018). As of January 2022, forty-one European universities have been established, involving more than 280 EU higher education institutions, that is, 5 percent of all higher education institutions across Europe, and with the potential to involve 20 percent of European students (Council of the European Union, 2021a). Other dimensions of the EEA for higher education are micro-credentials, the European Student Card initiative as well as quality, inclusive, innovative, and connected education (European Commission, n.d.-a).

The impact of the proposed EEA within the European higher education policy field is yet to be evaluated; however, some first hints emerge. Within the vision of the European Universities there is a level of integration that goes far beyond the current framework of higher education, with a transformative potential for the national higher education systems comparable to what the Bologna Process has been in the 2000s. Even if the Council of the EU pledges to “[w]ork together at international, national and regional level, as well as between governments and institutions, to identify and remove, where necessary, the obstacles” to further integration of the higher education systems (Council of the European Union, 2021a), the question on whether such level of ambition can be realized without giving further competences and powers to the supranational level is present, even if in the background.

Furthermore, even if the EEA should work in synergy with the EHEA (Council of the European Union, 2021a), the relationship between the two education areas is still unclear, as the EEA is a de facto subgroup of the broader EHEA. On the one hand, proposals of parity exchanges between the EHEA and the EEA are being discussed (BFUG, n.d.). On the other hand, questions on the leadership in the policy-making initiative have already emerged, for example, on microcredentials. The Rome Ministerial Communique in 2020 asked the BFUG to explore the issue, possibly to present a proposal by the following Ministerial Conference three years later. However, within the framework of the EEA, the European Commission proposed a Council Recommendation on micro-credentials at the end of 2021 (European Commission, 2021), de facto putting any work within the EHEA on the topic within the boundaries set by the EEA.

The development of an EU-based EEA alongside the EHEA posits new challenges for European higher education stakeholders, including ESU. So far organizations like ESU have worked within a policy field made of two interconnected spaces, with a different membership: the narrower EU and the broader EHEA. The growing importance of the former will put further pressure on stakeholders, which will probably need to consider the EEA as a policy-making field of interest for the whole of its membership, including those residing outside of the EU. At the same time, the position of the stakeholders within the EEA seems much weaker than that within the EHEA: there is no stable involvement of the stakeholders at the political level

(they are excluded by the newly established High-level group, where only the Commission and the Member States are represented), but only within the technical working groups; they can be invited to the meetings of the Directors General “if and as appropriate” (Council of the European Union, 2021b).

Another challenge is posed by the new transnational dimension of student involvement within the European Universities initiative, one of the key EU higher education initiatives. Several alliances have some sort of transnational student council, and not all of them with a direct or indirect democratic student legitimacy. For ESU, this poses a possible tension between the logic of influence and the logic of membership. The logic of influence would entail finding a way to integrate these transnational student councils into the work of the organization in order to consolidate ESU’s stakeholder position on this topic vis-à-vis the European Commission. On the other hand, ESU has strict membership criteria on internal democracy and representativeness of the potential candidates, and would have to tackle the issue of double representation or clashes between the national perspective of ESU full members and that of the transnational student councils, which many times are made up of students from their local unions. The outcome of these processes will shape the role that ESU and the other stakeholders will play in evolving the European higher education policy field.

References

- Austria’s Agency for Education and Internationalisation. (n.d.). *Promoting Internationalisation, Inclusion and Innovation at Higher Education Institutions*. November 25, 2022. <https://oead.at/en/expertise/european-higher-education-area/3-in-at-2019-2021#:~:text=Promoting%20Internationalisation%2C%20Inclusion%20and%20Innovation%20at%20Higher%20Education%20Institutions&text=3%2DIN%2DAT%20was%20an,%E2%80%9CSupport%20to%20Policy%20Reform%E2%80%9D>.
- BFUG. (n.d.). *Proposal to the BFUG from the Ad Hoc Task Force to Increase Synergies between the EHEA, the Higher Education Dimension of the EEA and the ERA*. January 10, 2022. <http://www.ehea.info/Upload/Proposal%20from%20the%20Ad%20Hoc%20Task%20Force%20synergies%20EHEA%20EEA%20ERA.pdf>
- BFUG. (2022). *Statement by Members and Consultative Members of the Bologna Follow Up Group on Consequences of the Russian Federation Invasion of Ukraine*. November 25, 2022. <http://ehea.info/Upload/STATEMENT%20BY%20MEMBERS%20AND%20CONSULTATIVE%20MEMBERS%20OF%20THE%20BOLOGNA%20FOLLOW%20UP%20GROUP%20ON%20CONSEQUENCES%20OF%20THE%20RUSSIAN%20INVASION%20OF%20UKRAINE.pdf>
- BFUG Co-chairs. (2020). *Statement of the BFUG Co-chairs on the Situation in Belarus*. November 25, 2022. http://ehea.info/Upload/BFUG_DE_UK_74_Co-chairs_Statement_situation_Belarus.pdf
- BFUG Secretariat. (2019). *BFUG Meeting LXXV: Minutes*. November 25, 2022. http://ehea.info/Upload/_BFUG_RO_MK_65_Minutes.pdf
- BFUG Secretariat. (2020). *List of Countries and Consultative Members That Supported the Co-chairs Statement on the Situation in Belarus*. November 25, 2022. http://ehea.info/Upload/Belarus_statement_list_countries_and_consultative_members.pdf
- BFUG Secretariat. (2021). *BFUG Meeting LXXVIII: Minutes*. November 25, 2022. http://www.ehea.info/Upload/BFUG_SI_AM_78_Minutes%20of%20Meeting.pdf
- BFUG Secretariat. (2022). *BFUG Meeting LXXX: Minutes*. November 25, 2022. http://www.ehea.info/Upload/BFUG_FR_AZ_80_Minutes%20of%20meeting.pdf

- Blättler, A.C. and Imhof, F.D. (2019). *Bologna emeritus? 20 Jahre hochschulpolitische Integration Europas—Analyse und Kritik*. Bielefeld: wbv Publikation.
- Council of Europe and UNESCO. (1997). *Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education in the European Region (ETS No. 165)*. November 25, 2022. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list?module=treaty-detail&treatynum=165>
- Council of the European Union. (2021a). *Council Conclusions on the European Universities Initiative— Bridging Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Society: Paving the Way for a New Dimension in European Higher Education*. November 25, 2022. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/49659/st08658-en21.pdf>
- Council of the European Union. (2021b). *Council Resolution on the Governance Structure of the Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021–2030)*. November 25, 2022. <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-14487-2021-INIT/en/pdf>
- Courty, G. and Michel, H. (2013). Interest groups and lobbyists in the European political space: The permanent eurocrats. In D. Georgakakis and J. Rowell (eds.), *The Field of Eurocracy. Mapping EU Actors and Professionals* (pp. 166–87). London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- EHEA. (2001). *Prague Ministerial Communiqué*. November 25, 2022. http://ehea.info/Upload/document/ministerial_declarations/2001_Prague_Communique_English_553442.pdf
- EHEA. (2005). *Bergen Ministerial Communiqué*. November 25, 2022. http://ehea.info/Upload/document/ministerial_declarations/2005_Bergen_Communique_english_580520.pdf
- EHEA. (2007). *London Ministerial Communiqué*. November 25, 2022. http://ehea.info/Upload/document/ministerial_declarations/2007_London_Communique_English_588697.pdf
- EHEA. (2018). *Paris Ministerial Communiqué*. November 25, 2022. http://ehea.info/Upload/document/ministerial_declarations/EHEAParis2018_Communique_final_952771.pdf
- EHEA. (2020). *Rome Ministerial Communiqué*. November 25, 2022. http://ehea.info/Upload/Rome_Ministerial_Communique.pdf
- ENQA. (2005). *Report on Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*. November 25, 2022. http://www.ehea.info/media.ehea.info/file/ENQA/05/3/ENQA-Bergen-Report_579053.pdf
- ENQA, ESU, EUA, EURASHE. (2015). *Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European higher education area (ESG)*. November 25, 2022. https://www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG_2015.pdf
- Eppie. (2007). *Analyser l'européanisation des politiques publiques*. In Palier, B., Suriel, Y. and alii (eds.), *L'Europe en action. L'européanisation dans une perspective comparée* (pp. 13–85). Paris: L'Harmattan.
- ESU. (2015). *Bologna with Student Eyes 2015: Time to Meet the Expectations from 1999*. November 25, 2022. <https://esu-online.org/?publication=bologna-with-student-eyes-2015>
- ESU. (2017). *Board Meeting 72 Resolution: Support for Student Representation*. November 25, 2022. <https://esu-online.org/?policy=bm72-support-student-representation>
- ESU. (2018a). *Bologna with Student Eyes 2018: The Final Countdown*. November 25, 2022. <https://esu-online.org/publications/bologna-student-eyes-2018/>
- ESU. (2018b). *Board Meeting 74 Resolution: Students' Rights to Partake in Decision-making and to Speak up*. November 25, 2022. <https://esu-online.org/?policy=bm74-students-decision-making>
- ESU. (2019). *Board Meeting 76 Resolution: National Funding of Croatian Student Council*. November 25, 2022. <https://esu-online.org/?policy=bm76-resolution-national-funding-of-croatian-student-council>
- ESU. *Financial Report 2020*.
- ESU. (2020a). *Bologna with Student Eyes 2020*. November 25, 2022. <https://esu-online.org/publications/bologna-student-eyes-2018-2/>
- ESU. (2020b). *Statement on the Presidential Elections in Belarus*. November 25, 2022. <https://esu-online.org/?policy=statement-on-the-presidential-elections-in-belarus>

- ESU. (2021a). *Board Meeting 80 Resolution: Structural Changes of Higher Education in Hungary*. November 25, 2022. <https://esu-online.org/?policy=bm80-structural-changes-of-higher-education-in-hungary>
- ESU. (2021b). *Board Meeting 80 Resolution: The Attacks on Student Self Governance*. November 25, 2022. <https://esu-online.org/?policy=bm80-resolution-on-the-attacks-on-student-self-governance>
- ESU. (2021c). *Solidarity Statement on Interference in the Autonomy of Student Organisations in Montenegro*. November 25, 2022. <https://esu-online.org/?policy=solidarity-statement-of-interference-in-the-autonomy-of-student-organisations-in-montenegro>
- ESU. (2021d). *Board Meeting 81 Resolution: Student Manifesto on the Future of Higher Education in Europe*. November 25, 2022. <https://esu-online.org/?policy=bm81-resolution-on-student-manifesto-on-the-future-of-higher-education-in-europe>
- ESU. (2022a). *Strategic Priorities 2022–2024*. November 25, 2022. <https://esu-online.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Strategic-Priorities-2022-2024.docx.pdf>
- ESU. (2022b). *Membership Survey*.
- EUA. (2021). *Belarus: EUA, ESU and SAR Call on Europe to Take Action against Criminalisation of Students and Academics*. November 25, 2022. <https://eua.eu/news/699:belarus-eua,-esu-and-sar-call-on-europe-to-take-action-against-criminalisation-of-students-and-academics.html>
- EU Neighbours East. (2021). *Scholarships for Young People from Belarus to Study in Romania*. November 25, 2022. <https://euneighbourseast.eu/opportunities/scholarships-for-young-people-from-belarus-to-study-in-romania/>
- European Commission. (n.d.-a). *What Is the EU Doing on Higher Education?* January 10, 2022. <https://education.ec.europa.eu/levels/higher-education>
- European Commission. (2010). *Communication from the Commission. Europe 2020. A Strategy for Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth*. November 25, 2022. <https://ec.europa.eu/eu2020/pdf/COMPLET%20EN%20BARROSO%20%20%20007%20-%20Europe%202020%20-%20EN%20version.pdf>
- European Commission. (2020). *EU Strengthens Its Direct Support to the People of Belarus*. IP/20/2309. November 25, 2022. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_20_2309
- European Commission. (2021). *Proposal for a Council Recommendation on a European Approach to Micro-credentials for Lifelong Learning and Employability*. November 25, 2022. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:10b78e47-59aa-11ec-91ac-01aa75ed71a1.0001.02/DOC_1&format=PDF
- European Council. (2000). *Lisbon European Council 23 and 24 March 2000*. Presidency conclusions Retrieved November 25, 2022. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/lis1_en.htm
- European Council. (2017). *European Council Meeting (14 December 2017)—Conclusions*. November 25, 2022. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/32204/14-final-conclusions-rev1-en.pdf>
- European Economic and Social Committee. (n.d.). *Liaison Group with European Civil Society Organisations and Networks*. January 10, 2022. <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/sections-other-bodies/other/liaison-group-european-civil-society-organisations-and-networks>
- European Education and Culture Executive Agency, Eurydice. (2018). *The European Higher Education Area in 2018: Bologna Process Implementation Report*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2797/265898>
- Eurostudent (n.d.). International steering board. August 15, 2022. <https://www.eurostudent.eu/board>
- Federal Foreign Office. (2021). *Supporting Students and Doctoral Candidates at Risk: The Federal Foreign Office Launches the Hilde Domin Programme*. November 25, 2022. <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/aussenpolitik/themen/hilde-domin-programme/2453890>
- Fumasoli, T., Stensaker, B. and Vukasovic, M. (2018). Tackling the multi-actor and multi-level complexity of European governance of knowledge: Transnational actors in focus. *European Educational Research Journal* 17(3): 325–34.
- Genicot, G. (2005). À l'école buissonnière du lobbying. L'élite étudiante de l'ESIB. In H. Michel, *Lobbyistes et lobbying de l'Union européenne. Trajectoires, formations et pratiques des représentants d'intérêts* (pp. 113–41). Strasbourg: Presses Universitaires de Strasbourg.

- Grogan, S. (2012). ESIB. In Ivošević et al. (eds.), *ESU Turns 30! Fighting for Student Rights since 1982* (pp. 13–16). Limassol: European Students' Union.
- Hauschildt, K., Gwośc, C., Schirmer, H. and Wartenbergh-Cras, F. (2019). *Social and Economic Conditions of Student Life in Europe: EUROSTUDENT VII Synopsis of Indicators 2018–2021*. Bielefeld: wbv Media GmbH & Co. KG.
- Høgsgaard, F.V., Ulloa, H. and Vespa, M. (2021). *Why Europe and the World Need a “Student at Risk” Support Scheme*. University World News. November 25, 2022. <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=2021121013142255>
- Interview, Higher Education Policy Maker, 20th April 2022.*
- Interview, Maria Kelo, 20th April 2022.*
- Interview, Sjur Bergan, 20th April 2022.*
- Klemenčič, M. (2012a). Student representation in Western Europe: Introduction to the special issue. *European Journal of Higher Education* 2(1): 2–19.
- Klemenčič, M. (2012b). How ESIB got into the Bologna process. In Ivošević et al. (eds.), *ESU Turns 30! Fighting for Student Rights since 1982* (pp. 17–28). Limassol: European Students' Union.
- Klemenčič, M., & Galán Palomares, F.M. (2018). Transnational student associations in the European multi-level governance of higher education policies. *European Educational Research Journal* 17(3): 365–84.
- Kruispuntbank van Ondernemigen. (n.d.). *European Students' Union*. July 23, 2022. <https://kbopub.economie.fgov.be/kbopub/toonondernemings.html?ondernemingsnummer=896361756#nul>
- Kuzmich, A. et al. (2021). Academic community in the period August–December 2020. *Belarusian Students' Association*. November 25, 2022. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1eMrnD-BLd5d1yF1zUSMSk2zoyUtmLR9Z/view>
- Macron, E. (2017). *President Macron Gives Speech on New Initiative for Europe*. November 25, 2022. <https://www.elysee.fr/en/emmanuel-macron/2017/09/26/president-macron-gives-speech-on-new-initiative-for-europe>
- Mégie, A. and Ravinet, P. (2007). Coopération intergouvernementale et processus d'européanisation: La construction des espaces européens de la justice et de l'enseignement supérieur. In Palier, B. and Suriel, Y., *L'Europe en action. L'européanisation dans une perspective comparée* (pp. 87–143). Paris: L'Harmattan.
- Membership Strategy* (2021). European Students' Union.
- Michel, H. (2005). Un groupe en pratiques, les pratiques d'un groupe. In *Lobbyistes et lobbying de l'Union européenne. Trajectoires, formations et pratiques des représentants d'intérêts* (pp. 9–21). Strasbourg: Presses Universitaires de Strasbourg.
- Official Journal of the European Union*. (2018). *Council Conclusions on Moving towards a Vision of a European Education Area*. November 25, 2022. [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52018XG0607\(01\)&rid=6](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52018XG0607(01)&rid=6)
- Radaelli, C.M. (2003). The Europeanization of public policy. In Suriel, K. and Radaelli, C.M. (eds.), *The Politics of Europeanization* (pp. 27–56). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Richardson, J. and Coen, D. (2009a). *Institutionalizing and managing intermediation in the EU*. In Coen, D. & Richardson, J., (eds.), *Lobbying the European Union: Institutions, Actors and Issues* (pp. 337–50). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Richardson, J. and Coen, D. (2009b). Learning to lobby the European Union: 20 years of change. In Coen, D. and Richardson, J., *Lobbying the European Union: Institutions, Actors and Issues* (pp. 3–15). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Robert, C. (2013). Expert groups in the field of Eurocracy. In Georgakakis, D. and Rowell, J. (eds.), *The Field of Eurocracy. Mapping EU Actors and Professionals* (pp. 137–65). London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Roullaud, É. (2017). *Contester l'Europe Agricole. La confédération paysanne à l'épreuve de la PAC*. Lyon: Presses universitaires de Lyon.
- Schmitter, P.C. and Streeck, W. (1999). The organization of business interests: Studying the associative action of business in advanced industrial societies. *MPIfG Discussion Paper, 99/1*.

- Standing Orders, European Students' Union* (2023).
- Statutes, European Students' Union international non-profit association* (2019).
- Sundström, B. (2012). How it all began. In Ivosevic et al. (eds.), *ESU Turns 30! Fighting for Student Rights since 1982* (pp. 5–12). Limassol: European Students' Union.
- Transition Report ESIB asbl* (2017).
- Upton, B. (2021). *Belarus Stripped of European Leadership Over Academic Repression*. *Times Higher Education*. November 25, 2022. <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/belarus-stripped-european-leadership-over-academic-repression>
- Vukasovic, M. (2017). Stakeholder organizations in the European higher education area: Exploring transnational policy dynamic. *Policy and Society* 36(1): 109–26.
- Vukasovic, M. and Stensaker, B. (2018). University alliances in the Europe of knowledge: Positions, agendas and practices in policy processes. *European Educational Research Journal* 17(3): 349–64.
- Wagner, A.-C. (2013). The personnel of the European trade union confederation: Specifically European types of capital? In Georgakakis, D. and Rowell, J., *The Field of Eurocracy. Mapping EU Actors and Professionals* (pp. 188–201). London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Zgaga, P. (2014). European higher education reforms and the role of students. *Preparing Students for Life and Work. Policies and Reforms Affecting Higher Education's Principal Mission*. 11th International Workshop on Higher Education Reform. Higher Education and its principal mission: Preparing students for life, work and civic engagement, Memorial University of Newfoundland, Canada.

5

The Emergence of the Global Student Forum and Prospects for Increased Student Participation within the International Education Polity

Sebastian Berger, Giuseppe Lipari, Georgia Potton, and Carmen Romero

Introduction

With the collapse of the two competing international student organizations, the International Union of Students (IUS) and the International Student Conference (ISC), in the second half of the twentieth century, students were left without a representative voice on the global stage for decades (Grønne, 2017). This vacuum in global student representation coincided with a period of increased globalization in higher education, defined by Altbach as a “broad economic, technological, and scientific trends that directly affect higher education” and the effects of which are “beyond the control of any one actor or set of actors” (Altbach et al., 2009, p. 23). Today, the system of global higher education policy-making is increasingly non-hierarchical, involving negotiation and mediation from a range of stakeholders, as opposed to unilateral decisions by single authority (Klemenčič, 2012). Key players in global higher education polity include intergovernmental organizations that hold regular education policy-making fora and processes between Member States, such as the United Nations and its subsidiary agencies, international financing institutions and multilateral funds focused on education, and a diverse, vibrant global education civil society sector composed of non-governmental organizations and trade unions who are often formally recognized and represented in the former two entities.

The Global Student Forum entered the global higher education polity in 2020. This chapter analyzes the emergence of the GSF and how, and to what extent, a democratic, representative, global student entity can influence the decentralized higher education policy-making framework and processes at the global level. To do so, the existing systems of representation and the nature of student intermediation in key global education stakeholders are assessed. This analysis utilizes the framework proposed by Klemenčič and Palomares (Klemenčič and Palomares, 2018) and the understanding that formalized routes of engagement strengthen the “legitimate power” of student organizing and enables a “higher propensity for students to influence policy processes” (Klemenčič, 2014, p. 402). Drawing on a wider range of documents issued by relevant student unions and international education sector organizations and harnessing the findings of a series of expert interviews conducted throughout 2021 and 2022, this chapter starts with the description

of the process that led to the foundation of the Global Student Forum. The following section offers an analysis of GSF internal structures, classified in line to the already existing literature on student unions. The global decision-making environment on educational policy and students' role in it are then introduced, leading to a threefold analysis of intergovernmental organizations, education financing institutions, and international organized civil society.

Historic Overview

The formation of international student politics in the post-Second World War era was organized around two major organizations, the International Union of Students—IUS (est. 1946) and the International Student Conference—ISC (est. 1950). The IUS rapidly developed a pro-communist/pro-soviet ideology which led to multiple noncommunist national unions of students terminating their membership in the organization (Altbach, 1970). In direct response to these developments and with the support of United States Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) covert operations funding, the ISC was founded to “deny the pro-Soviet International Union of Students its claim to represent the world student population” (Paget, 2003). In 1967 the ISC came under major financial and political pressure due to the revelation of the CIA’s financial ties and existing CIA assets in the ranks of the deeply subverted international office of the United States National Student Association—USNSA (Altbach, 1970). “The Kiddies” as these CIA student operatives were referred to in the US foreign intelligence circle, provided detailed reports on young emerging politicians, political movements, and the overall developments in international student politics from their observations made in the scope of international student events all over the globe (McDonald, 1967). After the dissolution of the ISC in 1969, that ended two decades of competition, the IUS was once again the only existing global student governance structure for roughly another twenty years. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the emerging post-1989 world order, the IUS lost its funding and what was left of its relevance in student politics in the years after. It became “entirely dormant” (Shore and Grønne, 2020, p. 341) after a 2003 conference held in Ghana (Deca, 2012 in Shore and Grønne, 2020). What followed was a period of time in the nineties and early twenty-first century in which student unions, both at the regional and national level, had little to no formalized global cooperation. A minimum of existing cooperation between student platforms was linked heavily to UNESCO and its World Conference on Higher Education in 1998, 2003, and 2009 (ESU, 2012).

Recent Developments Concerning Global Cooperation between Student Federations and the Emergence of the Global Student Forum

The European Students' Union and the National Unions of Students in Norway hosted a “Global Student Voice” conference in 2016 that produced the “Bergen Declaration” (Bergen Declaration, 2016). The document expressed the “desire for universal cooperation in the defense of students’

rights, public tertiary education and access to education for all” (Bergen Declaration, 2016, p. 2) and the interest of involved student organizations “to host further meetings with students, exchange information in support of our common struggles, and expressions of support to national and regional actions” (Bergen Declaration, 2016, p. 4). This reignited a possible convergence of the international student movement and considerations for intensified future cooperation enjoyed a renaissance (Grønne, 2017). Concrete discussions concerning the creation of a formal governance structure on the global level between regional student leaders emerged in 2018, when elected representatives from the All-Africa Students Union (AASU), Commonwealth Students’ Association (CSA), European Students’ Union (ESU), and the Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions (OBESSU) followed the invitation of Nobel Peace Laureate Kailash Satyarthi to convene in Accra, Ghana for a meeting hosted by the 100 Million Campaign (OBESSU, 2019a). This event presented the initiation of a two-year-long process that would lead to the establishment of the Global Student Forum in 2020.

Elected student leaders from regional student federations subsequently met multiple times in different parts of the world. This included gatherings on the sidelines of United Nation meetings such as the UNGA 2019 in New York (OBESSU, 2019b) and the Global Refugee Forum 2019 in Geneva, where ESU and OBESSU hosted the “Global Student Voices: Education and Migration” conference that convened student representatives from all parts of the world for a side event to the UNHCR summit (OBESSU, 2019c). These regular meetings, which served as spaces for student leaders from regional platforms to negotiate the nature and politics of the emerging global student governance structure on behalf of their organizations’ membership, were continued virtually throughout 2020 due to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. This continuous dialogue led to the development of the Global Student Forum proposal. The proposal, which presents the ambition for a new global umbrella of student unions from secondary and third-level education, is opened by a statement of intent from regional federations that represents the political common ground of student unions and confederations at the global level. Considering that “corporate and individualistic interests govern most decision-making processes, [...] authoritarianism has consolidated, [...] democracies have weakened as elites seize on social and economic insecurities to consolidate power” (GSF, 2020a, p. 1), the founding organizations decided to create a stable global umbrella “to urgently develop solidarity and collaboration, in order to achieve educational justice and as allies in a wider struggle for democracy, social justice and human rights” (GSF, 2020a, p. 2).

After fundraising trips in Europe and the United States in 2019 and 2020 in which connections with potential donors, allies, and critical friends were established, the project consortium consisting of the regional federations was equipped with a seed grant by the Open Society Foundations given to the European Students Union (ESU) to establish an interim-Secretariat for the GSF in 2020.

Organizational Characteristics and Membership Structure of the Global Student Forum

Building the organizational structures of the newly established GSF was the task of the interim-secretariat, comprised of staff members from ESU, OBESSU, and AASU and a Steering

Committee formed by the elected political leadership of the regional federations as well as other national student organizations which had supported the process. The Steering Committee began their two-year mandate in June 2020 and in January 2021 appointed former ESU Vice-President and founding Steering Committee member Sebastian Berger as first full time staff member and Executive Director of the GSF. Since 2021 the Secretariat has been hosted by Education International, the global umbrella of the unions of workers of education, in Brussels (Belgium).

The GSF membership is divided into three categories; 1. full membership (regional student federations and their national unions), 2. consociate membership (national unions of students outside of regional federation membership) and 3. associate membership (student organizations that do not qualify as national student unions) (GSF, 2021c). Each of the five regional federations elects one representative into the Steering Committee while the consociate and associate membership hold caucuses in which one representative for the consociate and one for the associate membership are elected by the member organizations in the respective category to represent their interests throughout the course of the Steering Committee mandate.

The internal democracy and working procedures of the GSF are governed by the Rules of Procedure adopted by the Steering Committee at the beginning of 2021 (d). The Steering Committee serves as the political executive of the organization, in continuous consultation with the represented constituencies and it is composed of volunteers. The mandate of the Steering Committee members is individual (a person is elected to the position by his/her/their constituency) and from 2022 the duration of the mandate is one year. The employees of the organization work in the Secretariat, which is headquartered in Brussels, hosted by Education International, with a regional office in Accra, Ghana, hosted by the All Africa Student Union.

Even though there are no membership fees, the main “barrier” to becoming a member of the GSF are the political and organizational criteria that student organizations need to meet to become members. These are the most important ones: a) the organization is controlled and run by students; b) it holds democratic (s)elections and runs on a democratic basis; c) it is representative and built on a solid ground with legitimacy coming from students; d) it represents a large number of students and at the same time has at least an ambition to influence national education policies; e) it is autonomous and independent in decision-making; f) it must be financially and politically independent in decision-making from any political parties, governments, and financial donors; g) the organization’s set of values and objectives are in accordance with the GSF’s values and objectives, stated in the founding documents (GSF, 2021c).

According to Klemenčič and Palomares’s classification, the GSF can be defined as a transnational “meta-association” (Klemenčič and Palomares, 2018, p. 367, 369), composed by continental and national representative platforms of students of higher education, second-level education, and post-graduate students. The GSF therefore claims to be representative of the entire body of secondary and third-level students, and in particular counts on the membership of representative tertiary student platforms and organizations from the Americas, Africa, Europe, Oceania, and parts of Asia and the Pacific (as in the classification from Klemenčič and Palomares, 2018, p. 383). The vast membership includes organizations with different structures, both social movement organizations and interest groups, depending on national and regional contexts (Klemenčič, 2012).

Political Activities and Priorities of the GSF

The Steering Committee of the GSF decided that networking, solidarity, capacity building, cooperation, research, and advocacy were to be the main political activities for its first year of operation. These were guided by eight political priorities (Democracy, Human Rights, and Solidarity, Covid-19, Racial Justice, Environmental Justice, Gender Justice, Quality Education for All and Equality) agreed upon in the GSF work plan for 2021–23, a document heavily consulted and adopted by national and regional member organizations throughout the first quarter of 2021 (GSF, 2021b).

Throughout 2020 and 2021, the GSF focused on developing a network of partners within the international education sector, forging ties with the United Nations framework, multilateral funders, and a broad spectrum of civil society organizations. This advocacy and external representation were facilitated by a series of online conferences, student caucuses, and consultations supporting the political priorities of the GSF. Some examples include a student and youth summit in parallel to the Y20 in cooperation with 100 Million (Tripathi, 2021) and a global student congress for International Students' Day in 2020 (GSF, 2021e). The Worldwide Student Summit on Climate Action and Biodiversity of the following year represented the attitude to organize events on non-sectoral topics cooperating with NGOs and groups with specific expertise (Berger, 2021). The consultations toward the World Higher Education Conference 2022 are another example of coordinated online deliberation that included GSF constituencies region-by-region (GSF, 2021a). The Academy in Activism, Leadership, and Advocacy is another key activity of the Global Student Forum, that focuses on training student leaders. Its first edition, in 2021–22, consisted of bi-weekly seminars with experts from academia, international NGOs, the media, and experts from the private sector, covering a vast selection of topics, ranging from international relations and education policy, to social and environmental justice alongside practical skills necessary for effective leadership of student unions (GSF-ALA, 2021).

Student Participation within the Institutions and Organization of the International Education Sector

Student unions on the global level are confronted with a de-centralized institutional framework. While at the national level, and sometimes regionally such as in Europe through the EHEA/Bologna Process and the European Union or in Africa through the African Union, there is a clear division of tasks and competences among executive structures, at the global level various inter-governmental organizations produce educational policy without a stable hierarchy. This chapter explores the main existing decision-making entities, looking at the effective spaces and mechanisms for participation of student representatives, and the impact that their engagement can have on the international education policy-making within these institutions. Classifying the global system as pluralist or corporatist/neo-corporatist (as in Klemenčič, 2012, p. 11) is not suitable due to a de-centralized institutional framework composed of multiple structures and organizations

with overlapping competences. Relevant institutions contributing to the formulation of educational policy on the global level have their own decision-making processes involving students and civil society actors in diverse ways. Despite the GSF currently embodying the only representative structure for students on the transcontinental level, the global system of student representation is far from a neo-corporatist one. A relevant element that introduces some characteristics of pluralism is the frequent merging of student and youth representatives in stakeholder engagement. The youth category generally encompasses a higher number of associations and organizations, active on different topics, producing a considerable degree of plurality.

To structure our research and lay the foundation for this analysis, we have identified three types of global entities influencing and making decisions regarding higher education.

1. Policy-making fora in international and intergovernmental organizations which produce standards, analyses, and policies concerning education. Within the United Nations framework, the key actor on education issues is the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Further subject of inquiry will be the status and activities of student organizations within the Education and Academia Stakeholder Group operating in the UN Economic and Social Council structures. Another international organization making relevant contributions to the education field and therefore falling into this first category of interest is the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).
2. Global education financing institutions, composed of governments and often other public and private stakeholders, represent a second category to analyze. These institutions wield a significant influence over education policy as their funding is often dependent on adherence to specific terms and conditions which therefore “define directly or indirectly the educational policy lines to be followed” (Moutsios, 2009, p. 468). Within this category, we have included the World Bank Group (WBG) as it is the largest financier of education in the developing world and operates in over eighty countries. We have also selected the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and Education Cannot Wait (ECW) as they are not only large external funders of education worldwide, but as multi-stakeholder partnerships, provide a “space of assembly” for diverse actors to participate in decision-making where the representation of students can be assessed (Stone, 2008). The Open Society Foundations (OSF) have also been analyzed, considering its role as donor of educational projects and partner of student organizations.
3. The civil society sector focused on higher education policy sees strong representation of teachers and education workers through their global trade union Education International (EI), higher education institutions through the International Association of Universities (IAU), and a broad coalition of education Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) coming together under the umbrella of the Global Campaign for Education (GCE). All of whom wield considerable influence through their representation via elected representatives in numerous relevant spaces and mechanisms of category one and two institutions.

Spaces and mechanisms for the consultation of students exist in many of these entities, ranging from the episodic participation in events to formalized and stable presence in consultative or advisory bodies and governance boards. The participation of students in these spaces however

is often not representative, frequently featuring individual students selected by the inter-governmental organization instead of representatives elected or appointed by democratic student-led governance structures.

To assess the quality of student participation in global educational policy decision-making, we were guided by the following three sets of questions: (1) Does a stable mechanism for student participation and engagement exist or are students only sporadically involved? (2) Are student spokespeople coming from representative student organizations? (3) Are student and youth constituencies merged or separated?

Beyond assessing the mere representativeness of participation spaces and mechanisms, it is also necessary to look at the concrete outcomes of these to understand how policy-making processes are influenced by student voices. A useful reference ladder can be found in the levels of political responsiveness (Shumaker, 1975; Burstein et al., 1995, in Almeida, 2019, 126, table 6 adapted).

1. Access responsiveness—concerns of the group get access to the policy-making institutions and social movements are consulted by policymakers;
2. Agenda responsiveness—the demand is transformed into an issue to be solved, so agenda setting gets concerned and influenced by that;
3. Policy responsiveness—policy is produced, formally giving an answer to the concern;
4. Output responsiveness—legislation is enforced and measures are concretely taken;
5. Impact responsiveness—claims are satisfied and grievances alleviated in society.
6. Structure responsiveness—there are radical changes and impact is structural.

The classification according to levels of political responsiveness can be useful for our analysis since reference to and comparison with previous academic literature proved to be difficult, due to the absence of studies on student participation within global institutions, and taking into account the recent emergence of the GSF. Owing to this lack of existing scholarly work relating to student participation within relevant international institutions and organizations on the global level, our analysis draws mainly on the study of official documents, calls for participation as well as statutes and standing orders concerning spaces and mechanisms for student participation within the three categories of organizations and institutions established above. The examination of documents is substantiated by expert interviews conducted with relevant officials representing OECD, UN EASG, the World Bank, GPE, EI, GCE, IAU, and OSF, held between December 2021 and March 2022.

Category 1—Student Representation in Intergovernmental Organizations

UNESCO

As the UN agency devoted to the fields of culture and education, UNESCO is a key policymaker at the global level for higher education. Sustainable Development Goal 4 “Quality Education,” which UNESCO is responsible for delivering, doesn’t include student representation as a key objective or tool (UNESCO, 2016, 2017). Within the membership of the Collective Consultation

of NGOs on Education 2030, one can only find “discipline-specific” (Klemenčič and Palomares, 2018, 384) student-related organizations such as the International Pharmaceutical Students Federation and International Association for Political Science Students (CCNGO, 2019, 2020). Throughout 2021 and in the scope of the Global Education Cooperation Mechanism revision, the Global Student Forum and other civil society organizations were lobbying for the establishment of a student seat in the new UNESCO SDG4 High Level Steering Committee (SDG4HLSC) which eventually resulted in the creation of the SDG4Youth Network as a mechanism for students and youth organizations to nominate candidates to be selected by UNESCO for the position in the SDG4HLSC and Sherpa group. While initial terms of reference of the SDG4Youth Network set out membership eligibility for individuals, lobby efforts from student organizations resulted in membership criteria being changed and opened to organizations. The SDG4Youth Secretariat then chose a cohort of around 100 representatives via top-down selection, ensuring a strong majority of youth organizations to be accepted in the network (ESU, 2022; OBESSU, 2022).

Some of the regional student federations in the membership of the GSF are also involved in the general UNESCO structure holding consultative status while other stakeholders hold associate status (UNESCO, 2021b). An example of learners’ representation with formalized characteristics and a structured role for the Global Student Forum can be found within the framework of the General Education Monitoring (GEM) Report of UNESCO. Together with the GSF, the GEM team co-hosted a dialogue for learners in 2021, and signed a co-publishing agreement with the GSF for the “GEM Youth Report 2022—Non state actors in education: who chooses who loses” (2021). The GSF and its representative regional platforms are also part of an ongoing consultation process with the UNESCO GEM personnel through a working group consulting the report recommendations and a GSF representative holding a position in the formal UNESCO GEM advisory board.

The UNESCO World Higher Education Conference 2022 (WHEC) marked another opportunity for student participation in the new global framework represented by the Global Student Forum. The GSF organized a series of consultations, in partnership with its regional and national members unions, to provide input to the event and inform a worldwide student declaration addressing the conference (GSF, 2021a; GSF, 2022a). The youth engagement strategy for WHEC outlines specific spaces for youth engagement, but does not attribute or acknowledge a different role to students and their movement (UNESCO, 2021c).

UN—Education and Academia Stakeholder Group

The Education and Academia Stakeholder Group is part of the UN system responsible for monitoring and reviewing the Sustainable Development Goals. The EASG “brings together human rights-based education civil society organizations as well as academia organizations and networks that work on the right to education” (EASG, 2017), including the European Students’ Union (ESU) as one of the co-founders and organizing Partner since the establishment of EASG in 2016. Dr. Katarina Popović, Co-chair of the EASG on behalf of the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE), explained in an interview that the EASG is a “young group [that] does not have a strong tradition of organizing” (interview, Prof. Dr. Popovic, 28/12/2021). Despite that, the group has an advanced perspective on student participation, with strong formal inclusion of student platforms: ESU was an organizing partner from the inception of EASG in 2016 till

September 2021, when ESU resigned from this role and the GSF was elected to serve as an organizing partner of the stakeholder group. Prof. Dr. Popovic underlined how the participation of organized students is relevant for the issue-based nature of the reactions and inputs required to the group and referenced the EASG side event at the 2021 High Level Political Forum moderated by the GSF Executive Director who also gave the concluding remarks as an example (EASG, 2021).

The OECD

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development provided episodic spaces of individual participation (not representative) in their Global Forum on the Future of Education and Skills, on secondary education, involving learners selected by member countries and other civil society structures in a focus group. Panelists at this conference were selected without consulting independent student and representative student organizing structures (OECD, 2020). Open consultations conducted by the OECD allow people to participate as individuals, answering questionnaires on different topics, but do not seek input from representative student structures. A more stable youth structure can be found in the “Youthwise” Youth Advisory Board, whose mandate is year-long. Membership in the first 2021 edition of this advisory body was based on a top-down selection of individual profiles made by OECD personnel, mixing youth and student constituencies (OECD, 2021). The fact that student organizations do not select their own representatives within OECD processes has been confirmed also by Dr. Andreas Schleicher, OECD Director for Education and Skills, when interviewed by the authors in January 2022. Although part of the work of the OECD is based on samples (e.g., PISA), there is space for organized representation of students to assume a stronger role, as practiced within the education worker constituency, which is represented in OECD processes through spokespeople appointed by Education International. The Global Student Forum as a stable body of representation could contribute to the idea of education as a “society project” with “students as active citizens” (and not customers), in line with OECD aspirations and how other aligned stakeholders do in the internal policy processes of the organization (Interview, Dr. Andreas Schleicher, 25/01/2022).

Category 2—Student Representation in Global Education Financing Institutions

Multilateral funds for education, whilst primarily financing institutions, wield significant influence over policymaking within the international education sector. Recognition of this power is evident in the governance of key players such as the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), Education Cannot Wait (ECW), and the World Bank Group (WBG), all of which include representatives of governments and in the case of GPE as well as ECW, the private sector, civil society, and teachers.

The Global Partnership for Education

The Global Partnership for Education (GPE) is the largest global partnership fund for education in lower-income countries, and therefore despite not focusing on, or funding, higher education

it remains an important organization to include in the scope of this research. Currently, the only stable mode of engagement for learners (or young people) is as individual GPE Youth Leaders (GPE, 2021a): an informal route unconnected to governance, focused on external advocacy and communications (interview, GPE representative, 21/02/22). To date, GPE has no formal representation of students or their elected representatives in their decision-making structures. While a recent study into the role of non-state actors in the GPE found that civil society actors have been “relatively influential” (Menashy, 2016, p. 99), of the twenty constituencies represented on their global Board of Directors, learners and their representatives are not formally included (GPE, 2019). In an interview with a GPE Official conducted by the authors it was stated that as “board constituencies are self-governing, GPE doesn’t engage in who are the members or how they define their membership” (interview, GPE representative, 21/02/22). As a result, the participation of student organizations within the three existing CSO constituencies relies on the favorable discretion of the constituency’s current governing organization.

A governance review conducted by GPE in 2021 found “strongly expressed concern” that youth representation within GPE “avoids the risk of tokenism” and that the “right voices are heard” yet ultimately rejected a “specific proposal to include a new board seat for a youth representative” (GPE, 2021b). The review also gave no clarification on which voices are the “right” ones neither distinguished between the demographics of “youth” and “students,” the latter being confirmed as a general practice within GPE by our official interviewee (interview, GPE representative, 21/02/22). Nevertheless, the broad support by “Board members across constituencies ... for stronger youth representation” (GPE, 2021b) presents an opportunity for the GSF to build upon. The level of political responsiveness by the GPE to this potential route of student participation remains to be seen.

The World Bank

With over US\$9 billion in investments in the sector since 2015, The World Bank Group (WBG) is the largest financier of education in the developing world (World Bank Group, 2018a), with higher education as one of their focus areas (World Bank Group, 2018b), yet their bilateral operating structure means assessing the level of responsiveness to, and routes of participation for, students at the global level is difficult. Dr. Roberta Bassett, the Global Lead for Tertiary Education at the World Bank, explained in an interview with the authors, as each project is “independently structured between the client country and the Bank,” there is “not a uniform project preparation framework that would indicate which groups to engage,” but insisted that for tertiary education projects, students and student organizations are always invited to stakeholder consultations (interview, Dr. Bassett 17/12/2022). Where opportunities for global stakeholder engagement exist, Dr. Bassett indicated that the WBG would welcome the participation of a global student organization, for example in their peer review process for global documents, reports, and briefings (interview, Dr. Bassett 17/12/2022). Therefore, access responsiveness by the WBG is still lacking, but opportunities of improvement could emerge in the near future.

Education Cannot Wait

In 2020 Education Cannot Wait became the first multilateral global education fund to constitute a self-organized Youth—and Student-led subgroup within the Civil-Society Constituency, which

elects a representative organization to sit on its Executive Committee and High-Level Steering Group (ECW, 2020, 2021). Not only is the distinction between youth and students recognized as two separate demographics in the title of the sub-group, according to the terms of reference individuals are ineligible to join and organizations must be able to demonstrate they are youth—or student-led (100 Million webpage 1). The Global Student Forum has been an active member of this subgroup from the outset, alongside all the regional student platforms in its membership and a large number of national student unions. At present this sub-group has over seventy member organizations and is regularly consulted in all ECW decision-making and deliberation processes as equal stakeholders alongside governments, wider civil society, and the private sector (100 Million webpage 2). Existing for less than two years at the time of writing, this is a relatively new formal route of representation for students within ECW and it is too early to accurately assess the impact of this participation. However, structurally at least, ECW goes beyond access responsiveness and demonstrates both agenda and policy responsiveness: with the concerns of the democratic constituency of student and youth-led organizations mandated to be responded to and requiring an answer at the highest level of ECW organizational governance.

Open Society Foundation

The Open Society Foundations (OSF) is a “network of private philanthropic foundations” (Calligaro, 2018, p. 157) created in 1993 by George Soros (Calligaro, 2018; Correa-Cabrera et al., 2021). OSF follows the ideological framework of Karl Popper’s “The Open Society and Its Enemies” (1945), aiming to advocate for the defense of democracy and against authoritarianism and discrimination (1945). The open political approach of OSF, that claims to be neutral and independent from governments and powerful interest groups, makes possible a connection with a vast number of associations and NGOs with different ideological backgrounds, going from liberal to “new left” sensibilities (Calligaro, 2018, p. 167; Stubbs, 2013, p. 136). With 60 percent of its budget dedicated to grants (Calligaro, 2018, p. 158), OSF fits in the donor category in this research and is among the main funders for the organized student movement globally.

Education is one of the ten thematic objectives of the organization (Correa-Cabrera et al., 2021, p. 3), with an OSF Official confirming in an interview with the authors that a priority within this is supporting democratic student governance, ensuring that “the voice of the students and their representative organizations can be a part of the global regional and national dialogue on education policy-making” (interview, OSF Official, 28/03/2022). This belief that students “must have a central place in determining policy at all different levels” led to key partnerships with student organizations in the 2010s, including two European projects that merged the fight for migrant and refugees’ rights and the right to education: “Together Moving Forward” and “Seeds for Integration.” Due to OSF financing, the European Students Union and Organising Bureau of Secondary School Students coordinated these two respective student-led projects, including a consistent granting part, allowing national and local student unions to apply for funds for initiatives, assessed, supported, and evaluated by the two European student umbrellas (OBESSU, 2018; Together Moving Forward; Henriques and Lyamouri-Bajja, 2018, p. 30). The support of OSF has also been instrumental in facilitating the cooperation between regional student representatives in the period of time preceding the formation of the Global Student Forum, through funding explorative study visits, proposal writing workshops, and international student conferences.

Despite the dissolution of the Education Program in the scope of an internal restructuring in the foundation in 2022, as the OSF Official in our interview highlighted, students are a “force in society” beyond education issues and therefore “key actors in the broader debates of economic, social, environmental, political dimensions of our common life” (interview, OSF Official, 28/03/2022). This presents and justifies an opportunity for the inclusion and participation of the GSF, which the OSF Official noted is a “phenomenal advancement” in the coming together of student movements (Interview, OSF Official 28/03/2022), in the wider strategy and subsequent governance structures of OSF. Establishing the legitimacy for this, and other similar roles in the wider education policy—and grant-making sector, requires building trusted partnerships with allied organizations and challenging the widespread “fear and tokenism” of democratic student engagement (Interview, OSF Official 28/03/2022).

Category 3—Student Representation within the Global Civil Society Organizations

GSF, a newborn non-governmental organization, has ties with other international organizations and confederations representing other stakeholders of the educational sector. This section studies and examines three major civil society organizations which operate at the global level and represent constituencies such as teachers (Education International), Higher Education Institutions represented by its academic authorities (International Association of Universities), and finally another organization that encompasses various constituencies (Global Campaign for Education).

Education International

Education International, founded in 1992, represents teachers’ organizations and other education employees at the global level. It has a membership of 383 organizations speaking for more than 32 million teachers in 178 countries and territories (Education International, n.d.). According to Ms. Wulff, Director of Research Policy and Advocacy at Education International, many of EI’s members at the national level work with students’ unions and have structures in place to engage with students, while at the global level a historic lack of organized student governance contributed to less formalized cooperation between teachers and students until the Global Student Forum emerged (interview, 27/01/2022).

Regarding the distinction between students and youth as separate constituencies, Ms. Wulff confirmed that EI does differentiate these two constituencies and justifies this differentiation by acknowledging the privileged stakeholder status of students being directly linked to the education sector and possessing first-hand experiences of education policies and their impact (interview, Ms. Wulff, Director of Research Policy and Advocacy at Education International, 27/01/2022). According to Ms. Wulff, students are a primary partner for the teaching profession and Education International, taking into consideration their democratic and accountable self-representation structures from the institutional to the global level, to mediate students’ interests through “elected representatives as opposed to self-appointed youth representatives” (interview, Ms. Wulff, Director of Research Policy and Advocacy at Education International, 27/01/2022). EI has problematized this aspect for a long time, pointing out the way in which the focus on

youth representation has often resulted in top-down selection of token individuals, frequently from very privileged backgrounds. The creation of a global umbrella of student organizations has been supported by Education International, which currently hosts the Global Student Forum in its Brussels headquarters (interview, Antonia Wulff, 27/01/2022).

International Association of Universities

Universities at the global level are represented in the international community, and UNESCO specifically, by the International Association of Universities (IAU) founded in 1950. The aim of the IAU as stated in their constitution is “to provide a center of co-operation at the international level among the universities and similar institutions of higher education of all countries, as well as among organizations in the field of higher education generally, and to be an advocate for their concerns” (IAU Constitution). Dr. Hilligje van’t Land, Secretary General of IAU, stated that IAU deliberately focuses on inviting and including students in their events and initiatives (interview, 17/01/2022). Historically, the association found it difficult to partner with the student constituency on the global level, given the lack of a representative international student platform over the past decades. Dr. van’t Land identifies the developing partnership with the Global Student forum as an opportunity that will “allow the IAU to better liaise with student organizations around the world” (interview, Dr. Hilligje van’t Land, Secretary General of IAU, 17/01/2022). For the IAU a clear distinction in stakeholdership within the higher education sector between youth and students is rooted in their democratic beliefs, and the IAU works with students and their unions as opposed to selected youth representatives. Their track record of cooperation with student unions is substantial and includes collaborations with the European Students Union, the Erasmus Student Network, Students Organizing for Sustainability (International), and the Global Student Forum.

Global Campaign for Education (GCE)

In 1999, Education International, Oxfam International, Action Aid, and the Global March Against Child Labour founded the Global Campaign for Education (GCE). In 2022, the GCE represents over 100 national and regional education coalitions and international organizations (Oxfam, 2005). According to Oxfam, the GCE was distinctive from other organizations at the time, uniting civil society organizations from the global north and global south and including organizations such as trade unions and campaigners against child labor. In their 2015 World Assembly, the GCE membership recognized the necessity to represent and integrate youth- and student-led organizations in its governance structure. During their sixth World Assembly in 2018, European Students Union (ESU) representatives participated for the first time and the organization amended its constitution to formally establish a seat for youth-led organizations on the GCE board, the main governing body of the organization. An ESU representative was subsequently elected at this World Assembly to carry the voice of the newly created constituency (Global Campaign for Education, accessed April 28, 2022). A second seat for youth and students in the GCE board was created through a decision taken at their virtual 2021 World Assembly, with a student representative from the GSF member organization, All-Africa Students Union, later elected into this position (GCE website). Mr. Refat Sabbah, President of the GCE, defines the organization as a civil society movement with the goal to reinforce, improve, and strengthen the role of civil society in the education sector (interview, Mr. Sabbah, 27/01/2022). Mr. Sabbah recognized that

prior to the establishment of the student and youth constituency, the GCE did not have a structure to represent the student and youth voice within the governance of the organization, which Mr. Sabbah identified as a “weakness.” According to Mr. Sabbah the differentiation between student and youth constituencies is based on the conviction that students are naturally connected to the education sector and its institutions while young people as a demographic are not. Mr. Sabbah also concluded that there is a qualitative difference between the way students and youth organize themselves in democratic and representative governance structures.

Conclusions

This chapter presented the evolution of student governance structures representing higher education students on the global level and analyzed spaces and mechanisms for student participation within international institutions that shape educational policy. The formation of the Global Student Forum presents an opportunity that could impact the formal representation of students in policy-making fora, funding organizations, and civil society based platforms. As Dr. Andreas Schleicher recognized, the absence of an umbrella organization aggregating and representing students at the global level for decades affected the “stakeholder perspective” during years of increasing interaction between civil society and international institutions (interview, Dr. Schleicher, 25/01/2021). Sporadic participation, tokenism through top-down selection of unrepresentative spokespeople, and a mergence of student and youth constituencies are widespread practices that undermine democratic student representation in policy-making processes and consultations in the international education sector. This picture is summarized by Table 5.1 simplifying the findings of this chapter.

The foundation of the GSF, which unites hundreds of independent student organizations and movements all over the world and proactively engages in education advocacy and partnership building between student unions and the institutions of the international community, could be a paradigm shift in the way students are represented in the decision-making process that determines their educational and social realities. In the two years since the launch of the Global Student Forum, great strides have been made in establishing pathways for meaningful student participation throughout all categories of entities subjected to this analysis, with the United Nations Economic and Social Council—Education and Academia Stakeholder Group (Category 1), the Education Cannot Wait Fund (Category 2), and the Global Campaign for Education (Category 3) showing a high degree of political responsiveness and co-decision making powers granted to student unions and their elected representatives. Considerable support, allyship, and systematic, meaningful involvement of students can also be attributed to the other category 3 organizations, Education International and the International Association of Universities. UNESCO and the OECD do have formalized pathways (top-down selection) for student participation in place, but do not distinguish between student unions and individuals from the youth sector, harming the quality of democratic representation and undermining the students as key stakeholders in the education sector. Finally, while the GPE, the World Bank, and the OSF do not currently have any formal structures for representative student participation in decision-making processes, the interviews with representatives conducted for this chapter suggested opportunities for future developments.

Table 5.1 Student participation within international organizations and levels of political responsiveness

Organization	Process	A stable mechanism for student participation and engagement exists	Student spokespeople come from representative student orgs.	Student constituency is autonomous from youth	Level of political responsiveness
UNESCO	SDG4YOUTH	Yes	No	No	0
UNESCO	GEM Report	Yes	Yes	Yes	2
UNESCO	World Higher Education Conference	No	No	No	0
UN DESA	EASG	Yes	Yes	Yes	2-3
OECD	Youthwise	Yes	No	No	0
GPE	Board	No	No	No	0
World Bank Group	None	No	No	No	0
Education Cannot Wait	High Level Steering Group and Executive Committee	Yes	Yes	Yes	2-3
Global Campaign for Education	Board	Yes	Yes	Partly	3

Source: Compiled by the Authors.

The state of student representation and the impact of student organizations on decision-making processes at the global level will need to be closely monitored in the upcoming years. The developments of the years 2020–22, and the prior unification of regional student platforms at the global level, demonstrate the capacity of an organized student representative body to achieve access to policy-making institutions, international funds, and NGOs working on education. However, at the same time there is institutional resistance to this formal student self-government and not all of the entities subject to this analysis are ready and willing to work with the organized international student movement, embodied by the Global Student Forum and its membership. It remains to be seen in future research efforts whether the active inclusion of legitimate student representatives and organizations becomes a standard in the global education sector as teachers have achieved through Education International. Will the impact of student agency be distinguishable in the policies produced by international fora after the inclusion of the student constituency? These and many more questions stay open, laying the foundation for new studies and analyzes to be conducted in the years to come.

Acknowledgments

Sebastian Berger has been the main author of the Introduction, Historic Overview, Recent developments concerning global cooperation between student federations and the emergence of the Global Student Forum, Organizational characteristics, and membership structure of the Global Student Forum, Political activities and priorities of the GSF. He led and supported a series of interviews and conducted multiple overall revisions of all chapter sections at different stages of the writing process.

Giuseppe Lipari has been the main author of the section “Student participation within the institutions and organization of the international education sector” and co-author of the sections “Recent developments concerning global cooperation between student federations and the emergence of the Global Student Forum,” “Internal structures and functioning of the Global Student Forum,” and “Organizational characteristics and membership structure of the Global Student Forum.” He has written the part “Category 1—Student representation in intergovernmental organizations” and led the interviews, with the support of Carmen Romero and Sebastian Berger, and he has developed the final table. He has supported the interview with Refat Sabbah, led by Carmen Romero, and the review process at different stages.

Carmen Romero has been the author of the part “Category 3—Student representation within the global civil society organizations” and she has conducted several interviews with representatives of Education International, the Global Campaign of Education, and the International Association of Universities, supported by Sebastian Berger and Giuseppe Lipari. She supported Sebastian Berger when conducting interviews for other sections of the chapter. She has been co-author of the section “Internal structures and functioning of the Global Student Forum” and “Organizational characteristics and membership structure of the Global Student Forum.”

Georgia Potton has been the main author of the section “Category 2—Student representation in global education financing institutions,” leading the interviews with the support of Sebastian Berger, and the co-author of the Abstract, Introduction, and Conclusion. She has also contributed

to the analysis and research in the section “Student participation within the institutions and organization of the international education sector” alongside supporting the review and revision process at different stages.

References

- 100 Million (n.d.). Education cannot wait: Youth-Led organisations take the lead. <https://100million.org/index.php/latest-actions/all/317-education-cannot-wait-youth-led-organisations-take-the-lead> (accessed January 16, 2022)
- 100 Million (n.d.). Terms of reference for civil society participation in ECW governance. <http://www.100million.org/act-now/ecwyp/ecw-cs-tor> (accessed January 16, 2022)
- Almeida, Paul (2019). *Social Movements: The Structure of Collective Mobilization*.
- Altbach, Philip G. (1970). The international student movement. *Journal of Contemporary History* 5(1): 156–74.
- Altbach, Philip G., Reisberg, Liz and Rumbley, Laura E. (2009). Trends in global higher education: Tracking an academic revolution; a report prepared for the UNESCO 2009 world conference on higher education, 278. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000183219>
- Berger, Sebastian (2021). Worldwide student summit on climate action and biodiversity. *GSF*. <https://www.globalstudentforum.org/2021/04/28/worldwide-student-summit-on-climate-action-and-biodiversity/> (accessed August 12, 2022)
- Burstein, Paul, Einwohner, Rachel L. and Hollander, Jocelyn A. (1995). The success of political movements. In Jenkins, J. Craig and Klandermans, Bert, *Comparative Perspectives on States and Social Movements* (eds.), *The Politics of Social Protest*, NED-New edition (pp. iii, 275–95). Minneapolis, MN, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/j.cttt723.12> (accessed September 18, 2023).
- Calligaro, Oriane (2018). Une organisation hybride dans l’arène européenne: Open Society Foundations et la construction du champ de la lutte contre les discriminations. *Politix* 121(1): 151–72.
- CCNGO (2019). 9th collective consultation of NGOs on Education 2030, <https://www.soroptimistinternational.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Report-CCNGO-9th-Global-meeting-Dec-2019.pdf>
- CCNGO (2020). Working procedures of the collective consultation of NGOs on education 2030 (CCNGO-ED 2030)–UNESCO digital library, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000372608> (accessed January 16, 2022)
- Correa-Cabrera, Guadalupe, Núñez, Lucas and Ludwig, Hayden (2021). Assessing the international influence of private philanthropy: The case of open society foundations. *Global Studies Quarterly* 1(4): ksab039.
- Deca, L. (2012). ESU and the temptation of going global. In Ivošević, V. et al. (eds.), *ESU Turns 30! Fighting for Student Rights since 1982* (pp. 29–36). Limassol: ESU. Retrieved 3 January 2019, from <https://www.esu-online.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/30th-Anniversary-Online.pdf>
- Declaration, Bergen (2016). Bergen declaration–Uniting for a global student voice. *ESU Online*. <https://www.esu-online.org/?policy=bm70-bergen-declaration-uniting-for-a-global-student-voice> (accessed January 16, 2022)
- EASG. Introductory Document
- EASG (2021). High-Level political forum (HLPF) 2021 Side Event–Education: Paving the way out of the pandemic and shaping the new-normal.
- ECW (2020). *ECW Operational Manual*. <https://www.educationcannotwait.org/download/ecw-operational-manual-june-2020/> (accessed January 16, 2022)
- ECW (2021). 2020 annual results report, <https://www.educationcannotwait.org/annual-report-2020/> (accessed January 16, 2022)

- ESU (2012). Brussels: European students' union. *ESU Turns 30!—Fighting for Student Rights since 1982*. <https://www.esu-online.org/?publication=esu-publishes-30th-anniversary-publication> (accessed January 16, 2022)
- ESU (2017). ESU at UNESCO's Meeting of NGO's working towards education 2030. *ESU Online*. <https://www.esu-online.org/?news=esu-unescos-meeting-ngos-working-towards-education-2030> (accessed January 16, 2022)
- ESU (2022). Statement: Student unions collectively withdraw from the UNESCO SDG4Youth Network. *ESU Online*. <https://esu-online.org/?policy=statement-student-unions-collectively-withdraw-from-the-unesco-sdg4youth-network> (accessed August 2, 2022)
- Global Campaign for Education (n.d.). Integrating youth and students voices for improved advocacy: GCE youth and students. *Global Campaign for Education*. <https://campaignforeducation.org/en/what-we-do/gce-youth-students> (accessed April 28, 2022)
- Global education monitoring report, youth report 2022: Non-State actors in education: Who Chooses? Who Loses? (2022). UNESCO Digital Library, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000381643> (accessed September 2, 2022)
- GPE (2019). Charter of the global partnership for education | documents | global partnership for education, <https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/charter-global-partnership-education> (accessed January 16, 2022)
- GPE (2021a). 17 youth activists partner with GPE to transform education | Blog | Global partnership for education, <https://www.globalpartnership.org/blog/17-youth-activists-partner-gpe-transform-education> (accessed January 16, 2022)
- GPE (2021b). Board decisions. March 2021 | Documents | Global partnership for education. <https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/board-decisions-march-2021> (accessed January 16, 2022)
- GPE (n.d.). Youth and education | Global partnership for education. <https://www.globalpartnership.org/about-us/youth-and-educationX> (accessed January 16, 2022)
- Grønne, Viktor (2017). Global student cooperation—Prospects for increased cooperation by Viktor Grønne—Issuu, https://issuu.com/viktorsmithgronne/docs/170914_global_student_cooperation_- (accessed January 16, 2022)
- GSF-ALA (2021). Programme guide 2021–2022—Academy in activism, leadership and advocacy. *Brussels: Global Student Forum*. https://www.globalstudentforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/GSF-ALA-Programme-Guide-2021-2022-compressed_high.pdf
- GSF (2020a). Global student forum: Seed funding proposal for Phase 1, 2020.
- GSF (2020b). Agenda of the II steering committee meeting of the global student forum—8th of September 2020.
- GSF (2021a). European student consultation for the UNESCO WHEC 2022. *GSF*. <https://www.globalstudentforum.org/2021/11/22/european-student-consultation-for-the-unesco-whec-2022/> (accessed January 16, 2022)
- GSF (2021b). GSF Workplan 2021.
- GSF (2021c). Membership guidelines.
- GSF (2021d). Rules of procedure.
- GSF (2021e). *Global Student Congress “More United than Ever!”*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T2J_oocoa_4 (accessed August 12, 2022)
- GSF (2022a). UNESCO WHEC 2022—Global student declaration, <https://www.globalstudentforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/WHEC-2022-Global-Student-Declaration.pdf>
- GSF (2022b). New GSF steering committee inaugurated. *GSF*. <https://www.globalstudentforum.org/2022/07/03/new-gsf-steering-committee-inaugurated/> (accessed August 12, 2022)
- Henriques, Andreia and Lyamouri—Bajja, Nadine (2018). *STEP-by-STEP Together—Support, Tips, Examples and Possibilities for Youth Work with Young Refugees*. https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/47261953/FINAL+step+by+step+together_reduced_size.pdf/8103c431-afc3-f978-9117-20776950bedf
- IAU. Constitution of the international association of universities. https://www.iau-aiu.net/IMG/pdf/iau_constitution-en-2.pdf

- King, Roger (2011). Globalisation and higher education. In Brennan, John and Shah, Tarla (eds.), *Higher Education and Society in Changing Times: Looking Back and Looking Forward* (pp. 24–35). London: Centre for Higher Education Research and Information, CHERI.
- Klemenčič, Manja (2012). Student representation in western Europe: Introduction to the special issue. *European Journal of Higher Education* 2(1): 2–19.
- Klemenčič, Manja (2014). Student power in a global perspective and contemporary trends in student organising. *Studies in Higher Education* 39(3): 396–411.
- Klemenčič, Manja and Miguel Galán Palomares, Fernando (2018). Transnational student associations in the European multi-level governance of higher education policies. *European Educational Research Journal* 17(3): 365–84.
- McDonald, Robert (1967). NSA/CIA: The Kiddies and their playmates. *Transition* 31: 14–19.
- Menashy, Francine (2016). Understanding the roles of non-state actors in global governance: Evidence from the global partnership for education. *Journal of Education Policy* 31(1): 98–118.
- Moutsios, Stavros (2009). International organisations and transnational education policy. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education* 39(4): 469–81.
- OBESSU (2018). Call for selection committee members—Seeds for integration programme, <https://www.obessu.org/resources/news/call-for-selection-committee-members-seeds-for-integration/> (accessed April 22, 2022)
- OBESSU (2019a). 100 million campaign: Global youth conference. <https://www.obessu.org/resources/news/100-million-campaign/> (accessed August 9, 2022)
- OBESSU (2019b). OBESSU joined the 100 million delegation at the UN general assembly 2019!, <https://www.obessu.org/resources/news/obessu-joined-the-100-million-delegation-at-the-un-general-assembly-2019/> (accessed August 9, 2022)
- OBESSU (2019c). “Global students” demands on refugees and migrants’ education. <https://obessu.org/resources/news/global-students-demands-on-refugees-and-migrants-education/> (accessed August 2, 2022)
- OBESSU (2022). OBESSU announces its withdrawal from the UNESCO SDG4Youth network. <https://www.obessu.org/resources/documents/obessu-reactions/obessu-announces-its-withdrawal-from-the-unesco-sdg4youth-network/> (accessed August 2, 2022)
- OECD (2020). *Student Voices from the Global Forum*. Paris: OECD. <https://www.oecd.org/education/2030-project/global-forum/second-meeting-october-2020/global-forum-student-brochure-2021.pdf>
- OECD (2021). *The OECD Presents: Youthwise*. Paris: OECD. <https://www.oecd.org/about/civil-society/youth/youthwise/Youthwise-one-pager-final.pdf>
- OECD (2022). *Youthwise 2022*. Paris: OECD. <https://www.oecd.org/about/civil-society/youth/youthwise/Youthwise-overview-2022.pdf>.
- OXFAM (2005). *Partnerships for Girls’ Education*. Edited by Nitya Rao and Ines Smyth. <https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/115515/bk-partnerships-for-girls-education-011204-en.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>
- Paget, Karen (2003). From Stockholm to Leiden: The CIA’s role in the formation of the international student conference. *Intelligence and National Security* 18(2): 134–67. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02684520412331306780> (accessed January 17, 2022).
- Schumaker, Paul D. (1975). Policy responsiveness to protest-group demands. *The Journal of Politics* 37(2): 488–521. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2129004> (accessed September 18, 2023)
- Shore, Luke and Grønne, Viktor (2020). Between tokenism and inclusion: The student movement in the post-2015 process. In Wulff, Antonia (ed.), *Grading Goal Four—Tensions, Threats, and Opportunities in the Sustainable Development Goal on Quality Education* (pp. 339–64). Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill NV.
- Stone, Diane (2008). Global public policy, transnational policy communities, and their networks. *Policy Studies Journal* 36(1): 19–38.

- Stubbs, Paul (2013). “Flex actors and philanthropy in (post-)conflict Arenas: Soros” open society foundations in the post-yugoslav space. *Croatian Political Science Review* 50(5): 114–38.
- Together Moving Forward (n.d.). Together moving forward. *Together Moving Forward*. <https://www.togethermovingforward.eu/> (accessed April 22, 2022)
- Tripathi, Ankit (2021). Y20 Summit: A fair share for our future. *GSF*. <https://www.globalstudentforum.org/2021/02/24/y20-summit-a-fair-share-for-our-future/> (accessed August 12, 2022)
- UNESCO (2011). Basic texts: 2012 edition; including texts and amendments adopted by the general conference at Its 36th session, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000216192.page=151> (accessed January 16, 2022)
- UNESCO (2016). Sustainable development goal 4 and its targets. *UNESCO*. <https://en.unesco.org/education2030-sdg4/targets> (accessed January 16, 2022)
- UNESCO (2017). Ensure quality education for all: Sustainable development goal 4; ten targets–UNESCO digital library, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000259784> (accessed January 16, 2022)
- UNESCO (2021a). Draft terms of reference of the SDG4Youth network, https://www.sdg4education2030.org/sites/default/files/2021-10/Draft%20Terms%20of%20Reference_SDG4Youth_3.pdf
- UNESCO (2021b). List of NGOs in official partnership with UNESCO within the framework of the directives concerning UNESCO’s partnership with non-governmental organizations (36C/Res. 108), https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/list_ngos_official_partners_unesco.pdf
- UNESCO (2021c). UNESCO world higher education conference 2022. *UNESCO*. <https://en.unesco.org/news/unesco-world-higher-education-conference-2022> (accessed January 16, 2022)
- World Bank (2018a). World bank education overview (English). *World Bank*, <https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail> (accessed January 16, 2022)
- World Bank (2018b). World bank education overview: Higher education (English). *World Bank*, <https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail> (accessed January 16, 2022)

6

A Regional Student Movement in Latin and South America: The Organización Continental Latinoamericana y Caribeña de Estudiantes—OCLAE (Latin American and Caribbean Continental Student Organization)

Bianca Borges dos Santos, Giuseppe Lipari, and Carmen Romero

Introduction

The history of universities and the social transformations in Latin America are deeply intertwined. Mobilization of students at universities and their collective action has had a significant impact on social transformations (Krotsch, 2002). The prominent La Reforma de Córdoba (the Reform of Córdoba) in Argentina, 1918, is a case in point and must be highlighted when studying student movements in Latin America. This reform is a fundamental part of the history of this continent and especially higher education in Latin America.

The reform started in 1918 in Argentina; it engraved in universities (especially public ones) a specific character in terms of community and decision-making processes. The reform aimed at pushing for more autonomy for the university, participation of students and teachers in the decision-making process, academic freedom, and the separation of the university and other institutions such as the army, political parties, and the church (Slon, 2020). As stated by Solano (1998), the students from Córdoba (Argentina) lighted the flame of the university reform, this process started in the, by the time, underdeveloped and clerical Córdoba University but soon moved to many other universities in the country and from there to the rest of Latin America. Furthermore, for some sociologists, this year is especially relevant since they consider it as the year that Latin America entered the twentieth century (Bernheim, 1998).

According to Bernheim (1998), the Córdoba protests presented the first time that the traditional Latin-American university was challenged and an important step toward modernization of higher education in Latin America. The students, also known as the “Reformists” [Los Reformistas] that fought for the reforms, did not hesitate to support other political movements or political parties that represented their interest or advocated for their demands. Moreover, these students acknowledged the necessity of an alliance between the different social sectors as a means to

constitute a popular movement (Solano, 2018). Krotsch (2002) considers that the universities and the movement around the reforms initiated in Córdoba played a key role in the construction of a modern and active civic citizenship in Latin America.

Another notable period in the history of student movements in Latin America, as in many other countries of the world, was in the 1960s and 1970s. According to Hobsbawm (in Muñoz, 2013) during the 1960s, the role of the students both at the social and political arena was more important than ever before, student activism and influence were in the spotlight all over the world. During these years, the Latin-American student movement supported various causes from working-class and feminist movements to anti-imperialist ones (Muñoz, 2013). For Muñoz (2013), this proved that the fights and demands of the student movement were deeply rooted to the political context in which it originated. Furthermore, other authors observe that during the 1960s and the 1970s the student movement in Latin America focused both on university reforms and societal transformations. In this period, most of the countries in the region were under dictatorships, so the main agenda was the fight for democracy, freedom of political organization, participation of students in spheres of decision, academic freedom, and university autonomy. The movement also remained deeply inspired by the Cordoba Reform. After the mobilizations of 1918, the conquest of the autonomy of higher education and the growing debate about the social mission of universities became central agendas. University democratization extended to the position of rector, which became elective, and from this movement the university extension was also born, focused on bringing to society the knowledge produced in the academic environment. Ordorika (2022) suggests that student activism at the time was firmly influenced by the Cuban Revolution and the later death of Che Guevara (Ordorika, 2022).

It was during the period of 1960s and 1970s revolts that the Organización Continental Latinoamericana y Caribeña de Estudiantes—OCLAE (Latin American and Caribbean Continental Student Organization) as a regional student organization was founded, influenced in particular by the Cuban Revolution and broader social movements in Latin America at the time. This chapter discusses the establishment, the organizational characteristics, and political activities of the OCLAE, and in particular how the historical background and other social events have influenced the OCLAE since its foundation.

This chapter draws on the literature on the history of the Latin-American student movement. However, no scholarly publication exists on the OCLAE. Analytical studies on the structure of OCLAE and the systems of student representations in Latin America more generally are lacking. Therefore, this chapter relies on the primary sources, especially the publications by the OCLAE such as the most recent policy papers, internal reports and press releases, as well as the official statutes of the OCLAE. Content analysis of these primary sources allowed us to understand the formal rules and outcomes of the internal decision-making processes and also the political standing of the organization. We triangulate data from documentary sources with the semi-structured interviews with the student leaders: the current President of OCLAE Leonel Friman (from Cuba), the former representative of Brazil in the Secretariat, Bia Lopes and Dave Oliveros, President of the Venezuelan Federation of University Students, and current member of the General Secretariat. The interviews have been conducted through voice messages, so not simultaneously.

This qualitative study of the OCLAE presented in this chapter takes inspiration from the previous academic literature on student representation (Klemenčič, 2012, 2014), particularly

Klemenčič's work on global comparison of student representation and transnational representative student associations (Klemenčič and Palomares, 2018). This chapter brings the Latin American student movement under a new lens of analysis that has proven to be fruitful investigating student unions in general and in particular the regional representative student associations. The chapter first presents the history of the OCLAE. Next section discusses the particularities of the organizational characteristics of the OCLAE. The following question is guided by the question: how does OCLAE's legitimacy survive going beyond sectorial claims? The conclusion presents the contributions of OCLAE for the Latin American student's movement and the development of its integration through the fifty-five years of existence of the organization.

History of the Organización Continental Latinoamericana y Caribeña de Estudiantes—OCLAE (Latin American and Caribbean Continental Student Organization)

In 1966, during the IV Latin American and Caribbean Student Congress, the OCLAE was founded by Fidel Castro, leader of the Cuban Revolution (Statues of OCLAE). The idea was to constitute the movement by the time of the “Bogotazo,” the series of riots and protests happened in Colombia after the murder of the presidential candidate Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, in 1948. Bogotazo enabled the founding of the OCLAE. With the votes of twenty-three students' organizations in the IV Latin American and Caribbean Student Congress, when OCLAE was founded, the University Federation of Students of Cuba (FEU Cuba) was elected to OCLAE's presidency (Reyes, 2021). This decision was also made based on the historical contribution of the Cuban student movement, its trajectory, and the fact that this movement had already achieved what was (and is) perceived by student leaders as a free and quality education for all in the country. This decision has been ratified by all student delegates who have participated in each of the student congresses organized since then; the last one took place in 2019 in Caracas, Venezuela (Interview, Leonel Friman).

Since its foundation the main objective of the OCLAE has been the fight for a quality and free education for all. Furthermore, the OCLAE has led and promoted or supported other fights such as the fight for peace, for sovereignty, and independence of people and countries, for gender equality, the protection of the environment and against any kind of discrimination. The OCLAE hasn't focused only on a sectorial agenda, but rather on all the social problems in the region and that is what makes the student movement unique in the region (Interview, Leonel Friman).

The main principles that the organization stands for are anti-imperialism, peace, equality, anti-neocolonialism, and antiracism. The anti-imperialist principle refers to the understanding that the students cannot allow their countries and people to be the back door of other countries or allow the implementation of genocidal policies in order to get advantage of its natural resources (Interview, Leonel Friman).

The OCLAE members understand imperialism as moving in the complexity of human relationships, which include education. According to Bia Lopes, former Executive Secretariat of OCLAE, imperialism promotes “ideals of life that are convenient to the interests of foreign nations, like the myth that the Latin Americans are submissive and must keep their eyes on the

United States and its way of life instead of seeing the wealth and potential of their own region” (Interview, Bia Lopes). When debating anti-imperialist education, the students are seeking an educational system that serves their own people and national interests, with plurality, diversity, and respect for native peoples and resources, and also inspired by the expression of Simón Bolívar “that the nations march towards their greatness at the rate that their education marches” (Interview, Dave Oliveros).

One of the main objectives of OCLAE is to support the Latin American integration through cooperation among Latin American student movements. The fight for peace in Colombia, against the economic blocking of the United States against Cuba that lasts over sixty years, and the economic blocking against Venezuela are some of OCLAE’s main priorities, as well as the solidarity with the Palestinian and Saharai causes (interview, Dave Oliveros).

OCLAE: A Different Regional Student Association

OCLAE is a special example of a regional association with unique characteristics that make it differ from other regional representative student associations. The first main difference can be found in the constituency. While All-Africa Students Union (AASU), European Students’ Union (ESU), and the Commonwealth Students Association (CSA) are composed entirely by students of third level education (in some cases including postgraduate students), OCLAE has also a consistent membership from secondary education (OCLAE Statutes; OCLAE, 2021a, c; Reyes, 2021).

The membership without distinctions among second-level, university, and postgraduate student representation is composed by (OCLAE Statutes, art. 16–22):

- Non-governmental national student organizations (Full members);
- Non-governmental local or campus-based student organizations (Associate members);
- Sub-regional umbrellas of student and youth organizations (Consultative status);

This perfectly couples with the agenda of the organization, which is transversal and political—even partisan sometimes. The same statutes, in the preamble, declare: “Students of the American continent and of the rest of the world, in their fight to conquer true social justice, are challenged to achieve an economic, political and social order that can be fair and equitable” (OCLAE Statutes, 1).

The other key difference, that makes OCLAE similar to a social movement organization (SMO—as according to Klemenčič, 2012, p. 8), is the absence of paid professional staff. The two Secretariats of OCLAE, the General Secretariat and the Executive Secretariat, are both political bodies composed of volunteer representatives of the national member unions and organizations. The absence of professionalized staff and the limited functional differentiation coexist with a hierarchical political coordination, merging elements from SMOs, and interest groups. Another key component of the available internal resources is the stable office of the organization placed in Havana (Cuba), that shows the support coming from the Cuban government, as also underlined by many interviewed student leaders in “La Calle es Nuestra” (“The Street Is Ours”), the most recent publication on OCLAE, edited on the fifty-fifth anniversary of its foundation, in 2021 (OCLAE Statutes, art. 5; OCLAE, 2013, p. 3; Reyes, 2021).

Not all of these structures include the national student population in the same way, but similarly to ESU in Europe, OCLAE is representative of the entire student body in Latin America (Klemenčič and Galan Palomares, 2018, p. 383). The structure of OCLAE is composed of current national student leaders, and usually the elected continental representatives do not leave their roles at the national level. Reinforcing that, all the elections to positions within OCLAE do not elect individuals but organizations, so for the entirety of the mandate it is a specific member union covering the position, but the person can change while changes in national executives happen (OCLAE Statutes, art. 38).

The key democratic moment of the organization is the CLAE—Latin American and Caribbean Congress of Students, held every two years (*ibid.* art. 34). All members contribute to the elaboration of the political priorities of the organization and elect the organizations that will compose the General Secretariat and the Executive Secretariat. The General Secretariat, with roles of continuous political supervision, approval of the budget, and organization of the CLAE, is composed by elected sub-regional representatives (Mexico and North America, Central America, Spanish-speaking Caribbean, French-speaking Caribbean, Andes, Southern Cone), the topic-based secretaries, working groups, and the Executive Secretariat (*ibid.* art. 31, 37). This latter body, also elected by the CLAE, is the executive structure of OCLAE. It is composed of four organizations, representing: a) Central and North America; b) Caribbean; c) Southern Cone; d) Andes (*ibid.* art. 29). Each of the four members also takes one among the following positions: a) President of OCLAE; b) Executive secretary as treasurer, organization officer, or communication officer (*ibid.*). It is a custom that a Cuban from FEU (University Student Union) leads the organization as president, both for the functional advantage of living in the host country, and for the symbolic value of what is considered the most influential union in an achieved national liberation process (Reyes, 2021, p. 47, 60, 103).

The President of OCLAE describes OCLAE as an organization of organizations. There is a shared understanding that the most important thing for OCLAE is not the construction of a student entity made individually, by people, but the construction of an organization that can bring together those who have reference in its bases, the student movement that really organizes the schools and universities of the continent. That's why student organizations are chosen and not people: because a project is chosen (Interview, Leonel Friman). The organizations that participate in OCLAE have a common objective: Latin American sovereignty, public, free, unrestricted, and quality education for students. A student as a person could not represent all this collective effort to build socially referenced public policies (interview, Bia Lopes).

Looking again at Klemenčič's typologies (2012, p. 8), we can say that both the mode of action and the outputs prove to be really original for the Latin-American regional student association. OCLAE supports the national struggles of its members and promotes campaigns, going from institutional lobbying to high-risk activism (as in McAdam, 1986, p. 68). Ángel Arzuaga Reyes, president of the organization from 1984 until 1986, mentioned the medical support provided to Nicaragua in occasion of the VII CLAE, and the support provided to the student opposition to the Pinochet regime in Chile (Reyes, 2021, p. 67). OCLAE tends to mix the national and the intercontinental campaigns, putting them together in official documents and statements (e.g., OCLAE, 2021b, c).

The organization is also part of higher education political processes which allow for Latin American student involvement. Mirthia Julia Brossard Oris (President 2018–19) described the

efforts of OCLAE to get heard at the Regional Conference of Higher Education (CRES) hosted by UNESCO in 2018, and the contrast to the Summit of the Americas of the same year (part of the system of the Organization of American States—OAS) condemned for its political standings and the reduced space allowed for student participation. OCLAE then joined the Summit of Peoples (Cumbre de los Pueblos) expressing a completely different agenda that denounced the presence of unrepresentative organizations at the OAS Summit, it declared the will to get mobilized for the 100th anniversary of the Cordoba Reform and renewed the goals of peace in Colombia and of the defense of self-determination for Latin American and Caribbean peoples (Reyes, 2021, p. 108, 110–12). The organization has a consultative status within the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, and it is an official partner of UNESCO, while former presidents and the current General Secretariat have aimed to get a stronger position in these settings (OCLAE, 2021c, p. 4; Reyes, 2021, p. 114; UNESCO 2021, p. 13).

The Coexistence of a Stable and Formalized Student Organization and the Militant Student Movements at the National Level. How Does OCLAE's Legitimacy Survive Going beyond Sectorial Claims?

With members at the national level having the characteristics of social movement organizations, at first glance the structure of the OCLAE, with a stable and formalized hierarchy, may seem contradictory. It must be taken into consideration the fact that the scope of OCLAE's political action, which goes beyond the struggle for education and students' sectorial claims, is a key element of the entity's characterization. Going from room to room in schools and universities, the *modus operandi* of the student's movement goes from organizing demonstrations in the streets to presenting demands for the rights of students or taking a stand on major issues affecting the countries of the region in political processes. However, it does not mean that advocacy is rejected by its members, and it is also part of the mode of action of the organization, which usually adopts activist activities in the first place to gain space for its agenda in institutionalized structures.

The main struggles on the political agenda of the national student organizations and the OCLAE revolve around the ongoing structural problems of the continent: the fight for public education, for access to public higher education, against the commodification of education and the rise of private education institutions, against the presence of large foreign capital education conglomerates in our countries, struggle for free student passes in public transport. Furthermore, there are a series of social struggles embraced by students: the struggle for democracy, against imperialist interference on the continent, the struggle in defense of women's lives, for students' mental health and for decent employment (interview, Bia Lopes). Since these social struggles are part of students' daily lives, its members understand that they should be fought by OCLAE.

The militant character of most of the members also helps to understand the constituency of the Executive Secretariat. In 2022, the Secretariat is composed of the national student representatives of Brazil, Venezuela, Nicaragua, and Cuba. According to Dave Oliveros, member of the General

Secretariat of OCLAE: “three of these countries represent revolutionary political processes in the region that are examples in promoting the access to a free and quality education, which is broadly ratified and recognized by the membership of the organization” (Interview, Dave Oliveros).

Some of OCLAE’s members declare that seeking unity in the midst of diversity is an important method for the performance of the organization’s work. This should happen not by means of imposition, but by means of dialogue. As stated by the former President of the University Student Federation of Cuba, José Angel: “We have always insisted on dialogue, defending our convictions and explaining the position of the FEU, always linked to the principles of solidarity and humanism. In different scenarios we have made it clear what Cuba’s position is in each aspect. We have been consistent in the constant support of sister student organizations such as the UNEN in Nicaragua, the FBU in Venezuela, the UNE in Brazil and the CUB in Bolivia. Those links that are already historic do not diminish our shows of solidarity and affection for the rest of the federations of the continent. We share with any of them, but leaving well marked what our political positions are and what our principles are” (Alma Mater Magazine, 2021).

The OCLAE creates and decides to support the campaigns of its members in the General and Executive Secretariat. From that instance the lines of action are organized by the OCLAE members to support and participate in the campaigns. Some of the most common methods to express regional solidarity and promote consciousness about the processes that countries in the region are experiencing are through: regional days of mobilization through national committees organized by the student’s federations and OCLAE, protests in front of embassies and consulates, and social media campaigns (Interview, Dave Oliveros). Furthermore, OCLAE gives support to the national federations of students in their campaigns all over the continent, promoting it and encouraging that other national unions produce content or organize activities regarding the campaign with its own membership.

Recent examples of these student-led mobilizations are several. In 2019, Brazil and Chile experienced mass student demonstrations. In Brazil, the “Education Tsunami” convened by the National Student Union started the first revolt against the government of the present Jair Bolsonaro. The reaction of the academic community to the statements of the then Minister of Education Abraham Weintraub that 30 percent of the university budget would be cut because the university’s communities were “promoting agitation” created a great indignation in the country (Rede Brasil Atual, 2019).

With huge popular support of the student’s body ratified in assemblies which took place in the universities to organize the protests (Gomes and Mascari, 2019), the Tsunami of Education brought out millions to the streets with the support of political leaders of the more diverse ideological tendencies. As a result, the cuts were reversed throughout the year and thus the student movement imposed the first political defeat to the Bolsonaro government (Cancian and Bran, 2019). The campaign was composed of three big national street demonstrations: 15 and 30 of May and 13 of August organized by the National Students Union of Brazil, member organization of OCLAE’s Executive Secretariat, and therefore re-launched and supported with various solidarity actions by sister organizations across Latin and South America.

Also in 2019, in Chile, the kick-off for social mobilization was the 3.75 percent increase in public transport fares in Santiago. This led to demonstrations by high school students on October 17 and 18, the so-called “catracaços,” in which large groups of students gathered to jump the subway turnstile as a form of protest. With the repression applied to the movement of

high-school students and the lack of retreat, the demonstrations took on a much larger and more generalized volume, including new agendas. OCLAE organized, through its national unions in other countries, protests in solidarity in Chile's embassies and consulates. Even after the increase was revoked, mass protests continued: on October 25, the "biggest demonstration in the history" of Chile was called, in which more than 1.2 million people gathered around Plaza Italia (BBC, 2019), the main stage of demonstrations in the city. This marked a turning point in the correlation of forces and was the kick-off for the convening of the constituent process in the country, as it was the start of the mass protests claiming for social rights and structural changes that would only be possible with the adoption of a new Constitution.

In sum, the OCLAE as a formal organization finds legitimacy among its members because it is a direct reflection of the militant character of those who build the organization. The structure, that represents a continuous coordination directly led by national student leaders, is legitimized by the strong prestige of the organizations in the Executive Secretariat and by the coherent political nature of common actions, that are based on Solidarity and mutual support more than on top-down mobilizations at continental level. As demonstrated by the interviews with the present and former student leaders of OCLAE, the composition of the Executive Secretariat and the long-standing permanence of the FEU of Cuba in the presidency are not seen as contradictions by its members, but rather as a confirmation of the shared political agenda and principles that are common to all.

Conclusion

This chapter presents the organizational structure of OCLAE and its main political priorities in the Latin American educational and political context. The organization represents an important platform for the integration of students from the region by institutionalizing the cooperation of national and local student organizations in Latin America. The practice of solidarity between member organizations, engagement in joint campaigns, and the construction of activities and meetings show that this integration has been consolidated since the foundation of the entity fifty-five years ago. The democratic mechanisms of participation of members and adoption of shared principles reinforce this cooperation. OCLAE, with its strong non-sectoral agenda, has made use of practices going from institutional lobbying to risk activism for decades. This is a reflection of the involvement of sectors of Latin American youth with regional policy that allowed OCLAE to reach its nineteenth congress, to be held in 2022.

This integration, of course, has not been easily consolidated and continues to be the target of threats. The current President of OCLAE, Leonel Friman, stated in an interview for the book "La Calle es Nuestra" ("The Street Is Ours") (OCLAE, 2021a, p. 3; Reyes, 2021) that "the attempts to destabilize are the result of convergent interests of the world elites of transnational capitalism, the United States government, as well as the oligarchic fractions and dependent bourgeoisies, and the objective of re-establishing neoliberal policies in some cases, and radicalizing them in others, dismantling Latin American integration and liquidating the democratic and social welfare gains in some countries." This reality has had as a response the combative and haughty attitude of the students, the workers, and the people in the streets, which raises the need to change the system.

In the face of imperialism's attempt to restore, the people have begun to react by showing the value of progressive struggles. This is demonstrated by the recent popular rebellions in Chile, Peru, Colombia, and Guatemala; the failure of the coup in Bolivia; the resistance of Cuba, Venezuela, and Nicaragua to the blockades imposed by the US government and the election of progressive governments in Mexico and Argentina. In many of these processes, the student movement was the catalyst for the claims for social change.

Even with the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, which conditioned the organization to operate virtually, despite the great barriers to internet access on the continent, OCLAE member federations continued to mobilize and work for their integration (Interview, Leonel Friman). There were ample events organized during 2020 and 2021.

In June 2020 the organization held the online forum "OCLAE vs COVID: Acción y Denuncia" (OCLAE vs COVID: Action and Denunciation), with the participation of thirty student federations. Furthermore, in October 2020, the online meeting "El movimiento secundario in América Latina y el Caribe" (The Secondary Movement in Latin America and the Caribbean) was organized and in November 2020, the "Encuentro Juvenil Internacional Ideas que son banderas" (International Youth Meeting Ideas that are Flags). From March 19 to 20, 2021, a virtual meeting was held, in which thirty-one student federations paid tribute to Fefel Varona, martyr of the OCLAE, on the fifty-third anniversary of his death. Five days later in the first workshop of the VI National Meeting "Friends of the Revolution" the theme of the unity of the student movement for a free public education was addressed. Throughout July and August, virtual panels and a face-to-face brigade were held in Havana to commemorate the organization's fifty-fifth anniversary.

In July 2021, OCLAE held, together with the Federación de Estudiantes de la Universidad de Guadalajara (FEU UdG), the "Encuentro Estudiantes en Resistencia: Soñar, Luchar y Resistir" (Encounter Students in Resistance: Dreaming, Fighting, and Resisting). First in-person meetings occurred later that year. In November 2021, the first face-to-face meeting in two years of OCLAE's General Secretariat occurred. In February 2022, another meeting of its General Secretariat and the Launch of its nineteenth Congress happened. In April 2021, OCLAE organized its 1st School of Political Training for Student Leaders.

The specific way of organizing of the Latin American student movement and the features of OCLAE, which represents its aggregate at regional level, are deeply interconnected to the history of movements and to geopolitics in the region. This chapter provides a first analysis of how OCLAE works. However, our chapter also leaves many questions open that could bring further research in the future. How the changes in the political context(s) have impacted the student movement and its political standings could be analyzed, both with an historical perspective and with a social-political one, looking at the most recent changes in Latin-American governments. A study of the tools used in internal and external communication could be interesting, considering OCLAE as an international organization whose leadership is directly affected by an embargo limiting access to the internet. Finally, the OCLAE leadership, and its legacy in Latin American politics could bring to interesting results, considering the strong connection existing among the student and political activism spheres in those countries.

These and other questions on student movements in Latin America are relevant because of the variety of national contexts in which OCLAE members operate in, and for the political nature of Latin American student activism that brings students and their organizations to the frontline of social and political changes in Latin America.

Acknowledgments

Bianca Borges led the interviews with the student representatives and has been the main author of the chapter “The coexistence of a stable and formalized student organization and the militant student movements at the national level. How does OCLAE’s legitimacy survive going beyond sectorial claims?” based on OCLAE’s history and the collected data.

Giuseppe Lipari has been the main author of the section “OCLAE: a different regional student association” connecting the chapter to the previous literature on student unions and confederations. He has coordinated the bibliographical research and different reviews of the entire chapter. Giuseppe has supported the preparation of the questions for the interviews, then led by Bianca Borges.

Carmen Romero has been working especially in the contextualization of the chapter and she is the main author of the introduction of it. She has led the preparation of the questionnaire for the different interviews, then led by Bianca Borges. She has also supported the translation of the interviews from Spanish to English as well as its analyses.

References

- Bellei, Cristián, Cabalin, Cristian and Orellana, Víctor (2014). The 2011 Chilean student movement against Neoliberal educational policies. *Studies in Higher Education* 39(3): 426–40. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2014.896179> (accessed February 8, 2022).
- Cancian, Natália and Brant, Danielle (2019). Governo decide repor 21% da verba cortada na educação. *Folha de São Paulo* 22(05). <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/educacao/2019/05/governo-decide-repor-21-da-verba-cortada-na-educacao.shtml> (accessed June 14, 2022).
- Gomes, Rodrigo and Mascari, Felipe (2019). 30M in Brazil: Second tsunami for education in two weeks. *Rede Brasil Atual* 06(12). <https://www.pressenza.com/2019/06/30m-in-brazil-second-tsunami-for-education-in-two-weeks/> (accessed June 20, 2022).
- Klemenčič, Manja (2012). Student representation in western Europe: Introduction to the special issue. *European Journal of Higher Education* 2(1): 2–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21568235.2012.695058> (accessed January 16, 2022).
- Klemenčič, Manja (2014). Student power in a global perspective and contemporary trends in student organising. *Studies in HE* 39 (3): 396–411.
- Klemenčič, Manja and Miguel Galán Palomares, Fernando (2018). Transnational student associations in the European multi-level governance of higher education policies. *European Educational Research Journal* 17(3): 365–84. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1474904117736428> (accessed January 16, 2022).
- Krotsch, Pedro (2002). Los universitarios como actores de reformas en América Latina : ¿han muerto los movimientos estudiantiles?. *Espacios en blanco* 12: 19–49. <https://www.memoria.fahce.unlp.edu.ar/library?a=d&c=arti&d=Jpr14926> (accessed September 18, 2023).
- McAdam, Doug (1986). Recruitment to high-risk activism: The case of freedom summer. *American Journal of Sociology* 92(1): 64–90. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2779717> (accessed February 8, 2022).
- Muñoz, José Armando (2013). Movimiento estudiantil: universidad y democracia en América Latina. Elementos para el análisis. *Ciudad Paz-ando* 6 (2): 158–66. <https://revistas.udistrital.edu.co/index.php/cpaz/article/view/7248> (accessed September 18, 2023).
- OCLAE (2013). Análisis de la Organización Continental Latinoamericana y Caribeña de Estudiantes (OCLAE) sobre la aplicación de la Convención para la Eliminación de todas las formas de discriminación contra la mujer (CEDAW) en Cuba.

OCLAE (2021a). COYUNTURA EDUCACIONAL EN AMÉRICA LATINA Y EL CARIBE ANTE EL IMPACTO DE LA COVID-19.

OCLAE (2021b). ‘DECLARACIÓN FINAL DEL SECRETARIADO GENERAL DE LA OCLAE Y LANZAMIENTO A LA CONVOCATORIA AL XIX CLAE.

OCLAE (2021c). Libro de trabajo de la reunión del Secretariado General de la OCLAE.

OCLAE. Statutes of OCLAE—Estatutos de la Organización Continental Latinoamericana y Caribeña de Estudiantes.

Ordorika, Imanol (2022). Student movements and politics in latin America: A historical reconceptualization. *Higher Education* 83 (2): 297–315. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-020-00656-6> (accessed July 20, 2023).

Redaction (2019). Após ministro chamar universidades de ‘balbúrdia’, pesquisadores reagem. *Rede Brasil Atual* 05(19). <https://www.redebrasilatual.com.br/cidadania/2019/05/apos-ministro-de-bolsonaro-chamar-universidades-de-balburdia-pesquisadores-reagem/> (accessed June 20, 2022).

Romero Reyes, Rodolfo (2021). La calle es nuestra. *Ocean Sur*. <https://oceansur.com/catalogo/titulos/la-calle-es-nuestra>

Solano, Gabriel (2018). La reforma universitaria de 1918. Fundación del movimiento estudiantil latinoamericano. *Hic Rhodus. Crisis capitalista, polémica y controversias* 14 (7): 59–72. <https://publicaciones.sociales.uba.ar/index.php/hicrhodus/article/view/3002> (accessed September 18, 2023)

Tünnermann Bernheim, Carlos (1998). La reforma universitaria de Córdoba. *Educación Superior y Sociedad* 9 (1): 103–27. <https://www.iesalc.unesco.org/ess/index.php/ess3/issue/view/22>

Part B
Student Politics and
Representation in Africa

Student Politics in Africa in the Twenty-First Century

Thierry M. Luescher

Introduction

Student politics in Africa has experienced a multitude of changes during the twenty-first century, many of which can be attributed directly to changes in African higher education in general, as well as the large-scale national and socio-economic transformations that African societies are undergoing. These transformations follow the period of decolonization and national state formation during which students had emerged as important political force and gained sympathy in the general population for their part in the independence movements. Focusing particularly on the higher education sector, the most important development in the new millennium must be the massive and rapid expansion and transformation of higher education provision across Africa, particularly sub-Saharan Africa, in the last twenty years. This process has gone along with widespread privatization and, to some extent, differentiation of higher education. The expansion of student enrollments has also increased the number and diversity of institutions, led to a massification at institutional level, and even system-level massification in some countries (Luescher, 2017; Mohamedbhai, 2014).

The expansion of student enrollments has entailed that the student bodies of individual universities and the general student body of African nations have not only greatly expanded but in all cases transformed to become much more diverse and fragmented (Klemenčič, 2019; Oanda, 2016). Many social groups who have historically been marginalized and underrepresented in higher education, including women, rural youth, and youth from lower socio-economic backgrounds, have gained increased access to universities and colleges in numbers. In the process of redressing old inequities new ones and student hardships were introduced, not the least with the pressure on existing infrastructure and staff, the resource constraints that accompany such expansion, and the cultural and academic changes required to reflect greater social and epistemological diversity. The changes and their effects have required a huge student political investment in bringing about greater equity, dealing with the legacies of inequity, and raising awareness of and seeking to address new ones in such areas as access to higher education and academic success, student funding (and financial aid), teaching and learning, and campus cultures to mention but a few. As part of these processes, student organization and agency has been transformed.

Analytically, this chapter draws on a framework established originally by Phillip G. Altbach in his study of student activism in India and globally (Altbach, 1968, 1991, 2006), which has

been systematized and partially applied in a number of recent studies (Luescher, 2018; Luescher, Klemenčič and Jowi, 2016; Muswede, 2017). Taking a historical and sociological approach in this chapter, the framework helps us understand why student politics in Africa changed in a particular way over the *longue durée*. Methodologically, the database that grounds the arguments in this chapter has been generated by two systematic reviews of authoritative scholarly literature on student politics in Africa. The two reviews were conducted in 2005 and 2022 respectively, to compare the evidence between student politics, representation, and activism in the twentieth century and the first two decades of the twenty-first century. They provide the material to synthesize broad continuities and discontinuities that give the chapter its empirical grounding.

The most important changes impacting student politics across most African countries in the twenty-first century are:

1. The changing national political environments and socio-economic development
2. The changing size, nature, and institutional landscape of higher education
3. The expansion, transformation, and fragmentation of institutional and national student bodies
4. The changing political character of student governments and organizations
5. The changing role of student representation in university governance
6. Technology and the changing repertoire of student political agency
7. The changing student political discourse on African higher education

These changes are interrelated and reflect the large-scale political, social, and economic transformations that African societies have undergone with their impact on student politics. Analysts from different contexts may arrive at slightly different lists. As a high-level overview across the continent, these changes are at least among the most important and impactful in their effect on student politics in the first twenty years of the twenty-first century.

Student Politics in Africa in the Twentieth Century

The 2005 review showed that for the most part of the twentieth century, developments in African higher education and student politics had been intricately linked to national and international politics. From the beginning of the twentieth century, African students and student movements had played an important role in national and international campaigns against colonialism (Bianchini, 2016; Boahen, 1994). Immediately before and after most African nations achieved independence (from the 1950s to the 1970s), the provision of higher education on the continent expanded greatly as country after country established a national university as symbol of independence, national pride, and engine of development (Sawyer, 2004).

Even after independence, the anti-colonial (and anti-apartheid) struggle, social justice, and democracy continued to dominate the political agenda of students well into the 1970s (Boahen, 1994). Realizing the continued dependence of African economies on the former colonizers, student struggle against colonialism morphed into one against neo-colonialism, imperialism, and the cooptation of African political elites (Bianchini, 2016). At the same time, some activist students were also caught up in key post-independence debates on the role of African universities and scholars in the decolonization process, and idea of the “development university” and its

implications (Mamdani, 2019; Mazrui, 1995). An inspiration was, for example, the argument that “the truly African university must be one that draws its inspiration from its environment, not a transplanted tree, but growing from a seed that is planted and nurtured in the African soil” (Yesufu, 1973, p. 40).

Altogether, African students in the post-independence decades were part of a quite privileged group on the continent. Serving only a very small youth population (typically less than 1 percent of the post-secondary school age cohort), African higher education was very elitist, and students generally paid no tuition fees, enjoyed free board and lodging, and even received a stipend (Sawyer, 2004). At times their elitism would reflect in their activism. According to Mamdani (2019), students at the University of Dar es Salaam protested in 1966, just months before President Julius Nyerere announced the Arusha Declaration, against the introduction of compulsory national service for secondary school graduates. During this period, students are typically described in the literature as “incipient elite,” and their politics and inclusion in higher education governance reflected the typical characteristics of student politics in an elite higher education system.

The privileged position of higher education and student politics in the post-independence decades changed quite dramatically as the global economic recessions of the late 1970s and early 1980s led to a steep decline of African economies and opened the way for externally imposed structural adjustment programs (SAPs) in many countries in the 1980s. For African universities, SAPs resulted in a withdrawal of public financial support from higher education. A concurrent rise in student enrolments caused huge problems with regard to the quality of the learning environment: infrastructure, staffing, and resourcing (Sawyer, 2004). As a result of these changes, the political terrain of student politics also shifted increasingly from a focus on political governance and global relations to economic governance and the higher education sector, while it also became increasingly confrontational and violent (Federici, Caffentzis and Alidou, 2000; Mazrui, 1995). In many countries, students joined mass coalitions of civil society and eventually played no small role in bringing about Africa’s “second liberation” in the 1990s (Mazrui, 1995). If independence from foreign colonial tyranny represented the continent’s first liberation, the “second liberation” referred to freedom from “post-colonial domestic tyrants” and the re-introduction of multiparty democracy in the course of the 1990s (Ekeh, 1997 in Osaghae, 2005, p. 6). Yet, only in the lattermost part of the 1990s and the early 2000s a recommitment by both state and donors to African higher education could be observed (Sawyer, 2004).

Irungu Munene and others argue that for the greatest part of their political involvement in the twentieth century African students enjoyed being a legitimate part of the political order (Munene, 2003; Emmerson in Altbach, 1989, 1991). It is widely acknowledged that African students drew on a pool of legitimacy which they had originally established in their involvement in African liberation struggles and replenished in the post-colonial struggle against domestic authoritarianism and externally imposed austerity (Bianchini, 2016). The main thrust in the most authoritative scholarly literature on student politics in the twentieth century is that the state of African nations in terms of their political and economic realities was mirrored in the state of higher education and particularly the prestigious national universities, and therefore, students’ political attention in the twentieth century for the most part concentrated on macro-political and macro-economic governance rather than on higher education itself, as the true locus of higher education authority resided external to it.

Student Political Changes in the Twenty-First Century

The Changing National Political Environments and Socio-Economic Development

At the turn of the millennium and in the first two decades of the twenty-first century, African student politics was confronted with developments brought about by the “second liberation”: political liberalization, multipartyism, economic liberalization, economic growth, and large-scale social change (Luescher-Mamashela and Mugume, 2014; Oanda, 2016). Moreover, global technological advances such as the broad-based roll-out of the internet and mobile telephony provided the means for African societies to leapfrog into the digital age. A boom in commodity prices (particularly minerals, metals, and fuels) poured in the private investment and public finance for developing and upgrading public infrastructure and a diversification of African economies. Relatively inclusive growth decreased dire poverty, promoted a global African urbanity, and enhanced the growth of an urban middle-class. In so many respects, African societies experienced a rapid and incisive transformation that had great impact on the national systems of higher education, individual institutions, and the nature of higher education provision.

Multiparty democracy, economic growth, and liberalization meant that the legitimacy of the national political system increased. Concomitantly, the legitimacy that African students enjoyed as extra-parliamentary opposition and conscience of the nation during colonial and post-colonial times and the era of single-party rule has decreased. Rather, as shown below, politically interested students have become increasingly integrated in the national multiparty systems. A contradictory tendency has developed whereby, on the one hand, the focus of student politics has turned increasingly etudialist, that is, toward higher education-specific rather than society-oriented issues. On the other hand, the link to political parties has introduced a different, frequently problematic if not dysfunctional, national dimension to student politics.

The Changing Size, Nature, and Institutional Composition of Higher Education Provision

Ibrahim Oanda identifies the mid-1990s to the mid-2010s as a period of higher education revitalization, expansion, privatization, and commercialization in Africa (Oanda, 2016). Sporting the highest rate of expansion of anywhere in the world (UIS, 2010), by 2015 several national systems of higher education in Africa had massified, that is, they had achieved a general enrollment rate (GER) of over 15 percent of the relevant post-secondary school age cohorts. They included countries as diverse as Benin, Botswana, Cape Verde, Ghana, Mauritius, and South Africa, as well as all North African states except Mauritania (Luescher, 2017). In the following years, mass higher education came into reach of an even greater number of countries.

Initially, the drivers of massification in African higher education were mainly educational, demographic, and socio-cultural: growth in secondary/high school completion, population growth, and the higher education aspirations of students/parents (Mve, 2021). In addition, economic growth and development also contributed with respect to certain medium- and high-

level skills demands, tertiary-level technical and vocational education and training (TVET) provided by polytechnics and specialized colleges (Mohamedbhai, 2021), and some countries introduced equity-minded policies (e.g., expanding Black and female participation in higher education in post-apartheid South Africa).

The rapid expansion went hand in hand with a privatization of provision that took chiefly two forms: the growth of private higher education providers, typically offering vocational-type certificates, diplomas, and undergraduate degrees only; and increased enrolments in existing public institutions, especially by adopting cost-sharing policies and adding fee-paying students (so-called “private students”) to previously fee-free public universities (Oanda, 2016; Wangenge-Ouma, 2012). The prestigious national (and state) universities that had previously dominated the higher education landscapes in Africa were joined by multitudes of private higher education colleges, typically of vocational or religious orientation, and branch campuses of international universities. Moreover, increasing numbers of new public colleges and specialized universities were established including polytechnics, for example, in Ghana and Nigeria (Luescher, 2017).

The increased size and more diverse composition of the higher education sector in Africa involved increasing vertical and horizontal differentiation in the sector. However, the lines are rather blurred. As much as there were new, often low-quality private colleges offering commercialized entry-level higher education qualifications in marketable vocations, so did several established and prestigious universities offer the same to augment their shrunk public subsidy (Mamdani, 2007). In the meantime, some of the erstwhile African flagship universities successfully pursued recognition in global university rankings as world-class, research-intensive universities and were joined by others to form the African Research Universities Alliance (ARUA) in 2015. Some private institutions also came to successfully establish themselves in niches of their own, such as the continent-wide African Institute for Mathematical Sciences (AIMS) or Nigeria’s Covenant University. Online (“virtual”) and distance education equally continued to account for a growing portion of student enrolments in the sector, including mega universities such as the distance-education University of South Africa reaching close to 400,000 students enrolled in 2020. The process of introducing ICT into the teaching and learning process in Africa was further accelerated by the experience of the Covid-19 pandemic (Chetty and Luescher, 2020).

The new heterogeneity in the institutional landscape of African higher education has had varied effects on student politics and representation. As much as students from the prestigious national universities, such as Makerere University in Uganda, the University of Nairobi, the University of Ghana, and others, have their student political traditions, student politics as a whole has become more fragmented. Except in some institutions like the new universities of technology in South Africa, student politics in tertiary TVET, private, and religious institutions has tended to be much subdued (Mugume and Katusiimeh, 2016).

The Expansion, Transformation, and Fragmentation of Institutional and National Student Bodies

By 2014, over half of all countries in sub-Saharan Africa, especially Anglophone countries, had instituted some form of cost-sharing in public higher education (Darvas, Ballal and Feda, 2014). Cost-sharing was given expression in different ways. In some cases, cost-sharing involved

that all students were liable to the payment of fees but some qualifying students receive a form of financial aid (as grant or loan), typically on the basis of financial need and/or academic merit. In some universities, cost-sharing meant that alongside the track of the traditional, fully government-funded students a new “commercial track” of self-funded or “private” students was admitted (Oanda, 2016; Wangenge-Ouma, 2012). Over the years, cost-sharing facilitated a rapid expansion of enrollments by privatizing the costs of expansion. At first this expansion led to “institutional massification” whereby much of the growth was absorbed by a small number of fast-growing, typically overcrowded universities (Mohamedbhai, 2014). Eventually, it led to the kind of institutional sprawl and diversity mentioned above.

The expansion of enrollments has had positive and negative impacts on student life and politics. On the one hand, it has meant that in some of the universities, the institutional student body has come to be divided along the dual tracks of different modes of admission and funding, that is, government-funded vs. privately funded students. The difference in the student experiences has been so incisive that there are institutions where student government and student representation are structured along the same dividing lines. For example, Taabo Mugume and Mesharch Katusiimeh (2016) show that the privately funded students at Makerere University in Uganda set up new student organizations (such as the Makerere University Private Students’ Association) to represent their interest in relation to the student guild and university leadership. They also found that student political activism has decreased at that university, because fee-paying students fear questioning or challenging university management. (As will be shown below, the privatization has also impacted on student political discourse, student identity, and activism in ways that reflect a growing acceptance of the consumerist discourse.) The fragmentation that Ibrahim Oanda (2016) observed in several West and East African universities has therefore led in some cases to structural divisions in student representation.

On the other hand, the expansion also started to address existing inequities in higher education enrolment in Africa such as the gender gap. In 2021, it was reported that the Sub-Saharan GER of women in higher education was 7.2 percent compared to 10.4 percent for men (Mulwa, 2021). The gender gap is even more pronounced in certain subjects, particularly in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) subjects where women tend to be significantly underrepresented. The expansion and, in parts, massification has also brought greater numbers of rural and working-class youth into higher education. Overall, the expansion (and increased privatization) of higher education has thus not only increased the size of the student population but it also brought about some transformation in the student body, greater diversity, and along with it a political fragmentation.

In the South African case where massification was achieved in the early 2010s, Johnathan Jansen (2017) found that the class character of student politics has also changed especially in the historically white universities to increasingly reflect pro-poor and working-class “welfarist” demands. In contrast, Rekgotsofetse Chikane (2022) argues that it was not only massification but also an increasingly clientelist approach toward students that exacerbated growing welfarist demands even if they had started well before the 2010s. In both cases, it is noteworthy that student demands are predominantly etudialist rather than societal in orientation, thus focusing inwards on student issues and higher education rather than outwards toward more community-oriented matters or on African and global wicked problems such as climate change, environmental sustainability, social cohesion, or poverty.

The Changing Character of Student Politics and Representation and Organizations

Irungu Munene argued that with the demise of one-party rule and reintroduction of multiparty politics in most African nations during the 1990s, political parties replaced students as the main national opposition. During the period of one-party rule, it was students who had played the role of an extra-parliamentary opposition in several countries. Munene predicted that multiparty politics would “limit the scope and impact of student activism” (2003, p. 124).

During the two first decades of the twenty-first century, African student politics, representation, and activism have indeed changed:

1. There has been a reconstitution of the organization and role of the student movement in national politics, precipitated by the factors mentioned by Munene (2003);
2. There has been an increase in institutionalized student representation in higher education decision-making at institutional and national levels with respect to certain issues, and;
3. There is clearly a much more central role that political parties, both ruling parties and oppositional parties, have come to play in both.

The first two points are elaborated below. With respect to the third point, several recent studies, including the Kenya chapter by Adhiambo Ojwang in this book, show how student leaders have inserted themselves in multiparty politics with an eye on resources, networks, and career prospects, while political parties have also turned to student leaders for prestige and the recruitment of aspirant politicians (e.g., Birantamije, 2016; Gyampo, Debrah and Aggrey-Darkoh, 2016; Luescher-Mamashela and Mugume, 2014). At all levels of student governance, the campus-based student branches of political parties have started to dominate elections for universities’ student representative bodies and key positions in national student organizations (see the chapter by Emmanuel Nuvi Jr., Samuel S. Adonteng, and James Kodjie on student politics in Ghana). Partisan student politics has thus emerged as a major novelty and disruptor in African student politics of the twenty-first century, creating many new challenges in African universities and provoking varied and, in parts, drastic responses from university executives and national governments (Birantamije, 2016; Soudien et al., 2009).

Apart from the politicization per se and occasional clashes between partisan student groups during student government elections, the most troubling development associated with the multiparty penetration of student politics is the spectacularly high levels of resource exchange between political parties and student leaders found, for instance, in Uganda and Ghana, and related observations of the impact of multipartyism on students’ orientation toward their representative mandates (Mugume, 2015; Nuvi, Adonteng and Kodjie, 2024).

The Changing Role of Student Representation in University Governance

The emergence of more market-oriented public and private universities discussed above did not reduce student activism exactly in Munene’s terms. On the one hand, the nature of student politics changed particularly by becoming more partisan, integrated in, and subservient to the national

multiparty political system. On the other hand, the changing discourse of higher education privatization and commercialization, and a related rise of new public management approaches and managerialism in university governance also came to privilege a more individualist, consumerist, and entrepreneurial student identity while providing new utility for student representation in university governance.

One way of understanding the implications of the consumerist discourse on student politics is to juxtapose the conception of students as “clients” in higher education to earlier conceptions such as that of students as “incipient elite,” “citizens,” “members of the academic community,” or “stakeholders in university governance.” In each case, the legitimization of student representation is a very different one, and thus the nature and extent of legitimate student representation tend to vary (Luescher-Mamashela, 2013). For instance, the involvement of students as clients in national politics does not make sense. However, the same conception has some utility within the higher education sector and at different levels and in certain domains of university governance and management.

At higher education system, institutional, and unit levels, student consumerism has a role for students as clients in the decision-making process. In many cases, the changing discourse has precipitated a change in student representation, which was rationalized and frequently increased, albeit only in those domains where student representation would lead to better information available to managers so as to improve organizational performance (e.g., in lecturer/course evaluations, quality assurance, and the like). Moreover, more student representation did not equate with increasing students’ decision-making power. Quite in the contrary as it went hand in hand with a much deeper erosion of collegial academic rule and its replacement with more top-down managerial approaches (Chikane, 2022; du Toit, 2000).

Finally, it has also been observed that two types of student activism have come to predominate. First is the traditional, emancipatory student activism informed by principles like equality, freedom, accountability, and social justice. This type of activism has become highly politicized along national party lines as well as more etudialist and welfarist. The second type emerged in some universities as direct response to the consumerist discourse: “entrepreneurial student activism.” This activism (or “hustle”) straddles the political and economic realms of student life by seeking to reorganize student governance and organizations in a consumerist, entrepreneurial fashion (Luescher-Mamashela, 2010). It can even be argued that the way multiparty student politics operates on some African university campuses (with its complex dimensions of resource exchange) may be construed in politically entrepreneurial ways (Busia, Amegah and Arthur-Holmes, 2021; Luescher-Mamashela, 2010).

Technology and the Changing Repertoire of African Student Political Agency

One of the most distinctive features of student politics in Africa in the last ten years has been its adoption of a new protest repertoire. In the wake of the Arab Spring movements that started in North Africa in 2010, several student formations took to digital social media as part of their conscientization, mobilization, and information strategies. Probably the first, most well-documented, and most successful case is the RhodesMustFall (RMF) movement that started

at the University of Cape Town in March 2015 (Chikane, 2018). Later that year RMF was followed by the nationwide #FeesMustFall campaign which engulfed the entire South African higher education sector in a wave of protests and a national higher education shutdown. What distinguishes RMF, similar campus-based student formations, and the national #FeesMustFall-related campaigns from earlier student agitations in Africa is the intentionality by which student activists used the dynamic interaction between online and offline spaces in their activism (Bosch, Luescher and Makhubu, 2020).

The incorporation of social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and others in the student protest repertoire in Africa tremendously enhanced the efficacy of student political agency at campus level and in national policy development. Over and above that, due to their networked nature the likes of RMF have been able to rapidly connect with kindred activists and formations beyond their home base nationally and internationally, and the #FeesMustFall campaign in particular took on the most comprehensive national character of any student political mobilization in South Africa in the twenty-first century. This extensive translocal element has not been seen in African student politics since the erstwhile struggles against colonialism and apartheid. It has resulted in demands for “decolonization” not only in historically white universities across South Africa but also in places like Oxford University (UK), Harvard University (USA), and the University of Ghana, amongst many others. The translocality facilitated by the new online repertoire can also be gauged in the use of the #MustFall label by numerous social groupings in South Africa and the #FeesMustFall Twitter hashtag, which was adopted, for example, as part of student protests at Makerere University, Uganda, and at student protests in Delhi’s Jawaharlal Nehru University in India in 2019.

The Changing Student Political Discourse on Higher Education in Africa

Student politics in twenty-first century Africa also features changes in student political discourse and ideology. The new student discourse primarily arises from students’ experiences of inequity in different university contexts. With reference to the South African case, Thabiso Muswede lists four experiences:

Socio-economic inequality which limits poor students’ access to and success in higher education;

1. Inadequate financing higher education and provision of student financial support;
2. Poor cultural integration, racial/ethnic inequities, and language issues, and;
3. The outsourcing of support services (Muswede, 2017).

In all cases, a pro-poor and working-class element can be discerned in these experiences and the social justice and “welfarist” demands arising from them, thus hinting back at the changes in the African student body brought about by higher education expansion and massification.

In the language of South African student activists, the political awakening of students to persistent inequities led to the elaboration of a new student political discourse coined “Fallism” that hinged on three ideological pillars: Pan-Africanism, Black radical feminism, and Black Consciousness (Chikane, 2018). More broadly, the contributions that the “Fallist” student

political discourse has made to higher education transformation discourse may be captured specifically with respect to two concepts: intersectionality and decolonization. The notion of intersectionality, referring to the interconnectedness of social categories such as class, race, and gender, and the way they create multiplicities of disadvantage and oppression (Hill Collins, 2019), has become an important way to reflect on women's identities and participation in African student politics (as well as those of queer students, and various other student groups) (Khan, 2017; Xaba, 2017). As much as #FeesMustFall has been described as an intersectional student activism, the notion of intersectionality provides a framework for student political activism in pursuit of anti-racism, social justice, equality, and freedom, while it also introduces more self-reflection, other-mindedness, and inclusiveness into the African student political discourse.

The link between the discourses of intersectionality and decolonization can be understood by looking at the definition of decoloniality averred by Nelson Maldonado-Torres: "By decoloniality it is meant here the dismantling of relations of power and conceptions of knowledge that foment the reproduction of racial, gender, and geo-political hierarchies that came into being or found new and more powerful forms of expression in the modern/colonial world" (in Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2019, p. 14). The decolonization discourse popularized by students put at its center African students' experiences of violence of different kinds in the post-colonial university and society—spatial, linguistic, intellectual, spiritual, and political—and their resistance in practical and theoretical terms (Matandela, 2017). The student political decolonization discourse has come to resonate widely in African higher education with respect to the incomplete decolonization of the African university, the place of African epistemologies, indigenous knowledge systems, and African languages in higher education.

Reflection and Conclusion

In 2016, the international higher education expert Philip Altbach asked in his introduction to the book *Student Politics in Africa*, what the student political implications of massification in Africa and its ramifications in the twenty-first century would be. "The realities of massification affect students in profound ways ... How are students reacting to these changes?" (2016, p. xii). This chapter has given an overview of the most important changes affecting the higher education sector in Africa and students' reaction to it. Yet, in the face of all these changes and discontinuities, what are the continuities?

There are still many challenges in African higher education and student politics including the gender gap, which means that student politics continues to be a male-dominated affair; identity chauvinism and unease with otherness, including ethno-regional factionalism, inflated religiosity, and bigotry toward LGBTIQ students, amongst others; limited interaction between Anglophone, Francophone, and Lusophone higher education and students; and experiences of police brutality in response to student protests. Student politics also tends to be narrowly concerned with competition for "power" and "positions" against rivals or on behalf of external actors. Meanwhile, activism on some of the wicked problems that deserve the attention of the next generation of African leaders, like climate change, environmental degradation, widespread

inequality and poverty, persistent public health and housing crises and the like, rarely seems to make it onto the student political agenda.

On the upside, despite the large-scale changes in the macro-political system, the higher education sector, and the national and institutional student bodies, this chapter shows that African student politics remains a force to be reckoned with in the twenty-first century. There are powerful student political cultures, traditions, organizations, and commitments, which manifest in the representation of student interests at various levels using a diversity of routes and repertoires. The inventiveness and resilience of African student politics could be seen in their adoption of new repertoires, elaboration of new student political discourses and activisms, and their ability to still mobilizes students for major causes even during the momentous disruption that the Covid-19 pandemic brought (Luescher and Türkoğlu, 2022).

Acknowledgments

I am grateful to the comments of the reviewers of an earlier version of this paper, including Rekgotsfetse Chikane, Jonathan Jansen, Manja Klemenčič, and Taabo Mugume. SDG.

References

- Adonteng, S.S., Kodjie, J., Nuvi Jr., E., and Potton, G. (2024). Influence of political parties on the National Union of Ghana Students: A study of contemporary trends. In Klemenčič, M. (ed.), *The Bloomsbury Handbook on Student Politics and Representation in Higher Education*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Altbach, P.G. (1968). *Student Politics in Bombay*. Bombay, London & New York: Asia Publishing House.
- Altbach, P.G. (1989). *Student Political Activism: An International Reference Handbook*. Westport, CT: Greenwood.
- Altbach, P.G. (1991). Student political activism. In *International Higher Education: An Encyclopedia* (pp. 247–60). New York: Garland.
- Altbach, P.G. (2006). Student politics: Activism and culture. In Forest, J.F. and Altbach, P.G. (eds.), *International Handbook of Higher Education* (pp. 329–45). Dordrecht: Springer.
- Altbach, P.G. (2016). Foreword: The importance and complexity of students in politics and governance. In Luescher, T.M., Klemenčič, M. and Jowi, J.O. (eds.), *Student Politics in Africa: Representation and Activism* (pp. xi–xii). Cape Town: African Minds.
- Bianchini, P. (2016). The three ages of student politics in Francophone Africa: Learning from the cases of Senegal and Burkina Faso. In Luescher, T.M., Klemenčič, M. and Jowi, J.O. (eds.), *Student Politics in Africa: Representation and Activism* (pp. 85–108). Cape Town: African Minds.
- Birantamije, G. (2016). The University of Burundi and student organisations: Governance system, political development and student representation. In Luescher, T.M., Klemenčič, M. and Jowi, J.O. (eds.), *Student Politics in Africa: Representation and Activism* (pp. 202–23). Cape Town: African Minds.
- Boahen, A.A. (1994). The role of African student movements in the political and social evolution of Africa from 1900 to 1975. In *UNESCO General History of Africa*, Vol. 12. Paris: UNESCO Publishing.
- Bosch, T., Luescher, T.M. and Makhubu, N. (2020). Twitter and student leadership in South Africa: The case of #FeesMustFall. In Taras, D. and Davis, R. (eds.), *Power Shift?: Political Leadership and Social Media* (pp. 220–33). New York: Routledge. <http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11910/15175>

- Busia, K.A., Amegah, A., and Arthur-Holmes, F. (2021). Pathways of electoral clientelism in university student elections in Ghana: An exploratory study. *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa* 9(2): 153–71. DOI: 10.24085/jsaa.v9i2.2204
- Chetty, K. and Luescher, T.M. (2020). African universities—Working towards an inclusive digital future in a Post-COVID-19 world. *Africa Insights* 50(2): 79–102.
- Chikane, R. (2018). *Breaking a Rainbow, Building a Nation: The Politics behind #MustFall Movements*. Johannesburg: Pan Macmillan.
- Chikane, R. (2022). Personal email exchange. October 16, 2022.
- Cloete, N., and Maassen, P. (2015). Roles of universities and the African context. In Cloete, N., Maassen, P. and Bailey, T. (eds.), *Knowledge Production and Contradictory Functions in African Higher Education* (pp. 1–17). Cape Town: African Minds.
- Darvas, P., Ballal, S., and Fedaa, K. (2014). Growth and equity in tertiary education in Sub-Saharan Africa. *International Journal of African Higher Education* 1(1): 85–137.
- du Toit, A. (2000). From autonomy to accountability: Academic freedom under threat in South Africa?. *Social Dynamics* 26(1): 76–133. DOI: 10.1080/02533950008458687
- Federici, S., Caffentzis, G. and Alidou, O. (eds.) (2000). *A Thousand Flowers: Social Struggles against Structural Adjustment in African Universities*. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press.
- Gyampo, R.E.V., Debrah, E. and Aggrey-Darkoh, E. (2016). Politicisation of the national union of Ghana students and its effects on student representation. In Luescher, T.M., Klemenčič, M. and Jowi, J.O. (eds.), *Student Politics in Africa: Representation and Activism* (pp. 224–43). Cape Town: African Minds.
- Hill Collins, P. (2019). *Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory*. Durham & London: Duke University Press.
- Jansen, J. (2004). Changes and continuities in South Africa's higher education system, 1994 to 2004. In Chisholm, L. (ed.), *Changing Class: Education and Social Change in Post-apartheid South Africa* (pp. 293–314). Cape Town: HSRC Press
- Jansen, J. (2017). *As by Fire: The End of the South African University*. Pretoria: Tafelberg.
- Khan, K. (2017). Intersectionality in student movements: Black queer woman and nonbinary activists in South Africa's 2015–2016 protests. *Agenda* 31(3–4): 110–21. DOI: 10.1080/10130950.2017.1396011
- Klemenčič, M. (2019). Students and higher education expansion. In Shin, J.C. and Teixeira, P. (eds.), *Encyclopedia of International Higher Education Systems and Institutions* (pp. 1–8). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-017-9553-1_57-1
- Luescher, T.M. (2017). Higher education expansion in Africa and middle east. In Shin, J.C. and Teixeira, P. (eds.), *Encyclopedia of International Higher Education Systems and Institutions*. Dordrecht: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-017-9553-1_54-1
- Luescher, T.M. (2018). Altbach's theory of student activism in the twentieth century: Ten propositions that matter. In Burkett, J. (ed.), *Students in Twentieth Century Britain and Ireland* (pp. 297–318). Cham: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Luescher, T.M., Klemenčič, M. and Jowi, J.O. (2016). *Student Politics in Africa: Representation and Activism*. Cape Town: African Minds.
- Luescher, T.M. and Türkoğlu, D. (2022). Student activism and the pandemic: A global round-up. *International Higher Education* (111): 11–13. <https://ejournals.bc.edu/index.php/ihe/article/view/15325>
- Luescher-Mamashela, T.M. (2010). From university democratisation to managerialism: The changing legitimisation of university governance and the place of students. *Tertiary Education and Management* 16 (4): 259–83. DOI: 10.1080/13583883.2010.529161
- Luescher-Mamashela, T.M. (2013). Student representation in university decision-making: Good reasons, a new lens? *Studies in Higher Education* 38(10): 1442–56.
- Luescher-Mamashela, T.M. and Mugume, T. (2014). Student representation and multi-party politics in African higher education. *Studies in Higher Education* 39(3): 500–15. DOI: 10.1080/03075079.2011.625496
- Mamdani, M. (2007). *Scholars in the Marketplace. The Dilemmas of Neo-Liberal Reform at Makerere University, 1989-2005*. Cape Town: HSRC Press.

- Mamdani, M. (2019). Decolonising universities. In Halvorsen, T., Skare Orgeret, K. and Krøvel, R. (eds.), *Sharing Knowledge, Transforming Societies: The Norhed Programme 2013–2020* (pp. 48–67). Cape Town: African Minds.
- Matandela, M. (2017). Redefining black consciousness and resistance: The intersection of Black consciousness and Black feminist thought. *Agenda* 31(3-4): 10–28. DOI: 10.1080/10130950.2017.1402410
- Mazrui, Ali A. (1995). The polity and the university: An African perspective. In Adjibolosoo, S. B-S. K. (ed.), *The Significance of the Human Factor in African Economic Development*. Westport: Praeger Publishers.
- Mohamedbhai, G. (2014). Massification in higher education institutions in Africa: Causes, consequences, and responses. *International Journal of African Higher Education* 1(1): 59–83.
- Mohamedbhai, G. (2021). Interview with Prof. Goolam Mohamedbhai. Interview conducted by Prof. Crain Soudien on 17 May 2021. *Reimagining the African University—Conversation Series*. <https://hsrc.ac.za/our-research/learning-activity-4-reimagining-the-african-university/>
- Mugume, T. (2015). *Student politics and multiparty politics in Uganda: A case study of Makerere University*. MA dissertation. South Africa: University of the Western Cape.
- Mugume, T. and Katusiimeh, M.W. (2016). Private higher education and student representation in Uganda: A comparative analysis of Makerere University and Uganda Christian University. In Luescher, T.M., Klemenčič, M. and Jowi, J.O. (eds.), *Student Politics in Africa: Representation and Activism* (pp. 109–29). Cape Town: African Minds.
- Mugume, T. and Luescher, T.M. (2017). Student representation and the relationship between student leaders and political parties: A case study of makerere university. *South African Journal of Higher Education* 31(3): 154–71. DOI:10.208535/31-3-639
- Mulwa, M. (2021). The gender gap in universities and colleges in sub-Saharan Africa: Mini-report. *Education Sub Saharan Africa*. <https://essa-africa.org/node/1421>
- Munene, I. (2003). Student activism in African higher education. In Teferra, D. and Altbach, P.G. (eds.), *African Higher Education: An International Reference Handbook*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Muswede, T. (2017). Colonial legacies and the decolonisation discourse in post-apartheid South Africa—a reflective analysis of student activism in higher education. *African Journal of Public Affairs* 9(5). <https://hdl.handle.net/10520/EJC-6a114147f>
- Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S.J. (2019). Discourses of decolonization/decoloniality. *Papers on Language and Literature* 55(3): 201–26. www.blacfoundation.org/pdf/Ndlovu-Gatsheni-16.pdf
- Oanda, I. (2016). The evolving nature of student participation in university governance in Africa: An overview of policies, trends and emerging issues. In Luescher, T.M., Klemenčič, M. and Jowi, J.O. (eds.), *Student Politics in Africa: Representation and Activism* (pp. 61–84). Cape Town: African Minds.
- Osaghae, E.E. (2005). The state of Africa's second liberation. *Interventions* 7(1): 1–20. DOI: 10.1080/1369801052000330324
- Sawyers, A. (2004). Challenges facing African universities: Selected issues. *African Studies Review* 47. 10.1017/S0002020600026986.
- Soudien, C. et al. (2009). *Report of the Ministerial Committee on Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education Institutions*. Pretoria: Department of Education.
- UIS (2010). *Trends in Tertiary Education: Sub-Saharan Africa*. Quebec: UNESCO, UIS.
- Wangenge-Ouma, G. (2012). Public by day, private by night: Examining the private lives of Kenya's public universities. *European Journal of Education* 47(2): 213–27.
- Xaba, W. (2017). Challenging Fanon: A Black radical feminist perspective on violence and the Fees Must Fall movement. *Agenda* 31(3–4): 96–104. DOI: 10.1080/10130950.2017.1392786
- Yesufu, T.M. (1973). The role and priorities of the university in development. In Yesufu, T.M. (ed.), *Creating the African University: Emerging Issues of the 1970s*. Ibadan: Oxford University Press.

8

Student Representation in Higher Education Governance in (English-Speaking) Cameroon: The Politics, Challenges, and Way forward

Emmanuel Shu Ngwa and Novel Lena Folabit

Introduction

Higher Education (HE) remains an engine of development charged with the responsibility of transforming the teeming student population into skilled human resources for sustainable development. That is, students are critical stakeholders of HE system and governance—as they do not only constitute the core of HE functioning, but are also drivers of socio-economic and political change and innovation within and outside the system. It is on the basis of this understanding that higher education (HE) systems in twenty-first Century Africa cannot afford to undermine the contributions of students through student representation in HE governance. Yet, such have been the experiences within the Central African Sub-region in recent years. Contemporary Cameroon is a case in point where the idea of student unions has been embraced with hesitation and feet-dragging by most members of HE and political governing class despite the democratic culture adopted by the state in the 1990s. This is demonstrated by the actions of the management of some public universities (e.g., University of Buea) to weaken the involvement of well-organized student unions in HE governance (Fongwa and Chifon, 2016). This recent development is a reflection of the turbulent history of student unionism in Cameroon.

The development of university students' unionism in post-independence Cameroon could be traced to the rapid expansion of the then single state university (University of Yaounde, Cameroon, now University of Yaounde I) in the 1970s and 1980s. According to Njeuma et al. (1999, p. 1) and Fongwa and Chifon (2016), the university was experiencing an exponential increase in student numbers (over 40,000 students on a campus originally intended for 5,000). There were poor teacher-student ratios (1:132 in the Faculty of Law and Economics, 1:58 in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, and 1:58 in the Faculty of Science), and consequent negative effects on educational quality and success rates. The university's budget was spent largely on students' welfare (over 43 percent) to the detriment of its primary missions of teaching and research, to which less than 1.5 percent of the recurrent budget was allocated (Njeuma et al., 1999). Nyamnoh, Nkwi, and Konnings (2012) note that these numerous challenges motivated

students to organize in different faculty and socio-cultural associations (as, for example, the Anglophone Students Movement) to demand reforms.

Growing activism and militancy amongst the students led to numerous violent and nonviolent protests against the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) of the World Bank which was seen as the source of economic hardship (Luescher and Mugume, 2014). Furthermore, students demanded improvements in their deteriorating living and study conditions in the university.

The later creation of additional public universities including the English-Speaking Universities of Buea and Bamenda has led to the introduction of a democratic culture in these universities and the Cameroon polity as a whole. This included the rights to: student associations, organize in student unions, student representative councils, and participate in university management which has become a common practice in the country (Nyamnjoh, Nkwi and Konnings 2012). This new norm was further supported by Cameroon's ratification of international legislations—being a signatory to several human rights conventions including the 1976 International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). The ICCPR amongst others protect the rights of people to freedom of expression (Art. 19(2), assembly (Art. 21), association (Art 22); and the freedom from arbitrary arrest or detention (Art. 9)) (ICCPR, 1976). These provisions protect the rights of the students to assemble, engage in peaceful protests over their rights and entitlements, and to not be illegally arrested and detained for the sole purpose of exercising their constitutional rights, thereby contributing to the higher education governance process in the country.

This chapter investigates how the management of higher education institutions and the government of Cameroon have responded over the years to sustaining these students' rights and enabling student representation in HE governance. It examines the place of students' unionism in higher education governance in Cameroon, with special focus on the politics, challenges, and way forward. More specifically, there are three guiding questions that this chapter addresses: How is the politics relating to student unionism and higher education governance played out within higher education institutions in Cameroon? What are the challenges encountered by the major stakeholders (university administrators, students, and academics) with regard to student unionism and higher education governance? and what is the way forward for a more inclusive HE governance in Cameroon? These questions are not only important for understanding democratic culture in HE institutions but also how student unionism reflects and contributes to nation building.

The chapter captures perspectives from ten (10) HE stakeholders (two academics, two administrators, three former, and three serving student leaders) from the English-speaking Universities of Bamenda and Buea, on the issues at stake. It then suggests a way forward toward a more inclusive HE governance system in Cameroon. The study adopted a qualitative research procedure with interviews and content analysis of formal documents as the main methods of data collection. The primary data required for the chapter were collected through in-depth interviews with critical university stakeholders involving four former and current student leaders, and two university administrators and two academic staff from the Universities of Bamenda and Buea in the North West and South West Regions (English-speaking), Cameroon. Primary sources for document analysis include legislative documents, statutory documents from the student affairs departments in both universities, and of student associations. The model of student organizations in Cameroon and particularly in the universities of Buea and Bamenda, which are the focused institutions for this study, is the product structure model in organizational structure model. Given the focus on the cases of two institutions, this chapter's findings are limited to these two

institutions only. The situation in institutions in the French-Speaking regions may be different from the findings described in this chapter due to cultural differences and political orientation of the people.

In the next sections of the chapter, we review conceptual, theoretical, and contextual literature, with focus on student unionism, higher education governance from a shared leadership theory perspective, the product structure model of organizational structure as it applies to student associations in Cameroon, and students' representation in Africa and Cameroon. This section is followed by the presentation of empirical findings obtained through the interviews with some key stakeholders of the Universities of Bamenda and Buea on the issues at stake. The chapter concludes with a synthesis of the issues examined, and an overall recommendation to inform policy on students' unionism and higher education governance.

Review of Literature

Higher Education (HE) remains an engine of transformation as it constantly prepares the growing African student population into skilled human resources for sustainable development (New Africa Magazine, 2015). This implies that students do not only constitute the core of HE functioning, but are also potential drivers of sustainable socio-economic and political change and innovation within and outside the HE system (Luescher and Mugume, 2014).

Student Unionism

Generally, student unionism is a student-led organization that is formed to represent the students or learners at all schooling levels independent of the context of the school system (Ansala, 2015) be it at the secondary, college, or university level. Literature argues that student unionism consists of student representative organizations, which come in different forms—as student unions, councils, parliaments, or student governments—and whose primary aim is to represent and defend the interests of the collective student body (Klemenčič, 2012). Student representative organizations operate on different levels of HE governance such as the faculty or departmental level through institutional, national, and regional levels where national representative organizations meet (Klemenčič, 2012). Student unions are regulated by national legislation and statutory documents of higher education institutions that define their tasks. The legislative and statutory provisions on student representation implicitly also affirm that including students in decision processes a way to enhance students' democratic competencies and develop active citizenry for the future (Ansala, Uusiautti and Määttä, 2015).

Higher Education Governance from the Perspective of Stakeholder and Shared Governance Theories

The stakeholder theory of organizational management and business ethics was a proposition of Edward Freeman (1984) to address matters related to the morals and ethics of running an

organization. The theory deals with discussions on whether an organization or business has a greater responsibility toward its stakeholders than toward the shareholders, and how such responsibilities can be fulfilled while ensuring the sustainability of the institution (Freeman, Harrison and Zyglidopoulos, 2018). According to the stakeholder theory, any organization must seek to maximize value for its stakeholders because there is always a very strong interconnected relationship between organizations and all those who have a stake or interest in it. These include clients, employees, suppliers, investors, and the community. Other groups considered as stakeholders include the media, government, political groupings, professional associations, and trade unions, amongst others. All these stakeholders are related to organizations in that, they can affect and can in turn be affected by them. The organization therefore has a responsibility to consider the interests of these groups, aside from the personal interests of the founders. (Harrison and Wicks, 2013). This means that the only business of an organization is to serve the needs of the stakeholders, and not just the shareholders or founders.

The implication of this theory to student representation in HE governance is that students are critical stakeholders of the higher education system whose interest supersedes all and must not therefore be taken for granted by other stakeholders. In fact, universities exist, first because of the interests of the students they are out to serve. Klemenčič (2020) concurs to this by opining that students are generally considered a valuable source of information to institutional leaders and government administrators about student experiences, satisfaction, and behaviors within the HE system at an institutional or national level. In addition to this, students can be described as human resource raw material being intellectually transformed toward contribution to national and sustainable societal development. Consequently, they are formal members of governing bodies, sharing the same decision rights and responsibilities with other members and stakeholders. Their representation in university or higher education governing boards through the student union and student association leaders to defend the interest of fellow students is not only critical to sustainable peaceful campus operations but above all, the attainment of higher education objectives in the nation.

Shared leadership occurs when two or more members engage in the leadership of an organization in an effort to influence and direct fellow members to maximize organizational effectiveness (Bergman, Rentsch, Small, Davenport and Bergman, 2012). Shared leadership is referred to as broadly sharing power and influence among a set of individual experts, rather than centralizing it in the hands of a single individual who acts in the clear role of a dominant superior (Wu1 and Cormican, 2021). This theory is inspired by the fact that organizational and business management is rapidly changing from the old traditional authoritarian models to more open methods, as a result of social media and newer web technologies that foster information sharing. Consequently, shared leadership is innovative leadership that shares power and influence with the different stakeholders within the organization with the aim of ensuring organizational performance. Shared leadership empowers each stakeholder to assume a leadership position in an area they're most proficient in. It is basically a communal approach to sharing responsibilities. It therefore fosters collaborative and collective decision-making with a focus on constant growth and improvement. Within the context of student representation in HE governance, student unions through their leaders are formally part of the institutional leadership and so ought to be seen by institutional leaders and other members of the governing board as collaborators with experience

on students' interests, all working toward improving institutional performance, and not as aliens or enemies to the administration.

Arguing from the position of the stakeholder and shared leadership theories, De Coster et al. (2008) posit that governance focuses on the rules and mechanisms by which various stakeholders use shared responsibilities to influence decision-making, how they are accountable and to whom. In the HE context, it is the structure, processes, and activities involved in planning and directing decision-making in HE institutions, and people working together within the institution to attain institutional goals (Castro, 2012; Mulinge et al., 2017). HE in the twenty-first century has witnessed changes that span from massification, curriculum transformation, increased student enrolment, leadership, relative decrease in public funding, a wider competition between HEIs, rising student protests, etc. all of which have brought to the fore issues pertaining to university governance (De Coster, Forsthuber, Oberheidt, Parveva and Glass, 2008). Governance practices, especially shared governance practices which foster stakeholder involvement and shared leadership, are highly relevant in addressing these challenges. They are relevant for ensuring quality education in higher education institutions as well as for securing peaceful campus operations (Luescher-Mamashela, 2013). Mulinge and Arasa (2017) argue that in the African context given the fast changes, bringing a lasting solution to the governance issues may be for universities to embrace good governance and also by considering and engaging all the day-to-day operations of these institutions such as human resources, funding, quality assurance, course planning, and student union activities (Castro, 2012). With this, quality and inclusive student representation in the HE system could be assured.

Although studies highlight the importance of the inclusion of students in university governance, especially in terms of decision-making process, structures, and relationship (Klemenčič, Luescher and Jowi, 2015), scholars point out that this inclusion is seldom straightforward (Fongwa and Chifon, 2016). In African universities for instance, "student participation in university governance has most often faced numerous challenges leading rather to student activism than to actual democratic engagement and representation" (Fongwa and Chifon, 2016: 109). Throughout history, African students resorted to activism for social change. Students campaigned against the legitimacy of colonialism which increased the determination to achieve independence in most African countries. For example, Edi (2019) argues that these anti-colonial sentiments which ended colonialism in most parts of Africa in the early 1960s were activated by the *Fédération des Etudiants d'Afrique Noire Francophone* (FEANF) and the *West African Student Union* (WASU). This sense of political determination was later inherited by successive student generation post-independence (Luescher-Mamashela and Mugume, 2014). Universities emerged to be centers of social and political contestation against neo-colonialism and in recent years against dictatorships and authoritarian leadership (Edi, 2019).

In the contemporary universities, students used protest as a way of demanding a systematic drop of tuition fees such as the notable #FeesMustFall student movement by South African students union (Klemenčič and Luescher, 2016). This chapter argues that student protests have proliferated across universities in Africa because of the inability of the university leaders to get students involved in the governance of the institutions. The basis for this exclusion from university governance is that students want to bring instability in the country. There is a widespread perception that students bring instability in African countries (Akeusola, Viatonu and

Asikhia, 2012). However, as Akeusola, Viatonu and Asikhia (2012) argue, student revolts and rampages are simply a reflection of many of their grievances and serve as a means to press their demands to their school authorities.

Model of Student Organizations in Cameroon

The model of student organizations in Cameroon and particularly in the universities of Buea and Bamenda, which are the focused institutions for this study, is the product structure model in organizational structure model. According to the organizational structure model, an organizational structure should divide the work of the organization, differentiate, and then effectively coordinate, integrate the work at all levels within the organization to best meet the mission and goals of the organization. The model also defines the decision-making processes and connects the strategy and behaviors within the organizational cultures of the institution. It aligns resources and navigates them toward accomplishing the tasks and mission of the organization (Wheatley, 2006). According to Wheatley, the rapid dynamic changes in contemporary organizations, particularly higher institutions of learning where the boundaries between the institution and the external environment are beginning to merge, have forced most of such organizations to move away from controlling, hierarchical structures to ones based on shared decision-making, and a focus on process, flexibility, and collaboration. Consequently, universities are today being seen more as open, organic systems that are in a constant state of transformation, either through the mechanistic or organic structural design (Wheatley, 2006). Mechanistic organizations are highly structured, with centralized decision-making and vertical information flow. Organic organizations are viewed as loosely structured; decentralized in their decision-making, with lateral information flow (Bowditch, Buono and Stewart, 2008; Goold and Campbell, 2002). According to Galbraith (2002), an increasing combination of dominant hierarchical, functional organizational structures with alternative (organic) structures particularly in higher education institutions has led to the emergence of new structural models like the product structure model. The product structure model creates multiple functional organizations, each with its own product line. Decision-making power in these organizations is in the hands of those with direct contact with students and creating flatter structures with emphasis on lateral collaboration and fewer middle hierarchical layers. This therefore brings about a greater span of supervision. There is also a greater focus on eliminating internal divisions and more emphasis on end-to-end work responsibility (Galbraith, 2002).

The structure of student organizations in most Cameroonian universities is a reflection of the organization structure model. In the past, the student union bodies in the Universities of Buea and Bamenda were centralized bodies with hierarchical authorities, representing the interests of students within the university administration through their presidents, elected by a constituent assembly of students. However, over the years, these student union bodies have shifted from the mechanistic to the organic structural designs of governance (from a centralized student union body with three governing arms to departmental and faculty associations with the different presidents directly representing the interest of their students) within the university governance. This change in structure was not voluntary but forced by the administration on the student body. The university administration sees an organized and united structure of the student union as a threat to Campus stability and easy control of the student population. Consequently,

the departmentalization of student governance is a strategy to curtail their influence on campus and over the administration. This has led to a shift in decision-making responsibilities from a central authority (university student union president) to those with direct contact with students (Departmental and Faculty Presidents). Of course, this has been achieved through the proliferation of flatter student structures on campuses like departmental associations and faculty associations, at the detriment of the overall university students' union body.

In the University of Buea for instance, the University of Buea Students Union (UBSU) was disbanded by the university administration in favor of departmental and faculty associations. In the University of Bamenda, the university administration is more comfortable working with independent faculty and departmental presidents, than with an organized students' union government elected by a constituent assembly of students. Consequently, there is more emphasis on lateral collaboration and fewer middle hierarchical layers in students' governance activities, thereby resulting in greater spans of supervision. Though this structural design in students' governance may appear to be a good strategy to increase students' direct engagements and involvement in higher education or university governance in these institutions, public opinion amongst some stakeholders is that the rationale behind the approach championed by the different university administrations may be self-seeking and politically motivated.

Student Unionism and Higher Education Governance in Cameroon

In Cameroon, as is the case in most African countries, the history of higher education is inextricably linked to the country's colonial heritage. After obtaining political independence from France and Britain in 1960 and 1961, the need for higher education to prepare the indigenous citizens for post-independence nation building was a national priority, as was the case elsewhere in post-colonial Africa (Doh, 2012; Fonkeng, 2010). Consequently, the state of affairs in the country's higher education sector, particularly at the then single University of Yaoundé, Cameroon brought about a series of problems that ushered in the reforms of the early 1990s. Tambo (2003) and Ngwa and Fonkeng (2017) argue that the exponential increase in student population without a corresponding increase in infrastructure and other human, material, and financial resources, coupled with other challenges encountered by the students, led to a series of protests and riots orchestrated by students and civil society leaders across the country.

The outcome of these protests was a series of reforms in the higher education and university sector. Presidential Decree No. 92/74 of April 13, 1992, complemented by decree No. 93/034 of January 19, 1993, created five full-fledged public universities to supplement the University of Yaoundé and also made some changes within the university system. Today, the government still being guided by the 1993 reforms has created more universities totaling eleven public institutions. They include the Universities of Yaoundé I & II, Buea, Dschang, Ngaoundere, Douala, Maroua, Bamenda, Garoua, Bertoua, and Ebolowa (the first six universities having been born out of the 1993 reforms, the 7th and 8th—Maroua and Bamenda established in 2008 and 2010 respectively, and the last three—Garoua, Ebolowa, and Bertoua, all established in 2022). Added to these eight universities are two virtual universities, one of which is for the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) sub-region and a center for telemedicine (Doh, 2012; SUP INFOS, 2010).

Amongst the eight public universities, two of them—the Universities of Buea and Bamenda—are managed as English-Speaking universities. These are investigated in this chapter for the practices of student representation in HE governance. The University of Buea (UB), in particular, as the first English-speaking university in the country (Decree No. 92/074 of April 13, 1992 and Decree No. 93/034 of January 19, 1993) has since creation given the student as stakeholders more leverage to participate in the institutional governance through well-organized student unions and associations, as compared to the French-speaking universities. Writing on *University Crisis and Student Protests in Africa—the 2005–6 University Students’ Strikes in Cameroon*, Nyamnjio, Nkwi, and Konnings (2012) argue that students’ contribution to university governance at the University of Buea became visibly strong with the creation of the first ever organized and centralized students governing body in the early years of the university’s existence known as the Buea University Students Union (BUSU). This student union has had an executive and legislative arm (2012). Several student protests initiated by the union seeking campus reforms reminded the government of the violent Anglophone students’ movement at the University of Yaoundé in the early 1990s. Students from the English-speaking regions at the then University of Yaoundé had violently protested the attempted assimilation of the English subsystem of education by the French subsystem, thereby forcing government to consent to a series of reforms within the Anglo-Saxon subsystem of education—like the creation of the Cameroon General Certificate of Education Board (CGCEB) and the University of Buea as the first Anglo-Saxon university. The university administration, in the late 1990, therefore saw the united student body (BUSU) and their protest activities as a threat to campus peace. This explains why the union was decentralized to independent faculty and departmental student associations (Nyamnjio, Nkwi and Konnings, 2012). Fongwa and Chifon (2016) in their study on student participation in higher education governance at the University of Buea, Cameroon 2004–13 add that the university administration in 2005 saw the need to re-establish the university-level students’ union following violent agitations and strikes against what they described as administrative fraud, corruption, and the quest for institutional reforms by the student body. It is on this basis that the University of Buea Students Union (UBSU) was born with vibrant executive and legislative arms, that is, Students Representative Council—SRC. Nevertheless, following another students strike in 2013 to express their discontentment over some administrative actions, the union was again dissolved by the university administration and reverting to independent faculty and departmental associations (Telewou, 2013).

Higher education stakeholders within and outside the system thus appear to be divided in their views on the place of student unions/associations in the university governance. Some see students as critical stakeholders who are part and parcel of the administration, management, and university governance system (Ngwa and Fonkeng, 2017; Ngwa and Lawyer, 2020). According to Klemenčič (2020) students are the primary beneficiaries, main internal constituency, and the main stakeholder in education. This position provides them with the democratic right to be part of the decision-making in educational institutions that will have direct effect on them. Consequently, institutions have to ensure that students protect their interests in decision-making processes, which is necessary for the legitimacy of these decisions and for nation building. However, other stakeholders see student unions as administrative burdens and distractors of smooth and peaceful institutional governance. Some university leaders or government officials also see students as political competitors and agents of political destabilization that must be controlled and not be given the full opportunity to thrive within the system (Fongwa and Chifon, 2016; Telewou, 2013). This has given birth to a lot of internal and external politics amongst different stakeholders with

students mostly ending up as the victims. This shall be substantiated in the subsequent section through the analyses of the views expressed by student leaders during the interviews.

Challenges Encountered by the Major Stakeholders with Regard to Students' Unionism and Higher Education Governance in the Country

From the interviews with student leaders, academic staff, and university administrators, some of the challenges encountered by stakeholders with regard to students' unionism and higher education governance in Cameroon include amongst others: the lack of collaboration amongst stakeholders as a result of divide-and-rule politics, inadequate funding of universities and inequitable distribution of funds, victimization of student leaders by university administrators and the government, too much centralization of university governance, which hinders proactive decision-making by administrators, overzealous and criminal behaviors of some student leaders, politicization of higher education governance from tribal, ethnic, and partisan bases. Above all, there is the lack of a comprehensive policy direction or roadmap for higher education governance in the country. Speaking on the challenges of victimization of student leaders, and divide-and-rule politics by administrators, one of the student leaders notes that:

“... you will agree with me that without students, there will be no university, this makes students the most important interest group in any university community ... most of the challenges encountered as a student leader on campus were inspired by the university administration ... take for instance the bitter divisions amongst student leaders on campus—key members of the administration were happy to see student leaders divided in opinion and direction because it reduced the pressure coming from students on them as we were mostly busy fighting amongst ourselves ... the Vice chancellor then who saw the student union as a threat to the administration, before banning the union, was always devising victimisation, and divisive tactics to deal with the students in order to keep them busy away from the administration ... that's why during elections they sponsored their preferred candidates, invited factions to governance meetings and left out others ... I don't think student leaders are a political threat to the university administration or the state, they are simply young ambitious youth and stakeholders with a zeal to contribute in nation building through their participation in university governance; while also preparing themselves for future leadership in the nation”

[Interview with a former University of Buea student leader, November, 2021]

The above view by the student leader concurs with that shared by Klemenčič (2020) in her argument in favor of students' involvement in higher education governance. She argues that

student involvement in higher education governance can be an effective deterrent of student unrest, if students are provided with multiple channels of voicing their concerns. Student participation in institutional governance contributes to the learning objectives of developing students' dispositions toward and skills for active citizenship. Consequently, creating an enabling environment for student involvement in HE governance allows students to exercise active citizenship and reinforces the conception of higher education institutions as sites of citizenship and civic participation.

According to members of the administration and academia in both universities Buea and Bamenda, the major challenges with regards to student unionism and higher education governance in the country center around inadequate university funding and the over centralization of higher education management in the country. Virtually all public universities in the country depend on the Ministry of HE for funding subventions and instructions on major management decisions. In terms of funding, public universities rely majorly on the Ministry of Higher Education for subvention, and major independent funding decisions by individual universities will require inputs and validation from the Ministry of Higher Education. The consequence of all these is a slowdown in governance activities within the universities, with administrators also going into conflict with the students' unions due to the inability to swiftly meet students' demands. On the challenge of politicization of higher education governance, some of the administrators also believe that the challenge of students' unrests is a product of overzealousness and criminal behavior exhibited by some student leaders and incitement from rival or ambitious opposition members within the university administration who want to get appointments from hierarchy through an atmosphere of chaos and instability on campus. Consequently, the rival administrators subtly use criminal and overzealous student union factions (created mostly on regional and tribal bases) to create instability on campuses as a way of settling political scores.

“ ... some of the student leaders were not only criminal in their activities on campus, but were overzealous in the name of fighting for students' rights ... how do you explain the fact that some student leaders spent more than 5 years in the university for a 3 years course and were still unwilling to graduate? Were there some benefits they never wanted to let go? ... you realise that they're always the ones championing student riots and pitching the students against the university administration and interestingly, they would always manoeuvre their way into a position of leadership every academic year using all kinds of diabolic means ... we didn't see this as normal but as criminality extended into the campus in the name of student activism ... most of the time they were acting the scripts of some staff opposed to the administration. That's why we had to at one point dissolve the student's union and gave the powers to the faculty and departmental presidents ... ”

(Interview with a former University of Buea administrator,
November, 2021)

The consequence of all these is of course the slowdown in the smooth functioning of the institution.

Speaking on the centralization of university governance and inadequate funding of universities, an administrator noted that

“ ... the way higher education is structured in the country has made it pretty difficult for universities to engage in some key independent projects without approval from Yaoundé ... some of us have the ideas on how to better students’ involvement in university governance from the campus level, but the resources are not there to make available the infrastructure needed for this to happen. We can’t just embark on some radical funding measures without approval from the ministry and this has made us to learn how to operate within our means ... so when students say the administration is not meeting their needs in some areas, it’s simply because our hands are tight”

[Interview with a University of Bamenda Administrator,
November, 2021]

The submission of the administrator aligns with the argument of Ngwa and Fonkeng (2017). According to them, indigenous funding of public universities in Cameroon is limited due to the centralization of university governance by the Ministry of higher education. Individual institutions lack the independence to carry out key aggressive funding drives with stakeholders to supplement the annual subvention by the government to institutions through the Ministry of Higher Education. The effect of this is the inability of the universities to meet up with the expectations of stakeholders, especially those of students and teaching staff.

Buttressing the challenge of politicization of universities, factionalization of institutional governance and ethnic/tribal bigotry within public HE institutions, an academic argues that:

“ ... the system in this country where university administrators are appointed through presidential and ministerial degrees has brought about a lot of political gymnastics on campus ... everyone is ambitious you know, and so there is that tendency to find a lot of rivalry and suspicion amongst administrators as they scheme to project and/or protect their political interests by doing only what pleases the minister or head of state, and not the students and staff ... in such an atmosphere, there can never be effective governance and organization of the student body ... there is that tendency by some of these administrators to use the student movements against each other ... that’s why most heads of public universities cannot entertain a vibrant students’ union on campus ... is it not because of some of these things that UBSU (University of Buea Students Union) was banned by the former administration? ... the existing decentralized Faculty Associations through their presidents cannot really achieve much of the things UBSU achieved because of the tribal, regional, and divide and rule politics they’ve been entangled in on campus”

[Interview with a University of Buea Academic Staff,
November, 2021]

From all of these, it won't be an overstatement to agree with some of the stakeholders that the lack of a comprehensive policy direction on university or higher education governance in the country is responsible for many of the challenges encountered, particularly with regard to students' unionism and university governance. That is why most administrators think that it is discretionary to allow the existence of student movements on campuses depending on the approach of the student movement toward intuitional management.

The Politics of Students' Unionism and Higher Governance within University Institutions in Cameroon

From the views expressed by student leaders, academicians, and higher education administrators, the politics of student unionism and higher education governance is played out mostly within university campuses, and this often takes different forms from the election process for student leaders at different levels, to working with student leaders as they defend their interests within the administration. The politics is manifested in some of the following ways: campus party politics, fierce political campaigns, students' union elections, favored student leader candidates from the administration versus favored candidates from academics, students' union funding politics, student leaders side-lined, threats and counter threats, corruption, hindrance to innovation, limited membership of the student unions, student leaders as political tools, and tribal and ethnic politics.

According to the interviewees, the politics often starts at the level of electing student leaders. During this exercise, there is a lot of party politics on campus, where two or more parties are created by students to contest for leadership positions at the departmental, faculty, and central level. The process sometimes becomes so fierce between the contesting parties that campus security officials are called in to maintain the peace. The elections are usually funded and coordinated by the department in charge of student affairs at the faculties and central administration level. The student leaders noted that the university administrations most times have their preferred candidates and often try to influence the outcome of the elections. According to a former student leader,

“ ... students' union elections used to be very tough between the different parties ... I remember most students often saw the White Party as the party of the administration and the Yellow Party as the party of the students ... so there were always tense atmospheres on campus as these two most popular parties tussled for leadership control ... the university administration at some points tried to threatened and bribed candidates they didn't like to emerge as leaders but this most of the times did not work ... Sometimes, rival administrative staff opposed to the candidate of the university administration worked in the background with academics to support their own preferred candidate in student union election for their own personal reasons ... all these made the electioneering politics tough and sometimes very interesting too ... ”

[Interview with a former President of UBSU, November, 2021]

In confirming this claim, an administrator argued that,

“ ... the priority of the university administration is to create a conducive atmosphere on campus for smooth and peaceful teaching-learning activities ... it is therefore of interest to us to ensure that the students who emerge every year as student leaders at the different levels are level headed students who are genuine and willing to collaborate with the administration to maintain the serenity on campus ... ”

[Interview with a University of Bamenda Administrator,
November, 2021]

The quest to have control over the students' union president by rival members of the administration mostly happens when they have political scores to settle with each other, and so would want to have control over the student body which they can always incite to settle political scores with amongst themselves.

In terms of post-election governance, the student leaders noted that there is crucial politics in the funding of student union activities particularly in public university. According to a student leader,

“ ... Faculty and departmental associations are funded through an annual student dues of 3000 Francs CFA (less than \$5) per student and subvention from the faculty administration, which often depends on the kind of relation that exist between the Faculty students' executive and the Deanery ... some Faculty administrations facilitate the collection of student dues by the student executives by placing it as a condition prior to the signing of courses, while some faculties also stifle the collection these dues by making it a none compulsory exercise for students ... this has often negatively affected the activities of the student executives ... some of my colleagues say that the Ministry of Higher Education gives subvention for student associations under the Director of Student Affairs under the University budget. But we've never received any money like that since we came on board ... ”

[Interview with a student leader of the University of Bamenda,
November, 2021]

Adding to the issue of students' union funding, a former students' leader notes that

“ ... the union was funded during our time through different sources ... we collected annual dues of 3000 Francs CFA from each student whereby 500Fr went to the UBSU treasury while 1000Fr and 1500Fr went to the Faculty and departmental treasuries respectively ... even though the payment of student dues was not obligatory, we put in place a strategy where students, especially fresh men and women were all compelled to pay ... the students union also received annual subvention ranging between

2 Million—3 Million francs from the Ministry of Higher Education through the student affairs office of the school ... then we also ran businesses on campus ... I remember we had UBSU shops 1, 2 and 3 where we retailed some essential daily needs of students and snacks ... these are basically the means through which the union was funded ... ”

[Interview with a former students’ union leader, November, 2021]

According to the stakeholders, the university has made membership in most of the unions an optional thing, thereby limiting the amount of financial contributions that come into the union through students’ dues. Though the student leaders see this as an administrative strategy to starve them of resources thereby keeping them dependent under the university, the administrators argued that there are priority financial needs of institutions which must be handled before disbursement to other departments like the students’ associations. This is an indirect barking to the position of the student leaders that student leaders/representatives are sometimes left out of critical university administrative meetings where decisions may not be in favor of students. Whereas sometimes, there are attempts to create division and silence key student leaders through corruption and intimidation. Through these, the university administrations, according to stakeholders, hinder student union innovations that could make student movements and their contribution to university governance stronger.

Way Forward for a More Inclusive HE Governance System for Cameroon

On the way forward for a more inclusive higher education governance system for Cameroon, the stakeholders identified different recommendations.

There is a need for the institution of a comprehensive HE governance policy/roadmap to be strictly followed by all stakeholders. This according to the university administrators should be done by bringing all higher education stakeholders to draft and agree on such a road map before it is voted as an act of parliament and promulgated into law by the president of the republic. This view is in accordance with the submission of Ngwa and Mekolle (2020). According to them, education policy in contemporary Cameroon is limping due to the lack of a comprehensive document that can be identified as Cameroon’s educational policy. The country’s educational system depends on a series of Acts of parliament, Presidential decree, Ministerial circulars, and reports; and this does not augur well for any twenty-first century educational system.

Stakeholders also recommended the promotion of inclusive representation at all levels of students’ leadership and university management. According to sociologist and former student leader,

“Women were not duly represented within the students’ union as most female students were not interested ... I was amongst the two or three students that were in the entire body including members of the SRC and the executive ... while some of my female mates saw the students’ union as a cult due the violent activism of a few comrades, others said

the politics was too time consuming and strong for university students who were supposed to focused on their studies ... ”

[Interview with a former student leader, November, 2021]

Consequently, instituting a quota system in terms of gender and disability status during election of student representatives could go a long way in ensuring inclusivity in students’ representation and governance in the country. Such inclusivity must also be ensured in the management structure of the university.

Also, it is important that higher education administrators follow the ethical decision-making process when making decisions that affect the interest of stakeholders. Issues that involve the interest of stakeholders and the progress of higher education must be critically examined by administrators and informed decisions taken and implemented. This will go a long way to ensure that there is objectivity, rationality, equity, and fairness in the higher education governance process. Students are critical amongst the stakeholders of higher education and so cannot be ignored in the governance process. Consequently, the state, university managements, and academic staff unions must change attitudes and see student union leaders not only as unavoidable collaborators in university governance, but also as future leaders in training under their tutorship. As Klemenčič (2012), higher education governance bodies oversee the development of policies and regulatory instruments that guide the system, and in some cases and places, also perform accountability checks as national quality assurance and accreditation bodies. Students cannot afford not to be represented in such a process. Thus, the involvement of student representatives drawn from democratic and autonomous student associations is to provide them the full opportunity to be part of the critical and ethical-decision making process in higher education.

A former student leader during the interview stated that,

“ ... there were several times the university administration and some visiting officials from the Ministry of Higher Education accused us of working with the opposition SDF (Social Democratic Front) party to oust the government ... in some cases they tried to link us to the activities of the SCNC (Southern Cameroons National Council—a separatist group in English speaking Cameroon) ... all these happened during the 2003 and 2006 violent protest that saw the sacking of two Vice chancellors of the university ... we lost more than 3 students to police brutality during those strikes, as the system had described us as a security threat to national sovereignty ... ”

[Interview with a former student leader, November, 2021]

Based on the above, the student leaders recommended that university administrators must not see student leaders as political threats to the attainment of their ambitions on or off campus. Such a change in attitude would lead to confidence building which could eventually improve collaboration amongst stakeholders and ensure sustainable peaceful campuses.

The decentralization of public university management is serious way forward proposed by university administrators and academics that must be considered by Cameroon’s Ministry of Higher Education in the higher education governance framework of the country. As stated by the administrators during the interview, some of the administrations’ inability meets the demands of student unions stemmed from the centralized nature of university management

where administrators cannot independently act on some critical issues without a due clearance from the Ministry. Decentralizing university governance in the country by granting some level of managerial autonomy to institutions could go a long way in helping university managements improve students' involvement in university governance through swift and decisive students' governance reforms. This is in alignment with the recommendation by Ngwa and Fonkeng (2017) on the need for the decentralization of higher education financing in Cameroon to enable individual institutions exploit other critical indigenous and alternative funding sources which they could use to improve institutional governance without necessarily waiting for government subvention which in most cases is not always adequate. One of the reasons why some university administrations stifle student union activities is to avoid student leaders' demands for the financing of student union activities which is often the responsibility of university administrations.

According to the interviewed stakeholders, the way forward toward a more inclusive students' union and higher education governance practices in the country is the need for annual capacity-building programs on inclusive and sustainable higher education governance facilitated by the Ministry of Higher Education in collaboration with various universities in the country. The beneficiaries of such capacity-building programs should be key higher education management stakeholders in the country, including student leaders, academic and support staff, union leaders, and members of university managements.

Conclusion

The chapter examines student unionism and higher education governance in Cameroon, with emphases on the politics, challenges, and the way forward toward more inclusive and sustainable higher education governance practices. The chapter submits that the model of student organizations that underpins student representation in Cameroon's higher education institutions is a product of organizational structure model proposed by Wheatley (2006), Goold and Campbell (2002), Bowditch, Buono and Stewart (2008). It explains the change in organizational structure from mechanistic to organic structural designs of governance. Contextually, it refers to an involuntary change from a relatively united and autonomous student union body with three governing arms (executive, legislature, and judiciary), to departmental and faculty associations with the different presidents directly representing the interest of their students within the university governance system.

The findings from the interviews conducted with stakeholders established that the politics of student unionism and higher education governance practices of involving students in the examined cases of English-speaking universities is not conducive, nor free and fair for all students. The challenges are enormous, with the lack of collaboration amongst stakeholders; tribal, ethnic, and partisan politicization of university governance; and centralized management of public universities being the key challenges.

The findings therefore corroborated the views earlier expressed in literature by Fongwa and Chifon (2016); Nyamnjio, Nkwi, and Konnings (2012); Telewou (2013), Ngwa and Fonkeng (2017); whereby higher education stakeholders within and outside the Cameroon's higher education system are divided in perspective as to the place of student unions/associations in HE governance. While some see the students as critical stakeholders who are part and parcel of the administration and university management system (Nyamnjio, Nkwi and Konnings, 2012) and Fongwa and Chifon

(2016), others see them as administrative burdens and distractors of smooth and peaceful campus operations (Telewou, 2013). They are also seen as political competitors and agents of political destabilization that must not be given the full opportunity to thrive (Interview with former University of Buea Student leader, November, 2021). All these do not align with the stakeholder theory that put students as critical stakeholders of the higher education system—whose interests must be defended and protected. They also do not align with the shared university governance theory which requires administrators of institutions to share leadership amongst critical stakeholders in order to create an atmosphere of collaboration and smooth functioning of management.

The interviewed stakeholders therefore recommended amongst others as the way forward: the putting in place of a comprehensive legally binding higher education governance framework for the country with clearly defined roles. The decentralization of university management and the organization of annual capacity-building programs on inclusive and sustainable higher education governance principles and practices. Such capacity-building programs should be facilitated by the Ministry of Higher education in collaboration with the various universities in the country.

Acknowledgments

Contributions by the authors:

Emmanuel S. Ngwa conceived the topic and wrote the abstract and introduction. He reviewed literature on students' unionism and higher education governance in Cameroon, and also conducted the interviews, analyzed them, and wrote the conclusion of the chapter. He read through the entire manuscript and made corrections where necessary.

Novel Lena Folabit conceived the idea of the chapter and reviewed the conceptual and theoretical sections of the literature. She also sourced literature and read through the entire manuscript to make additional inputs and corrections where necessary.

References

- Akeusola, O., Viatonu, O. and Asikhia, O. (2012). Perceived causes and control of student's crises in higher institutions in Lagos State, Nigeria. *Journal of Education and Practice* 3(10): 29–43.
- Ansala, L., Uusiautti, S. and Määttä, K. (2015). Student unions as the way of learning democracy skills—successful. Finnish University Student Activists' perceptions. *International Journal of Arts & Sciences* 8(6): 31.
- Bergman, J.Z., Rentsch, J.R., Small, E.E., Davenport, S.W. and Bergman, S.M. (2012). The shared leadership process in decision-making teams. *The Journal of Social Psychology* 152(1): 17–42. DOI: 10.1080/00224545.2010.538763
- Bowditch, J.L., Buono, A.F. and Stewart, M.M. (2008). *A Primer on Organizational Behavior*. (7th ed). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, Inc.
- Castro, E.B. (2012). Higher education governance reform in practice. Matching institutional implementation practices and policies. *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education* 9(2): 267–79.
- De Coster, I., Forsthuber, B., Oberheidt, S., Parveva, T. and Glass, A. (2008). *Higher Education Governance in Europe: Policies, Structures, Funding and Academic Staff*. Brussels: ERIC.
- Doh, S.P. (2012). The Responses of the Higher Education Sector in the Poverty Reduction Strategies in Africa: The Case of Cameroon. University of Tampere: Tampere University Press

- Edi, E. (2019). West African student unions in the 1990s: An overview. Retrieved May.
- Fongwa, S.N., and Chifon, G.N. (2016). Revisiting student participation in higher education governance at the University of Buea, Cameroon: 2004–2013. *Student Politics in Africa: Representation and Activism* 2: 109.
- Fonkeng, G.E. (2010). *The History of Education in Cameroon: 1844–2010*. Moda Publishers.
- Freeman, R.E. (1984). *Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach*. Boston: Pitman.
- Freeman, R.E., Harrison, J.S. and Zyglidopoulos, S.C. (2018). *Stakeholder Theory: Concepts and Strategies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Galbraith, J.R. (2002). *Designing Organizations: An Executive Guide to Strategy, Structure and Process*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Goold, M. and Campbell, M. (2002). *Designing Effective Organizations*. San Francisco: JosseyBass.
- Harrison, J.S. and Wicks, A.C. (2013). Stakeholder theory, value, and firm performance. *Business Ethics Quarterly* 23(1): 97–124.
- Klemenčič, M. (2012). The changing conceptions of student participation in HE governance in the EHEA. In *European Higher Education at the Crossroads* (pp. 631–53). Dordrecht: Springer.
- Klemenčič, M. (2020). Higher education governing boards: Student board members. In *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Higher Education* (pp. 2–4). Washington, DC: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Klemenčič, M. and Luescher, T. (2016). Student power in twenty-first century Africa: The character and role of student organising. In Rachel Brookes (ed.), *Student Politics and Protests* (pp. 1–20). Abingdon: Routledge.
- Klemenčič, M., Luescher, T. M. and Jowi, J.O. (2015). Student power in Africa. *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa* 3(1).
- Luescher-Mamashela, T.M. (2013). Student representation in university decision-making: Good reasons, a new lens?. *Studies in Higher Education* 38 (10): 1442–56. <http://www.thierryluescher.net/>
- Luescher-Mamashela, T.M. and Mugume, T. (2014). Student representation and multiparty politics in African higher education. *Studies in Higher Education* 39(3): 500–15.
- Mulinge, M.M. and Arasa, J. N. (2017). *The Status of Student Involvement in University Governance in Kenya: The Case of Public and Private Universities*. Dakar, Senegal: CODESRIA.
- New Africa Magazine (2015). *Universities: Engines of Innovation*. July, 2015 edition
- Ngwa, E.S. and Fonkeng, G.E. (2017). Indigenous funding strategies for sustainable higher education in Cameroon. *African Journal of Social Sciences* 8(3): 25–44.
- Ngwa, E.S. and Lawyer, B.N. (2020). The competency-based approach in public universities in anglophone cameroon: Implications for the tuning Africa project. *Asian Journal of Education and Social Studies* 10(4): 38–59. DOI: 10.9734/AJESS/2020/v10i430274
- Ngwa, E.S., and Mekolle, P.M. (2020). Public policy on education in contemporary cameroon: Perspectives, issues and future directions. *European Journal of Education Studies* 7(8): 187–205. DOI: 10.46827/ejes.v7i8.3203. www.oapub.org/edu
- Njeuma, D., et al. (1999). *Reforming a National System of Higher Education: The Case of Cameroon. A Report of the Association of the Development of Education in Africa*. Buea: University of Buea
- Nyamnjoh, F.B., Nkwi, W. G. and Konings, P. (eds.) (2012). *University Crisis and Student Protests in Africa: The 2005–2006. University Students' Strike in Cameroon*. Bamenda, Cameroon: Langaa.
- SUP INFOS (2010a). A Bilingual Quarter Review of Higher Education in Cameroon. No. 13, MINESUP Yaoundé, Cameroon.
- Tambo, L.I. (2003a). Cameroon national education policy since the 1995 Forum. Design House.
- Telewou, C. (2013). University of Buea: The dissolution of UBSU would put an end to incessant strikes. <http://www.minat.gov.cm/index.php/en/component/content/article/23-contenu/actualite/52-university-of-buea-the-dissolution-of-ubsu-would-put-an-end-to-the-incessant-strike-actions>
- Wheatley, M.J. (2006). *Leadership & the New Science: Discovering Order in a Chaotic World*. (3rd ed). San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.
- Wu1, Q. and Cormican, K. (2021). Shared leadership and team effectiveness: An investigation of whether and when in engineering design teams. <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.569198/full>

Influence of Political Parties on the National Union of Ghana Students: A Study of Contemporary Trends

Samuel Sasu Adonteng, James Kodjie, and Emmanuel Nuvi Junior,
Contributing Author—Georgia Potton

Introduction

Historically, African student activism and youth groups have influenced many societal and higher education reforms globally and within the continent. A notable example is the Apartheid divestment movement in the 1970s and 1980s, which urged governments and companies to divest from South Africa unless they ended apartheid (Astor, 2018). Students were critical actors in the anti-Apartheid movement and linked the wider struggle to its impact on education, such as during the Soweto Uprising. This protest by young Black South African students against a law which mandated the use of Afrikaans as the basic language of Education in South Africa heightened the global call and movement against the apartheid system (Astor, 2018).

In Africa, student and youth movements played an important role in influencing countries' independence, including Ghana. Kwame Nkrumah, former Vice-President of the explicitly anti-colonial West African Students Union in London and the first President and Prime Minister of Ghana, recognized that the success of his Convention People's Party was heavily reliant on "the tireless enthusiasm of young people" (Nkrumah, 1957, p. 108). However, before 1948 and the establishment of the University College of the Gold Coast (renamed the University of Ghana after independence in 1957), there were no higher education institutions in Ghana. According to Howard (1999), this forced Ghanaian elites to send their children overseas for higher education, where they were exposed to ideas of freedom and learned about revolutionary movements around the world, with many students, such as Nkrumah, returning to Ghana educated and outspoken about liberation from colonialism.

From the struggle for independence to the current democratic dispensations, student activism has been the central point around which political action and engagement have revolved (Van Gyampo, 2019). In his work, Van Gyampo (2019) establishes that youth and student groups were largely friends of the state and democratic regimes in the 1980s. Not only did student unions contribute to the independence of Ghana, but they have also helped further inclusivity in higher education, an example being the advocacy campaign to ensure increased enrolment for female students at the University of Ghana (Van Gyampo, 2019). Arguably, the majority of the key successes, such as the establishment of the Ghana Education Trust Fund, increasing the quota for female participation in education, and the establishment of the National Service Scheme of

the Ghanaian student movement, can be traced back to the National Union of Ghana Students (NUGS), the umbrella institution for all students in Ghana (Van Gyampo, Debrah and Aggrey-Darkoh, 2016).

This chapter addresses student representation and student activism in Ghana, focusing on the National Union of Ghana Students (NUGS), aiming to evaluate the influence of political parties on the NUGS. Formed in 1962, the Union's central aim is to protect the interest of all Ghanaian students at home and abroad. With about 10 million students under its stewardship, the Union plays a key role in the national governance process of Ghana by contributing to policy formulation and implementation on some issues, especially those regarding the right to quality education. The Union represents Ghanaian students from the basic to tertiary education levels. The National Union of Ghana Students also works with local unions representing high school, professional, university, and postgraduate students. The Union is wholly student-led and student-run through instituted democratic structures.

Researchers have already addressed the issue of the politicization of national student organizations in Ghana. Van Gyampo (2013), in his study on the politicization of the National Union of Ghana Students, stated that the original mission of the student union, to promote and serve students' interests, had changed due to the huge influence of political parties in the space of student organizations: going from an independent student union to one acting as a vehicle to advance the interests and strategies of political parties. This was prevalent from 2004 to 2013, during which Van Gyampo (2013) conducted his study. He highlights how student elections served as conduits for political parties to influence student activism: during elections, aspiring student leaders were sponsored by political parties in cash or kind, and then if elected, these student leaders became more loyal to the political party than the student body. This politicization, in effect, narrowed NUGS's leverage within the Ghanaian political space until 2019, when the Union was reunited: with the student leaders more inclined to pursue the interests of their "paymasters" (political parties) rather than that of their members (Amankwa, 2018). The politicization of the Union led to the division of the Union, which was implicitly fractured along partisan lines, with each side of the division being funded and supported by political actors and parties (Paalo and Van Gyampo, 2019). This division reduced NUGS's ability to mobilize and advocate effectively. However, since this period, the Union has arguably taken steps to regain its unity and ability to represent the interests of Ghanaian students legitimately. This chapter builds on Van Gyampo's analysis by providing new and updated knowledge on the National Union of Ghana Students, discussing the current status of NUGS after its recent restructuring and assessing the extent to which it remains relevant within the Ghanaian student movement.

Mugume (2015) also argues that student leaders after school usually become political party frontliners. This assertion is supported by Paalo and Van Gyampo (2019), who found that most Ghanaian university student leaders received financial and other forms of support from politicians and political parties, sometimes with the help of student partisan organizations. As a result, networks of young party-aligned political leaders from campuses to the national stage are formed across the country.

Adapting a position originally proposed by Schmitter and Streek (1999), Mugume and Luescher (2017) posit that student representation in Africa is politicized because political parties seek to get the support of student leaders by establishing relationships based on the provision of resources. This relationship often hampers student representatives' ability to criticize the

government on student welfare issues (Samuel Binfoh as cited by Van Gyampo, 2016). Luescher (2016) categorizes student representation into two forms: formal student representation and informal student activism. Formal student representation includes representation on boards and committees and student involvement in government structures, while informal activism involves a variety of student protests, from demonstrations to strikes. These forms of representation and activism are employed to pursue student interests (Cele as cited by Luescher, Klemenčič and Otieno Jowi, 2016). However, with the politicization of student unions and other student representative bodies, informal student activism is gradually fading away in Africa as formal student representation grows (Van Gyampo, 2016). Formalizing the democratic structures of student unions has become increasingly important in reassuring individual students that they can fully trust student unions to prioritize their interests at all times.

This chapter will explore some of the emerging trends in the NUGS and how it espouses its relevance in contemporary times. It will also provide historical perspectives and chronology of the NUGS, including the political disconnect that threw the Union into disarray from 2000 to 2019. To better understand the NUGS structure compared to other student unions in Ghana, the chapter will also discuss the legal and statutory framework and the NUGS's organizational structure, including elected officials, administration, and funding.

The chapter draws on a qualitative research design to explain the nature of student representation in Ghana (Creswell and Poth, 2016). Previous studies on related topics, such as research on youth involvement in politics in Ghana (Van Gyampo and Anyidoho, 2019), also utilized the qualitative approach. Data required for this chapter's updated analysis of the influence of partisan politics on the NUGS were generated from primary sources, including the print and online media, video interviews from news portals and YouTube, reports and policy documents by governmental and nongovernmental organizations, the constitution of NUGS, and articles published on websites of governmental and non-governmental organizations.

History of NUGS

The National Union of Ghanaian Students (NUGS) had its origins in the Union of Gold Coast Students (UGCS) (Angel 1990, 234 as cited by NUGS, 2022). The UGCS was one of the affiliated student unions formed in Commonwealth West African countries in the 1930s through the encouragement of the UK-based West African Students Union (WASU) (NUGS, 2022). When Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of Ghana, became vice-president of WASU in 1945, he prodded the UGCS into political activism to further British decolonization in West Africa (NUGS, 2022). Post-independence, the students of the University of Ghana, the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, and the University of Cape Coast came together in 1965 to form a multi-level governance structure for the administration of students' affairs called the National Union of Ghana Students (Constitution of NUGS, 2019(12), NUGS, 2022).

NUGS has historically demonstrated a strong commitment to defending and advancing the ideals of democratic governance in Ghana. For instance, after the coup d'état led by Jerry John Rawlings in 1981, NUGS demanded the transfer to a civilian government in 1982 and that the

Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) hand over authority to the Office of the Chief Justice within a month (Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Canada, 1990). In 1990 they also continued to hold the government to account by calling on the ruling regime to repeal all oppressive laws and advocating for the “unconditional release of political detainees” (Van Gyampo, 2013, p. 58).

NUGS was formed with the vision of championing and spearheading the interest of Ghanaian students both in Ghana and abroad (NUGS Constitution, 2019). The current objectives of the NUGS are to discuss student problems, coordinate student activities, and formulate collective student opinions on matters of mutual concern to students and the nation at large (NUGS Constitution, 2019). NUGS aims to mobilize students in higher education to fight for the promotion and defense of their interests; inculcate in students a high sense of discipline, militant participation, and revolutionary awareness of the Ghanaian cultural heritage and the means to advance these, as well as act as a pressure group to make demands and influence government decisions (NUGS, 2022).

NUGS aims to establish a strong and distinctive student organization that protects cultural norms and fosters societal advancement (Chazan, 1978). NUGS continues to pursue these objectives and prioritize issues such as the well-being and welfare of women and girls and the delivery of quality education from basic to tertiary levels. NUGS has been considered a key partner by the government and CSOs in conversations about enhancing the access and delivery of quality public Education (Frimpong, 2017).

Organizational Characteristics of NUGS

Following the National Redemption Council Decree (NRCDC) 241 of 1974, NUGS is registered by the National Youth Council (now referred to as the National Youth Authority) as an independent student organization responsible for championing the cause of Ghanaian students (Van Gyampo, 2013). It is registered as an independent entity limited by guarantee.

As an independent body, NUGS is self-funded. It generates most of its funds from dues collected from its members, including Student Representative Councils at higher education institutions in Ghana and other representative student organizations. It also receives donations and nonfinancial assistance from independent donors such as the private sector (Constitution of NUGS, 2019(22)). Over the years, particularly in a favorable political climate, NUGS has received financial support from the government, although irregularly and insufficiently. Hence, the annual dues payable by its members constitute a reliable source of income to NUGS (interview, S. Binfoh, April 2014 as cited by Van Gyampo et al., 2019). According to the 2019 constitution, funds for running the organization primarily come from the Student Representative Councils (SRCs) at universities in Ghana, which comprise most of the National Union of Ghana Students membership.

The NUGS is an umbrella association of the various representative student unions and associations in Ghana (NUGS Constitution, 2019 (18)), including the University Students Association of Ghana (USAG), Graduate Students Association of Ghana (GRASAG), Teacher Trainees Association of Ghana (TTAG), Ghana Union of Professional Students (GUPS), Ghana National Union of Technical Students (GNUTS), National Health Students Association of Ghana

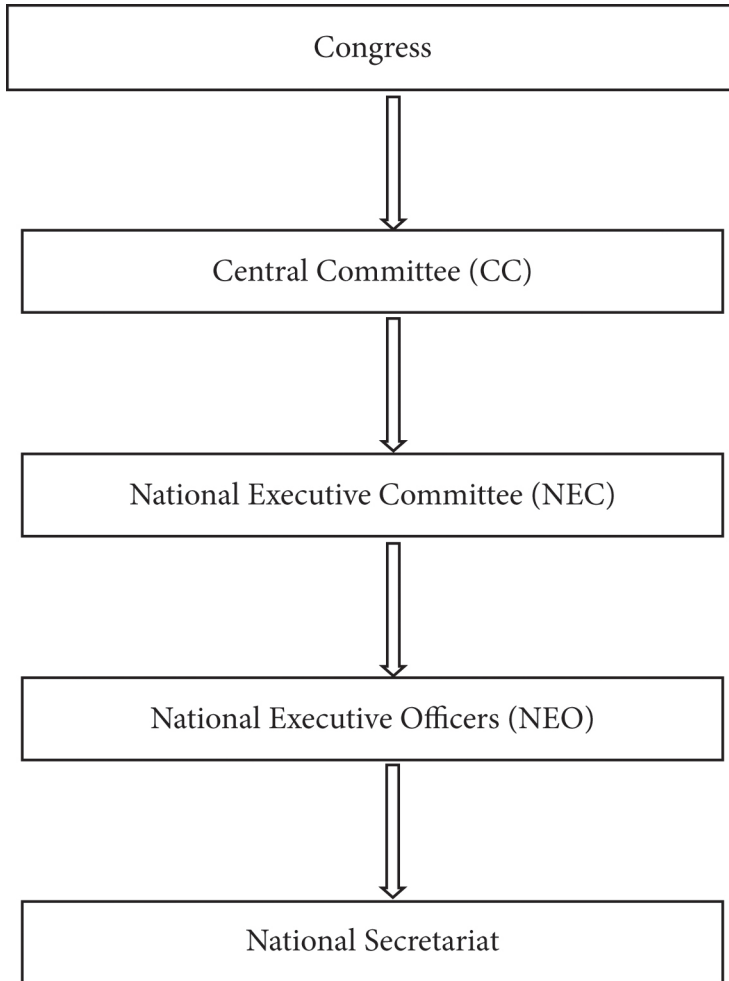


Figure 9.1 Membership structure of NUGS.

Source: Developed by the authors.

(NAHSAG and Regional Student Representative Councils (SRCs) of senior high schools) (see Figure 9.1 for details).

These student unions and associations under NUGS are referred to as blocs. These blocs have memberships composed of unions and associations, usually called Student Representative Councils, representing students at different Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), technical universities, pre-tertiary institutions, teacher education colleges of health education, postgraduate institutions, and Ghanaian students in the diaspora. All blocs must present their programs and core activities at scheduled central committee meetings and Congress (NUGS Constitution, 2019). Through this membership structure, NUGS has a clear mandate to represent students from basic to tertiary level educational institutions in Ghana, summing up to about 10 million students (Interview with the NUGS President, 2022/2023).

NUGS Governance and Membership

The National Union of Ghana Students has continuously evolved to reflect students’ current needs. In the 1980s, NUGS was largely focused on tertiary institutions; however, since then, the Union has broadened its scope to include the different categorizations of students in the country and even those in the diaspora. Currently, the Union’s objectives include (NUGS Constitution, 2019 (10)):

- protecting and safeguarding the rights and interests of students studying in Ghana and Ghanaian students studying abroad;
- offer a common platform to discuss all matters related to students’ well-being and welfare; and
- to enhance cooperation between Ghanaian students and students and student unions of other nationalities.

As the membership structure of NUGS evolved, so did its governance structure to accommodate these changes (NUGS Constitution, 2019 (17)). Currently, according to its constitution (2019 (12)), NUGS’s governance structure is composed of the bodies below in order of supremacy:

1. Congress
2. Central Committee (CC)
3. National Executive Committee (NEC)
4. National Executive Officers (NEO)
5. National Secretariat

The governance structure of the National Union of Ghana Students is represented below (Figure 9.2).

Today’s NUGS differs substantially from its founding structure. The organized student movement in contemporary Ghana is quite complex, owing to the different unions representing different sections of students in the country. For instance, the Ghana Union of Professional Students represents students affiliated with professional bodies such as the Institute of Chartered Accountants Ghana, Ghana Institute of Languages and Ghana School of Surveying and Mapping. Similarly, the Graduate Students Association of Ghana represents only students pursuing postgraduate programs. NUGS is expected to manage all member unions’ different expectations and interests. As an umbrella union, NUGS must engage all members democratically to meet

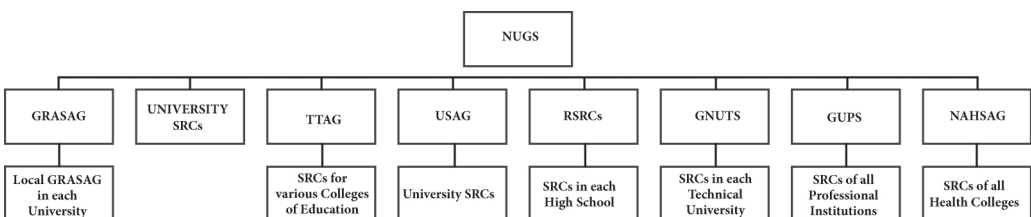


Figure 9.2 Structure of NUGS.

Source: Developed by the authors.

student needs without imposing on any of the unions. On the other hand, member unions of NUGS are also expected to follow the mandate of the NUGS constitution alongside their priorities and provide proof of activities geared toward meeting and prioritizing the needs of their constituents during Congress and Central Committee meetings (NUGS Constitution, 2019).

Congress is the highest decision-making body of the organization. It comprises all NUGS member unions and associations (referred to nationally as blocs) from the basic to tertiary education level, as referenced previously in this chapter. Congress meets annually to take major decisions about student welfare, and an extraordinary congress may be convened at any other time to discuss urgent issues affecting the Union and its members (NUGS Constitution, 2019).

The Central Committee comprises select representatives of the member unions and associations (blocs) of NUGS. The representatives of the member unions and associations are sworn in at the first sitting of the NUGS Central Committee. These representatives are democratically elected by their internal elections. The Central Committee meets a minimum of twice a year, once before the annual Congress meeting and any other time in the year, to assess the student movement's current activities at the local, national, and regional levels (NUGS Constitution, 2019).

In hierarchical order, the National Executive Committee (NEC), which comprises elected officers and an appointed officer, is answerable to the Central Committee (NUGS Constitution, 2019). Except for the Administrative Secretary, who the NUGS President appoints, all members of the National Executive Committee are elected, for a one-year, nonrenewable term of office, at an annual meeting of Congress and are rotational. The National Executive Committee comprises the National President, General Secretary, Secretary for Education, Secretary for Finance, Secretary for Women's Development, and five education officers (representing the five subsections—Special Education, Tertiary Education, Further Education, Pre-tertiary Education, and Technical and Vocational Education—of education levels in Ghana), Presidents of the member unions (i.e., GRASAG, GUPS, university SRCs, etc.), President of the National Service Personnel Association (does not have voting rights), International Students' Officer (does not have voting rights), and the NUGS Administrative Secretary. The National Executive Committee has oversight responsibility over the National Secretariat and is responsible for the following:

1. Overseeing the implementation of the Central Committee's policies and may also initiate policies for the approval of the Central Committee;
2. The National Executive Committee is responsible for rendering accounts to the Central Committee, inclusive of all financial transactions undertaken by the National Secretariat within one financial year;
3. The National Executive Committee is also responsible for informing member institutions about upcoming programs and projects.

The day-to-day activities of NUGS are run by the National Secretariat, which is made up of twelve (12) Executive Officers (NUGS Constitution, 2019); nine (President, General Secretary, Secretary for Education, Secretary for Finance, Secretary for International Relations, Secretary for Women Development, Secretary for Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Skills Development, Secretary for Union Development, and Secretary for Society and Welfare) of who are elected at the NUGS Annual Congress, two (Secretary for Press and the Secretary for Projects and Programs) of whom are appointed by the President-Elect in consultation with the other elected officers and the Administrative Secretary. All National Executive officers serve for one term (the

equivalent of an academic year) except for the Administrative Secretary, whose tenure is three (3) years. The secretary performs all administrative roles and manages the secretariat's day-to-day running. The Administrative Secretary also aids in the transitioning of power from one administration to the other. The NUGS Secretariat also engages national service (a one-year compulsory service engagement instituted and funded by the Government of Ghana) personnel and volunteers in the delivery of its duties.

The National Executive Committee is responsible for the effective operation of the national secretariat and oversees the implementation of its programs and projects. The National Secretariat, located in Accra, is operated by national officers and performs the day-to-day administration of NUGS.

A trustee board is also mandated to manage the Union's affairs in moments of crisis or challenges. Article 25 of the NUGS Constitution (2019) mandates the institution of the Board of Trustees, which acts as an advisory board for the Union. The board is expected to assist the Union with technical advice, especially in times of crisis and also in the formulation of key strategic priorities and plans. Including the board of trustees became a priority at the footing of efforts to reunite NUGS in 2019 and ensure that it does not go back to its perilous days of division and political infiltration. The board of trustees is made up of:

1. One member from the Ghana Bar Association (GBA)
2. One member from the Trades Union Congress (TUC)
3. One member from the Association of Ghana Industries (AGI)
4. One member from the National House of Chiefs
5. One member from the Christian Council of Ghana
6. One member from the Muslim Council of Ghana
7. One member from the Ghana Journalists Association (GJA)
8. A NUGS Alumni President
9. A former NUGS President

Representation and Activities

The National Union of Ghana Students achieves its aims and objectives through representation, advocacy, conferences, and lobbying activities (NUGS Constitution, 2019). The Union works with its member institutions at the national, regional, and local levels to reach all students and amplify their voices in decision-making. At the institutional level, in most Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Ghana, the President of the Student Representative Council, who represents NUGS on campuses, sits on the institution's highest governing board alongside three government appointees, the Vice Chancellor of the respective University, the Pro Vice-Chancellor, the registrar, labor union representative, finance director of the university, and the chairman of the governing board or council.

NUGS also plays an important role in the national governance process of Ghana by contributing to policy formulation and implementation on some issues, especially those regarding the right to quality education. For example, NUGS is active in many national bodies whose mission relates

to Education, such as the Ghana Education Trust Fund (GETFund), National Youth Authority (NYA), and the National and District Scholarship Secretariats.

The Ghana Education Trust Fund is one of the biggest successes of NUGS's advocacy efforts. The fund supports the government's investment in public education infrastructure. It offers scholarship opportunities to disadvantaged but gifted students to pursue a degree and postgraduate programs in Ghana and foreign countries. The fund's establishment by the Government of Ghana resulted from advocacy efforts, dubbed the "Mmobrowa Struggle" (Garbrah, 2006). This was a period of struggle in the lives of university students, mounting pressure against the introduction of the "academic facility user fees" and the "residential facility user fees" in 1994. This success could be seen as a driving factor in the Government of Ghana legitimately recognizing the Union as a functional unit representing the voices of all Ghanaian students. Currently, NUGS nominates one representative from its membership to sit on the Board of GETFund. The current representative of NUGS on the board is a representative from the Ghana National Union of Technical Students (Ghana Business News, 2020).

As the National Union of Ghana Students is registered under the National Youth Authority (NYA), which sits under the Ministry of Youth and Sports and coordinates youth empowerment activities in the country, it can actively engage and influence projects and events led by the NYA and those which the NYA has been invited (Van Gyampo, 2013).

The National Scholarship Secretariat was established in 1960 as an extra-ministerial body under the Office of the President. The secretariat is mandated to administer all government scholarships both locally and abroad. It was not until recently (2022) that the National Union of Ghana Students were officially invited to participate in the decision-making processes for awarding scholarships: NUGS now has a student representative in all 261 District Selection Committees across Ghana (MyJoyonline, 2022). The current officers of NUGS consider this a key step in restoring the prominence of NUGS in representing the voices of students at all levels of decision-making and the pursuit of equal access to Education in Ghana (MyJoyonline, 2022).

In 2020, NUGS was invited by the Ghanaian President to discuss education matters due to the Covid-19 pandemic (The Presidency Republic of Ghana, 2020). Before that, the Union had engaged the Ministry of Education to discuss the discomforts students face with accessing online modes of learning and how they could be addressed. NUGS initiated a project to provide data for online studies and food supplies for students and other members of society who could not provide for themselves during the national lockdown (CitiNewsRoom, 2020).

NUGS is also an active member of the wider Education civil-society movement in Ghana; for example, in 2020, the Union joined the Coalition against zPrivatization and zCommercialization of Education (CAPCOE) (Africa Education Watch, 2021; NUGS, 2021). In 2022, NUGS, as part of CAPCOE, presented a petition to Parliament demanding an increased budget to support the financing of quality public Education. Even though the petition has not yet yielded a significant impact, the action was captured by media outlets across the country and contributed to increased visibility of NUGS activism (MyJoyOnline, 2021; NUGS, 2021). Currently, the Union is running projects such as the NUGS nationwide capacity-building initiative (NUGS Talk) and the construction of a six-unit classroom block for a marginalized community in the Northern part of Ghana (NUGS, 2022). This presents a new phase for the Union, where it is devoid of any divisions and is vigorously pursuing the objects of the Union.

Political Infiltrations in NUGS

Historically, the National Union of Ghana Students has not only protected students' interests but also strongly opposed all regimes that conflicted with the interests of the Ghanaian people (Chazan, 1978; Gyimah-Boadi, 1993). Simultaneously, partisan political actors have developed ways to infiltrate and weaken organized student leadership to counteract their collective power, especially when standing against unfavorable government policies in the education sector (Lartey, 2019). In an attempt to undermine NUGS influence, governments have even attempted to establish rival union-like organizations: for instance, the administration of former Ghanaian leader Kwame Nkrumah, the country's first President, established the National Association of Socialist Students' Organisations (NASSO), as the student arm of the Convention People's Party (Adu Boahen cited in UNESCO, 1994).

According to Van Gyampo (2013), political leaders in Ghana care deeply about who wins the NUGS presidency. To prevent potential student leaders from becoming too critical of the government, party political leaders have actively sought to manipulate the election process and fueled the growth of dissident movements and widespread defections from the NUGS (Awaah, 2019; Van Gyampo, 2016). Students who take on leadership roles in political parties are arguably more likely to have a heightened sense of prestige among their peers. Opposition parties often use their influence to try and sway NUGS to tell students they should protest the government. On the other hand, the party in government needs NUGS to subdue students into supporting its programs and policies, even if these counter the students' best interests (Amankwa, 2018).

NUGS's political infiltration involves various national and institutional initiatives and practices to suppress and neutralize student activity deemed to undermine or threaten a respective partisan power. For example, it is important to recognize the generational impact of many former student leaders allegedly aligned with political parties who are now leading politicians in Ghana (Lartey, 2019). According to Van Gyampo (2016), this motivates the current leadership of NUGS to steer their membership to cater to the caprices and desires of politicians in pursuit of self-aggrandizement. With many student leaders receiving assurances of future positions from politicians after their studies, NUGS may feel compelled to downplay the widespread problem of youth and graduate-level unemployment (Amankwa, 2018). Even in situations where student interests have been severely damaged, under this system, student leaders aligned with the political parties in power are arguably less eager to mobilize students against their party if it risks their career prospects.

The impact of political infiltration has resulted in division and distrust within NUGS' internal structure over the last twelve years. Competing factions with close affiliations to political parties even established their executives, each claiming to be the legitimate leaders of NUGS (Lartey, 2019). Lartey further noted that this led to some members of NUGS, specifically member unions and associations at the institutional level, expressing a desire to leave the Union in 2019 if the problem of political infiltration in the Union's leadership was not solved (Lartey, 2019). In response, the rival factions came together to institute reforms to unite the Union. In an interview, one faction leader indicated both sides' willingness to restructure the Union. According to him:

“For the past three years, NUGS has been dealing with issues such as divisions. So now, the focus has been to make NUGS a reformed union. What happened in

Kumasi were discussions by the Central Committee of the Union so we can look at ways and means we can reform the Union.”

(as quoted by Lartey, 2019)

The restructuring saw the introduction of new provisions targeted at addressing loopholes that enabled the challenges that plagued the Union and helped ensure that the Union stayed on course to represent the interests of all Ghanaian students (NUGS Constitution, 2019). The new provisions that were introduced included the expansion of the electoral college of NUGS by giving the Colleges of Education (TTAG) and the Independent Colleges of Health (NAHSAG) institutional representation, the expansion of pre-tertiary level representation by giving all regions with functional Regional Students Representative Councils (RSRC) seven delegates each. There has also been an alignment of representation to population distribution to achieve a rational proportional representation and a clearer definition of who qualifies to be a delegate to a NUGS function to ensure a cleaner and transparent voter register. The new provisions also reclassify portfolios or executive positions to reflect the current demands of students. The introduction of the administrative secretary’s office, streamlining the executives’ roles and responsibilities to remove ambiguity and overlapping responsibilities, is a vivid example of the NUGS’ determination to increase its advocacy and reach efforts (NUGS Constitution, 2019).

More importantly, the new amendment to the constitution provides a clear definition of the term of office for NUGS and a definite deadline for the conduct of Annual Residential Congresses and Handing over Ceremony. The amendment also enforces the expansion of the Composition of Central Committee (CC) and National Executive Committee (NEC), introducing a Board of Trustees, and new electoral regulations to end the decade-long problem of electoral fraud (NUGS Constitution, 2019). Key among the reforms is the “Board of Trustees” and the office of an “Administrative Secretary.” “The Board of Trustees” are tasked with managing any crisis should it reoccur. In contrast, the “Administrative Secretary” ensures that the Union’s core work does not halt even during times of crisis (NUGS Constitution, 2019).

From 2019 to the present day, the Union has experienced relative stability since the restructuring, with two successful congresses devoid of conflict being held. The Union has been working hard to reclaim its former glory and ascend to the heights of national relevance and social significance through increased visibility of its activism (Ahimah, 2022; Asare, 2020; Mohammed, 2021; NUGS, 2021; NUGS, 2022; Yalley, 2022).

However, recognizing students’ collective power and influence within the education ecosystem and beyond, it seems likely that political parties will continue to attempt to infiltrate organized student unions and associations in pursuit of partisan interests. Conventional wisdom holds that politicians support student campaigns, promote “splinterism,” and bolster self-declared student leaders without regard to the Union’s institutions, all to the detriment of NUGS and the students they represent (Awaah, 2019).

Conclusion

As this chapter has demonstrated, the National Union of Ghana Students, the umbrella organization of student organizations in Ghana, has played an integral part in Ghana’s democratic

governance process. However, NUGS's aim to promote and protect the interest of Ghanaian students at home and abroad was negatively influenced by political parties from 2004 to 2018. As illustrated, from 2019 onwards, the Union has attempted to put in place measures to limit or eliminate the infiltration of political parties in the activities of NUGS, which could lead to future divisions. This should remain a priority for the Union, as divisions within NUGS do not bode well for the future of the Ghanaian student movement, especially as it undermines the ability of the student's voice to be represented in key education decision-making spaces in Ghana.

The infiltration of political parties in student activism is not limited to the student movement in Ghana. Political actors worldwide recognize the student movement's power when organized to mobilize and hold governments and political leaders accountable (Klemenčič, 2014). Suppose a student union is to be productive and effective in its mandate to act objectively to protect its members' interests. In that case, it has to be devoid of political puppeteering.

This chapter provided an important historical perspective about the student movement in Ghana and what it has transformed to be today. The Union's former prominence, including the period in which it contributed to the establishment of the Ghana Education Trust Fund, was marked by a time when student leaders acted objectively to hold the government accountable and demand justice for all students.

In some instances, it has been argued that it may be impossible to alienate student activism from mainstream politics (Altbach; 1966; Klemenčič, 2014.). Regardless of the credibility of this claim, student unions must still devise strategies that aim to enable their structures to maintain integrity while pursuing progressive and contextualized means to deliver on their mandate. NUGS, as of 2019, has made major changes to ensure that the Union remains intact with little to no political infiltrations. However, this does not mean that due to the new provisions, the Union is unlikely to face any crises shortly. One of the new provisions in the constitution, which mandates the institution of the Board of Trustees, may prove futile in preventing divisions if the board does not offer fairness in its advice or judgment in settling conflicts that may arise. Student and aspiring student leaders must still be oriented and well-supported to always place the interests of the Union and its members first. Student leaders who contradict the constitution's provisions by their actions or words should be subjected to the rigor of the NUGS constitution and Ghanaian laws as a deterrent to others and as a means of enhancing the credibility and integrity of the National Union of Ghana Students for generations to come.

References

- Africa Education Watch (November 17, 2021). Eduwatch, NUGS & CAPCOE petition parliament to advocate increased investment in public basic education. *Africa Education Watch*. <https://africaeducationwatch.org/news-page/petition-parliament-to-advocate-increased-investment-in-public-basic-education>
- Ahimah, K. (February 8, 2022). UTAG Strike: Resolve impasse quickly—NUGS implores UTAG. NLC. *The Ghanaian Standard*. <https://www.ghstandard.com/utag-strike-resolve-impasse-quickly-nugs-implores-utag-nlc/>
- Altbach, P.G. (1966). Students and politics. *Comparative Education Review* 10(2): 175–87.

- Amankwa, R. (September 18, 2018). When student politics marries national partisan politics, political infiltration is birthed. *Success Africa*. <https://www.successafrica.info/when-students-politics-marries-national-partisan-politics-political-infiltration-is-birthed/>
- Asare, K. (March 19, 2020). Joint petition to the parliamentary select committee on education on the management and allocation of GETFund For 2020. *Modern Ghana*. <https://www.modernghana.com/news/990305/joint-petition-to-the-parliamentary-select-committ.html>
- Asiedu-Acquah, E. (2019). “We shall be outspoken”: Student political activism in post-independence Ghana, c. 1957–1966. *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 54(2): 169–88.
- Astor, M. (March 5, 2018). 7 times in history when students turned to activism. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/05/us/student-protest-movements.html>
- Awaah, F. (2019). Towards a united national students’ front. *University World News Africa Edition*. <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20190930065611797>
- Chazan, N. (1978). Political culture and socialization to politics: A Ghanaian case. *The Review of Politics* 40(1): 3–31.
- CitiNewsRoom. (March 29, 2020). Coronavirus: NUGS to distribute food and essentials to students in Ghana. Retrieved from CitiNewsRoom. <https://citinewsroom.com/2020/03/coronavirus-nugs-to-distribute-food-and-essentials-to-students-in-ghana/>
- Creswell, J. W. and Poth, C. N. (2016). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*. Washington, DC: SAGE.
- Frimpong, K. (2017). Civil society organizations and good governance in Ghana. *International Journal of Development and Sustainability* 6(9): 956–71.
- Garbrah, S. (December 3, 2006). Spio Garbrah: The unscratchable itch!. *GhanaWeb*. <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/features/Spio-Garbrah-The-Unscratchable-Itch-114928>
- Ghana Business News. (June 10, 2020). GETFund Board of Trustees inaugurated. *Ghana Business News*. <https://www.ghanabusinessnews.com/2021/06/10/getfund-board-of-trustees-inaugurated/>
- Gyimah-Boadi, E. (1993). *The Search for Economic Development and Democracy in Ghana: From Limann to Rawlings. Ghana Under PNDC Rule*. Dakar: CODESRIA, pp. 1–12.
- Howard, Angela (1999). When the people decide: A study of the independence movement in Ghana. *African Diaspora ISPs*. 41.
- Klemenčič, M. (2014). Student power in a global perspective and contemporary trends in student organizing. *Studies in Higher Education* 39(3): 396–411.
- Lartey, N.L. (2019). NUGS makes reforms to address divided front. *Citinewsroom*. <https://citinewsroom.com/2019/08/nugs-makes-reforms-to-address-divided-front/>
- Luescher, T. (2016). Towards an intellectual engagement with the# studentmovements in South Africa. *Politikon*, 43(1): 145–8.
- Luescher, Thierry M., Klemenčič, Manja and Otieno Jowi, James (2016). Student politics in Africa: Representation and activism. *African Minds*.
- Mohammed, M. (October 12, 2021). NUGS petition’s Parliament over massive Law Exam failure. *Diamondfmonline*. <https://diamondfmonline.com/nugs-petitions-parliament-over-massive-law-exam-failure/>
- Mugume, T. (2015). *Student Politics and Multiparty Politics in Uganda: A Case Study of Makerere University*.
- Mugume, T. and Luescher, T. (2017). Student politics at Makerere University in the Lens of Schmitter and Streeck’s Framework: Student leaders and political parties. *Makerere Journal of Higher Education* 9(1): 133–60.
- MyJoyonline (May 3, 2022). NUGS secures representation on district selection committee of scholarship secretariat. *MyJoyonline.com*. <https://www.myjoyonline.com/nugs-secures-representation-on-district-selection-committee-of-scholarship-secretariat/>
- MyJoyOnline (2021, November 20). All-Africa Students Union and partners petition parliament over public basic education. *MyJoyOnline*. <https://www.myjoyonline.com/all-africa-students-union-and-partners-petition-parliament-over-public-basic-education/>

- National Union of Ghanaian Students (NUGS). (2019). *The Constitution of the Nation Union of Ghanaian Students (NUGS)*. Accra: National Union of Ghanaian Students (NUGS).
- National Union of Ghana Students (NUGS) (2021, November 18). NUGS petition parliamentary select committee on education. *NUGS Facebook page*. <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=891362828213643>
- National Union of Ghana Students (NUGS) (2022a). About NUGS “Our History”. *NUGS Online*. <https://nugs.org.gh/about-us/>
- National Union of Ghana Students (NUGS) (2022b). NUGS Facebook page. [https://www.facebook.com/nugs.org.gh/?__cft__\[0\]=AZXNKVsnyvFq1vYDs1IBTyOkd2mCu7OhwTDGKL3Bd8L4nxaE5HMfD9uPqeCKw-vvNw1K24tVZbJbZp24co74aJaLFEEtLzwb1f1AObkG03Wz5CIImF5RCmfv1g29PuRxFO-Ozqjh-N1GfbybHD3EA18CiC6Hu7tZTB59S-xgMolMJVffuABc7_RmLwAFNK-hY1luiXMZaPg3Kn](https://www.facebook.com/nugs.org.gh/?__cft__[0]=AZXNKVsnyvFq1vYDs1IBTyOkd2mCu7OhwTDGKL3Bd8L4nxaE5HMfD9uPqeCKw-vvNw1K24tVZbJbZp24co74aJaLFEEtLzwb1f1AObkG03Wz5CIImF5RCmfv1g29PuRxFO-Ozqjh-N1GfbybHD3EA18CiC6Hu7tZTB59S-xgMolMJVffuABc7_RmLwAFNK-hY1luiXMZaPg3Kn)
- National Union of Ghana Students (NUGS). (2022c, August 2). NUGS Special Project. *NUGS.org*. <https://nugs.org.gh/nugs-special-project/>
- National Union of Ghana Students (NUGS) (2022d, August 30). Clashes on campuses—knust council’s decision. *NUGS Facebook page*. [https://www.facebook.com/nugs.org.gh/?hc_ref=ARQWNB-wusmJLKBVPHc2v1rEZEmBd1VbJ3q6f-joLLvXW2M5Tfv7-kKbPXQIPTu-buc&fref=nf&__xts__\[0\]=68.ARBZ2U8QXlaZYRjW0pmMzDUZ-6NOcojblshv51mO4oLFwczwxRdS1j6ZAfQvYwWmN6FZk0TGD2Du7As51wyGhoRv8DPPVBJpg4pppOSRoaiH5y1_MMMJrBEa](https://www.facebook.com/nugs.org.gh/?hc_ref=ARQWNB-wusmJLKBVPHc2v1rEZEmBd1VbJ3q6f-joLLvXW2M5Tfv7-kKbPXQIPTu-buc&fref=nf&__xts__[0]=68.ARBZ2U8QXlaZYRjW0pmMzDUZ-6NOcojblshv51mO4oLFwczwxRdS1j6ZAfQvYwWmN6FZk0TGD2Du7As51wyGhoRv8DPPVBJpg4pppOSRoaiH5y1_MMMJrBEa)
- Nkrumah, K. (1957). *Ghana: Autobiography of Kwame Nkrumah*. London: International Publishers Thomas Nelson & Sons, Ltd, p. 108.
- O’Donoghue, J.L., Kirshner, B. and McLaughlin, M. (2002). Introduction: Moving youth participation forward. *New directions for youth development* 2002(96): 15–26.
- Paalo, S.A. and Van Gyampo, R. E. (2019). Campus politics and intra-party vote buying in Ghana: How political mentorship could destruct. *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa* 7(2): 123–41.
- The Presidency Republic of Ghana (2020, April 25). “You have become a global icon”—NUGS to president Akufo-Addo. *Presidency Republic of Ghana*. <https://presidency.gov.gh/index.php/briefing-room/news-style-2/1575-you-have-become-a-global-icon-nugs-to-president-akufo-addo>
- Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Canada (1990, June 1). Ghana: Information regarding demonstrations by the National Union of Ghanaian Students (NUGS) on May 2–5, 1983. *RefWorld*. <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6ac52f.html>
- Schmitter, P.C. and Streeck, W. (1999). The organization of business interests: Studying the associative action of business in advanced industrial societies. *MPIfG Discussion Paper* (99/1).
- UNESCO (1994). *The Role of African Student Movements in the Political and Social Evolution of Africa from 1900 to 1975*. Paris: UNESCO.
- Van Gyampo, R.E. (2013). Student activism and democratic quality in Ghana’s Fourth Republic. *Journal of student Affairs in Africa* 1(1–2): 49–66.
- Van Gyampo, R.E. and Anyidoho, N.A. (2019). Youth politics in Africa. In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Van Gyampo, R.E., Debrah, E. and Aggrey-Darkoh, E. (2016). Politicization of the National Union of Ghana Students and its effects on student representation. *Student politics in Africa: Representation and Activism*, 224.
- Yalley, C. (2022, September 7). Prioritize infrastructure development in basic schools—NUGS to Akufo-Addo. *Joy Online*. https://www.myjoyonline.com/prioritise-infrastructure-development-in-basic-schools-nugs-to-akufo-addo/?fbclid=IwAR2Ty3Ae0S7yfy1_gWfqSXXHqay1u2R6_Y56w3ou-56aJUcPy5GaDtk9pFPY

10

Students' Power and How It Has Changed in Kenya

Mary Adhiambo Ojwang

Introduction

Globally, students' politics and activism have proved to have influence in societal events. In developing countries, the historical implication of this activism is seen through the influence and level of students' involvement in the struggle for independence, educational, and social reforms (Klemenčič, 2014). For instance, prior to India's independence, student movements were actively involved in national political developments through their powerful mobilization as organized influential groups that instigated national political activities including the struggle for independence from the British colony (Altbach, 1984). Student movements have played a critical role in influencing countries' independence through activism that has been effective because of their autonomous status. The autonomy and power have been reflected through their ability to powerfully mobilize and organize into influential groups that instigated national political activities including the struggle for independence from the colonizers (Altbach, 1984).

In sub-Saharan Africa, countries like South Africa, Sudan, Senegal, Ethiopia, and West African countries, students' involvement in decolonization and in overthrowing dictatorship governments took shape with involvement of student movements within universities. Therefore, higher learning institutions provided a breeding ground for shaping sociopolitical and democratic activism in most African countries. For example, in 1964, Khaturm University students' protest played a critical role in overthrowing the military government of General Ibrahim Abboud, same was the case with 1968 students' demonstration in Senegal that toppled President Léopold Senghor government forcing him to flee the capital, and also Ethiopia in 1970s and South Africa in 1980s, student movements played part in overthrowing repressive state regimes (Hodgkinson and Melchiorre, 2019, p. 6).

Just like in many other African countries, Kenya has shown a lot of students' involvement in structuring its democratic space and in overthrowing dictatorship leadership. Kenya's student leadership movements have seen a lot of revolution and transformations including several suspensions by both the learning institutions and national government in the quest to tame their autonomy. For instance, in 1969, after a heated strike that occurred fueled by political actions, the government closed down the University of Nairobi for a few months and upon resumption put up reapplication requirements for students which included signing an apology for disobeying the government. Some student leaders were expelled from the university as well (Klopp and Orina, 2002, p. 8).

The role and direction of student politics in Kenya have evolved over time with a long history of student demonstrations. This chapter traces the evolution and transformations within students' power which has been mostly manifested within student movements through activism, political actions, and protests within higher learning institutions and beyond. The chapter investigates contemporary issues in students' representation, leadership, and governance in universities in Kenya at both the institutional and national levels. It aims at discussing the major changes in the history of students' representation in higher learning education governance in Kenya. It highlights key developments in students' activism, including student grievances that mobilize to activism, participation in student protests, and individual or collective acts of activism.

To understand the autonomy and legitimacy of students' representative bodies in Kenya, I investigate contemporary issues in student politics in Kenya and discuss models of student organizations and modes of student politics (Klemenčič, 2012, 2014, 2020a,b; Klemenčič and Park 2018). The methods of data collection include an extensive review of secondary literature, content analysis of statutory documents, surveys including interviews with current and former student leaders, higher education stakeholders, and experts in the field. The data was analyzed qualitatively.

The study made use of a qualitative approach, where the researcher relied on the experiences and existing literature to draw conclusions. Primary data was collected through interviews of current and former student leaders from the following student organizations in Kenya: Kenya University Students Organization (KUSO), University of Nairobi Students Association (UNSA), Kenyatta University Students Association (KUSA), Moi University Students Organization (MUSO), Students Organization of Maseno University (SOMU), Pwani University Students Association (PUSA), Students Representative Council of Kibabii University (SRC), and Egerton University Students Association (EUSA). The interviews were conducted through zoom using a well-structured interview guide; the meetings were recorded for future reference. Snowball sampling technique was used to sample the participants. The study also made use of secondary data collected from reviewing literature and documents on the subject under study. The data collected was analyzed by qualitative methods. For ethical and validity purposes, all respondents and their statement of consent were recorded before engaging in the research.

The next section broadly describes the sociopolitical and higher education context in Kenya, followed by a section analyzing student organizations representing students in Kenya. By reviewing the existing literature and publications on student politics, student unions, activism, student organizing themselves in Kenya, and other parts of the world, this study outlines historical developments of student organizing, representation, and politics. The following section focuses on modes of influence that students have on higher education policies and practices, followed by a section on contemporary issues in student politics in Kenya.

This chapter gives an analysis of the implication of this transformation on student power and on Kenya's democracy. It offers the most up-to-date analysis of contemporary student politics and its transformation in Kenya, and discusses using the existing literature, the perspectives on the student politics, student roles, and student activism in Kenya. Special attention is devoted to the trajectory of events leading to the Universities Amendment Act 2016 and some of its implications.

The Context of Student Politics in Kenya

Student protests have been a pervasive feature of higher education and experienced as major disruption by higher education institutions and the government.

Given that the University of Nairobi was the only existing higher education institution between 1950s and 1980s, the history of student politics and activism is traced back to the Students' Organization of Nairobi University (SONU) (Deutschmann, 2022, p. 4). SONU's main objective was basically to govern students and represent their interest within the university and beyond. It was effective in addressing students' grievances with university administration as well as informing national policies and political structures. SONU greatly influenced the democratic space in Kenya (Deutschmann, 2022, p. 4).

SONU played a critical role in influencing multiparty democracy and protesting human rights violations including political assassinations of J.M. Kariuki, Tom Mboya, and Dr. Robert John Ouko. SONU was a voice to reckon in overthrowing dictatorship governments by both the late President Jomo Kenyatta and the late President Daniel Moi, whose consequences led to a number of student leaders being imprisoned, others expelled, and others suspended so as to restore peace (Amutabi, 2002, pp. 12–20; Deutschmann, 2022, p. 6; Klopp and Orina, 2002, pp. 8–9).

Student activism is reflected through the collective acts of students mobilized toward informing and transforming policies and practices that have an impact on students' lives and in effecting social or political change (Luescher, Klemenčič and Jowi 2015, 2016). In Kenya, student power was first manifested in 1969 when students at the University of Nairobi violently protested attempts by the government to stop the first Vice President of Kenya, Adonijah Jaramogi Oginga Odinga, from addressing students in the Taifa Hall at the University of Nairobi (Amutabi, 2002; Klopp and Orina, 2002). Among the issues that spiked the protest was the introduction of the educational loan scheme (HELB) that replaced the free tuition fee privilege that the students were receiving from the government (Amutabi, 2002, pp. 7–8; Klopp and Orina, 2002, pp. 8, 14, 19).

The education loan scheme is a program that dates back to Higher Education Loan Fund in the colonial era (1952) that was set by the colonial government (British) to finance Kenyan students who were pursuing university education abroad (Otieno, 2004, p. 76). However, upon attaining independence in 1963, the Kenyan government suspended the program and resolved to directly cover university education costs for its students and grant them job opportunities as a way of building the internal local skilled manpower to manage government activities (Otieno, 2004, p. 76). By this, students felt comfortable as upon graduation, they were also assured of job opportunities (Deutschmann, 2022, p. 6).

According to Wycliffe Otieno (2004, p. 76), “increased enrollments in university education coupled with dismal economic performance mainly occasioned by the oil shocks of the 1970s forced the government to rethink its policies on financing university education. As a result, it ‘introduced’ a loan program in the 1973–1974 financial year. In reality, it was simply a reactivation of the 1952 program, which had never been formally discontinued; the government had merely stopped funding it. The program was reintroduced as the University Students' Loan Scheme. The 1973 program was not administered by an autonomous body but by the Loan Disbursement and Recovery Unit in the Ministry of Education.” Thus, the introduction of the Higher Education Loan scheme meant that students would no longer receive free university education as before and were no longer certain about job opportunities awaiting them after graduation, an issue that

aroused tension in students (Amutabi, 2002). Another issue that instigated the protest was the ethnic appointment of the first Vice Chancellor for the University of Nairobi, Mr. Josphat Karanja, who was less experienced in overseeing matters relating to academic institutions (Amutabi, 2002, p. 7; *The New York Times*, 1974).

Due to student activism, the government suspended the organization SONU in 1969, 1980, and in 1992 (Deutschmann, 2022, p. 6; Klopp and Orina, 2002, pp. 8–10). For instance, the University of Nairobi administration on many occasions suspended SONU and was successful in disbanding SONU in 2017. It was then renamed UNSA (University of Nairobi Students Association) in 2019, whose institutionalization and structural formation were based on the University Amendment Act of 2015. In the 1990s, students in Kenya played a critical role in influencing multiparty democracy and protesting human rights violations including political assassinations (interview, student leader KUSO, February 12, 2022). In 1995, KUSO was formed as a national representative students' organization and a forum through which students would address issues of national importance. In 2021, KUSO was registered as a nongovernmental organization, and has national representatives and regional representatives (interview, student leader KUSO, February 12, 2022).

Due to the disruptive student activism, the government has tried to control student organizations. In 2015, a bill was proposed to parliament directing amendment of the University Act, with focus on restructuring of students' governance and electoral process. This was achieved through the amended University Act of 2016. University Act is an Act of Parliament to make better provisions for the advancement of university education in Kenya and for connected purposes (Laws of Kenya, University Act, n.d.).

Clause 13 of the University Amendment Act of 2015 amended Section 41 of the University Act issuing specifications on status of students' association regarding membership, election, and duration of office (KENYA GAZETTE SUPPLEMENT, 2015). This amendment dictates that faculty, schools, and departments form electoral colleges from which three representatives are selected to elect university student council members (The Universities Amendment Act, 2016). This is contrary to the previous governance and electoral procedure whereby all students were responsible for electing their student representatives through a popular ballot initiative. The bill proposed inclusivity in gender and ethnic diversity and further proposed an adjustment in the student electoral process.

It is important to note that in Kenya, all policy structures are legislated and enacted by the government. Therefore, the university community is not an autonomous entity in their own policy issues that directly affect them, thereby weakening their institutionalization and leading to some crisis in the educational sector and creating room for oppressive laws. The University Act (2016) is a statutory document that commissions higher education management and governance in Kenya, as well as stipulates how students are represented in higher education governance.

Student Organizations Representing Students at the Institutional Level

According to the University Act (2016), university and college students in higher education institutions are governed through a student representative body led by student leaders elected

through electoral colleges (see Appendix for full text). Student leaders get elected to student councils which operate within institutional governance through a delegate system. The Delegate system is a form of governance where every member is represented through his or her own elected delegate (Smith, 1987, p. 428). Hence, all universities in Kenya have a student association, a student-governing body mandated to undertake all the functions stipulated in the constitution of the students' governing body. These functions include channeling students' grievances to university authority, representing students' interests in key organs of the university, promoting students' aspirations and welfare needs, and enhancing proper management of students needs in collaboration with university administration (University Act, 2016).

According to the University Act (2016), all student associations are governed by a student council composed of chairperson, vice chairperson, treasurer, secretary general, and three members who represent special interest groups. An example is the University of Nairobi, whose student body is called University of Nairobi Students Association (UNSA) and whose governing structure is discussed in detail in subsequent paragraphs.

The membership of student associations constitutes all students of the university, who contribute a mandatory-specific amount of money to student representative bodies. This amount is deducted from their school fee annually. The contribution is used to finance the student association's budget as well as used to pay stipends and allowances of elected student leaders who hold office for a term of one academic year.

Student associations are composed of student representatives elected by other students either through the electoral college or through structures available to specific universities based on students governing council constitutions. For students to be elected to student associations, they have to meet the basic delegation criteria set by their respective universities and documented in the student organizations' constitutions. Common to all institutions is that they must be registered students in their institutions. Students who want to be elected are required to campaign to other students. Just like in national politics, they develop manifestos and use finances to generate campaign materials which are used during the campaign period. Some of the sources of students' finances when seeking elective offices include contributions from friends and family members, and HELB Higher Education Loan Board money. Students seeking elective positions also get funding from national politicians. University students spend a lot of money on their campaigns and this is dependent on the elective positions one aspires for. The top positions require more financial spending compared to other positions.

According to the University Act (2016), student association representative elections are conducted by electing executive members of the students' council through electoral colleges. Each electoral college chooses three representatives in respect to ethnic diversity and gender who are involved in electing members of the students' governing council. The three representatives are elected members from the electoral colleges. For example, from the University of Nairobi, students who are interested in being elected at their different colleges and faculties form teams and come up with their unique team symbols. The teams are made up of seven people for the seven positions (Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, Secretary General, Finance rep, and Sports and Welfare, Person with Disability, and International students' representative). The seven members in the team must reflect ethnic and gender diversity. The team is now involved in campaigning among all students in their faculty or college for their team to be elected. All students in the college are involved in electing the team of their choice. Out of the team that wins, the team is

tasked to nominate three of its members who are involved in electing their top student council members. Out of the three, there should be representation from both genders, male and female. For example, one could be male and the rest female or vice versa. The electoral colleges are formed on the basis of either academic departments, schools, or faculties. This is also stipulated in Clause 18, Section 41 of the University Act (2016).

The structural composition of student associations is made up of the executive members consisting of seven people: Chairman, Vice Chair, Secretary General, Finance secretary, and three representatives of special interest groups, i.e., sports/social welfare/gender, Person with Disability, and international students' representatives. Then there is an electoral college formed by elected Campus representatives (UNSA Constitution, 2017). Congress members who form the delegates involved in electing the student's council executive are elected through a popular ballot initiative (interview, student leader Egerton University Students Association, February 12, 2022).

Data gathered from the interviews indicate that student leadership bodies are the administrative units of all higher institutions in Kenya. These associations include: University of Nairobi Students Association, Kenyatta University Students Association, Egerton University Students Association, Students Organization of Maseno University, Moi University Students Organization, Pwani University Students Association, and Students Representative Council of Kibabii University. Except for the Students Representative Council of Kibabii University, where all students are involved in electing all their leaders (one man one vote using their college Identification cards), the other student-governing council members are elected through the delegate system whereby based on their faculties, students are elected into congress by their fellow students from the same faculties, who then appoint some of their representatives to be delegates who in return elect the council members. An elected member of SRC Kibabii University explained that Kibabii University had not yet complied with the provision in the University Act 2016, and was in the process of complying (interview, SRC Leader, Kibabii University, February 12, 2022). He also mentioned that University Administrative leaders preside over their students' elections (interview, SRC Leader, Kibabii University, February 12, 2022).

Main Student Organizations on the National Level

At the national level, there are two formal institutions, KUSO—Kenya University Students Organization that represent all students nationally and WOSWA-Women students mentorship association that represent female students nationally.

Kenya University Students Organization (KUSO)

KUSO is a national representative students' organization. KUSO members are students from all universities in Kenya whose student leadership associations subscribe to KUSO (interview, student leader, KUSO, February 12, 2022). All university associations are members of KUSO. However, there was a fallout in KUSO leadership in 2019 with some universities retrieving

their membership. The contention was about the choice of KUSO president, as the University of Nairobi had formed a culture that whoever becomes SONU president would become KUSO president. This move was highly protested by elected student leaders from other universities, who formed their own movements led by Mr. Jacobs Fikirini. Student leaders in KUSO are voted in by student leaders from elected student association leaderships from different universities and colleges. Leaders who want to be elected in KUSO must campaign to other student leaders in other universities to turn up and vote for them.

KUSO was formed in May 1995 by student activists as a forum through which students would address issues of national importance, address students' problems nationally, and advise both the national government and the universities management on student concerns. KUSO intended to promote dialogue as a sense of dispute resolution in universities in Kenya (Klopp and Orina, 2002, p. 19). However, in 1995, the registrar of societies declined to register KUSO and argued that "peace, welfare and good order would likely suffer prejudice by reasons of registration of KUSO as a society" (Klopp and Orina, 2002, p. 19). In fact, student leaders who were involved in the formation of KUSO were immediately expelled from the university (Klopp and Orina, 2002, p. 19).

In September 1995, the government of Kenya announced the new loan policy, Higher Education Loans Board (HELB), which, according to KUSO leadership, lacked clear guidelines on its implementations. On October 23rd, 1995, through its leadership, KUSO presented a letter to the ministry of education criticizing the punitive way in which HELB implementation was proposed. At the same time Students in Kenyatta University were on strike over the new loan scheme. As a result of this strike, KUSO chairman Mr. Suba Charchil was arrested, and he was denied the loan with allegations that he forged his loan application documents. Other KUSO leaders like Janai Orina who challenged Charchill's expulsion in court were also denied the loan as well (Klopp and Orina, 2002, pp. 20, 21).

In the year 1996 and 1997, KUSO leadership played a critical role in the constitutional reform movements, and this led to the organization KUSO being terrorized again by the late President Moi's government. The police force arrested the student activists, some were left with injuries from police brutality, and had assassination threats from special forces. Although human rights organizations came to their aid, they were limited in petitioning the government and writing publications about human rights violations against students in Kenya (Klopp and Orina, 2002, p. 21).

The worst historical occurrence in KUSO was the assassination of the organization's Vice Chairman, Mr. Solomon Muruli, in his hostel room at the University of Nairobi. He was burnt to death on February 23, 1997. Due to this ordeal, KUSO leaders decided to stay away from campuses and joined other political movements including regional NGOs that were pushing for constitutional reforms. This made way for them to influence the national political space in a more structured manner (Klopp and Orina, 2002, p. 21).

The organization KUSO was vibrant also between 2013 and 2019. In the 2013–19 period, the nation and universities, especially the University of Nairobi, experienced the longest and concurrent protests from university students. Key issues that instigated the protest were HELB loan disbursement delays, Extra Judicial Killings, students insecurity issues like killing of some students, e.g., Mercy Keino's murder in 2013, murder of student influencer the late Ragira, who

was mostly referred to as “OCS-officer commanding students” in 2019 (interview, student leader KUSO, February 12, 2022).

These protests led to an indefinite closure of the University of Nairobi for months, to cool the political tension among angry students. The outcome of such a protest included vandalization of properties and businesses around the university, putting pressure on the vice chancellor, perceived to be corrupt by students, to resign from office, and setting a hostel to flame in 2019 (interview, student leader KUSO, February 12, 2022). The other outcome from the protest was that student issues were quickly resolved, security enhanced, with HELB loans quickly disbursed to students accounts and fee increment stopped (interview, student leader KUSO, February 12, 2022).

According to a KUSO representative, KUSO was registered as an NGO in February 2020. Currently, the role of KUSO is pushing the agenda of university students and their associations to parliament, including pushing for a national constitutional amendment on policies that affect students in Kenyan universities and colleges (interview, KUSO official, February 12, 2022). KUSO “operates under strong restrictions that prevent them from engaging in national politics and is rather restricted to focus on students-based issues only” (ibid.). Furthermore, “[t]he most common mode of political action of KUSO is dialogues and where dialogues fail, mass protest is used” (ibid.).

Before the formalization of KUSO, the organization operated on its own terms, had politicians as patrons, e.g., former Starehe Member of Parliament Hon Steve Chege was KUSO patron in 2015. KUSO engaged in a national political agenda without any limitations and aligned to support political parties of their interest. Its structural organization and operation were highly influenced by elected leaders from SONU (Students Organization of Nairobi University). It was almost obvious that the elected SONU chairman would become KUSO chairman too. KUSO brought together vibrant student leaders from major universities to its leadership. Before its formalization, KUSO enjoyed autonomy and mobilized students nationally to protest on matters pertinent to their interests (interview, student leader KUSO, February 12, 2022). The increased influence of university officials in student elections “has killed the power of students’ associations and any mobilizations towards activism” (interview, student leader UNSA-University of Nairobi Students Association, February 12, 2022).

The registration of KUSO in 2020 as an NGO, as a youth association, was authorized under tough government conditions which compromised its autonomy and independence. The conditions for its registration required that names of all the national executives should be submitted and permission obtained from the Office of the President of the Republic of Kenya, Presidency and Registrar of political parties with certification that the organization should not turn into a political party. Furthermore, the organization had to submit an affidavit with the advocate not to use external force in the organization (external force referring to political influence from a parliamentarian), and any influential persons in the organization must sign an affidavit to assure no use of the organization to influence personal political interests, no politician or parliamentarian to be patron to the organization (interview, KUSO official, February 12, 2022).

The University Act was amended without consultation with student associations and despite their opposition (interview, student leader, University of Nairobi Students Association, February 12, 2022). KUSO drafted an appeal on University Amendment Act 2016 to parliament and is currently pending approval for debate by parliamentarians (interview, student leader KUSO, February 12, 2022).

Women Students Welfare/Mentorship Association (WOSWA)

WOSWA is a female student-led advocacy organization that champions female students' welfare and rights in higher learning institutions in Kenya. WOSWA acts as the official mouthpiece of female students in Kenya, acting on matters that may directly or indirectly affect female students' development in Kenyan schools. Only female students at any universities in Kenya can become members of WOSWA. WOSWA currently exists in ten universities and keeps growing each year. From the database collected on the WOSWA membership registry, 4,000 female students registered as members. Some of the registered members came from universities that WOSWA has not officially established. WOSWA constitution, as per the University of Nairobi, stipulates that as long as one is a female student, they automatically become members of the organization. University of Nairobi has approximately 30,000 female students. WOSWA receives its funding from students' membership fees. When students join WOSWA, as they register, they pay KSH 500. WOSWA has been applying for grants from women organizations in Kenya and also on global platforms, although no donor has been able to honor any of the proposals. WOSWA main office is located at the University of Nairobi Main Campus. All universities that subscribe to WOSWA elect their leaders at their respective campuses (WOSWA website).

WOSWA is a national convener of female students' right-based advocacy. Before its formalization, WOSWA existed only at the University of Nairobi from 1986 to 2015, after which the former chairperson Ms. Mary Ojwang among other leaders engaged in consultations with female students in other Kenyan universities and colleges who agreed to be part of the organization. The organization was then introduced in their respective universities. This expansion instigated its formalization and registration as a national Civil Society Organization in 2018 (WOSWA website).

WOSWA advocates for female students' rights at higher learning institutions in Kenya, leading advocacy campaigns on matters of female students interests like sexual reproductive health rights. WOSWA is currently involved in policy development document on sexual harassment policy for learning institutions in Kenya (WOSWA website). When a Rongo University female student was raped and murdered, WOSWA led a protest to demand for justice. A campaign that initiated a national dialogue on femicide and led to another major convening at the University of Nairobi main campus by national stakeholders to pronounce femicide a national security emergency and a crisis in an event dubbed "Her Life Matters."

WOSWA is a nonprofit and nonpolitical organization and does not interfere in national politics. WOSWA operates within higher learning institutions in Kenya only as an advocacy and lobbying movement (WOSWA website). Among key achievements of WOSWA is lobbying for equal gender representation in university students' political leadership, which was well achieved through the enactment of the University Amendment Act 2016, which demands for equal gender representation and ethnic diversities in student governance (WOSWA website).

At the universities WOSWA has been on the frontline of calling out human rights injustices against female students, protesting when a female student is sexually assaulted, raped, or murdered. WOSWA has existed as a female student lobby group at the University of Nairobi since 1986 and its foundation was based on the fact that female students' issues were very sensitive and unique and needed special attention (WOSWA website). Some of the advocacy issues spearheaded by WOSWA since its formation were about female students' marginalization,

inequality issues including lack of female students' participation in student governance, and gender mainstreaming in student politics which have been successfully achieved (WOSWA website).

In the initial stages, through lobbying for gender mainstreaming in student governance, at least three positions in students' elective politics in SONU were set aside for women students, Vice Chairperson, Finance Secretary, and Gender Secretary. This encouraged female students at the University of Nairobi to participate in student politics. However, with increased political tensions during student elections in 2015, female students were still not able to actively engage in student politics as voters. What prevented female students from voting was the existence of chaos and goons roaming around polling stations. These goons were also students' "wisemen, generals, and had some influence on student politics" who served as agents of candidates who were on the ballot. The goons sent chills on the voters and at any moment there could be war among the goons in the polling stations. This would lead to some of the people queuing to vote getting hurt and women would stay out due to such election-related violence. WOSWA engaged with University of Nairobi leadership to work on election-related insecurity issues so as to enable female students to have equal chance to participate actively as voters. This further opened up more opportunities for female students to contest in highly contested male-dominated positions like chairman and secretary general positions and win.

To lobby for national policies, WOSWA partners with other Civil Society Organizations and NGOs including government institutions and media to voice female students' grievances and share the gaps in policies. For example, increased sexual harassment in universities is among the concern that instigated the ongoing development of sexual harassment policy for learning institutions in Kenya.

Student Representation in Governance of Higher Education

Student representation in governance of higher education institutions is enacted through student councils. The formal powers students have in the governance of the university as per the University Act (2016) include "overseeing and planning, in consultation with the Senate, students' activities for the promotion of academic, spiritual, moral, harmonious communal life and social well-being of all students; drawing to the attention of the appropriate authority, where necessary, special needs from particular students; offering suggestions to the Senate or its equivalent on matters affecting the wellbeing of students; and They seat in the senate disciplinary sessions of students." As per the UNSA constitution, the roles of students' council include:

1. Oversee and plan, in consultation with the Senate, students' activities for the promotion of academic, spiritual, moral, harmonious communal life, and the social wellbeing of all students;
2. Draw to the attention of the University management where necessary, special needs from particular students;
3. Offer suggestions to the Senate and the Student Affairs Management Board on matters affecting the wellbeing of students;

4. Delegate in writing-specific functions to named officials of the Association;
5. Undertake such other functions as provided in this Constitution.

As mentioned earlier, the amended Universities Act (2016) has changed the provisions for electing members of the student council. The electoral structure of the students association as constituted in the University Act (2016) only mandates a few members from the congress to elect the students council members who are entitled to key decisions on the entire students welfare at the university. While the congress members are elected through a popular vote, during their campaign, they are not clear about the leaders they will elect to council when they form the elective delegates (see Appendix for full provision). The delegate system is different from the prior 2016 student democratic governance structure in which the electoral process mandated all students to be involved in electing their representatives at all levels. Arguably, the new system limits the independence of student organizations and enables university administration to influence which student representatives become the members of student council.

All the interviewed former and current student leaders resented the change in the structure of students electoral process in the University Act 2016, terming it as undemocratic to students, denied students their rights to elect all their leaders, and created room for interference of university administrative leadership on students elections including offering room for preferred student leaders by University leadership chosen. Further the respondents explained that it is easier to influence the decision of a few individuals delegated to elect the council members than the entire students fraternity.

The implications of the amended University Act (2016) are perceived by student leaders as curbing democratic rights of students, increasing control of university officials over student representatives, in addition to decreasing the mobilization potential and thus power of student associations. The new legislation is perceived to weaken democracy in student elections and infringes on students democratic rights (interview, student leader, Student Organization of Maseno University, February 15, 2022; interview, student leader UNSA, University of Nairobi Students Association, February 12, 2022). According to one of the student leaders from Kenyatta University, the outcome of elected leaders through the delegate system does not reflect students' choices: "I have heard students complain about the delegate process, saying that when the delegates campaign for their election as members of the congress, they don't mention who they will choose into the students council executive. The 30 delegates involved in electing council members make their own choices and their decisions do not reflect choices of 30,000 students who elect them" (interview, student leader, Kenyatta University Students Association, February 12, 2022).

The student leaders interviewed expressed their concern that the University Act (2016) created a loophole for university administrations to infiltrate and influence who becomes elected, especially in the students elective council as the process is easily corruptible. As noted by one interviewee, "it is easier to manipulate and control the decisions of a few people, than the thousands of students in the mlolongo system" (interview, student leader, Egerton University Students Association, February 12, 2022). For example, in 2021, a student from nowhere who was not even popular to the student electorate was elected as president of University of Nairobi Students Association. A few months later, the school fee was increased successfully (interview, former student leader, University of Nairobi, February 12, 2022).

According to the interviewees, the easily compromised election process gives upper chances to admin preferred candidates “admin puppets” to be elected against students preferred candidates. When an “admin puppet” is elected, the elected individual is at a tight spot and can never act independently without university administration influencing decisions in the students association. According to one of the interviewees, “the delegate system puts in place ceremonial leaders, ‘admin puppets’ who are less effective in student issues” (interview, student leader, Kenyatta University Students Association, February, 12, 2022).

According to the interview respondents, there are loopholes created by The Universities Amendment Act (2016), which they stated include easy interference from university administrative leadership on student election, especially in the students council representatives. Given that the student council members are elected by few representatives from the electoral colleges, the electoral process denies students a say in choosing their leaders at the helm of students leadership, in the executive council. The “Duale Bill” ensures that “student representation is not a true representation of all university students” (interview, student leader, Moi University Students Organization, February 15, 2022). Instead, the bill has given rise to the election of student leaders who engage less with the student body and are socialized into boardroom politics with administrators in directing student issues.

The new practice is creating a disconnect between the students and the student body and their student leaders. For example, in 2019 students in Kenyatta University protested changes in administrative units (Fly over use over gate access issues) by themselves without any involvement of student leaders from Kenyatta University Students Association (interview, student leader, Kenyatta University Students Association, February, 12, 2022).

The same happened in Egerton University in 2019, when students protested a change in administrative operations about an installation of a new technology without their consultation. Due to lack of proper communication, this new practice prevented most students from registering for exams in time. While students were striking, the Egerton University Students Association leaders were actively engaging University Leadership through dialogue on the changes and by the time they were coming to terms on students demands, the protest had become chaotic and couldn't be stopped. The University was closed for a while and more than 200 students were suspended (interview, student leaders, Egerton University Students Association, February 12, 2022). According to one of the student leaders from UNSA, the delegate system killed the students' activism and aggression through which student bodies operated (interview, student leader, University of Nairobi Students Association (UNSA), February 12, 2022). Elected leaders through the delegate system are not active in mobilizing students to strikes and protests, and students mobilized themselves to strike without involvement of student leaders elected through the delegate system (interviews, Maseno University, Egerton University and Kenyatta University). As mentioned by one of the student leaders from Maseno University, “the delegate system is a way of killing the future of student activism. The system has killed students' leadership vibrancy, the elected leaders by the delegate system are undermined” (interview, student leader, Students Organization of Maseno University, February 12, 2022).

Finally, putting responsibility on a few individuals to elect council members raises risks of corruption in the delegate system (interview, student leader, University of Nairobi Students Association, February 12, 2022). Namely, “Duale Bill brought a lot of preferences, whereby a

lot of student delegates will prefer choosing the highest bidder financially to be UNSA overall president. The highest financial bidder wins” (ibid.).

The reasons for the government and universities to initiate the changes on students' governance and electoral process included overdominance of a single ethnic group in the former students' bodies leadership, gender representation was low, and minority groups were also under-represented. Minority groups here refer to persons with disabilities and international students. Single ethnic dominations gave room to ethnic radicalization with the leading ethnic group being involved in powerful mobilizations and receiving massive support from fellow members of the ethnic group and in unison this worked during mobilization of students strikes. Also, WOSWA leadership had complained to the University of Nairobi administrative leadership about lack of proper representation of Women in Students leadership structures, tasking the University to set up structures that would enable female students to actively participate in students' leadership and governance. To control ethnic dominance in students' leadership and decision processes and prevent disruption from radicalization by student leaders to strike, through Hon Duale, a change in the students' governance structures and electoral process was passed into law, which included equal gender, ethnic and minority groups representation.

This old type of governance brought forth most of the powerful student leaders at the helm of the student union who would call out for massive student protests and were highly respected by students to lead in time of protests and strikes. This power of the student leaders, such as especially in SONU, empowered them to challenge national policies and governance and made them appear as a threat to national governments. University Act (2016) changed the structure, arguably, to tame the student power to mobilize students to activism that has historically been attempted to be controlled unsuccessfully in the former President Moi regime. According to student leaders, “Duale Bill killed student activism” as it is meant to weaken student associations, and the elected student leaders are easily manipulated (interview, former student leader, University of Nairobi, February 12, 2022). “Duale Bill” herein refers to the University Amendment Bill 2016 which was sponsored by Hon Duale targeting Section 41 of the University Act, on restructuring of students' governance at the University level.

Student Involvement in National Politics and Contemporary Issues in Student Politics

Both former and current student leaders tend to be involved in national politics, including as candidates in the ongoing 2022 Kenya national elections. Student representation tends to be perceived as a breeding ground for future party political involvements (interview, student leader, University of Nairobi Students Association, February 12, 2022). Student leaders are also engaged in political campaigns helping develop political agenda and managing social media (interview, student leader, Students Organization of Maseno University, February 15, 2022). In turn, student leaders are often financed by politicians. According to interviewed student leaders (Moi University Students Organization, and Pwani University Students Association, February

15, 2022), politicians including their members of parliament and county assemblies gave them money to use for their campaign as they were pursuing their students' political campaign.

Apart from this involvement, the sentiment among student leaders and students is that currently KUSO as their representative association are not well represented in national politics and do not play an active role in national higher education policymaking (interview, students influencer, Maseno University, February 12, 2022). KUSO's impact and visibility in the student body are also questionable (interview, Former Student Leaders, Egerton University Students Association; Kenyatta University Students Association, February 12, 2022). Student representative council member of Kibabii University claimed that higher education issues are forgotten in political agenda; politicians are silent about higher education issues and are mostly focused on economy as key issues in their political manifestos (interview, student leader, Students Representative Council of Kibabii University, February 12, 2022).

The fear of punishment for student activism is very present in student politics in Kenya. One of the interviewed student leaders explained her experiences of punishments for being involved in a strike and its outcome that involved suspension and unfair hearing:

I was involved in a strike in 2019 which led to me being suspended among 200 other students at Egerton University. There were three categories of punishments in terms of suspension period given. While others were given a warning letter, the second group received one year suspension, and me in the third category was served two years suspension. I was a student leader in EUSA. In fact, during my hearing at the senate in petition for my reinstatement, the questions that were being raised had no relations with my position or involvement in the strike. Some were about my personal life. I felt threatened. Imagine, the university painted our pictures all over as criminals among the students and to the public. Upon reinstatement, the terms for my reinstatement was that I should never be involved as a student leader again, I should not run for any student elective post or be involved in student activism" (interview, Former student leader, Egerton University Students Association, February 12, 2022). One of the respondents interviewed said, "... suspensions of active student leaders in campus politics discourage students from actively participating in student politics and activism on campus" (interview, student leader, University of Nairobi Students Association, February 12, 2022). One of the students faced intimidation: "When we planned to protest against fee increments in 2021, we were being intimidated. I received a call from the OCS (officer in charge of the station) from Kabete Police, from his projections in the phone call, that was pure threats and intimidation. The strike was not successful.

(interview, student leader, University of Nairobi Students Association, February 12, 2022)

As discussed earlier, student activism has also weakened due to the amended University Act (2016). The University Act (2016) itself is one of the major issues student leaders mentioned in

the survey as challenges that needed to be addressed: “If the University amendment act 2016 is not revised, we will have higher learning institutions being run as secondary schools” (interview, student leader, University of Nairobi Students Association, February 12, 2022). Other pressing issues include poor living conditions in universities, lack of safety on campus (interview, student leader, Students Representative Council of Kibabii University, February 12, 2022) and issues with academic quality, such as lecturers issuing exams without completing the coursework (interview, student leader, Students Organization of Maseno University, February 12, 2022). Another major issue that causes strikes is HELB disbursement delays, and also the lecturers’ strike. Lecturers protested delayed payment issues. Their strike affected students who would stay out of classes and resolve to join lecturers in their strikes to push for quick interventions (interview, student leader, University of Nairobi Students Association, February 12, 2022).

Finally, interviewees observed a change in student culture marked by increasing individualism and anomie (interview, former student leader, University of Nairobi, February 12, 2022): “Students feel they lack issues affecting them as one and they only mind about what affects them—blame it on individualism and anomie.”

The academic staff too are perceived today as different from the past:

The academicians of the 1980s were filled with radicalism, which they taught right into their lecture halls; thus lecture halls became bubbling pots of activism. Academics taught emancipation from repression without paranoia or selfishness. Meanwhile, contemporary students focus on reading, passing examinations, graduating, and getting out into the highly competitive job market. To them, a student is intelligent as long as he or she grasps the reading, passes examination and graduates exemplarily. The result is “academic robots” who blindly conform to the repressive capitalism.

(interview, former student leader, University of Nairobi,
February 12, 2022)

Conclusion

The legislative changes enacted through the amended University Act in 2016 are reflection of the popular sentiment to students in general. According to the interviewed student leaders, students are viewed by the general public as unruly people, politicians see campus folks as angry, rowdy, pandemonium individuals. Kenya also has a distinct student culture which also uses specific language in reference to students and student politics. “Wisemen/Wise-ladies” refers to student organizers who lobby and lead demonstrations and operations. Also, they are seen as a group of politically correct students on campus. They are mostly informed about proceedings within university, and they influence students’ politics at their universities, because of their experiences and influence among students. “Mugo” metaphorically refers to a student leader who is a coward in the context of student activism. They are easy to manipulate and appear not to know much about student politics. “Generals” is a term used to refer to long-term players in student politics; they are seen as pandemonium guys. “Admin puppet” refers to individual student or student leaders who act as spies and report to university administration about student activism plans.

Just like the national governments, student associations in Kenya are very political in nature and provide a framework for student representation within higher education institutions, with a professional mandate to respond to students welfare needs and interests in higher education institutions. Kenyan domestic legal frameworks through the constitution of Kenya 2010 provide in Article 37 that every Kenyan has freedom and right to assemble peacefully, demonstrate, picket, and to present a petition to authorities. It is through these legal provisions that students at the universities base their activism and protests, especially in instances where dialogue proved ineffective in lobbying and advocating for students' interests both at the university and at the national level.

Student organizations representing students in the National scope are KUSO and WOSWA. However, WOSWA is more diplomatic in its engagement in student representation in national policy discourse, where protest and street demonstrations have been used, mostly to raise awareness about injustices like rape or femicide and to put pressure on authorities as well as to get public attention on the matters affecting girls in higher learning institutions. On the other hand, KUSO has been mostly adopting activism in its representation until its formalization in 2020, which came with lots of restrictions, thereby limiting the level of activism, to a point that some students no longer feel their impact in student activism anymore.

Universities in Kenya have an average annual enrollment of 522,170 students every year, which form 4.39 percent of the total Kenyan population. This mostly constitutes young adult population who mostly form part of first-time voters in Kenyan national election, making students votes appealing to national politicians during election period and effect their involvement in students elections at the university level mostly through financing student candidates running for student leadership in the students political bodies so as to keep in touch with the appealing students votes if their sponsored candidates occupy office in the students association.

Student politics in Kenya has been transforming and closely losing their critical role in defining national politics and governance. This is due to the impact of the University Amendment Act 2016. The Act creates a loophole for university administrations to infiltrate and influence who becomes elected, especially in the students' elective council, making the process easily corruptible and putting "admin puppets" into control of students' power. This has weakened student associations and their influence in activism at university level as well as at the national level.

The future of student activism in Kenya needs a revolution to restore its lost glory and this can happen only if the students unite to revolt university administration interference and influence in their electoral processes and revisit their past on how "comrades power" manifested, and how it worked for students activism. Comrades' power was a symbol of the students' power to unite to end social and institutional injustices including corruption.

Most of the student leaders interviewed felt that there was a need to revisit University Amendment Bill 2016 especially on the students election section, to restore it in a manner that all students are involved in electing all their leaders and not putting the responsibility on a few individuals.

Clause 18, Section 41 of the University Act 2016 creates a loophole for a weak student governance structure that is easy to compromise. The previous students electoral process was less likely to be influenced by administrators' interference and this brought forth very powerful student leaders who were highly related with independent students concerns and the students

unions were very effective in influencing social change and challenging institutional policy decisions at the university level and also at the national level.

Restructuring and rebranding of the historic SONU to UNSA diluted the predominant historic “unilateral power” that students had in mobilizing themselves in influencing and shaping institutional policies as well as social change. For instance, the Student Organization of Nairobi University (SONU) was effective in stopping universities’ consistent attempts to increase tuition fees when it existed in the past years. However, two years after the institutionalization and rebranding of SONU to University of Nairobi Students Association (UNSA), the University of Nairobi has been successful in increasing tuition fees by more than double. The University of Nairobi has previously been unsuccessful in attempting to heighten tuition fees under the leadership of SONU.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my supervisor from the University of Nairobi Institute of Development studies, Mr. John Murimi Njoka, for his support and encouragements during this study. I also thank all those current and former student leaders who gave us interviews, and special thanks to Prof. Manja Klemenčič for the mentorship and support during this study. I thank my daughter Leilani Princess for being understanding and my mom Elizabeth Ojwang for the moral and spiritual support.

References

- Altbach, P.G. (1984). In *Student Politics in the Third World* (2nd ed., Vol. 12, pp. 1–17) *Southeast Asian Journal of Social Science*. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24490822>
- Amutabi, M.N. (2002). Crisis and student protest in universities in Kenya. In *Examining the Role of Students in National Leadership and the Democratization Process* (2nd ed., Vol. 45, pp. 157–77). *African Studies Review*. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1514792>
- The Constitution of Kenya (Amendment) Bill, 2019* (July 04, 2019). Kenya Law. Retrieved 2022. [http://www.kenyalaw.org/kl/fileadmin/pdfdownloads/Constitution/HistoryoftheConstitutionofKenya/Bills\(2013–2019\)/2019/TheConstitutionofKenya\(Amendment\)Bill,2019.pdf](http://www.kenyalaw.org/kl/fileadmin/pdfdownloads/Constitution/HistoryoftheConstitutionofKenya/Bills(2013–2019)/2019/TheConstitutionofKenya(Amendment)Bill,2019.pdf) and <http://kenyalaw.org/kl/index.php?id=9631>
- Deutschmann, A. (2022). Education and politics. In *Student Activism for Elite Recruitment in Kenya* (pp. 1–12). *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*. DOI: 10.1080/02589001.2022.2034761
- Hodgkinson, D. and Melchiorre, L. (2019). Introduction: Student activism in an era of decolonization. *Africa* 89(S1): S1–S14.
- Kenya Gazette Supplement* (n.d.). University Amendment Act No 48 of 2016. July 24, 2022. http://kenyalaw.org/kl/fileadmin/pdfdownloads/Acts/2016/No._48_of_2016.pdf
- Kenya Gazette Supplement* (December 4, 2015). Kenya Gazette Supplement No. 194 (National Assembly Bills No. 66). Retrieved 2022, from http://kenyalaw.org/kl/fileadmin/pdfdownloads/bills/2015/Universities_Amendment_Bill_2015.pdf
- Klemenčič, M. (2012). Student representation in Western Europe: Introduction to the special issue. *European Journal of Higher Education* 2(1): 2–19.

- Klemenčič, M. (2014). Student power in a global perspective and contemporary trends in student organizing. *Studies in Higher Education* 39(3): 396–411.
- Klemenčič, M. (2020a). Student politics. In Shin, J.C. and Teixeira, P. (eds.), *International Encyclopedia of Higher Education Systems and Institutions*. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Klemenčič, M. (2020b). Student activism and student organizations. In David, Miriam E. and Amey Marilyn J. (eds.), *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Higher Education* (pp. 5v). SAGE.
- Klemenčič, M. and Yun Park, B. (2018). Student Politics: Between representation and activism. In Coates, H., Cant, B. and King, R. (eds.), *Handbook on the Politics of Higher Education* (pp. 468–86). Cheltenham: Edward Edgar Publishing.
- Klopp, J.M. and Orina, J.R. (2002). In *University Crisis, Student Activism, and the Contemporary Struggle for Democracy in Kenya* (1st ed., Vol. 45, pp. 43–76). African Studies Review.
- Laws of Kenya, University Act (n.d.). *University Act*. Rev. 2012 University Act. Retrieved 2022. http://kenyalaw.org/kl/fileadmin/pdfdownloads/Acts/UniversitiesAct_Cap210B.pdf
- Luescher-Mamashela, T., Klemenčič, M., Otieno Jowie, J. (eds.) (2015). Student Power in Africa. *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa* 3(1).
- Luescher-Mamashela, T., Klemenčič, M. and Otieno Jowie, J. (eds.) (2016). Student politics in Africa: Representation and activism. In *African Higher Education Dynamics Series* (Vol. 2). Capetown, South Africa: African Minds Publisher.
- The New York Times* (February 27, 1974). Rioting by students closes The University of Nairobi. June 27, 2022. <https://www.nytimes.com/1974/02/27/archives/rioting-by-students-closes-the-university-of-nairobi.html>
- Otieno, W. (2004). Student loans in Kenya: Past experiences, current hurdles, and opportunities for the future. *Journal of Higher Education in Africa/Revue de l'enseignement Supérieur En Afrique* 2(2): 75–99. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24486235>
- Smith, A.G. (1987). Delegate system. *Workplace Health & Safety* 35(10): 428.
- THE UNIVERSITIES AMENDMENT ACT 2016 (n.d.). Untitled. <https://www.kyu.ac.ke/phocadownload/THE%20UNIVERSITY%20AMENDMENT%20ACT%202016.pdf>
- UNIVERSITY ACT (n.d.). http://kenyalaw.org/kl/fileadmin/pdfdownloads/Acts/UniversitiesAct_Cap210B.pdf
- University Act* (2016). <https://www.knqa.go.ke/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Universities-Act-42-of-2012.pdf>
- The University of Nairobi Students Association Constitution* (2017). University of Nairobi. Retrieved 2022, from <https://uonbi.ac.ke/sites/default/files/The-University-of-Nairobi-Students-Association-Constitution.pdf>
- WOSWA. (n.d.). WOSWA. www.woswa.org. <http://www.woswa.org/about.html> <http://www.woswa.org/wedo.html> (accessed July 31, 2022).

Appendix

University Act, 2016: Section: 41. Students' Association. (1) Every university shall have a students' association composed of all students of the university. (1A) A students' association shall be governed by a students' council comprising of—(a) a Chairperson; (b) a Vice Chairperson who shall be of opposite gender with the Chairperson; (c) a Treasurer; (d) a Secretary-General who shall be the secretary to the Council; and (e) three other members to represent special interests of students. (1B) Every students' council shall be elected in accordance with this Act and its membership shall—(a) reflect national diversity; and No. 42 of 2012 Universities [Rev. 2016] [Issue 3] and (b) have not more than two-thirds of its members being of the same gender.

(1C) For purposes of conducting the election of the members of the student council referred to in subsection (1A), the students' association shall constitute itself into electoral colleges based on either academic departments, schools, or faculties, as may be appropriate. (1D) The students of each electoral college constituted under subsection (1C) shall elect three representatives— (a) from amongst persons who are not candidates under subsection (1A) and (b) of whom not more than two-thirds shall be of the same gender. (1E) The representatives of each electoral college shall elect the members of the student council within thirty days of the election under subsection (1D). (1F) A member of the student council shall hold office for a term of one year and may be eligible for re-election for one final term. (1G) A person who has held office as a member of the student council of a University for two terms is disqualified from election as a member of the student council of any other University or constituent college in Kenya. (1H) Every students' association shall, in consultation with the University, formulate and enact rules to govern the conduct of elections including regulation of campaigns, election financing, offences, and penalties. (1I) An election conducted pursuant to this section shall comply with the general principles of the Kenyan electoral system under Article 81 of the Constitution and the rules governing the election of members of the student council. (2) The functions of a Students' Council shall be to—(a) oversee and plan, in consultation with the Senate, students' activities for the promotion of academic, spiritual, moral, harmonious communal life, and social wellbeing of all students; (b) draw the attention of the appropriate authority, where necessary, special needs form particular students; (c) offer suggestions to the Senate or its equivalent on matters affecting the wellbeing of students; and (d) undertake such other functions as provided in its governance instrument as approved by the Council.

Part C

Student Politics and Representation in Asia, the Gulf States, and the Pacific

Contemporary Student Representation and Organization in Southeast Asia

Claryce Jiawen Lum

Introduction

While student politics was a notable driver of twentieth-century social transformation, its influence and traction have varied since. The European Students' Union (ESU), the first global regional student umbrella organization, is active in politics and has a significant impact on national and regional higher education policy (Altbach, 2013, 2016; Klemenčič, 2012a, 2012b; Zgaga, 2014). In comparison, student movements from the twentieth century that took place in Latin America, the United States of America (USA), Japan, and Southeast Asia (SEA) do not seem to have the same presence today (Altbach, 1984, 2016). In literature on contemporary national politics of SEA, student actors appear peripheral (Loh and Öjendal, 2005; Sinpeng and Kuhonta, 2012). In studies that do focus on student politics in the region, many cover anti-systemic and disruptive dimensions of student politics; few offer insights on current institutionalized forms of student organization (Manning, 2017; Weiss, Aspinall and Thompson, 2012).

In this chapter, I provide an overview of how students in SEA—specifically the ten member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)¹: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam—are organized and represented in higher education policymaking and governance at institutional and national levels. In presenting my findings, I offer a historical overview of student politics in the region, an outline of national comparisons within and beyond the region, and suggestions for further research.

This chapter condenses findings from my 2017 thesis, *Scolasticus (A) Politicus: Typologizing Student Representation and Organization in Southeast Asia* (Lum, 2017), developed for the Master of Arts in Global Studies program at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin Germany and FLACSO Argentina. I apply Manja Klemenčič's typologies of national student organization characteristics (2012a, 2014b, 2016; Luescher and Klemenčič, 2016) and national systems of student representation and interest intermediation (2012a; Klemenčič, Luescher and Mugume, 2016; Luescher and Klemenčič, 2016) to the analysis of original data I collected between July 2016 and April 2017 for the DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service), a consortium partner of the European Union (EU) Support to Higher Education in the ASEAN Region (SHARE) program.

I end my introduction with a note on my research methodology and the implications of recent developments on validity. As this is an understudied field, information on the available universe

of sample populations did not exist at the point of study. I therefore supplemented my literature review with qualitative nonrandom snowball sampling for primary data, beginning with an initial group of respondents identified through personal and professional networks, and subsequently nonrandom leads gleaned from informant networks that included representatives from institutional and national student organizations, youth-related organizations, the government, nongovernmental organizations and academia. I carried out informal and formal qualitative interviews and semi-structured qualitative questionnaires in person and through electronic correspondence, focusing on verifying data, clarifying organizational structures and programs, and obtaining leads to respondents with further insights. To supplement primary data collected through sampling, I referred to other types of primary data including historical and legislative documents, speeches, reports, newspaper articles, periodicals, and empirical studies, including reports commissioned by the Commonwealth Secretariat (2016), World Bank (Saint, 2009), SHARE (2016), and UNESCO-SEAMEO RIHED (2006). Throughout the process, I compared primary data with secondary data from my literature review of publications on SEA higher education, student politics, and regional history. A comprehensive account of sources and tool samples can be found in my original thesis (Lum, 2017). While the findings presented were valid in 2017, the impact of recent developments in SEA certainly needs investigation. Change factors include political developments in Myanmar, the Philippines, Cambodia, Indonesia, Thailand, and Malaysia between 2018 and 2023, as well as the backdrop of broader economic and social changes related to Covid-19. I hope that this modest snapshot of SEA student organization at a moment in time will inform future research on the evolving identity of SEA students.

The Rise and Fall of Student Politics in SEA

Intertwined with Independence Movements and Social Change

The history of student politics in SEA is intertwined with the region's independence struggles. Factors that shaped SEA include centuries of colonial invasion, rivalry, rule, and decline; brutal Second World War occupation; the Communist threat; internal conflicts and civil wars; authoritarian regimes like the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia; and the aftereffects of international conflict such as the Pacific War, the Cold War, two Indo-China wars, and a Sino-Soviet "proxy war" (Owen, 1999, pp. 139 ff.; Tarling, 1999a, pp. xvi–xvii ff.).

Various newly independent states in the region emerged in this context with their economies at their weakest (Owen, 1999; Yong, 1999). Industrial and service sectors of SEA were devastated, with factories, power plants, warehouses, communications networks, hospitals, and universities destroyed (Owen, 1999). Warfare between attacking and retreating powers devastated infrastructure, poisoned agriculture, and decimated populations. While figures on damages across the region are rare, the example of Burma (now Myanmar) is revealing: at the end of the Second World War, Burma was "thrown back a century" in infrastructure (Andrus, 1948, in Owen, 1999, p. 139). All of its oil refineries, 90 percent of ships, 85 percent of railroads, bridges, and locomotives, and 70 percent of roads, docks, and factories were destroyed (Owen, 1999).

The struggles of nationhood catalyzed students' stake in national sociopolitical agendas. Following the Second World War, the legitimacy of occupying powers waned (Owen, 1999), and US and European civil rights movements raised awareness of student influence (Loh, Liao, Lim and Seng, 2013, Manning, 2017, Weiss, Aspinall and Thompson, 2012). Students' desire to adopt agentic orientations was bolstered by increased public legitimacy of student movements and the relevance of revolutionary social action (Owen, 1999, Weiss, Aspinall and Thompson, 2012). Finally, the traditionally elite status of students and affiliations with the interests of subaltern classes led to high public regard for the moral authority of student leaders (Aspinall, 2012, Yong, 1999, Win Min, 2012). Student identities therefore then became tightly interwoven with community obligations as well as cultural and religious ethos.

These conditions framed student politics in the early independence years of SEA states. Scholarly discourse often spotlights student activist backgrounds of nationalist figures such as Indonesian leaders Sukarno, Mohammed Hatta, and Sutan Sjahrir (Aspinall, 2012), Myanmar's Aung San and U Nu (Win Min, 2012), and Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew (Weiss, 2012). The collective role of students as political actors in post-independence regime change is also often highlighted, for example, in the fall of Sukarno's regime in favor of Suharto's New Order in the 1960s and 1970s in Indonesia (Aspinall, 2012); deposing of authoritarian governments in Thailand (Kongkirati, 2012), Myanmar (Weiss, 2012), and the Philippines between the 1960s and 1980s (Abinales, 2012, Astorga-Garcia, 1970); the Kabataang Makabayan revolutionary movement, the First Quarter Storm, and the national boycotts of the Philippines between 1977 and 1980 (Abinales, 2012, Astorga-Garcia, 1970); and post-independence struggles of Malaya resulting in the split between Malaysia and Singapore (Loh, Liao, Lim and Seng, 2013, Weiss, 2012).

Anti-regime student politics is therefore extensively covered in historical and political assessments of twentieth-century nationalist movements in SEA. Accounts include *The University Socialist Club and the Contest for Malaya: The Tangled Strands of Modernity* (Loh, Liao, Lim and Seng, 2013), *Students' Role in the Movement for Democracy in Myanmar* (Das, 1994), *The Democratisation Process and the Role of Students: A Case Study of the Student Movement in Thailand* (Shyam, 2009), *Student Activism in Malaysia: Crucible, Mirror, Sideshow* (Weiss, 2011), and *Student Activism in Asia: Between Protest and Powerlessness* (Weiss and Aspinall, 2012). Literature on student politics in Myanmar also places emphasis on antagonistic relationships, such as student and civil protests of 1920, 1936, 1962, 1974–6, 1988, and 1996, culminating in the twelve-year closure and decentralization of universities between 1988 and 2000 (Weiss, Aspinall and Thompson, 2012, Win Min, 2012). Adversarial ties between the state and students are shown in Malaysian student politics literature, such as the curtailment of scope and degree of student organization by the *Akta Universiti dan Kolej Universiti* (AUKU, or Universities and University Colleges Act, UUCA) enacted in 1971, decentralizing student organization in favor of university authority (Fadzil and Samsu, 2015, Weiss, 2012). Similarly, literature on student politics in Indonesia spotlights state-student clashes. Accounts include state responses to the *Reformasi* movement of the 1980s and 1990s, followed by the co-opting of student groups by Suharto's New Order (Joesoef, 1984, in Weiss, 2012, Yong, 1999) and the 1978 Normalization of Campus Life policy depoliticizing campuses and controlling student bodies and the media (Aspinall, 2012, Weiss, 2012).

Decline and Delegitimization of Student Politics in Southeast Asia

Today, student politics in SEA has declined in stature and legitimacy in public imagination and scholarly attention. Reasons include governance structures, developmentalism, massification of higher education, and diversification of student profiles.

The turbulent post-Second World War environment solidified the power of nationalist elites and new political institutions in SEA (Owen, 1999; Tarling, 1999b; Yong, 1999), and ASEAN was created in 1967 to promote peace through economic cooperation and interdependence (Tarling, 1999a). Economic nationalism and state-centered intervention characterized SEA's newly independent states (Owen, 1999) and "autocratic leaders declared political participation an unaffordable luxury" (Weiss, Aspinall and Thompson, 2012, p. 2). Popular support for regimes was gained not through democratic representation but through economic interests, social mobility, growing wages, and access to labor and industrial markets (Owen, 1999; Yong, 1999). Close cooperation and co-optation between civil and military powers, state elites, technocrats, and middle-class professionals emerged as the norm, resulting in political closure and nondemocratic rule (Weiss, Aspinall and Thompson, 2012). Centralization of power, weakening of civil society, and promotion of political passivity (Owen, 1999; Yong, 1999) led to the decline of student politics of SEA toward the end of the twentieth century.

The massification of market-oriented higher education systems (Lucksanawong, 2016; Ratanawijitrasin, 2015) contributed to the decline of elite status of students and heterogeneity in profiles that cleaved solidarity between students and civil society allies (Sipadan, 2016; Weiss, Aspinall and Thompson, 2012). In addition, diversification of post-independence sociopolitical agendas diminished the legitimacy of student movements. Concerns included suspicions of movements being manipulated by political factions, and the opportunity cost of political activity becoming too great for students from increasingly diverse socioeconomic backgrounds (Aspinall, 2012; delas Nieves, personal communication, 2016; Kuntjoro-Jakti, personal communication, 2016; Lucksanawong, 2016; Sipadan, 2016). These factors, coupled with repressive state tactics, diminished collective student identity agency led to the rise of consolidated statist systems of student interest intermediation today.

Redefinition of Students in Southeast Asia as Consumer-Stakeholders

Anti-systemic politics is just one form of political behavior, especially for SEA student politics shaped by higher education internationalization, marketization, and managerial corporatism. Today, universities are conceptualized as human resource developers and service providers, and students as human resources and consumers (Klemenčič, 2015; Naidoo, Shankar and Veer, 2011, 2015, p. 263; UNESCO-IESALC, 2011).

All ten ASEAN member states have embarked on ambitious intra-regional and inter-regional projects to internationalize higher education (Manning and Bhatnagar, 2004; UNESCO-SEAMEO RIHED, 2006). Actors and projects include the ASEAN University Network (AUN); the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) Regional Centre for Higher Education Development (RIHED); the ASEAN regional research citation index; the ASEAN

regional credit transfer system; ASEAN Higher Education Clusters; the European Union-ASEAN Support to Higher Education in the ASEAN Region (SHARE) project; and the ASEAN Quality Assurance Network (AQAN) (Aphijanyathan, 2010; EURAXESS, 2016; Knight, 2012; SHARE, 2017). SEAMEO RIHED, SHARE, and the ASEAN Secretariat are in the midst of developing an ASEAN higher education common space with features similar to those of the EHEA, such as multilateral student mobility programs, Academic Credit Transfer for Asia (ACTFA), and the AUN ASEAN Credit Transfer System (ACTS) (Ratanawijitrasin, 2015).

Student intermediation in education is therefore a form of market capital and consumer feedback for quality control and competitive differentiation (Klemenčič, 2015). Students are increasingly recognized as civil society actors in institutional governance (Brooks, 2016; Klemenčič, 2012a, 2014, 2016). The ESU, for instance, is a resource partner and actor in higher education regionalization beyond the EHEA region, notably that of ASEAN, signaling the competencies and political recognition of students in regional higher education decision-making (SEAMEO RIHED, 2008; SHARE, 2016). To reflect greater representativeness, interest in and demand for an ASEAN counterpart to the ESU has grown at national and institutional levels (Gajaseeni, personal communication, 2016; Liermann, personal communication, 2016). The development of the ASEAN University Student Council Union (ASEAN Secretariat, JICE & JENESYS, 2017), which appears to be a counterpart to the ESU, is in progress.

While interest in the study of contemporary student politics in the world has begun to move beyond reductive antagonistic paradigms, alternative scholarly accounts are few. *Student Activism in Asia: Between Protest and Powerlessness* (2012) edited by Weiss and Aspinall is a notable contribution, offering historical accounts of selected cases of student politics in East Asia (China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, South Korea) as well as some SEA states (Indonesia, Myanmar, Malaysia, Thailand, and the Philippines). Even in these accounts, the focus is on networks of student mobilizations and state-student relations. We see little coverage of historical and institutional developments impacting student agency, and little empirical coverage of contemporary SEA student representation and organization (Assistant Director of the ASEAN Secretariat, personal communication, 2017; Klemenčič, personal communication, 2017; Liermann, personal communication, 2016). The persistent association of student politics with transgressive movements obscures moderate, systemic, and equally important forms of student politics (delas Nieves, personal communication, 2016; student from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, personal communication, 2016). More diverse and updated accounts, especially those of underrepresented Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, Singapore, and Vietnam, will support a more accurate overview of the evolution of student politics in the region.

Contemporary Student Representation and Organization in SEA

There are few comprehensive conceptual frameworks on modern student politics despite the rising acknowledgment of students as political players in higher education governance (Klemenčič, 2014, 2012a; Marginson and Rhoades, 2002; Zgaga, 2014). Klemenčič, Jens Jungblut, Thierry

Luescher, and Rachel Brooks are amongst those pushing for empirical and conceptual accounts of student representation, many of which are relevant to understanding SEA.

Klemenčič’s Typology of National Student Organization Characteristics

Academic studies of higher education regionalization and student representation beyond European contexts are emerging. A recent publication focusing on national contexts in Africa is *Student Politics in Africa: Representation and Activism* (2016) edited by Luescher, Klemenčič, and Jowi. A second recent effort is *Student Politics and Protests: International Perspectives* (2016) edited by Brooks, featuring case studies from North America, the Middle East, Latin America, East Asia, and the Pacific. The development of student agency at the regional level in the EHEA has been greatly aided by national student organizations (NSOs),² and the study of

Table 11.1 Typology of national student organization (NSO) characteristics

Characteristics	As social movements	As interest groups
Organizational structure	Network-like; loosely integrated; limited functional differentiation	Hierarchically ordered with strong centralized coordination; highly functionally differentiated
Internal resources	Fluctuating administrative funding; volunteer-based	Secure administrative funding; professionalized administration
Political agenda	Transversal, next to sectorial; focusing on broader political issues (solidarity, human rights, social justice, egalitarian values, democratization, anti-globalization)	Predominantly sectorial, focusing on organization, substance, and processes of education and student welfare
Mode of action	Noninstitutionalized forms of claim-making (protests, boycotts, campaigns)	Lobbying and political advocacy; provision of services
Outputs	Mobilization capacity expertise and information	Representativeness (legitimization capacity), expertise and information, implementation capacity
Examples of national student associations in Europe	Unione degli Universitari (UDU Italy); Union Nationale des Étudiants de (UNEF France); Fédération des Associations Générales Etudiantes (Fage France); Coordinadora de Representantes de Estudiantes de las Universidades Públicas (CREUP Spain)	Norsk studentorganisasjon (NSO Norway); National Union of Students (NUS UK); freier zusammenschluss von studentInnenschaften (fzs Germany)

Sources: Adapted by Lum (2017) from Klemenčič (2012a, p. 8) and Klemenčič (2014b, slide 11).

NSO organizational characteristics helps us better compare and understand the state of student politics today. Klemenčič's typology of NSOs, summarized in Table 11.1, is one conceptual framework for the study of student politics at a national level.

Five characteristics that distinguish NSOs include: organizational structure, internal resources, political agenda, mode of action, and outputs (Klemenčič, 2012a, 2014b). On the left of the typology, NSOs functioning as social movements are reflective of pluralistic, noncorporatist, or anti-statist governance models. Such NSOs engage in the logic of membership, prioritizing claims to student interests while resisting state subordination (Klemenčič, 2012a). These NSOs engage in activism and conflictual modes of claim-making, including protests and boycotts (della Porta and Diani 2006; Klemenčič, 2012a, p. 9), and tend to have unstable access to resources, resulting in informal, network-like operations (Klemenčič, 2012a). On the other side are NSOs functioning as interest groups, which are typical of corporatist and policy network governance models. Such NSOs have a strategic exchange relationship with government actors and intermediary associations (Klemenčič, 2012a). These NSOs focus on trust-based exchanges of student capital resources (including expertise, legitimization of policies, and control of members) for advocacy and representation within institutional channels of interest intermediation (Klemenčič, 2012a). NSOs functioning as interest groups have greater hierarchical arrangements, differentiation of roles, and structured resource arrangements (Klemenčič, 2012a).

Klemenčič's typology above offers a set of variables for understanding and discussing NSO organization and operations. While useful, it is limited in analysis of national systems of student representation and influence. A supplementary comparative framework is Klemenčič's typology of national systems of student representation and interest intermediation (2012a). Summarized in Table 11.2, this illustrates the spread and frequency of four types of national systems of state-NSO relations: corporatist, neo-corporatist, pluralist, and statist (Klemenčič, 2012a; Luescher and Klemenčič, 2016).

Corporatist and neo-corporatist systems have a limited number of NSOs with legitimate national representation (Klemenčič, 2012a, p. 11; Luescher and Klemenčič, 2016, pp. 175–6). While NSOs in pluralist systems have higher autonomy, they compete more for access to policy processes and resources (Klemenčič, 2012a, p. 11; Luescher and Klemenčič, 2016, pp. 178–9). Statist systems differ from other types as they do not explicitly recognize NSOs in the intermediation of students' interests; instead, state processes drive policymaking (Luescher and Klemenčič, 2016, p. 180).

National student interest representation and intermediation mechanisms in statist systems appear to have little or no student agency in contrast to the other three systems, which feature more student agency (Luescher and Klemenčič, 2016). In pluralist regimes, NSOs are recognized by the state and included in public policy processes, but political power is distributed and no NSO is given a monopoly in representation. NSOs under pluralist regimes, then, have more freedom to pursue their own goals and interests (Klemenčič, 2012a, p. 11; Luescher and Klemenčič, 2016, pp. 178–9). Corporatist and neo-corporatist systems therefore have stronger exchange relationships with the state, affording greater influence and representational monopoly in policymaking processes and resources (Luescher and Klemenčič, 2016, pp. 175–6). The distinction between corporatist and neo-corporatist systems is the degree of state influence or intervention, with corporatist models having low NSO operational autonomy, and neo-corporatist models featuring higher autonomy (Luescher and Klemenčič, 2016, pp. 175–6).

Table 11.2 Typology of national systems of student representation and interest intermediation

Type/ Characteristics	Corporatist	Neo-corporatist	Pluralist	Statist
Number of intermediary national student organizations ³ (NSOs)	Effectively one or a limited number exist and/or state-recognized NSOs*	Effectively one or a limited number of exist and/or state-recognized NSOs**	Several exist and/or recognized NSOs; no hierarchical order between or control of NSOs by NSOs or the state**	No exist and/or state-recognized NSOs*
State-NSO relations	State recognition; privileged formal or informal access to public policy processes Exchange relationship; state influence or intervention present	State recognition; privileged formal or informal access to public policy processes Exchange relationship; high NSO autonomy from state influence or intervention	State recognition; state willingness to provide formal or informal access to public policy processes; no NSO monopoly of representation High NSO autonomy from state influence	Little or no interaction between the state and NSOs collectively (state-centeredness characterizes policy-making decisions on student affairs)

Sources: Adapted by Lum (2017) from Klemenčič (2012a, pp. 10–16); Klemenčič (2014b, slide 7); Klemenčič (2016); Luescher and Klemenčič (2016, pp. 172–9).

*Precludes informal methods of incorporating student representative groups.

**May consist of informal and formal methods of incorporating student representative groups.

Typology of National Systems of Student Representation and Interest Intermediation in Southeast Asia

Table 11.3 maps SEA national systems of student representation to Klemenčič’s typologies, which feature six countries in Europe (Klemenčič, 2012a) and ten countries in Africa (Klemenčič, Luescher and Mugume, 2016; Luescher and Klemenčič, 2016). In SEA, statist national systems of student representation and interest intermediation appear to dominate, with exceptions being corporatist models in Indonesia and Vietnam, and a pluralist model in the Philippines.

Table 11.4 elaborates on Table 11.3 by presenting data on three common types of organizations responsible for intermediating student interests in each AMS.

The NSO is the first prominent category of student representative organization. Three of the ten AMSes—Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam—have this type of organization. Institutional student representative organizations are common. The majority of colleges have procedures in place to ensure the establishment of a campus-wide student representation mechanism.

Table 11.3 Typology of national systems of student representation and interest intermediation in Africa, Europe, and Southeast Asia (in **bold**)

Corporatist	Neo-corporatist		Pluralist		Statist
	Formalized	Informal	Formalized	Informal	
<u>Southeast</u>	<u>Africa</u>	<u>Africa</u>	<u>Africa</u>		<u>Africa</u>
<u>Asia</u>	Botswana	Burundi	South Africa		Ethiopia
Indonesia	Ghana	Cameroon	Zimbabwe		<u>Southeast</u>
Vietnam	Uganda	Kenya	<u>Europe</u>		<u>Asia</u>
		Nigeria	France		Brunei
		<u>Europe</u>	Italy		Darussalam
		Norway	Spain		Cambodia
		The UK	<u>Southeast</u>		Lao PDR
		Germany	<u>Asia</u>		Malaysia
			The		Myanmar
			Philippines		Singapore
					Thailand

Sources: Information on European and African national systems compiled by Lum (2017) based on Klemenčič (2012a, p. 14), Klemenčič, Luescher and Mugume (2016, p. 15), and Luescher and Klemenčič (2016, pp. 175 ff.). Data on SEA collected and verified in 2017 (Lum, 2017).

Apart from NSOs, there are student interest groups at every university, including those representing academic faculties, sports, professional development, recreation, politics, or religions. Institutional student organizations do not usually possess influence in student representation and organization at a national level, although there are exceptions. The Dagon University Law Students Association (DULSA) of Myanmar and the Student Cultural Association of the University of the Philippines (SCAUP) are two such exceptions (Astorga-Garcia, 1970, Chief Executive Director of Youth Social Force Myanmar, personal communication, 2016). Instead of NSOs, some institutional organizations may have legitimate national representation (Luescher and Klemenčič, 2016). The University of the Philippines University Student Council (UPUSC) is one such organization. Student representatives are involved in formal and informal consultation and working groups or projects of government agencies (delas Nieves, personal communication, 2016). The prevalence of student organizations at institutional levels confirms the centrality of higher education institutions in shaping opportunities, structures, resources, and schemas of contemporary student agency in SEA.

The third type of student representation organization is that of governmental organizations. The representation of students’ interests in national and regional SEA education policy is mostly carried out by government organizations and agencies. Although there is currently limited publicly accessible information on the legal frameworks of governmental organizations managing student concerns, one exception is Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and the DepEd of the Philippines. Constitutions and by laws specifying standards and procedures related to student representation are publicly available, and these stipulate student government or councils as required participants in formal consultative processes on tuition fee raises of private

Table 11.4 Data on key types of student representation organizations in each ASEAN member state (AMS)

Organization type/ASEAN member state (AMS)	National Student Organizations	Institutional Student Organizations (aggregated interests of the student body/specific interest groups)	Governmental Student/Youth Organization/Agency
Brunei Darussalam	None (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2016, p. 65)	Persatuan Mahasiswa/Mahasiswa Universiti Brunei Darussalam (University of Brunei Darussalam Students' Association, or PMUBD)	Ministry of Education (MOE) Brunei Darussalam
Cambodia	None (student from Royal University of Phnom Penh of Cambodia, personal communication, 2016)	Student Association of Royal University of Phnom Penh (SARUPP)	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MoEYS) Kingdom of Cambodia
Indonesia	Aliansi Badan Eksekutif Mahasiswa Seluruh Indonesia (BEM SI, or All-Indonesia Student Executive Board Alliance) (BEM Seluruh Indonesia, 2016)	Keluarga Mahasiswa Universitas Gadjah Mada (KM UGM, or Universitas Gadjah Mada Students Association) Badan Eksekutif Mahasiswa Universitas Indonesia (BEM UI, or University of Indonesia Student Executive Board) Keluarga Mahasiswa Institut Teknologi Bandung (ITB Student Family)	<i>Kementerian Riset, Teknologi dan Pendidikan Tinggi (RISTEKDIKTI)</i> , or Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education of the Republic of Indonesia) <i>Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan</i> (Kemdikbud, or the Ministry of Education and Culture) <i>Komite Nasional Pemuda Indonesia</i> (KNPI, or Indonesian National Youth Council) Ministry of Education (MOE) Lao PDR
Lao PDR	None (UNESCO-IBE, 2011)	No data	Ministry of Education (MOE) Lao PDR

(continued)

Organization type/ ASEAN member state (AMS)	National Student Organizations	Institutional Student Organizations (aggregated interests of the student body/ specific interest groups)	Governmental Student/Youth Organization/Agency
Malaysia	None (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2016, p. 65)	Persatuan Mahasiswa Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (PMUKM, or the National University of Malaysia Students' Association) Majlis Perwakilan Pelajar Penggerak Mahasiswa Universiti Malaya (MPP PPM UM, or University of Malaya Student Representative Council Student Movement) Dewan Perundingan Pelajar Universiti Sains Malaysia (DPP USM, or University of Science, Malaysia Students' Consultative Assembly)	Kementerian Pendidikan Tinggi (Ministry of Higher Education) Malaysia Kementerian Pelajaran (Ministry of Education) Malaysia
Myanmar	None (Chief Executive Director of Youth Social Force, Myanmar, personal communication, 2016; representative from the International Relation Office Mandalay University, personal communication, 2016)	Yangon Technological University Students' Union Myanmar Maritime University Students' Union (MMU SU) Dagon University Law Students Association (DULSA)	Ministry of Education (MOE) Myanmar
Philippines	National Union of Students of the Philippines (NUSP) Student Council Alliance of the Philippines (SCAP) League of Filipino Students (LFS)	Sangguniang Mag-aaral (Student Council), Ateneo de Manila University The Council of Student Organizations, De La Salle University University Student Council (USC), University of the Philippines Student Cultural Association of the University of the Philippines (SCAUP) (Astorga-Garcia, 1970)	Commission on Higher Education of the Philippines (CHED) Department of Education (DepEd) of the Philippines National Youth Commission (NYC) of the Philippines

Singapore	None (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2016, p. 66)	Nanyang Technological University Students' Union (NTUSU) National University of Singapore Students' Union (NUSSU) Singapore Management University Students' Association (SMUSA)	Ministry of Education (MOE) Singapore National Youth Council (NYC) Singapore
Thailand	None (Phumvat, 2005, in Kongkirati, 2012, p. 252; student from Chulalongkorn University Thailand, personal communication, 2016)	Student Union of Chiang Mai University (CMU) Chulalongkorn University Student Union (CUSU) Mahidol University Student Union (MUSU) Student Council, Student Administrative Board, Prince of Songkla University	Ministry of Education (MOE) Thailand National Council for Child and Youth Development (NCYD)
Vietnam	Vietnam National Union of Students (VNUS, 2016)	Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union and Student Association, Vietnam National University, Hanoi Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union and Student Association, Vietnam National University, Ho Chi Minh City Can Tho University Communist Youth Union	Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) Vietnam Vietnam Youth Federation (VYF)

Source: Data verified in 2017 (Lum, 2017).

schools, colleges, and universities (DO No. 16, Department of Education (DepEd), Republic of the Philippines, 1992), as well as the institutionalization of the Center for Students and Co-Curricular Affairs department of DepEd mandated to organize and institutionalize formal student governments in public secondary schools nationwide (DepEd, Republic of the Philippines, 2016).

In the case of the EHEA and ESU, regional structures of student organization and agency are evident, but none of the existing SEA regional student representation and organization structures identified play a comparable role, nor are they yet significant in influencing national systems of student interest intermediation. Regional organizations in SEA are based on loose networks such as the ASEAN University Network Student Leaders Forum (ASLF) and the SEAMEO Youth Leadership Forum (YLF). Others are oriented around international and diplomatic agendas, such as the Asia-Pacific Youth Organisation (APYO), Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative (YSEALI), and ASEAN Youth Volunteer Programme (AYVP). Yet others reference program agendas such as the Committee for ASEAN Youth Cooperation (CAYC), the ASEAN Youth Organization (AYO), and the Asia Law Students Association (Chief Executive Director of Youth Social Force Myanmar, personal communication, 2016). There is growing interest in an ASEAN counterpart to ESU student agency structures in SEA. As of 2016, the AUN proposed the establishment of a regional platform for student representation (Gajasen, personal communication, 2016; Kuntjoro-Jakti, personal communication, 2016), and as of 2017, the first ASEAN University Student Council Union Conference (AUSCUC) was organized by the ASEAN Secretariat in collaboration with the Japan International Cooperation Centre (JICE) and the JENESYS Programme (Japan-East Asia Network of Exchange for Students and Youths), a multilateral regional collaborative project aiming at institutionalizing the establishment and continuation of an ASEAN University Student Council Union (ASEAN Secretariat, JICE & JENESYS, 2017). The AUSCUC is now in its fifth year, and the annual conference brings together students and experts to discuss topics such as digitalization, income inequality, and education and skilling for young people in ASEAN (AUSCUC, 2022).

As counterpart regional structures comparable to the ESU are not yet present in SEA, NSO structures are the next most relevant level of investigation. Table 11.5 breaks down features of five NSOs studied according to variables of Klemenčič's typologies (2012a, 2016).

Corporatist National Systems in Southeast Asia: Indonesia and Vietnam

In SEA, Indonesia and Vietnam have corporatist national systems that promote student interests. Aliansi Badan Eksekutif Mahasiswa Seluruh Indonesia (BEM SI or All-Indonesia Student Executive Board Alliance) demonstrates interest-group-type NSO organizational characteristics, and is the only NSO representing student unions or senates of universities across Indonesia (BEM SI, 2016). Legislated in the BEM SI Decree of the National Congress, BEM SI enjoys formalization of state recognition and monopoly over student representation in public policy processes (BEM SI, 2016), which are corporatist features. BEM SI's modes of action appear sectorial; members are consulted for input that is escalated to regional and national leaders, and BEM SI transmits national and regional news to members, who implement regional guidelines and processes on campus agreed on at National Conferences of the Alliance (BEM SI, 2016). Based

Table 11.5. Typology of national student organizations (NSOs) and systems of representation in Southeast Asia

Breakdown of nationally significant NSOs	Indonesia	The Philippines	The Philippines	Vietnam
NSO and national system level characteristics	Aliansi Badan Eksekutif Mahasiswa Seluruh Indonesia (BEM SI)	National Union of Students of the Philippines (NUSP)	Student Council Alliance of the Philippines (SCAP)	Vietnam National Union of Students (VNUS)
NSO: Organizational structure	Interest group features (hierarchical; centralized; functional differentiation)	Interest group features (hierarchical; centralized; functional differentiation)	Interest group features (hierarchical; centralized; functional differentiation)	Interest group features (hierarchical; centralized; functional differentiation)
NSO: Internal resources	Interest group features (appointed representatives; full-time staff; professionalized administration)	Hybrid features (primarily social movement type; volunteers; full-time staff)	Hybrid features (primarily interest group type; volunteers; full-time staff; professionalized administration; fluctuating external and internal funding)	Interest group features (volunteers; appointed representatives; full-time staff; professionalized administration)
NSO: Political agenda	Interest group features (sectorial: focusing on organization, substance and processes of education and student welfare)	Hybrid features (primarily social movement type; transversal political action; social change relevant to education and healthcare)	Hybrid features (primarily social movement type; transversal political action; social change relevant to education)	Interest group features (sectorial: focusing on organization, substance and processes of education and student welfare)

(continued)

Breakdown of nationally significant NSOs	Indonesia	The Philippines	The Philippines	The Philippines	Vietnam
NSO: Mode of action	Interest group features (formalized participation; institutionalized lobbying and advocacy; service provision)	Hybrid features (primarily interest group type: formalized participation; institutionalized lobbying and advocacy; service provision; noninstitutional claim-making)	Hybrid features (primarily interest group type: formalized participation; institutionalized lobbying and advocacy; service provision; noninstitutional claim-making)	Hybrid features (primarily social movement type; noninstitutional claim-making; pressure group lobbying and advocacy; service provision)	Interest group features (formalized participation; institutionalized lobbying and advocacy; service provision)
NSO: Outputs	Interest group features (legitimation/representativeness expertise and information)	Interest group features (legitimation; representativeness expertise and information)	Interest group features (legitimation/representativeness expertise and information)	Social movement features (mobilization expertise and information)	Interest group features (legitimation/representativeness expertise and information)
National system: Number of intermediary national student organizations (NSOs)	Corporatist/ Neo-corporatist features (effectively one existent and/ or state-recognized NSO)	Pluralist/ Neo-corporatist NSOs; no hierarchical order between or control of NSOs or the state)	Pluralist/ Neo-corporatist features (several existent and/ or recognized NSOs by NSOs or the state)	Corporatist/ Neo-corporatist features (effectively one existent and/ or state-recognized NSO)	Corporatist/ Neo-corporatist features (effectively one existent and/ or state-recognized NSO)

National system: State-NSO relations	Corporatist/ Neo-corporatist features (privileged state recognition; formal access to public policy processes) Corporatist features (exchange relationship; state influence or intervention)	Pluralist/ Neo-corporatist features (recognition from the state; formal or informal access to public policy processes) Pluralist/ Neo-corporatist features (high NSO autonomy from state influence or intervention)	Pluralist/ Neo-corporatist features (recognition from the state; formal or informal access to public policy processes) Pluralist/ Neo-corporatist features (high NSO autonomy from state influence or intervention)	Pluralist/ Neo-corporatist features (nonrecognition from the state; no secure access to public policy processes; noninstitutional forms of claim making) Pluralist/ Neo-corporatist features (high NSO autonomy from state influence or intervention) Social movement; pluralist	Corporatist/ Neo-corporatist features (privileged state recognition; formal access to public policy processes) Corporatist features (exchange relationship; state influence or intervention)
Proposed NSO and national systems typology categories	Interest group; corporatist	Interest group; pluralist	Interest group; pluralist	Interest group; corporatist	Interest group; corporatist

Sources: Variables adapted from Klemenčič's typologies (2012a, 2014b, 2016; Luescher and Klemenčič, 2016). Data on SEA verified in 2017 (Lum, 2017).

on the features above, Indonesia's BEM SI has an exchange relationship with the state prioritizing the logic of influence, and a corporatist national model of student interest intermediation.

The only other corporatist national system of student interest mediation in SEA appears to exist in Vietnam. Founded in 1955, Vietnam National Union of Students (VNUS) is the student organization of the Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union Central Committee. VNUS claims to be the only NSO accorded the responsibility of representing institutional students of Vietnamese universities (VNUS, 2016). Other forms of youth engagement are represented by the National Committee Youth of Vietnam, the Ho Chi Minh Young Pioneer Organization, the Vietnam Youth Federation, and the Youth International Cooperation Development Centre (VNUS, 2016). VNUS is officially affiliated with the governing Vietnam Communist Party, and is organized hierarchically, with a presence in student representation at central level, provincial or city level, university or college level, and grassroots level (VNUS, 2017). In Vietnam, the formalization of VNUS's recognition by the government and its monopoly on student representation point to an exchange relationship with the government that prioritizes the logic of influence and reflects a corporatist model of student interest intermediation.

One Pluralist National System in Southeast Asia: The Philippines

The Philippines seems to have the only pluralist system of student interest representation in SEA. Three notable Filipino NSOs—the National Union of Students of the Philippines (NUSP), Student Council Alliance of the Philippines (SCAP), and League of Filipino Students (LFS)—claim to mediate student interests at the national level, and all claim high autonomy; similarly, all three demonstrate hybrid NSO features of social movement and interest group characteristics described in Klemenčič's typology (2012a).

The NUSP is a nation-wide alliance of student councils, governments, and unions with the agenda of advancing students' democratic rights and welfare (NUSP, 2017). Established in 1957, NUSP claims to represent 650 student councils/governments across the Philippines, supported by national, provincial, and municipal formations (NUSP, 2017). NUSP is led by its National President, Executive Vice-President, regional Vice-Presidents, a Secretary General, and groupings of functional powers, such as the National Assembly, the National Council, and the National Executive Board (NUSP, 2017). NUSP's strategy repertoire is varied, including voters' education, anti-fraud campaigns, protest rallies, and institutionalized representation in national policymaking; NUSP serves the role of resource speaker in national Congressional and Senate Hearings (NUSP, 2017), a feature which illustrates interest group-type exchange relations.

Established in 1997, SCAP is smaller than NUSP but has similar agendas, modes of engagement, and overall interest group-type characteristics and strategies. SCAP represents student councils, student governments, student political parties, and organizations in the Philippines. SCAP is led by its National Chairperson, regional National Vice-Presidents, National Secretary General, National Treasurer, National Auditor, and functional powers, such as the National Congress, Regional Assemblies, and the Chapter (SCAP, personal communication, 2017), featuring a hierarchical structure and centralized leadership. The SCAP recognizes NUSP as an influential actor in student representation, but has ideological differences (SCAP, personal communication, 2017). SCAP's strategies are varied, including campaigns, protest rallies, and

institutionalized representation in policymaking. SCAP is regularly invited to Technical Working Groups on national legislation related to student interests, and claims a historical and ongoing role in influencing national policies such as the Mental Health Act and the proposed Free Tertiary Education Act (SCAP, personal communication, 2017), demonstrating interest group-type state-NSO exchange relations.

Established in 1977 and positioned as an anti-imperialist far-left organization, LFS claims to be one of the largest student organizations in the Philippines, with chapters in universities, colleges, and high schools in the Philippines and the United States (Abinales, 2012, p. 268; LFS, 2017). LFS is distinct from NUSP and SCAP in one significant way: it is not acknowledged by the government and is not represented in procedures for developing national policies (LFS, personal communication, 2017). Yet, LFS has had a significant role influencing national issues such as the rejection of the US-PH Military Bases Agreement, reverting of Martial Law era curbs on student political activity, opposition to tuition fee increases, and abolition of Reserved Officers Training Corps (LFS, personal communication, 2017). The LFS demonstrates more social movement features than NUSP and SCAP, operating through mass mobilization and protests to influence public policy (LFS, personal communication, 2017). Thus, while LFS may not have institutionalized access to public policy decision processes as NUSP and SCAP do, it seems to have influence at a national level.

Summary and Conclusion

To conclude, this chapter offers an academic update on the subject of student representation and organization in SEA. In spite of a significant role in nationhood formation in the twentieth century, SEA student politics in the twentieth century is characterized by statist models and consumer-stakeholder relations. Based on available data in 2017, seven of the ten AMSes did not have nationally significant NSOs—Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, and Thailand. Two corporatist national systems of student interest representation existed in SEA—those of Indonesia and Vietnam, and the only pluralist national model of student interest intermediation in SEA was that of the Philippines.

It is important to note that the absence of formal processes does not mean that students lack a voice (Klemenčič and Luescher, 2016). Evidence of variations in types and effectiveness of student agency across SEA have emerged recently. In Malaysia, a 2012 amendment to the controversial UUCA provided a limited extension of the right of association for students, and Malaysia has seen a “revival” of student organization and representation since (Fadzil and Samsu, 2015; Sipadan, 2016; Weiss, 2012). In 2013, a coalition of thirteen student organizations participated in the 13th Malaysian General Election under *Gerakan Mahasiswa 13* (GM13) to demand higher-education reforms and greater academic freedom in Malaysia (Fadzil and Samsu, 2015), while in 2017, large-scale public protests against the 1MDB corruption case were led by student leaders (Sipadan, 2016). In Myanmar, student movements regained social and political presence at a national level during semi-democratic elections, with student organizations then involved in negotiations regarding technical laws related to the National Education Law bill (Lone Wa, 2014; Oxford Business Group, 2016). Existing student organizations do not receive formal

recognition and legitimation but may have influence and networks of student and public support (Pwint, personal communication, 2016). In Indonesia, students have led public protests against perceived governmental failure (student from Universitas Indonesia, personal communication, 2016). National systems of student interest intermediation in SEA are dynamic and constantly being influenced by recent sociopolitical changes, and future findings will produce even richer insights.

Notes

- 1 In this chapter, I focus on the ten ASEAN member states (AMS) of SEA (Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam) in alignment with norms in higher-education policy. SEA and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) are not synonymous. A region with histories, politics, economies, ethnicities, cultures, religions, and languages “more varied than those of Europe” (Kahin 1959, in Legge, 1999, pp. 1–2), the regional and political coherence of SEA as a regional unit is a recent phenomenon (Emmerson, 1984; Tarling, 1999a). Other ways of dissecting and analyzing developments in student organization and protest in SEA can be valid. Zomia—a region in mainland SEA spanning Pakistan, Afghanistan, India, Tibet, China, Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam—is an alternative conception of SEA, challenging ideas on contemporary state boundaries (van Schendel, 2005). These alternative methods may yet yield different and meaningful analytical patterns.
- 2 Klemenčič (2012a, p. 11; 2014b, slide 7; 2016) uses the terms “national student associations” and “national student representative organizations” to refer to student group organizational forms that represent student interests at the national level. For brevity and consistency with common practice (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2016), I use the term “national student organizations” (NSOs) to refer to all forms of national student associations and representative organizations typologized by Klemenčič.
- 3 Klemenčič (2012a, p. 11; 2012b, slide 7; 2016) uses the terms “national student associations” and “national student representative organizations” in her original typologies; for consistency and alignment with common practice (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2016), I use the term “national student organizations” (NSOs) to refer to all forms of student associations and organizations that claim to represent students at the national level.

References

- Abinales, P.N. (2012). The Philippines: Students, activists, and communists in movement politics. In Weiss, M.L. and Aspinall, E. (eds.), *Student Activism in Asia: Between Protest and Powerlessness* (pp. 259–80). London; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Altbach, P.G. (1984). Student politics in the third world. *Higher Education* 13(6): 635–55.
- Altbach, P.G. (ed.) (2013). *The International Imperative in Higher Education*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Altbach, P.G. (2016). Foreword: The importance and complexity of students in politics and governance. In Luescher, T.M., Klemenčič, M. and Jowi, J.O. (eds.), *Student Politics in Africa: Representation and Activism* (pp. xi–xii). African Minds Higher Education Dynamics Series. Vol. 2. Cape Town: African Minds.

- ASEAN Secretariat, JICE & JENESYS (2017). *The First ASEAN University Student Council Union Conference, Concept Note and Programme*. JENESYS 2016 Inbound Programme ASEAN Student Leaders Composite 4th Batch, Theme: Peace and Youth Leadership. Concept Note and Programme.
- ASEAN University Student Council Union (2022). #AUSCUConference2022. ASEAN University Student Council Union [Status update] Facebook. July 31, 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/Asean.USCU/>
- Astorga-Garcia, M. (1970). *Left to Right: The Student Activists*. The First Quarter Storm Library. *The Sunday Times Magazine*, February 22, 1970 (pp. 34–8). December 8, 2016. <https://fqslibrary.wordpress.com/2010/02/19/left-to-right-the-student-activists/>
- AUN ASLF (2017). *ASEAN Student Leaders' Forum (ASLF)*. ASEAN University Network (AUN). March 20, 2017. <http://www.aunsec.org/aseanstudent.php>
- AYVP (2017). *ASEAN Youth Volunteer Programme (AYVP)*. March 20, 2017. <http://www.ayvpukm.com.my/>
- Badan Eksekutif Mahasiswa (BEM) Seluruh Indonesia (2016). *BEM Seluruh Indonesia*. September 5, 2016. <http://bemindonesia.or.id/>
- Brooks, R. (ed.) (2016). *Student Politics and Protests: International Perspectives*. New York: Routledge.
- Commonwealth Secretariat (2016). *The State of Student Governance in the Commonwealth*. London: The Commonwealth Secretariat. January 22, 2017. http://thecommonwealth.org/sites/default/files/inline/STATE%20OF%20STUDENT%20GOVERNANCE%20REPORT_FINAL%20PRINT%20VERSION.pdf
- Das, S. (1994). *Students' Role in the Movement for Democracy in Myanmar* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru University.
- delas Nieves, J.P. (2016). Personal correspondence with John Paulo delas Nieves, student at University of the Philippines Diliman, the Philippines. October 25–27, 2016.
- Department of Education, Republic of the Philippines (1992). *DO 16, s. 1992: Guidelines on Tuition and/or Other School Fees in Private School, Colleges and Universities for School Year 1992–1993*. Republic of the Philippines. September 7, 2016. <http://www.deped.gov.ph/orders/do-16-s-1992>
- Department of Education, Republic of the Philippines (2016). *Center for Students and Co-Curricular Affairs (CSCA), Department of Education (DepEd), Republic of the Philippines*. Chan Robles Virtual Law Library. September 7, 2016. <http://www.chanrobles.com/legal3decscenterforstudentsandcocurricularaffairs.html>
- Emmerson, D.K. (1984). “Southeast Asia”: What’s in a name? *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 15(1) (March 1984). December 22, 2017. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022463400012182>
- EURAXESS (2016). *ASEAN Takes Quality Assurance of Universities Regional with the Launch of AQAN*. EURAXESS—Researchers in Motion, European Commission. November 21, 2016. January 23, 2017. <https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/worldwide/asean/asean-takes-quality-assurance-universities-regional-launch-aqan>
- Fadzil, Mohd. Fauzi and Samsu, Ku Hasnita Ku (2015). Student activism and the 13th Malaysian general election: The second civil society wave after 1969. *Pertanika Journals, Social Sciences & Humanities* 23(1): 105–28. October 17, 2016. [http://www.pertanika.upm.edu.my/Pertanika%20PAPERS/JSSH%20Vol.%2023%20\(1\)%20Mar.%202015/07%20JSSH-0948-2013%20Rev2.pdf](http://www.pertanika.upm.edu.my/Pertanika%20PAPERS/JSSH%20Vol.%2023%20(1)%20Mar.%202015/07%20JSSH-0948-2013%20Rev2.pdf)
- Gajaseni, N. (2016). Personal correspondence with Nantana Gajaseni, Executive Director of the ASEAN University Network (AUN) Secretariat. Thailand, October 25–27, 2016.
- Interview, Assistant Director, Education, Youth and Training Division, Socio-Cultural Cooperation Directorate, ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Department, the ASEAN Secretariat, Thailand, March 9, 2017.
- Interview, Chief Executive Director, Yangon Head Office, Youth Social Force, Myanmar, October 6, 2016.
- Interview, faculty representative, International Relation Office, Mandalay University, Myanmar, August 31, 2016.
- Interview, student, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand, October 25–27, 2016.
- Interview, student, Royal University of Phnom Penh of Cambodia, Cambodia, October 25–27, 2016.
- Interview, student, Universitas Indonesia, Indonesia, October 25–27, 2016.
- Interview, student, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Malaysia, October 25–27, 2016.

- Jungblut, J. and Weber, R. (2015). We are one, but we're not the same—explaining the emergence of hybrid national student unions. In Klemenčič, M., Bergan, S. and Primožič, R. (eds.), *Student Engagement in Europe: Society, Higher Education and Student Governance*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing.
- Klemenčič, M. (2012a). Student representation in Western Europe: Introduction to the special issue. *European Journal of Higher Education* 2(1): 2–19.
- Klemenčič, M. (2012b). The changing conceptions of student participation in higher education governance in the EHEA. In Curaj, A., Scott, P., Vlasceanu, L. and Wilson, L. (eds.), *European Higher Education at the Crossroads: Between the Bologna Process and National Reforms* (pp. 631–53). Heidelberg: Springer.
- Klemenčič, M. (2014). Student power in a global perspective and contemporary trends in student organising. *Studies in Higher Education* 39(3): 396–411. January 22, 2017. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2014.896177>
- Klemenčič, M. (2015). Student involvement in university quality enhancement. In Huisman, J., de Boer, H., Dill, D. and Souto-Otero M. (eds.), *The Handbook of Higher Education Policy and Governance* (pp. 526–43). London: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Klemenčič, M. (2016). Student organising in African higher education: Polity, politics and policies. In Luescher, T.M., Klemenčič, M. and Jowi, J.O. (eds.), *Student Politics in Africa: Representation and Activism* (pp. 9–26). African Minds Higher Education Dynamics Series Vol. 2. Cape Town: African Minds.
- Klemenčič, M. (2017). Personal e-mail correspondence with Dr Manja Klemenčič, lecturer in Sociology of Higher Education at the Department of Sociology, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Harvard University, March 6, 2017.
- Klemenčič, M., Luescher, T.M. and Mugume T. (2016). Student organising in African higher education: Polity, politics and policies. In Luescher, T.M., Klemenčič, M. and Jowi, J.O. (eds.), *Student Politics in Africa: Representation and Activism* (pp. 9–26). African Minds Higher Education Dynamics Series. Vol. 2. Cape Town: African Minds.
- Knight, J. (2012). A conceptual framework for the regionalization of higher education: Application to Asia. In Hawkins, J.N., Mok, K.H. and Neubauer, D.E. (eds.), *Higher Education Regionalization in Asia Pacific* (pp. 17–35). London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Kongkirati, P. (2012). Thailand: The cultural politics of student resistance. In Weiss, M.L. and Aspinall, E. (eds.), *Student Activism in Asia: Between Protest and Powerlessness* (pp. 229–58). London; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Kuntjoro-Jakti, B. (2016). Personal correspondence with Budidarmo Kuntjoro-Jakti, Associate Faculty Member, Department of International Relations, Bina Nusantara University (BINUS), and Professional Educator and Technical Expert in ASEAN functional cooperation on education, youth, and sports, Indonesia, October 26, 2016.
- League of Filipino Students (LFS) (2017a). About us. February 26, 2017. <http://www.lfs.ph/about/>
- League of Filipino Students (LFS) (2017b). Electronic questionnaire response.
- Liermann, S. (2016). Personal correspondence with Dr Susanne Liermann, Senior Project Manager, DAAD, SHARE, Jakarta, Indonesia, between July to October 2016.
- Legge, J.D. (1999). The writing of Southeast Asian history. In Tarling, N. (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia*. Vol. 1, Part 1 (pp. 1–50). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Loh, F.K.W. and Öjendal, J. (2005). Southeast Asian responses to globalization: Restructuring governance and deepening democracy. *Democracy in Asia*. Vol. 10. Copenhagen: NIAS Press.
- Loh, K.S., Liao, E., Lim, C.T. and Seng, G.Q. (2013). *The University Socialist Club and the Contest for Malaya: The Tangled Strands of Modernity*. Singapore: NUS Press.
- Lone, Wa (November 24, 2014). Behind the student protests. *The Myanmar Times*. February 26, 2017. <http://www.mmmtimes.com/index.php/in-depth/12359-behind-the-student-protests.html>
- Lucksanawong, J. (2016, May 30). Thai student activists face more complex issues than just the coup. *The Nation*. March 30, 2017. <http://www.nationmultimedia.com/news/national/aec/30286996>

- Luescher, T.M. and Klemenčič, M. (2016). Student power in twenty-first century Africa: The character and role of student organising. In Brooks, R. (ed.), *Student Politics and Protests* (pp. 166–86). New York: Routledge.
- Lum, C.J. (2017). *Scolasticus (A) Politicus: Typologizing Student Representation and Organization in Southeast Asia*. Berlin: Humboldt Universität zu Berlin.
- Manning, C. and Bhatnagar, P. (2004). *The Movement of Natural Persons in Southeast Asia: How Natural?* Paper presented in the Division of Economics Seminar Series, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, the Australian National University, Canberra, November 25, 2003. Retrieved April 20, 2017 from <https://crawford.anu.edu.au/acde/publications/publish/papers/wp2004/wp-econ-2004-02.pdf>
- Manning, P. (2017). Linking social movement networks, 1989–1992: Southeast Asia, Africa, and South America. In Smith J., Goodhart, M., Manning, P. and Markoff, J. (eds.), *Social Movements and World-System Transformation*. New York: Routledge.
- Min, W. (2012). Burma: A historic force, forcefully met. In Weiss, M.L. and Aspinall, E. (eds.), *Student Activism in Asia: Between Protest and Powerlessness* (pp. 181–204). London; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- National Union of Students of the Philippines (NUSP) (2017). About NUSP. *The NUSP*. February 14, 2017. <http://nusp.org/about-nusp/>
- Owen, N.G. (1999). Economic and social change. In Tarling, N. (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia* (Vol. 4, pp. 139–200). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Oxford Business Group (October 10, 2016). *Proposed Reforms for Myanmar's Education Sector*. October 10, 2016. <https://www.oxfordbusinessgroup.com/analysis/books-proposed-reforms-are-caught-decentralisation-debate>
- Pwint, P.W. (2016). Personal correspondence with Pwint, Phyu Maung, student at the University of Yangon, Myanmar, October 25–27, 2016.
- Ratanawijitrasin, S. (2015). The evolving landscape of South-East Asian higher education and the challenges of governance. In Curaj, A., Matei, L., Pricopie, R., Salmi, J. and Scott, P. (eds.), *The European Higher Education Area: Between Critical Reflections and Future Policies* (pp. 221–38). New York: Springer International Publishing. January 3, 2017. http://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-319-20877-0_15
- Saint, W. (2009). *Guiding Universities: Governance and Management Arrangements around the Globe*. Washington, DC: Human Development Network, World Bank.
- SEAMEO RIHED (2008). *Harmonisation of Higher Education: Lessons Learned from the Bologna Process*. SEAMEO RIHED Lecture Series Number 1 February 2008. February 20, 2017. http://www.rihed.seameo.org/wp-content/uploads/other_reports/Harmonisation_of_HE_Feb2008.pdf
- SHARE (2016). *Enhancing Internationalisation in ASEAN: Credit Transfer Systems and Student Mobility. Policy Recommendations from the Third SHARE Policy Dialogue*. European Union Support to Higher Education in the ASEAN Region (SHARE). Retrieved March 20, 2017 from http://share-asean.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/SHARE-Policy-Brief-2_October-2016.pdf
- SHARE (2017). *About SHARE: What Is SHARE?* European Union Support to Higher Education in the ASEAN Region (SHARE). January 22, 2017. <http://share-asean.eu/about/>
- Shyam, G. (2002). *Democratic Movement in Thailand with Particular Reference to the Role of Students* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru University.
- Shyam, G. (2009). *The Democratisation Process and the Role of Students: A Case Study of the Student Movement in Thailand*. Delhi: Academic Excellence.
- Sipadan, J. (August 27, 2016). Malaysian student protesters demand 1MDB arrest. *Reuters*. April 20, 2017. <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-malaysia-scandal-protests-idUSKCN11208C>
- Sinpeng, A. and Kuhonta, E.M. (2012). From the street to the ballot box: The July 2011 elections and the rise of social movements in Thailand. *Contemporary Southeast Asia: A Journal of International and Strategic Affairs* 34(3): 389–415. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
- Student Council Alliance of the Philippines (SCAP) (2017a). *SCAP about*. Student Council Alliance of the Philippines (SCAP). March 13, 2017. <https://scapnational.wordpress.com/about/>

- Student Council Alliance of the Philippines (SCAP) (2017b). Electronic questionnaire response.
- Tarling, N. (1999a). Introduction. In Tarling, N. (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia* (Vol. 1, Part 1) (pp. i–xvii). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tarling, N. (1999b). Introduction. In Tarling, N. (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia* (Vol. 2, Part 2) (pp. xix–xv). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- UNESCO-IBE (2011). Lao People's Democratic Republic. World Data on Education, VII Ed. 2010/11. UNESCO International Bureau of Education (UNESCO-IBE). October 16, 2016. http://www.ibe.unesco.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Publications/WDE/2010/pdf-versions/Lao_PDR.pdf
- UNESCO-IESALC (2011). *The Position of Latin America and the Caribbean on Rankings in Higher Education*. Meeting of University Networks & Councils of Rectors of Latin America and the Caribbean, Buenos Aires, May 5–6, 2011. International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (IESALC), UNESCO. April 12, 2017. www.iesalc.unesco.org/ve/dmdocuments/posicion_alc_ante_rankings_en.pdf
- UNESCO-SEAMEO RIHED (2006). *Higher Education in South-East Asia*. Asia-Pacific Programme of Educational Innovation for Development. United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Southeast Asian Ministers of Education (SEAMEO) Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development (RIHED). Bangkok: UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education. December 22, 2016. http://www.rihed.seameo.org/wp-content/uploads/other_reports/Higher_Education_in_Southeast_Asia_2006.pdf
- van Schendel, W. (2005). Geographies of knowing, geographies of ignorance: Jumping scale in Southeast Asia. In Kratoska, P., Raben, R. and Nordholt, H. (eds.), *Locating Southeast Asia: Geographies of Knowledge and Politics of Space*. Singapore: Singapore University Press.
- Vietnam National Union of Students (2016). Vietnam national union of students brief introduction. January 27, 2017. <http://english.doanthanhvien.vn/Article-detail/Vnus/16971/-vietnam-national-union-of-students.htm>
- Weiss, M.L. (2011). *Student Activism in Malaysia: Crucible, Mirror, Sideshow*. Singapore: NUS Press.
- Weiss, M.L. (2012). Malaysia: More transformed than transformational. In Weiss, M.L. and Aspinall, E. (eds.), *Student Activism in Asia: Between Protest and Powerlessness* (pp. 205–4). London; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Weiss, M.L., Aspinall, E. and Thompson, M.R. (2012). Introduction: Understanding student activism in Asia. In Weiss, M.L. and Aspinall, E. (eds.), *Student Activism in Asia: Between Protest and Powerlessness* (pp. 1–32). Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press.
- Yong, M.C. (1999). The political structures of the independent states. In Tarling, N. (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia* (Vol. 4, pp. 59–139). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Zgaga, P. (2014). *European Higher Education Reforms and the Role of Students*. Paper presented at the 11th International Workshop on Higher Education Reform, Higher education and its principal mission: Preparing students for life, work and civic engagement, at Memorial University of Newfoundland, Canada, 25–27 August 2014. February 2, 2017. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/265850093_European_higher_education_reforms_and_the_role_of_students

Aotearoa New Zealand: Exploring Myths of Egalitarianism in Students' Associations

Ellen R. Dixon, Nkhaya Paulsen-More, and Liam Davies

Leaderless Spaces? Enacted Egalitarianism in the Student Movement

On September 28, 2011, the students of Aotearoa New Zealand took to the streets to protest the *Voluntary Student Membership (VSM) Bill*. The Bill sought to remove automatic membership to students' associations, as it was said that students "often lacked the necessary experience to run a multi-million-dollar business" (Otago Daily Times, 2011, p. 15). The New Zealand Union of Students' Associations (NZUSA) commissioned a study by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) that indicated 48–73 percent of student services would be lost if the Bill passed. Despite efforts, the Bill passed with ACT politician, Heather Roy, stating that New Zealand's students were "free at last." NZUSA Co-President, David Do, stated: "[The] National Party has chosen to enable the extreme ideology of a discredited fringe political party. By ignoring the overwhelming opposition [. . . the] National [Party] have shown their real colors" (Otago Daily Times, 2011, p. 8). Yet, both these positions revolve around the popular urban myth of the importance of egalitarianism.

Aotearoa New Zealand has always prided itself on maintaining an image of egalitarian consensus (Woodhams, 2015, p. 146). Colonials seeking to escape the rigid hierarchy of the British Empire sought to create a classless society where "[t]here is no underdog" (Lipson, 2011, p. 450). This ethos drew "upon a rich amalgam of truth and myth" (Nolan, 2000, p. 127) as colonization excluded various groups, including Māori and women. Rashbrooke (2013, as cited in Woodhams, 2015) suggests exclusion has been sustained in modernity, moving from "a focus on relationships among people from different occupations and social groups" to a "modern preoccupation with distribution [of resources]" (149). Yet Lipson (2011) argues the egalitarian myth still "dominates and regulates everything that happens in the community" (p. 449).

The egalitarian ethos has not escaped the student movement. Ever since the formation of the first local students' association in 1890, the student movement has sought to create organic "leaderless spaces without hierarchies" (Nielsen, 2019, p. 91). Today, five national students' associations—NZUSA, Te Mana Ākonga (TMĀ—National Māori Tertiary Students' Association), Tairā Pasifika (TP—National Pasifika Students' Association), the New Zealand International Students'

Association (NZISA), and the National Disabled Students' Association (NDSA)—exist side-by-side. NZUSA and TMA are the oldest, with NZUSA founded in 1929 while TMA traces its whakapapa (history) back to the late-1800s. Of the five national associations, NZUSA, TMA and TP have institutional membership from their respective students' associations on campuses: general, Maori and Pasifika. NZISA and NDSA have a hybrid form, incorporating students' associations and student officers from general students' associations.

Each student organization has an horizontal structure. Nielsen (2019) suggests this represents an expectation that student representation should “provide marginalized groups (who the students feel are often silenced or ignored in traditional representative democracy) a better chance to speak” (p. 91), by attempting to create accountability mechanisms within associations. Presidents of member associations from local institutions at the, in accordance with legislation. The horizontal model for “leaderless spaces” is enacted at the national and local level to provide inclusive “safe spaces” for cross-cultural and cross-organization interaction (Nielsen, 2019). Yet, the student movement is increasingly accused of enacting egalitarianism while ignoring wider societal issues. Where horizontal structures have sought equality for marginalized groups, egalitarianism is challenged due to concerns regarding resourcing, and unequal access to government-level or institutional representative seats. Local students' associations threaten to leave national associations due to perceived inefficiency and resource-hoarding, while general associations are accused of racial prejudice and resource-hoarding by diverse student groups.

These fractures are argued to originate in the neoliberalization of higher education (HE) in Aotearoa New Zealand. The marketization of HE has commodified knowledge and increased institutional competition, changing student associations' funding models and forcing their dependence on university management (Klemenčič, 2016). This has placed significant pressures on students' associations, causing their organizational structures to sometimes *reflect* neoliberalism. One such example is in the accusation of resource-hoarding between associations, undermining the egalitarian ideal by exemplifying student belief in competition due to resource-deficits at the government and institutional level. Another is how students' associations, New Zealand Government and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) prioritize corporatization, as illustrated in the VSM analogy: ACT sought to harness students' associations through a corporate lens as “multi-billion-dollar businesses,” yet NZUSA's criticism of this came from commissioning research from a multi-billion-dollar business. Such demonstrates internalized neoliberal values within students' associations, despite their horizontal structures for accountability and inclusion.

This chapter examines the tension of this neoliberal orientation versus the egalitarian ideal in Aotearoa New Zealand's students' associations. It studies how students' associations often enact egalitarianism, both challenging and furthering unequal neoliberalism among the student body through their structure and representation. The chapter provides a brief history of the student movement and an in-depth review of the literature on the horizontal structure of New Zealand's student organizations. It then presents an overview of the methodology and findings from university students' associations, to demonstrate enacted egalitarianism acting on and within the student body. The chapter concludes that Aotearoa's students' associations actively

resist neoliberalism in creative ways—amidst their own privatization—to manage complex self-identities and communitarian values.

A Brief History of the Student Movement in Aotearoa New Zealand

The first university was founded in Otago in 1869. In 1870, the University of New Zealand was established by statute as the degree-granting body for all universities, amidst Keynesianism and the emergence of the social welfare state. Despite egalitarian leanings, the tertiary sector was Eurocentric and poorly resourced, with an Otago agricultural student stating in 1883: “[S]o short is the period during which the students can meet freely together, that anything in the shape of [a] liberal exchange of thoughts ... [is] almost unknown” (Elsworthy, 1990, p. 13).

The Otago University Students’ Association was established in 1890, followed by associations at the universities of Auckland, Canterbury, and Victoria. They engaged in inter-university rugby tournaments and debates, encouraging the founding of the New Zealand University Students’ Association (NZUSA) in 1929 (Robertson, 1994). An annual Congress started in 1948, with interest moving to political discussions on free speech and ending Compulsory Military Training (Elsworthy, 1990). By 1986, a dramatic restructure occurred, refocusing NZUSA as a “student union” (Robertson, 1994).

This restructure included a Māori Vice-President who engaged with the Tumuaki Māori Collective in 1985 (Robertson, 1994). Te Aute College, the first Māori-led students’ association, had been founded in 1897, supported by Anglican ministers who sought to give Māori equal access to university entrance. “The appearance of Māori graduates so early in the colonial encounter constituted a challenge to the nexus of [Eurocentric] power” (Walker, 2017, p. 26), with the Young Māori Party forming in 1909, who advocated for te reo Māori (Māori language) in universities. War significantly disrupted the Māori student movement, with revitalization occurring in the 1970s from the emergence of He Taua (Ngā Tamatoa), Te Reo Māori Society, the Young Māori Leaders’ Conference, and the New Zealand Federation of Māori Students. Other student-related groups also emerged including the Polynesian Panthers, an activist group advocating against discrimination toward Pasifika in the 1970s.

The Keynesian system was dismantled by successive neoliberal reforms that corporatized the tertiary sector. The University of New Zealand dissolved in 1961, with degree-conferring capacity given to each HEI. From 1984 to 1999, five government reviews sought fiscal prudence, introducing bulk-funding regimes based on equivalent full-time students, endorsing universities set fee structures, and removing universal student allowances. The *State Sector Act 1988* finalized free market privatization and competition in HEIs. VSM, which had been proposed in 1997 by the ACT Party, then passed in the *Education (Freedom of Association) Amendment Act 2011*, making students’ associations dependent on HEI service contracts to exist. Three of the national students’ associations—NZISA, TP, and NDSA—emerged following this period, possibly because of the impact VSM had on service provision to diverse student publics.

Equally Unequal? Horizontal Student Organizations and Neoliberalism

Neo-Corporatist or Pluralist Equality?

Enacted egalitarianism is arguably already evidenced in Aotearoa New Zealand’s students’ associations, as they demonstrate a hybrid form of Klemenčič’s (2012; 2016) neo-corporatist and pluralist typologies. In neo-corporatist systems, the government engages with one or a limited number of functionally or geographically different national representative students’ associations. In contrast, in pluralist systems there are several similar national-level students’ associations which “compete against each other for influence [in policy making and resource allocation], thus deterring possible mass collective action” (Klemenčič, 2016, p. 397, 2012).

Both of these typologies are arguably too narrow for the New Zealand context, although there is a tendency toward the neo-corporatist typology. The egalitarian ideal upholds: “If something good is to be had, then, the New Zealander will argue, let it be spread as widely as possible. The more who can participate, the better” (Lipson, 2011, p. 7). Figure 12.1 demonstrates this radical horizontal model at the national level, which Nielsen (2019) observed in the New Zealand student movement. In Aotearoa New Zealand, neo-corporatism is in the horizontal state-student policy exchange process, extended to all five national students’ associations as equal stakeholders in the policy process, as recently demonstrated in the Ministry of Education consultation of *The Education (Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners) Code of Practice 2021* which engaged all five associations. Nielsen (2019) suggests this may represent a Leftist enactment of self-forming teams, where students prioritize networking to equip members with skills over hierarchical leadership through activism. He suggests that this structure demonstrates a “progressive stacking,” where a facilitator or an intermediary is selected to balance “the order of speakers to allow people from minority nondominant groups to speak” (p. 91).

This also occurs at an HEI with Figure 12.2 demonstrating how various students’ associations at the local level—general, Māori, Pasifika, disabled, international, postgraduate, gender-based,

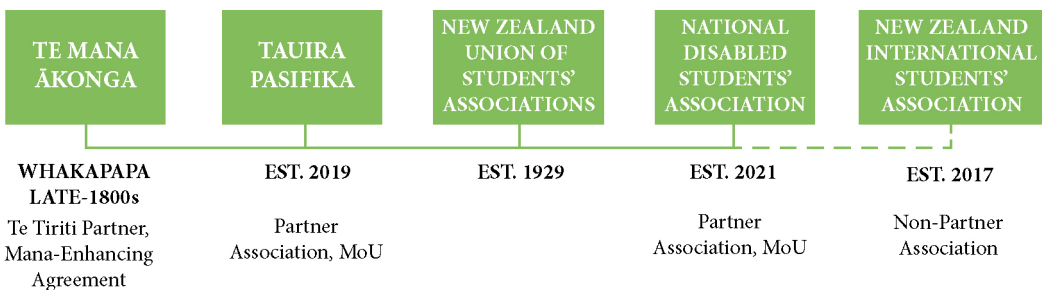


Figure 12.1 Horizontal engagement between the five national students’ associations, where NZUSA has typically acted as the intermediary due to its longevity but functions within partnerships with other groups, particularly with TMĀ as their *Te Tiriti o Waitangi/Treaty of Waitangi 1840* partner.

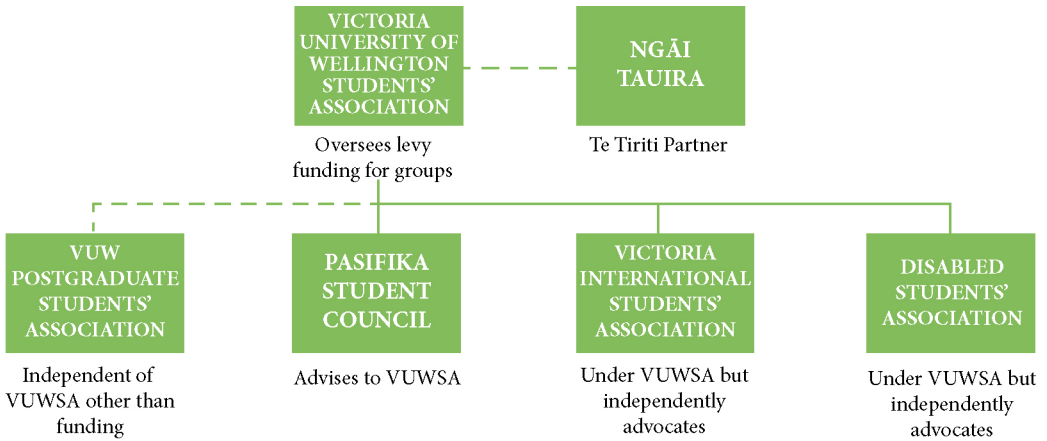


Figure 12.2 The horizontal model at the Victoria University of Wellington between the general students' association and then interrelated student bodies.

gender-diverse, cultural, religious, interest-based, subject-based, faculty or department-based groups—are structured with the egalitarian ideal, operating as separate entities on campuses with differing (yet interrelated) degrees of influence. According to Nielsen (2019), this horizontal approach acts to highlight the ridiculousness of tokenistic student representation on councils, committees, or boards, where a few are expected to represent the diversity of the student body.

Yet neoliberal competition is also evidenced in the policy process for students' associations at the national and local level. The New Zealand Government tends to recognize NZUSA as holding the intermediary role among the national associations, while general associations have traditionally maintained formal relationships with tertiary providers. This is Nielsen's (2019) intermediary muddled by VSM, with most national or local funding and access to representative seats in policymaking for diverse groups, only accessible through the general association. The intermediary therefore becomes both facilitator and potential cause of competition in the name of egalitarianism, if the government or institution only provides limited resources or seats for additional associations, resulting in an ad-hoc system of representation between groups.

Klemenčič (2014) states that nations transitioning from a colonial history mean “governments tend to opt for a pluralist approach: addressing several student groups, prompting them to compete against each other for influence, thus deterring possible mass collective action through ‘divide et impera’” (p. 397). This has been evidenced in that some associations determine tasks independently to avoid hierarchical control from the general association, resulting in groups overlapping in the same tasks (Klemenčič, 2012). Tribal affiliations and colonization must also be taken into account which while suggesting a corporatist typology in the treatment of Maori students' associations reflecting the treatment of Maori by the British Crown during colonization - have not been studied in regards to the impact of these on indigenous student representatives. In short, it is not clear as to whether students' associations in Aotearoa New Zealand inhabit the neo-colonial or pluralist typology, despite suggesting characteristics of an extending neo-corporatism to uphold egalitarian values.

Neoliberal Egalitarianism?

To further understand the typology of students' associations in Aotearoa New Zealand, we must also consider Klemenčič's (2016) proposal that the increasing heterogeneity from the neoliberal massification of education has resulted in a larger number of diverging student interests. While this accounts for diversity within the student movement, it does not acknowledge the intersectionality of Aotearoa's small population. Elected representation in students' associations often mirrors social movements—from the Māori Renaissance (1970s–2000s) to feminism (1970s–1990s), the gay rights movement (1970s–2000s), the anti-nuclear movement (1980s–1990s), the anti-war movement (1970s–80s; 2010s), protests against South African apartheid (1981–94), and climate change (2019–)—mixing diverse student bodies together.

This is partly due to power being granted to a singular intermediary at a national or local level. With the Government and HEIs granting representative power to one association, diverse student groups often infiltrate or populate the intermediary through elections, or the intermediary is expected to give marginalized groups access to self-identification and self-determination. Such arguably demonstrates the response of diverse stakeholders whose collectivist values challenge and change neoliberal and individualistic presumptions, resulting in an evolving structure that enacts egalitarianism to push for equality.

Nissen and Hayward instead propose that enacted egalitarianism among students' associations is due to the "marketization" of HE. They argue that students' associations' ability to mobilize for political action has been eroded, with government-directed reforms for free-market incentives targeting student rights by influencing the "membership of students' associations ... [causing them to fall] dramatically" (p. 129). Nissen (2017) suggests that "creative pragmatism"—artistry such as poetry, design, or music—has largely replaced physical protest for students, who have become increasingly aligned with the priorities of university management as disempowered "education consumers." She proposes VSM significantly weakened students' associations, such as removing compulsory membership enforcing coordination of students' associations' actions with HEIs.

But this also does not fully comprehend Aotearoa's students' associations. Brooks, Byford, and Sela (2014) criticize Nissen and Hayward's (2016) perspective as presenting a disempowering perspective of students' associations. One example of disempowerment is Nissen (2017) does not recognize that creative pragmatism has always existed in the student movement with Māori students' associations regularly engaging in kapa haka (war dances) and waiata (songs). Nissen also overlooks neoliberal fracturing *within* the student movement. Nielsen (2019) observes while the student movement presents itself as egalitarian, informal hierarchies often emerge, quoting a student: "We constantly have to fight against patriarchy and racism within the group" (p. 95). This supports Klemenčič (2016), who suggests "student movements can also emerge [...] due to the inaction of representative student structures" (p. 397). In this context, leaderless models may be concealing inequity within the student body itself.

General students' associations' restructures exemplify this. Unequal distribution of resources post-VSM has created suspicion between various student bodies, resulting in the regular call for general association restructures to uphold egalitarianism. Hayward (2021) sees this as a neoliberalism that falsely resonates "with the cultural mythology of struggling Indigenous warriors, pioneers and explorers" (p. 41), where restructures are proposed to initiative change and equity when actually supporting Western free market values.

This was highlighted by the Ngā Toki Collective at the 1984 restructure of NZUSA, who stated the constant internal disputes were: “Your problem as Pākehā [European] people” (Robertson, 1994, p. 28). This is because restructures do not typically occur in culturally diverse student bodies, who often uphold community values over structural reform. Where restructures have been unsuccessful, more students’ associations tend to emerge, increasing resourcing pressures. This indicates an unequal subjectivity exists within the structures of Aotearoa New Zealand’s students’ associations, who may fail to identify market ideologies—and potentially transitional colonial mindsets—contributing to a hybridization of students’ associations’ typologies.

Methodology for Research of Students’ Associations

Research Considerations

This research focused on the eight universities of Aotearoa New Zealand, which comprise 190,000 students nation-wide.¹ Each has a general local students’ association and a Māori students’ association. Numerous other associations exist on campuses, with varying levels of recognition.

As the researchers are members of the student movement, they sought objectivity throughout the data collection and analysis. This was to avoid selection bias of their close relational proximity to the representatives (see 4.2 *Data Collection*).

The researchers uphold the aspirations of the *United Nations Declaration of Indigenous Peoples*, and respect for rangatiratanga in the Crown-Māori partnership in *Te Tiriti o Waitangi/The Treaty of Waitangi 1840*. The researchers respect Māori data as taonga (a treasure) and as subject to Māori under *Te Tiriti*, with a kaitiaki (guardian) from TMĀ appointed for the instruction and use of this data.

Data Collection

Data collection took three forms: the local SIHEG (LOC-SIHEG) survey; the analysis of students’ associations’ constitutions; and group interviews.

The SIHEG Project collected data through the LOC-SIHEG survey, consisting of questions aimed at the environments of students’ associations. The survey comprised of three parts:

Part	Focus	Confidentiality (Y/N)
A	Publicly available information on a students’ association	N
B	Private information on a students’ association’s legal and financial status, membership, and political engagement	Y
BB	Private information on students’ personal perceptions and attitudes toward institutional governance and decision-making, employment, and the institutional and national political environment	Y

Student associations' constitutions from the eight universities were employed in a documentary analysis. The researchers analyzed the documents for content relevant to the survey's Parts A, B, and BB.

The group interviews were a supplementary data source to that collected on the general students' associations. The interviews were designed to include and uphold the voices of Māori, Pasifika, international and disabled student representation, and the influence they have on horizontal structures. The data is considered supplementary for the following reasons:

- (I) this research did not focus on identifying the intentions of indigenous, minority, and diverse students' associations; rather, it sought to indicate their *intrinsic* influence in and on the student movement in Aotearoa New Zealand;
- (II) there is currently no research proposing how diverse student groups *intersect* with general associations nationally or locally, to comprehend the interrelationship and evolution of these associations; and
- (III) there is currently no clear way to assert how many non-general students' associations are impacting representation in Aotearoa New Zealand, as they differ significantly between campuses.²

Interview data sought to give insight into the survey and constitutional data, and to encourage further research for (I).

Group interviews were chosen according to (II), as surveys can create *whakamā* (feelings of discomfort due to an ignorance of violating group rules) for Māori and Pasifika. Consequently, the researchers conducted semi-structured group interviews to uphold *kanohi-ke-ti-kanohi* (face-to-face) interaction. They constructed questions in accordance with Parts A, B, and BB to facilitate discussion.

The researchers sought three representatives per group due to the time frame. Recruiting interviews required asking people the researchers know, reflecting (III) as it is normal for communitarian groups to either: (a) offer specific ambassadors who have *mana* (social dignity and power) to represent them, or (b) are small enough that their representatives are known.³

Data Sample

The data sample for the LOC-SIHEG survey saw eight responses from the eight general students' associations in Aotearoa New Zealand, with one partial response (completion of Part A and not Part B or BB). The average ages of LOC-SIHEG respondents were 18–24 years (50 percent), 25–34 years (12.5 percent), with two nonresponses (25 percent). The majority of respondents identified as male (62.5 percent), with one female (12.5 percent), and two non-responses (25 percent). Of the respondents, 50 percent were the students' associations' presidents, while 25 percent were association staff members. The highest respondent qualification level was a Bachelors (37.5 percent), with 75 percent of respondents identifying they were currently enrolled at a university.

Of the responses, seven associations (87.5 percent) indicated they were located at a *research university*, while one (12.5 percent) marked *other*. Half of the associations indicated there were over 20,000 students enrolled at their HEI (50 percent), while three had between 10,000 and

20,000 enrolled (37.5 percent), and one between 500 and 5,000 (12.5 percent). Six general associations stated that they were members of NZUSA.

For the documentary analysis, constitutions were collected from seven of the eight students' associations (87.5 percent). The years of constitutional amendment were 2018 (12.5 percent), 2019 (25 percent), 2020 (25 percent), and 2021 (25 percent). Of the interviewees invited only ten were available. They were aged between 18–24 years (80 percent) and 25–34 years (20 percent), with 60 percent identifying as female and 40 percent as male. All interviewees were currently enrolled students, with eight enrolled in a Bachelors (80 percent), and three in Bachelor Honours or Masters (30 percent). The interviewees identified that diverse associations were engaged with local social and cultural community networks from churches to trade unions, in addition to their national associations.

Wrestling for Equality: Egalitarianism and Neoliberalism Side-by-Side

The Public or Private Debate

Part A of the survey sought to identify whether students' associations' HEIs were public or private. Neoliberalism is evidenced in the privatization of HE where the state has justified the injunction of market competition and financialization in universities to “defend competitive processes” (Rudd and Goodson, 2017, p. 72), where some institutions survive and others do not.

Despite all eight universities being declared as autonomous public institutions by the New Zealand Government, this was inconclusive in the collected data (Universities New Zealand, 2022). While all survey respondents selected *public* to describe their university, interviewees gave a more complex interpretation:

The tertiary environment we exist in, there is no such thing as private or public. We ... have a different university system compared to other countries ... the question is a bit moot because everyone is for profit ... it's what money does to the tertiary system ...

Just because our system says that they are public universities does not mean that they are accessible ... even for those who are not lower-socioeconomic ...

Officially they say it's non-profit but then we all know that ... our Vice-Chancellor always says “We are broke” although [we are] not.

I guess it's a public institution for the domestic students. But for us [international students] I would see it at a private institution since we have to pay full costs ...

It is uncertain whether this perspective was specific to diverse associations as general associations were unable to elaborate on their answer in LOC-SIHEG. This does not detract from identifying that a narrative of financial inequality and institutional misrepresentation exists among some student representatives.

Nissen (2017) demystifies this narrative, quoting the 2016 Productivity Commission characterizing New Zealand’s financing of HE as seeking to find the “right balance between public and private funding” based on “fiscal sustainability, tempered by a desire to see a large increase in participation” (pp. 20–1). But non-general groups indicated participation was not easily feasible, suggesting the *public* institution is “egalitarianism [that] does not necessarily clash with visible inequalities, provided one is sensitive to how the ‘myth’ is conceptualized” (Pearson, 1980, p. 170). In other words, diverse student representatives indicated institutions were supplementing public funding with private sources—such as tuition fees and student loans—which Klemenčič (2014) argues has reconfigured the relationship between institutions and students’ associations. It is unclear though as to whether this indicated an equity issue specific to diverse associations, given that general ones were unable to elaborate on their response.

Studying Horizontal Structures Up Close

Part B demonstrated this reconfigured relationship when looking at the legal and financial status, membership, and political engagement of students’ associations across Aotearoa New Zealand. It suggested significant tensions exist between neoliberal practices and legislation, and a desire for equality and inclusivity, propelling students’ associations’ use of horizontal structures.

Mixed Membership?

The first tension was students’ associations’ confusion concerning automatic student membership, and the *Education (Freedom of Association) Amendment Act 2011* legalizing VSM. Membership within students’ associations vastly varied between 300 and 42,000 members in the survey and interviews, depending on campus and community. Two survey respondents (25 percent) stated that their entire student body were members of their local association; 37.5 percent indicated that their association had *automatic student membership*, while 37.5 percent marked their membership as *other*, none of which is in keeping with legislation.

Most constitutions acknowledged the Act through administrative processes or limiting association influence:

Before admitting any person as a Member, the Executive may require that person to complete an application ...

UCSA, 5.4

There is no requirement for any student at the University to be a General Member The Association will not at any time exercise undue influence by encouraging students at the University to remain members.

OUSA, (6)(d) & (j)

Yet other associations contradicted legislation by indicating automatic membership:

The President of the Association, the Vice President and all students who enroll at the University are deemed members of the Association.

AUTSA, 6.1

This confusion also existed in non-general associations. Māori, Pasifika, and disabled representatives indicated membership could be automatic or voluntary due to focusing on community:

We have this saying “He whānau, he āhurutanga”. We’re a family. So it’s not so much that you’re just a part of that student association when you’re a student.

We had not worked out the finer details of membership more than it was a representative group that came to bring all of those voices together so that those voices represented more students.

This horizontal approach did not make it clear whether students’ associations were employing automatic membership to politically or culturally challenge legislation, with an international interviewee stating:

I know that there’s a big history on how fees have changed with the university and the union. It was to do with the voluntary something that happened in 2011 to 2012. I’m not sure.

Professionalization or Unequal Resourcing?

The second tension was between the legal status of students’ associations and equal resourcing. Over half of survey respondents (62.5 percent) indicated that they were *registered as non-governmental organizations* (NGOs), while four (57.1 percent) marked *other*. This difference may represent a confusion that under the *Charities Act 2005*, as students’ associations are Registered Charities rather than NGOs. This is due to their provision of voluntary services that do not focus on profit, gain, or distribution of money to members.

Cordery, Fowler, and Morgan (2016) suggest that the charity structure in Aotearoa provides a horizontal model of “organic” governance, that “eschew[s] formal organization” for “flexibility to enable charities to grow” (p. 283). Despite this, students’ associations’ funding was reported as highly privatized. Survey respondents said that funding came from *institutional grants* (50 percent) and *other* (50 percent), stated as being “business investment” or “advertising,” and “service contracts” which one survey respondent said “[is] 90% of our income.”

While the *Education (Freedom of Association) Amendment Act* forced associations’ financial dependences on HEIs, the *Incorporated Societies Act 1908* arguably foreshadowed this. While the latter was reported as being “a New Zealand success story [...] world leading and innovative” (New Zealand Law Commission, 2013, p. iv), it introduced corporatization by forcing students’ associations to focus on their registration, administration, and financial resourcing as incorporated societies (Cordery, Fowler and Morgan, 2016):

Auckland University Students’ Association (Incorporated), also known as AUSA, incorporated under the Incorporated Societies Act ... AUPISA means the Auckland University Pacific Islanders Students’ Association Incorporated

AUSA, (2)(f) & (i)

Corporatization has not aided egalitarianism, with disparity in resourcing clearly evident. Survey respondents indicated most associations had permanent staff (87.5 percent), but only half

(50 percent) owned property or businesses, with assets ranging from \$500 to \$1.1 million (NZD). Diverse associations reported much poorer resourcing, with constitutions indicating that many were dependent on Memorandums of Understanding with general associations, to access resources.

Māori stated some representation had “huge assets,” while others had to “hustle” for funding that “could just come directly to us” instead of going through general associations post-VSM. Disabled and international students sought financial partnerships with various groups, the latter sometimes deliberately working with corporations including Deloitte, PwC, and the Australian and New Zealand Bank. Private funding was said to:

... make sure resources and opportunities are equal between different campuses.

Neoliberal competition was hence seen to erode the horizontal structure, with a Pasifika representative stating disparities in funding often led to general associations’ restructures, to challenge potential competition:

*... we were allowed to apply up to six times a year [for funding to the general association] ... [now] it’s a whole new governing structure
.... The hope is to be on the same level as the general Exec ...*

Diverse but Apolitical?

Another tension demonstrated was between horizontal diversity and politicization. Brooks, Byford, and Sela (2014) state students’ associations post-VSM struggle to establish grassroots political campaigning due to an overwhelming focus on administration and financial resourcing. This aligns with survey responses, with 87.5 percent of respondents saying they had no formal links with political parties. One interviewee stated national students’ associations were having to “choose to be poor and take sides,” while others suggested political egalitarianism:

The politicians who are in government now, quite a lot of them came from student politics ... from all different parties so you had some from National, some from Greens, some from Labour We have people [politicians] who were in student associations down in Otago, Auckland, some in Vic[toria], up in Waikato, so it’s a whole range of different people.

Māori suggested apolitical behavior was because representatives “did not want to politicize kaupapa [principles],” with Māori and Pasifika focusing on service over politics:

We try and remain politically neutral in most things ... We don’t want any of our members to feel like they’re not being seen.

All survey respondents and interviewees indicated student leaders were elected at annual general meetings, with surveys suggesting stable but low voting numbers. Diversity markers were reported to be in 87.5 percent of associations, reflected in constitutions mandating certain representative roles for a horizontal structure, *i.e.*, Māori Vice-President; Pasifika Representative; Political Representative; Diversity Officer; Postgraduate Officer; Mature Students’ Officer; and Faculty Representatives. The intermediary role of general associations was evidenced

as some constitutions mandated student councils, where non-general associations were permanent members.

Disabled student representatives indicated that having diversity roles was essential not simply for access to resources. Similar to political neutrality among student associations and groups, diversity endorsed an acceptance of otherness to support the wider community (Nielsen, 2019):

The disabled community struggle[s] with the disability and the stigma ... it is difficult for the community to self-identify with the community itself... [so] we came up with something that makes our heart beat to articulate what we are ... inclusivity and allyship ...

Such indicates Aotearoa's students' associations may not be apolitical per se, instead acknowledging the importance of a democratic doctrine within a competitive frame (Woodhams, 2015). Woodhams (2015) describes this as the pursuit of equal opportunities—an enacted egalitarianism where “people openly compete in the political, economic and social spheres” (p. 149) to accept otherness—rather than viewing people as intrinsically the same.

Modes of Student Representation and Complex Self-Identities

Part BB addressed the level of students' associations' influence on the competitive frame of institutional governance and decision-making, employment, and the institutional and national political environment for education. This section indicates students' associations maintain strong connections to managerial staff in HEIs, while neoliberalism significantly impacts intrinsic equality in the education sector. It evidences uncertainty among student representatives as to how to accommodate complex self-identities within HEIs available modes of student representation.

A Token of Appreciation

While students were evidenced to play a strong role in HE governance, this conflicted between complex self-identities and neoliberalism. Despite students' associations being recognized as active entities in the *Education Act 1989*, student representation did not have statutory rights in HE governance until 2021. The Act endorsed that HEIs provide students with academic freedom (AF) with the freedom to question and test wisdom, state controversial or unpopular opinions, and engage in research. While this definition of AF was considered inclusive, neoliberal reforms in the education sector shifted collegial and democratic governance structures in favor of inaccessible hierarchical management systems (Olssen, 2000). This and VSM lessened associations' freedoms, enforcing working “with” university management to participate in governance (Nissen and Hayward, 2016).

Positively, *The Education (Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners) Code of Practice 2021* introduced “learner voice” as the recognition of student “mana [power] and autonomy” as essential to “develop, review, and improve learner wellbeing and safety strategic goals” (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2021, p. 14). This is already somewhat embedded in HEI practice, with survey respondents indicating that there were many opportunities for students to engage in HE governance structures. Of respondents, 75 percent indicated students were involved in internal governance structures, e.g., Academic Board or Senate, with 62.5 percent involved in

external governance structures, e.g., University Council. In addition, 75 percent identified that their institution included students on education-related working groups and task forces, with 62.5 percent having representation rights in quality assurance and research committees (although only 37.5 percent indicating they had voting capacity). Half of respondents (50 percent) identified that they had equal opportunities and voting rights on internal governing bodies.

There were signs of a mutual valuing of students' associations' relationships with management for survey respondents and interviewees. Student representation was indicated to be formalized in official documentation, e.g. terms of reference or procedural policy, in 62.5 percent of survey responses. A student representative stated:

Our university really likes having students on committees and boards. This means that there is student influence on decisions made by the university.

Yet the homogeneous stakeholder identity for students in HEI governance frustrated some interviewees. Diverse associations suggested current HE modes of governance resulted in a conflict between complex and nuanced self-identification in representation, and tokenism where only one student representative endorsed on a committee, council, board, or taskforce:

... how can one person equitably represent ... [their] sides ... are we asking them to wear their Pasifika hat or are we asking them to represent the whole student body?

Māori interviewees conflicted, seeing one representative as dishonoring some associations' co-leadership structure where only one tumuaki (president) could attend, while others indicated⁴:

If you think about it, we are offering our services to someone else. I don't have an issue if we only have one seat, because that's not our space ... we're just going in to make sure that the voices of Māori students are heard.

International interviewees also stated "students' trust in senior management is very low" due to neoliberal practices, while management was said to not trust student decision-making "because of high turnover ... of student cohorts." Māori, Pasifika, international, and disabled student representatives' dependence on general associations for access to governance bodies also reinforced the desire for extended neo-corporatist, horizontal structures in general associations, as indicated in a statement from an interviewee:

All the rep groups need to be united ... then the uni[versity] will listen to us.

Working Hard or Hardly Working?

Analysis of student influence at their universities through employment found similar trends of uncertainty concerning complex self-identities. Most survey respondents (75 percent) agreed that students could find part-time or hourly paid jobs on-campus at their institution, with the top four job fields being *residential assistants* or *student accommodation* (75 percent), *library assistants*

(75 percent), *student research assistants* (50 percent), and *administration assistants* (50 percent). More than half of respondents (62.5 percent) indicated that while voluntary roles were available to students, there was not a clear diversity of options present.

Despite this, New Zealand students are currently reported to be suffering from a cost-of-living crisis from rising education fees, post-pandemic inflation, and the housing crisis, challenging egalitarianism by exacerbating divides between the rich and the poor (Radcliffe, 2022). Over half of respondents (62.5 percent) acknowledged this, perceiving working opportunities on campus not being relevant for undergraduates, with only 12.5 percent signaling *most undergraduates could find “some type of [paid] work.”*

Neoliberal competition is reported to have permeated all parts of HEIs, with an increasing number of students employed by the institution on casual and fixed-term contracts. Growing inequality was evidenced in that respondents *strongly disagree* that *only poor undergraduate students get jobs on campus*, indicating a necessity among students for engaging with on-campus jobs. Combating this affront to egalitarianism was in the narratives of Pasifika and disabled interviewees, who indicated that students were “pushing for a living wage” on campus, suggesting those who chose to work at HEIs may have done so under precarious conditions.

This push for equality through employment was not reflected in the survey, with respondents feeling *neutrally* about the influence working undergraduate students had on their and others’ academic experiences. This indicated students viewed that they had little impact on the academic environment in which they were employed. A disabled interviewee stated this reproduced inequality within wider society:

... the disabled deficit in employment in general ... [means HEIs are] socially producing that within the institution and reproducing it in broader society ... we’re working ... to get more inclusivity ...

The Personal Is Political

Complex self-identities and communitarian values were also reported to conflict in student perceptions of their impact on political decision-making. The student movement against neoliberalism has been criticized for being self-centered and individualistic as it has often taken a neutral political stance (Nielsen, 2019). This criticism argues that neutrality is enacted egalitarianism as it endorses an equality that does not exclude “people openly compet[ing] in the political, economic and social spheres” (Woodhams, 2015, p. 149), rather than focusing on intrinsic equality. Yet students’ associations’ neutrality arguably demonstrates a strong consciousness of the impact of neoliberalism in political decision-making and on their personal and community context.

While it was suggested that students believe that education issues were a matter of importance in political decision-making, three-quarters of respondents (75 percent) indicated they only had a moderate impact on the political direction of HE in Aotearoa New Zealand. This reflected Nissen’s (2017) view that students “tended to consider political parties to be ‘stuck in their ways’ and not necessarily responsive to their concerns” (p. 180). The surveys indicated that neutrality was partly due to how neoliberal reforms had influenced the way students were viewed, with students seen as *social change makers* (50 percent), *partners in the academic community* (50 percent), and *an important electoral group* (37.5 percent), contrasted against *consumers of HE services* (62.5 percent), *troublemakers* (25 percent), and the *social elite* (12.5 percent).

These competitive, contradictory views were argued by interviewees to sustain paternalistic and politicized education structures in HEIs:

Universities herald themselves as being breeding grounds for maturity but often don't view you as an adult.

Institutional paternalism was not conducive to how Māori and Pasifika interviewees represented themselves, who indicated their complex self and community identities were sometimes encroached upon:

We don't really believe when we are in this place that we are only this one person. We are sort of the every ... part of ourselves which is brought here ...

There's been a lot of distrust, there's been a lot of history that's been full of raru [issues], so they [universities] expect [students] to keep up the relationship.

However, an overwhelming majority of survey respondents believed it was *true* that legislation and governmental decisions on education had to include student input. They also said it was *true* that political parties in Aotearoa (regardless of their ideological leanings) could not ignore student issues. An interviewee stated this was because students' associations in Aotearoa New Zealand view themselves—both personally and collectively—as intrinsic to the realization of democracy:

... missing that ... [student] groups face exposures, whether we're talking about climate change, whether we're talking about disproportionate outcomes for education, for health, [that we] are all going to be experts of that lived experience and how you can actually move towards a more egalitarian society and realize equity ... without engaging those student groups, without empowering them, that won't be realized.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined enacted egalitarianism within the structure and representation of students' associations in Aotearoa New Zealand. As Nielsen (2019) identifies, the student movement is currently experimenting with “leaderless, horizontal” and at times “direct democratic techniques to evoke egalitarian decision-making” (p. 91). This appears to occur due to a recognition that while students in Aotearoa New Zealand uphold equality, the egalitarian ideal has not been made fully manifest. The indeterminacy of students' associations' typology between the neo-corporatist and the pluralist models indirectly suggests transition for national and local students' associations, between competition and arranged state-student policy engagement. This indeterminacy is also seen in the confusion regarding the privatization of universities, with students aware public-private partnerships are reconfiguring HEIs relationships with students' associations. Such might link to Rashbrooke's (2013, as cited in Woodhams, 2015) hypothesis that colonization has dove-tailed with neoliberalism, resulting in the creative pragmatism, insecurity,

and depoliticization Nissen (2017) observes in a post-VSM world. Complex self-identification and communitarian values continue to be suppressed as students are presented “as innocent, passive victims or apathetic individualists in a changing world” (Hayward, 2021, p. 5).

Yet enacted egalitarianism by students’ associations appears to also act as the “gentle extension or breaking down of existing comfort-zones on all sides” (Nielsen, 2019, p. 95). This breaking down occurs in many ways. It can be through the use of an intermediary in a pluralist structure to enforce financial or representative equality for diverse groups at the government or institutional level. It can be through the use of constitutional structure, cultural approach, or enforced professionalization to challenge reforms like VSM. It is even in associations’ acceptance of a political neutrality to ensure all students feel welcome, supporting Nissen and Hayward (2016) who state “suggesting that there was no politics on campus did not mean students were not political” (p. 138). But this enacted egalitarianism has other issues. Students’ associations’ awareness of each others’ resourcing, especially among diverse groups who were more likely to be underfunded, has propelled neoliberal restructures. They also evidenced a disempowered perspective concerning their influence on decision-making, possibly furthering privatization when considering the resourcing of their own associations.

Yet, this analysis must recognize it is one of the first studies of its kind. The lack of documentation on the student movement in Aotearoa New Zealand—particularly in the poverty of literature concerning diverse student bodies—has meant students do not have access to their complex and rich heritage and histories of representation. An effort needs to be made to comprehend the uniqueness of the Pacific context, influence, and aspirations of indigenous peoples and minority cultures, and how non-general students’ associations intersect with general student representation. This is essential not only to address myths of egalitarianism concealing neoliberalism, but also to aid in the active realization of a post-colonial democracy for all students in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Acknowledgments

Tēnei te mihi ki a koutou katoa e ngā tūpuna, mo to koutou tautoko. The groundwork set by our ancestors is the reason why we can continue this kaupapa, especially as it exists in te ao Mārama. Without them, this chapter would not exist. Aroha tatou ki a koutou katoa.

The researchers want to thank the Global Student Forum and Dr. Manja Klemenčič for facilitating this project.

They also want to acknowledge Dr. Sylvia Nissen for her existing work in this area, and Henry Strathdee for contributing to calculating statistical data.

The most important thanks goes to our national and local students’ associations for their continued support of the student movement. May they stand strong, kia kaha.

Notes

- 1 Despite New Zealand universities having a smaller number of students than in comparison with other nations, the university student movement is highly unionized with over forty-eight students’ associations (most from universities) politically active in 2021 (NZUSA, 2021).
- 2 There are more diverse student groups on wealthier campuses, skewing interview data toward these institutions.

- 3 National student associations were included alongside local student groups as it is common for student representatives to hold multiple roles either successively or simultaneously; one interviewee exemplified this, stating: “This [interview] is hard when you’re part of three different students’ associations.”
- 4 Co-leadership is a model which is practiced among some Māori students’ associations and groups, which propose that there are always two leaders where one representative is a woman, and one is of any gender (male, female, nonbinary, or intersex).

References

- Brooks, R., Byford, K. and Sela, K. (2014). The changing role of students’ unions within contemporary higher education. *Journal of Education Policy* 30(2): 165–81.
- Cordery, C.J., Fowler, C.J. and Morgan, G.G. (2016). The development of incorporated structures for charities: A 100-year comparison of England and New Zealand. *Accounting History* 21(2–3): 281–303.
- Elsworthy, S. (1990). *Ritual Song of Defiance: A Social History of Students at the University of Otago*. Dunedin, New Zealand: University of Otago Students’ Association.
- Giroux, H. (2015). Neoliberalism’s war against higher education and the role of public intellectuals. *Límite. Revista Interdisciplinaria de Filosofía y Psicología* 10(34): 5–16.
- Hayward, B. (2021). *Children, Citizenship and Environment: #SchoolStrikes edition* (2nd ed.). Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.
- Kelsey, J. (1995). *The New Zealand Experiment: A World Model for a Structural Adjustment?* Wellington, New Zealand: Bridget Williams Books.
- Klemenčič, M. (2012). Student representation in Western Europe: Introduction to the special issue. *European Journal of Higher Education* 2(1): 2–19.
- Klemenčič, M. (2016). Student power in a global perspective and contemporary trends in student organising. *Studies in Higher Education* 39(3): 396–411.
- Klemenčič, M. (2019). Students and higher education expansion. In *Encyclopedia of International Higher Education Systems and Institutions*. Dordrecht: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-017-9553-1_57-1
- Lipson, L. (2011). *The Politics of Equality: New Zealand’s Adventures in Democracy*. Wellington, New Zealand: Victoria University Press.
- New Zealand Government (1908). Incorporated Societies Act. August 7, 2022. <https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1908/0212/latest/whole.html>
- New Zealand Government (1989). Education Act 1989. August 7, 2022. https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1989/0080/latest/DLM4234710.html?search=sw_096be8ed819f3478_%22student+association%22_25_se&p=1
- New Zealand Government (2005). Charities Act 2005. August 7, 2022. [legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2005/0039/latest/DLM344368.html](https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2005/0039/latest/DLM344368.html)
- New Zealand Law Commission (2013). *A New Act for Incorporated Societies*. Wellington, New Zealand: New Zealand Law Commission.
- New Zealand Qualifications Authority (2021). The Education (Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners) Code of Practice 2021. August 7, 2022. https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/assets/Providers-and-partners/Code-of-Practice/Tertiary-and-International-Learners-Code-2021/NZQA_Pastoral-Care-Code-of-Practice_English.pdf
- New Zealand Union of Students’ Associations (2021). *National Action Plan on COVID-19*. Wellington, New Zealand: NZUSA.
- Nielsen, G.B. (2019). Radically democratising education? New student movements, equality and engagement in common, yet plural, worlds. *Research in Education* 103(1): 85–100.
- Nissen, S. (2017). Politics as creative pragmatism: Rethinking the political action of contemporary university students in Aotearoa New Zealand [Doctorate Thesis, University of Canterbury].

- University of Canterbury Research Repository. August 5, 2021. <https://ir.canterbury.ac.nz/bitstream/handle/10092/13600/Nissen%2c%20Sylvia%20final%20PhD%20thesis.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>
- Nissen, S. and Hayward, B. (2016). Students' associations: The New Zealand experience. In R. Brooke's *Student Politics and Protest* (pp. 147–60). New York: Routledge.
- Nolan, M. (2000). *Breadwinning: New Zealand Women and the State*. Christchurch, New Zealand: Canterbury University Press.
- Olssen, M. (2000). The neo-liberal appropriation of tertiary education policy: Accountability, research and academic freedom. *Access: Contemporary Issues in Education* 19(2): 142–88.
- Otago Daily Times (October 5, 2011). Student dismay as VSM bill passed. December 28, 2021. <https://www.odt.co.nz/news/politics/student-dismay-vsm-bill-passed>
- Pearson, D. (1980). *Johnsonville: Continuity and Change in a New Zealand Township*. Sydney, Australia: Allen & Unwin.
- Radcliffe, K. (July 15, 2022). Cost of living concerns for students paint a picture of poverty. *Stuff*. August 7, 2022. <https://www.stuff.co.nz/dominion-post/129194116/cost-of-living-concerns-for-students-paint-picture-of-poverty>
- Rashbrooke, M. (2013). *Inequality: A New Zealand Crisis*. Wellington, New Zealand: Bridget Williams Books.
- Robertson, G. (1994). "A step to the right": The restructuring of the New Zealand University Students' Association in 1986. [Bachelor Honours Dissertation, University of Otago]. Library of the University of Otago. August 10, 2021. <https://ourarchive.otago.ac.nz/bitstream/handle/10523/2712/RobertsonGrant1994BAHons.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>
- Rudd, T. and Goodman, I.F. (2017). *Negotiating Neoliberalism: Developing Alternative Educational Visions*. Rotterdam, the Netherlands: Sense Publishers.
- Universities New Zealand (2022). How the sector works. August 7, 2022. <https://www.universitiesnz.ac.nz/about-university-sector>
- Walker, R. (2017). Reclaiming Maori education. In Hutchings, J. and Lee-Morgan, J. (eds.), *Decolonisation in Aotearoa: Education, Research and Practice* (pp. 19–38). Wellington, New Zealand: NZCER Press.
- Woodhams, J.M. (2015). A critical realist study of political identity in Aotearoa New Zealand: Materiality, discourse and content [Doctoral Thesis, Victoria University of Wellington]. ResearchArchive. Retrieved August 11, 2021, from <https://researcharchive.vuw.ac.nz/handle/10063/4769>
- Woodhams, J.M. (2019). Egalitarianism and politics in new zealand. In *Political Identity in Discourse*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-18630-2_3

Appendix I: Acronyms

AF	Academic Freedom
AUSA	Auckland University Students' Association
AUTSA	Auckland University of Technology Students' Association
HE	Higher Education
HEI/s	Higher Education Institution/s
NDSA	National Disabled Students' Association
NZISA	New Zealand International Students' Association
NZUSA	New Zealand Union of Students' Associations
OUSA	Otago University Students' Association

PwC	PricewaterhouseCoopers
SIHEG	Student Impact on Higher Education Globally
TMĀ	TeMana Ākonga
TP	Tauira Pasifika
UCSA	University of Canterbury Students' Association
VSM	Voluntary Student Membership
VUWSA	Victoria University of Wellington Students' Association

Appendix II: List of Students' Associations

This appendix lists the students' associations who took part in the survey and the group interviews. Local general students' associations participated in the survey, while local and national Māori, Pasifika, disabled and international students' associations took part in the group interviews, in accordance with *IV. Methodology*:

Local general students' associations:

- Auckland University Students' Association (AUSA);
- Auckland University of Technology Students' Association (AUTSA);
- Lincoln University Students' Association (LUSA);
- Massey University Students' Association Federation (MUSAF);
- Otago University Students' Association (OUSA);
- University of Canterbury Students' Association (UCSA);
- Victoria University of Wellington Students' Association (VUWSA); and,
- Waikato Students' Union (WSU).

Other local and national students' associations:

- Te Mana Ākonga (TMĀ);
- Tauira Pasifika (TP);
- National Disabled Students' Association (NDSA);
- New Zealand International Students' Association (NZISA);
- Ngā Tauira Māori (NTM);
- Te Akatoki;
- Te Waiora;
- Massey Albany Pasifika Students' Association (MAPSA);
- Victoria Pasifika Students' Council;
- Otago Disabled Students' Association (ODSA);
- Victoria Disabled Students' Association (DSA);
- Otago International Students' Association (OISA);
- Otago Muslim Students' Association (MOSA); and,
- Victoria International Students' Association (VISA).

Student Representation in China's Higher Education

Fan Li, Panpan Yao, and Wei Huang

Introduction

Chinese HE accounts for a considerable share of global HE (Altbach, 2009; Hornsby and Osman, 2014; Mok, 2016), leading to the massive expansion of student enrollment, spurring the globalization of HE (Dill, 2007; Giannakis and Bullivant, 2016; Neubauer and Gomes, 2017; Ngok, 2008; Yang, 2005). Since the early 2000s, China has been implementing a long-term development plan to improve the quality of higher education (HE).¹ The Chinese government has made substantial financial investments (Grove, 2017; Liu et al., 2019) alongside policy reforms to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of HE (Peters and Besley, 2018). High-quality HE depends on both investments in financial and human resources (Johnstone, 2003) and good governance (Rytmeister, 2009; Vidovich and Currie, 2011). The existing literature on China's HE has mainly focused on external factors, including public financing (Hirsch, 2001), quality assessment (Currie et al., 2003), and the massification and commodification of higher education (Christopher, 2012; Marginson and Considine, 2000). Limited research has been conducted on internal governance of HE institutions. When considering the recent pace of China's socioeconomic development and the potential impacts of its HE on both global HE development and labour markets, it is compelling to understand internal governance of HE institutions, including student involvement and representations in institutional decision-making.

Scrutinizing the existing literature on student involvement and representation in Chinese HE system, there were almost no empirical study that has been carefully conducted and documented. Given the void of the literature in this regard, and the compelling significance of Chinese HE on global HE markets, in this chapter we are motivated to examine student representation in Chinese HE institutions with a particular focus on different types of student government (SG) organizations, and how does the SGs in Chinese HE institutions represent students. We focused on SGs because beyond Chinese HE system, there are abundant literature in examining students' government, and most of these studies on SG and its influences on HE governance are relatively recent (Houwing and Kristjanson, 1975; Jones and Skolnik, 1997; Klemenčič et al., 2015). Two strands of literature are particularly relevant for our investigation. The first body of literature focuses on SGs' organizational characteristics (e.g., volunteer-run versus party-affiliated SGs) and investigates how SGs' political opportunities and resources affect their

organizational structure, cadre selection, and decision-making processes (Day, 2012; Parejo and Lorente, 2012; Stensaker and Michelsen, 2012). These scholars often study power distribution in HE governance by assessing the autonomy of SGs and student representation within SGs (Jessup-Anger, 2020; Klemenčič, 2014). For instance, Luescher (2013) discussed the advantages of student representation in HE governance and provided several paradigms through which researchers can examine this phenomenon. Later, Luescher and Klemenčič (2016) studied the representation of student organizations in several African countries and concluded that political parties often have a significant influence on HE students' politics, with ruling political parties exhibiting the greatest influence. These studies helped us form an analytical framework through which to investigate student governance in Chinese HE. By assessing the autonomy and degree of student representation in SGs, our chapter, along the same analytical framework, helps to yield a comprehensive understanding of the structure and operation of SGs in contemporary Chinese universities. It contributes to the literature on student representation in higher education, and on student representative associations in Asian context, and specifically in China.

Second, the perceived legitimacy of national political systems has profoundly influenced student politics in China (Altbach, 1984). The governance of HE is significantly influenced by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) (Huang, 2006). Since the economic reform in the 1980s and the later HE reforms in 1999, the governance of HE in China has been oscillating between centralization and decentralization (Wang, 2010). SGs are caught in and shaped by the processes of reconciling party-centralized leadership and decentralized HE autonomy. Thus, to examine how students are represented in the contemporary Chinese HE, understanding SGs' relationship with the CCP is essential to comprehend power distribution and its effects on students' representation. Specifically, we investigate the following three questions: (a) how is SG structured, and how does it operate to reconcile the demand for student representation, political autonomy, and other stakeholders' needs?; (b) how are students selected or elected as student cadres, and to what extent such election or selection process enables the students' representation?; and (c) what is the decision-making process of SGs, and where are SGs reforms heading to the future student involved internal governance? The structure of SGs and their internal operation significantly affect its criteria in determining who should be student cadres (or student deputies) and its generating procedures; and how student cadres are generated; and how such a student cadre generation process can ensure good student representations are essential in making further inferences about SGs in Chinese HE governance.

Therefore, in this chapter we address these questions through three distinctive but closely interconnected sections. In the first section, we examine the structure and power distributions within China's university SGs. Following this section, we investigate the student cadres (or student deputies') elections and student representation in Chinese universities. Last, we examine the recent development of university student congress (USC) system and its increasing role in student-related legislation and its legitimacies. To analyze the structures of Chinese SGs and assess its everyday operations, a series of in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted between September 2018 and July 2019. We interviewed fifty staff, student cadres, and students from seven universities in Hunan province. Interviewees were distributed among top-, median-, and bottom-tier universities as per China's Ministry of Education (MoE) rankings. As all top- and median-tier universities are public universities, our focus was mainly on public ones. Although there were some minor differences in SGs, the essential institutional arrangement at all seven

universities was astonishingly unanimous. This makes us more than confident that we can extend our qualitative findings to other Chinese HE institutes. Furthermore, our interviewees repeatedly confirmed our findings when relaying their personal experiences.

Structure and Power Distributions within China's University SGs

The concept of SGs in Chinese HE is rather vague. The use of the word “governments” is not strictly appropriate because of the absence of the power to enforce laws (MoE, 2016). However, we use the term “SG” to emphasize the quasi-governmental characteristics and operations of these student associations and organizations. For instance, according to one of our interviewees, who works in university administration [HN-1101-05]:

It is inappropriate to use the term government (in Chinese, 政府) to name the university associates or organisations. None of them are government, and [they] do not inherit any government characteristics.

Broadly, SGs in Chinese universities consist of two main parallel systems: student union [SU] systems (学生会) and CCP-party-affiliated systems (党/共青团委会). Figure 13.1 describes the structure of SGs with a three-level, top-down hierarchy.

Dual Nature of SGs in Chinese HE

Student unions are the main formal channel through which student organizations handle student-related affairs. They officially represent students in governing bodies and administrative units of HE institutions. Student union representatives (i.e., student cadres) participate in making joint decisions with other stakeholders (including university administrative boards, the CCP committee, faculty staff, etc.) in the governing processes.

The structures of SUs are top-down hierarchy, while the internal governance is typically decentralized. Each SU within the university SU system sets up their own agenda. For instance, at the university level, student union consists of multiple offices or ministries. They are responsible for attending to student affairs involving external stakeholders or multiple university departments. At the department level, each university department organizes its student union independently.² Department-level student unions have a rather similar internal structure as the university-level ones, and they operate only within their own department across different levels of student seniority. At the class level, students form many “class committees” (班委会) that take care of student-related affairs within a given class or year.

Meanwhile, the university CCP organizes its own student organization. Unlike the student union system, the CCP-affiliated system has a top-down and deeply hierarchical structure. CCP-affiliated system consists of two main student organizations: Communist Youth League Committees (CYLC, 共青团委会) and universities' Communist Party Committees (CPC, 党

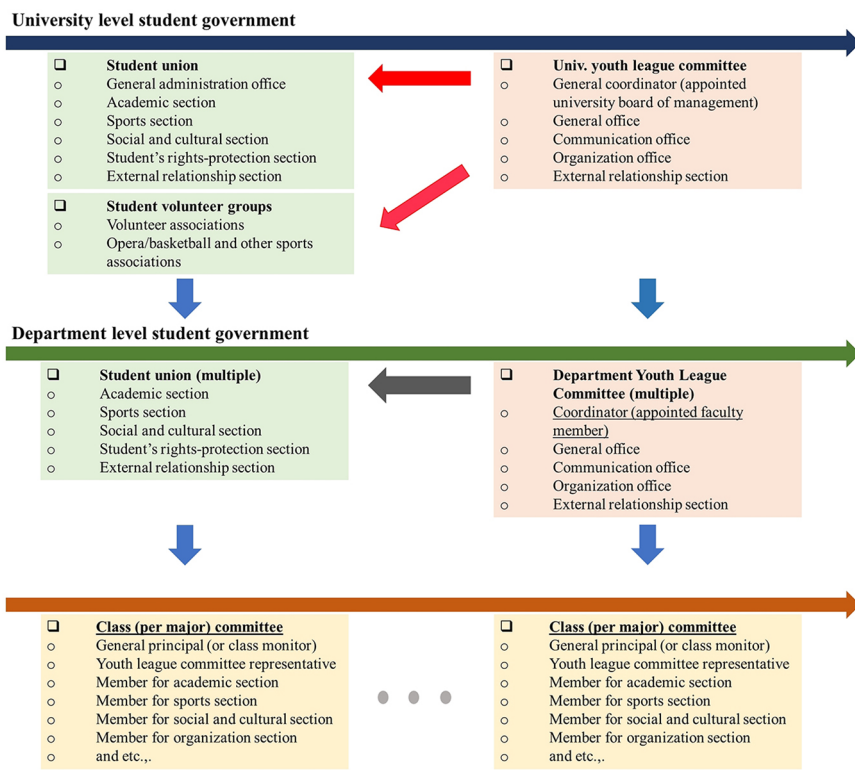


Figure 13.1 Structure of student government in China’s higher-education institutes.

Source: Prepared by the authors, and first published on Huang et al. (2021).

委会)。Whereas CYLCs are a primarily student-run organizations, CPCs are linked directly to university governance. Each university has a CPC, which has a strict, top-down hierarchy and comprises mostly university staff and elite students. In fact, it’s hard to claim that the university CPC is an SG since it is not entirely organized by students and exclusively associated with student affairs. CYLCs operate under the direct supervision and administration of CPCs. College students can apply to be CPC members via their local CYLC, but few succeed to join CPCs before they graduate. Although CYLC members are primarily students, CYLC chairs at both the university and department level are always administrative staff appointed by the university’s CPC. In short, this strongly top-down institutional arrangement ensures that CPCs have strong and centralized control over CYLCs.

Autonomy of SGs in Chinese HE

The vertical structure of CYLCs and CPCs ensures that the CCP-affiliated systems have a high degree of centralization and limited autonomy. In addition, given the role of CPC in university governance, CYLCs/CPCs have more power in university governance than student unions. This

is mainly achieved through the direct supervision of the CYLCs/CPCs on both SUs and the university faculty student management offices. For instance, the university-level CYLC and CPC directly supervise the operation of the university SU; same principles also applied at the department-level SGs and the major class committees.

However, this does not indicate that student unions have zero autonomy. First, student unions of all levels adopt a rather decentralized approach to their everyday operations. University- and department-level student unions do not supervise or coordinate lower-level student unions' or class committees' operations directly, and higher-level student unions seldom intervene in the affairs of lower-level student unions. Class committees can organize their own public events, set their own budgets from students' contributions, and negotiate with university administrators and faculty members on behalf of their members. For instance, an interviewee (a department student union cadre) [HN-1103-02] explained:

Our department student union has our own agenda and financial budget. The university student union does not intervene in our programme or planning. We do sometimes collectively organise some student event with the university student union, but mostly we make decisions by and for ourselves.

Second, although CYLCs supervise their corresponding student unions and class committees, this supervision focuses primarily on CCP-related activities, such as selecting candidates to join the CPC and organizing activities. Officially, CYLCs cannot be involved in student unions' non-CCP-related decision-making; however, they do play a monitoring role to ensure the transparency of decision-making processes and avoid conflicts of interest. Our interviewees indicated that student unions have some measure of autonomy, while the strong informal presence of CYLCs and CPCs affects student unions' decision-making and operations. Notably, because the public's and the CCP's interests can be defined broadly and subjectively, CYLCs play an important role in student union activities. For instance, a university student union cadre [HN-1103-08] shared:

Of course, as the university student union, we have our own scope of duties and responsibilities. However, we are also under the university CCP lead; communicating with the university CYLCs and the CCP is important to make sure that our activities are also supported by the university administrative offices. I personally do not think there would be any conflicts between the university student union and the CYLCs or the CCP; however, this collaborative relationship is based on good communication.

The extent to which these bodies' informal presence affects the operations of student unions depends on the issue at hand and how these bodies define the public's and CCP's interests. In summary, we found that although there is a degree of decentralization within student unions, the presence of CYLCs and CPCs means that in practice, SGs can be rather centralized, and party-affiliated bodies have the lion's share of formal and informal power. Such an institutional

arrangement implies that there might be a significant tendency among student cadres to attach the party system in reality. For instance, student cadres might show a significantly higher political trust, and actively join the CPCs than non-cadre students.

Cadres' Elections and Student Representation

The operation of SG highly depends on student cadres, who represent students and make decisions regarding student-related affairs among different entities. To examine how student cadres are selected and their representativeness, we first elaborate on the election process in both the student union and party-affiliated systems and then compare their election processes from the perspective of student representation.

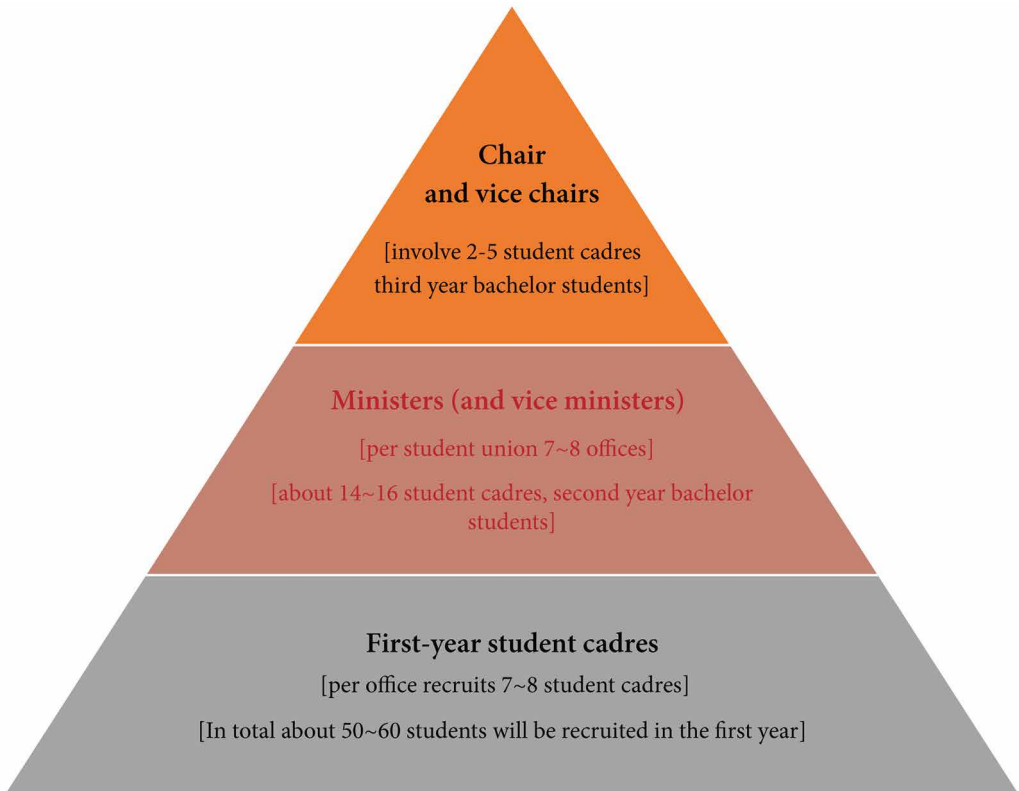


Figure 13.2 Structure of the student union and the number of student cadres.

Note: The hierarchy of the student unions, including the university student union and department student unions.
Source: Prepared by the authors, and first published on Huang et al. (2021).

Cadre Election or Cadre Selection?

There are strict protocols for student cadre elections among different SG entities. Here, we outline their defining characteristics for student unions and party-affiliated bodies alike.

The processes governing student union elections appear to be elective in nature but much more selective in practice. As shown in Figure 13.2, the chair and vice-chairs of university- and department-level student unions are mostly third-year bachelor's students, and the ministers of each office within student unions are mostly second-year bachelor's students. First-year students who wish to join student unions are subjected to evaluations by incumbent representatives at the beginning of each academic year. These evaluations assess candidates' abilities based on the requirements of each specific office. Candidates are required to give a public speech about their qualifications. Incumbent student cadres make final decisions about who will join the student union. Selected first-year student cadres mostly help senior cadres organize student-related affairs, and they play a limited role in decision-making. After the school year is over, first-year cadres compete for promotions to minister roles (of which two are available per office) and second-year cadres compete for the positions of chair and vice-chairs. These competitions are governed by the same processes by given a public speech and qualification examination, and winners are selected by the incumbent chair, vice-chair, and ministers. The corresponding CYLC supervises the election process but is not involved in final decisions. As an interviewee from the department CYLC [HN-1106-02] told us:

We are not involved in student cadre election in either the department student union or class committees. There are senior student cadres making their evaluation in the [department] student union. Once they have selected (voted) their candidates, we at CYLC have to confirm the election procedure and the results. That's all. We are also not involved in class committee election. Each class has their own election.

However, student cadre elections within CYLCs are rather limited. As with student unions, elections at CYLCs are similar to selection processes. First, all candidates must be official members of the CYLC, and students who apply to become CYLC cadres are subject to evaluation by their seniors.³ Second, the criteria for becoming a CYLC student cadre are quite blurry. Senior CYLC cadres weigh candidates' political beliefs and opinions rather heavily, even though these elements are subjective. This renders senior CYLC cadres' subjective opinions a crucial factor in the selection process. Third, public demands for transparency have limited the arbitrariness of senior cadres' judgments to some extent, alternatively leading to an increasing amount of importance being placed on academic performance, even though being a CYLC student cadre is not an academic or results-driven appointment. For instance, the interviewee above [HN-1106-02] explained:

In fact, academic performance is the most and only convincing criterion in electing a qualified student cadre. Of course, it is not necessary that candidates have all tests with the best scores, but the candidates cannot have poor academic performance, because only

exam scores are open, transparent, and objective. So, if someone wants to be a student cadre, she/he first has to make sure to have good academic performance.

Furthermore, the CYLC chair is a member of the university's administrative staff, appointed by the corresponding CPC. In fact, the chair is not selected through an election process. Thus, the CPC exerts a strong influence on CYLC elections and operations.

Class committees, the lowest level of student government units, manage almost 90 percent of student-related affairs. Unlike university- and department-level student unions or the CYLC elections, which are limited in scope and strongly influenced by the CPC, class committee membership is determined by a class-wide vote. A public campaign and election are organized at the beginning of each school year. Candidates are required to give a public speech. The election itself is supervised by the corresponding CYLC and decided by a vote. Winning candidates must receive at least two-thirds of the total vote. CYLCs exert a small amount of influence on these elections; for instance, winning candidates must be formally approved by the relevant department's CYLC to ensure that they represent the interests of a given class and the department administrators alike.

Cadres' Elections in Class Committees

We now examine representation among different election processes. Although the election process does not guarantee student involvement in decision-making, it offers students a basic channel to participate in university governance. We noticed that class committee elections have higher levels of student representation than student union and CYLC elections. First, all students participating in class committee elections share an equal and non-exclusive right to vote for the class committee cadres, and/or campaign to be elected as a class committee cadre. This procedure is far more open than student union and CYLC elections, which are decided by incumbent student cadres. For example, a field interviewee [HN-1109-07] shared:

I had never participated in any election or voting of the department student cadres. I do not think I can join given that I am not even affiliated to the class committee. I guess it is only open to students who have been in the department CYLC or student union. I did not join any of these organisations. But voting for the class committee is obligatory. All of us have to participate in the election at the beginning of the academic year.

Second, students who are elected to the class committee receive a procedural guarantee of wide support from their fellow students, unlike their counterparts in student unions and CYLCs. When class committee electoral candidates do not receive two-thirds of the overall vote, there are additional rounds of campaigning and voting. In contrast, senior and incumbent students dominate the decision-making processes in student union and CYLC elections, and the results are significantly affected by CPC members. In short, there is almost no institutional guarantee that student unions and CYLCs represent students and are supported by the majority of the student body.

Third, the results of class committee elections are rather definitive and subject to minimal influence from other stakeholders, especially CYLCs. Although CYLCs monitor the class committee elections, the results cannot be overturned unless two-thirds of students demand another election. That election results are so definitive demonstrates that class-level student governance is strong and decentralized. In contrast, the influence of CYLCs in student union elections and the fact that CYLC elections are directly supervised by CPCs demonstrate that these bodies' elections could be more centralized and less representative as the class committee election. Although our interviewees stated that they rarely observed conflicts between CYLCs and elected student union cadres, it is possible for the CYLC to reject an elected student cadre. In short, there is a significant lack of student representation in university- and department-level student unions and CYLCs. In this case, students' interests might be systematically neglected, further undermining the representativeness of SGs in HE.

University Students' Congress System and Student Deputy Election

Although the structure and the operation of SGs in Chinese universities have been well practiced since the HE reforms in 1999, to some extent, there were concerns about the legitimacy of SGs' decision-making process and the actual representativeness of the decision that SGs made. On the one hand, the imbalanced power distribution between the SUs and the CCP party-affiliated SGs entities (e.g., CYLC and CPC) undermines the role of SUs in decision-making and neglects students' voices within the SGs. The whole system often exhibits a typical top-down bureaucratic managerial style, which hinders the information feedback from all sorts of students to university administrators. In the long run, it causes a wide distrust of SGs, including both the SUs and the party-affiliated SGs. On the other hand, there is an increasing trend (or demand) of governing by the rule of law (RoL) since the late nineteenth century in the wide society of China (Turner et al., 2000).⁴ It has profoundly influenced the HE internal governance. Party-affiliated SGs entities still play a leading role; however, the SGs, as an essential institutional arrangement within the HE internal governance, have to comply with the rule of law, which indicates that the power of the congress system would be enhanced in the long run.

A Growing Enhanced University Students' Congress (USC) System

Under this evolving dynamic of the HE governance, and to regulate the operation of SGs by the rule of law, recently, we observed a growing institutional change: the introduction and enhancement of the (university) students' congress system (in Chinese, 学生代表大会制).⁵ It is difficult to say that the introduction of the USC system is innovative, given that there has been a long history of the National (and Provincial, Prefectural) People's Congress (NPC) system in Chinese political system. However, the recent enhancement of the USC system in many Chinese universities has greatly changed the grassroots universities' administrative approaches in managing students' affairs.

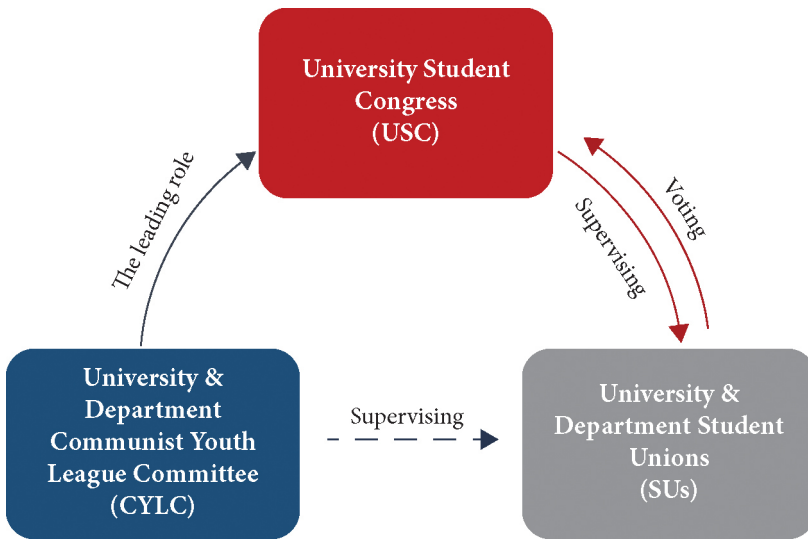


Figure 13.3 Tri-angle relationship after the introduction of the USC in SGs.

Note: The graph is constructed with using the reference of recently published USC governance regulations by the MoE (2019). Source: Prepared by the authors.

Figure 13.3 shows the model of the recent introduction of the USC in SGs, particularly the relationship with the SUs and the party-affiliated CYLC. Although the party-led CYLC still plays a leading role in managing student affairs (as what we showed above), there is starting a shift of the decision-making and supervising of SUs (including the students volunteer groups) from the CYLC to the USC through two primary channels. First, according to the USC policies (MoE, 2017), the USC is obligated to hold its annual deputy meeting at the beginning of the academic year. During the meeting, important decisions regarding student cadres’ elections, promotions, development goal, and large-scale activities are collectively decided through public voting. There has been a strict protocol to hold the annual deputy meeting, and strict criteria regarding the election of the student deputy. Second, once the SU’s objective and plans are approved by the USC during the annual meeting, and the new student cadres are elected after the voting, the USC will assemble the Standing Committee (SC) of the USC to perform the roles of supervision and student cadre evaluation.

We noticed that after the introduction of the USC system, both the annual deputy meeting and the standing committee schemes, the role of the CYLC shifted more toward leading and providing guidance in SUs daily activities. In practice, the CYLC (or even higher-level CCP party offices) starts taking more responsibility in party-related students affairs, thus providing more guidance to the USC. It still plays a role in supervising the daily operation of SUs, where non-party-related student affairs are coordinated and managed, and the primary supervising role has shifted to the USC. As an interviewee from the department students’ CYLC [HN-1110-03] told us:

After our university set up the USC, the CYLC acts more as a general supervisor. Most of the important decisions related to SUs and other student affairs have to be made during the USC annual meeting.

After the annual meeting, there will still have the standing committee to supervise. Of course, we supervise on different aspects of the SUs and other student related affairs. In CYLC, we are mainly focused on party-related activities, and we do not give the final evaluation of the SUs and its cadres, although in practice, we do provide our comments and suggestions to the USC standing committee.

The introduction of the USC system is still quite new to many universities' administrative office, and in fact, it was still not completely set up widely in all public universities. In fact, we did not observe the same movement has been starting in private universities. However, given the increasing interests of the central government and the CCP in transforming China's governance toward a rule of law-based system, we could expect that such a trend will become more prevalent in more public and private universities.

The USC Student Deputy Election and Student Representation

The introduction of the USC system might be an extensive institutional change of the SGs within the university governance; however, to what extent the USC system improves the student representation is unclear. It is difficult to empirically examine the change (or the improvement) of the student representations in the SGs, and to reflect potential impact on student representation, we particularly examined the USC system in student deputy election. First, the SC of the USC supervises the student cadres at all levels of SUs according to the SU objectives and the personnel evaluation criteria set up during the USC annual meeting. To ensure the representativeness of the SC, the USC has set up a clear quota of student deputies for different student groups. For instance, in one of the universities which has implemented the USC system, the USC deputy regulations (MoE, 2019) clearly stated:

... the number of the deputies during the (university) student congress annual meeting cannot be less than 1% of the students, and it has to be widely distributed to all departments over different grades and majors. Cadres from all levels of student unions cannot be more than 50% of the total deputies, and female student deputy cannot be less than 25%, and all ethnic minority student deputies should be proportional to the total number of students.

The standing committee of the (university) student congress cannot be larger than two times of the number of the departments. Deputies from all departments should be included. The standing committee also has to be careful with the gender balance, and the ethnic minority students. Student cadres cannot be more than 30% within the standing committee.

[document from MoE and CYLC, 2019]

In practice, the USC and its deputies are responsible for safeguarding the rights and interests of students and building a bridge between college students and the university administrative board. To achieve this objective, student deputies from the USC collect students' demands through its standing

committee in various approaches. For instance, many universities and faculties have adopted the “*propose first, publicly debate second*” principle, in which a new initiative should be always first proposed by an organization within the SGs, then it should be publicly discussed or debated before the final decision is made. The proposal can be initiated by the SUs, and it can also be raised by the CYLCs/CPCs or the university administrative office. This is quite different from the early decision-making process, which was often called as “*decided first, revolt and readjust second*” principle. However, these principles are rather primitive, and lack of concrete protocols in the field.

In summary, we found that (a) in general the regulations regarding the student deputies concerned the over representation of student cadres; thus, in both the USC annual meeting and the SC deputy’s election, strict bar has been set for student cadres; (b) it concerns the potential lack of female, and minority students; thus, it emphasizes the disadvantaged groups. However, these protocols and requirements are still relatively rough, and we found limited empirical evidence to show whether it has increased the actual representativeness of students from different background, such as family socioeconomic background, urban–rural, representation of non-CCP party-affiliated students, and other criteria. Moreover, the CYLC as a core CCP party organization still plays a significant leading role in either USC annual meeting or the SC of the USC in managing student affairs, which means it might still take a long run to observe the improvement of student representativeness in university internal governance.

Conclusion

Student involvement is an essential component in promoting the quality of HE (Luesher-Mamashela, 2013; Obondo, 2000). In China and many other developing countries where there were limited traditions in student involvement in HE governance, legislating on the student involved internal governance might be challenging. Thus, understanding the current status of student representation in HE governance, and how students should and could be involved is imperative. However, questions such as how SG is structured and operated, to what extent an SG is autonomous, and how these SG entities represent the interests of college students have seldom been discussed in China. We studied SG in China’s HE using extensive qualitative cases interviews. Our qualitative investigation indicated that the distribution of power in SGs is skewed toward CCP-affiliated bodies, such as CYLCs and CPCs, significantly undermining the autonomy of student unions. We also found that class committee-level elections (as a grassroots level of SGs) somehow exhibit a higher degree of autonomy and better student representation than university/department-level student unions and CYLCs, not least because universities’ CYLCs are directly influenced by CPCs. The introduction and promotion of the USC systems have been seen as a new progress toward public governing by the rule of law, and motivated to ensuring a high level of student representation, although the current state of USC system in most public universities is still in an early stage.

In summary, there are several distinct characteristics of student representation in China. First, despite the trend toward decentralization in HE governance (Green, 2007), centralization remains dominant in the Chinese context (Hawkins, 2000). This trend is reflected also in student representations in Chinese universities. Through the leading role of CCP and CYLCs

in SG, university administrators can extend their control over important decision-making at the university- and department-level. At the micro-level, class committees enjoyed certain degrees of autonomy, enabling flexibility in student involvement in decision-making in study-programs (majors). Such an internal governance style might exhibit certain advantages, including effective governing, forming consensus when the CPC and the CYLC have a stronger influence, and in the meanwhile ensuring certain autonomy among numerous class committee at the grassroots level. However, the dominance of CPC and the CYLCs over SUs and numerous class committees might inhibit effective student participation in decision-making in HE governance, ultimately limiting the potential of HE development.

Second, student cadres in China's HE are institutionally recognized as elites, who have the skills and experiences to reconcile and coordinate the interests of different stakeholders, particularly students and CYLCs. Such elitism might be partially attributable to the drastic massification of HE in China since 2000 (Mok, 2016; Mok and Han, 2017). The fast expansion of HE enrollment with the fear of loss of control requires internal governance with an increasing level of student elitism; student elites are integrated into a wide party-affiliated system, while non-elites are unable to survive in such a competitive environment.

Third, effective student involvement in HE governance is increasingly highlighted (Li and Zhao, 2020; Luescher, 2020; Tu, 2011). There will be more demands from the massive number of students for participation in different decision-making processes (Li and Zhao, 2020; Serger et al., 2015). In such a situation, the current SG structure and operation with its skewed power distribution and limited student representation will no longer be acceptable. Thus, determining the policies for student involvement in HE governance to be designed and identifying how HE governance should be reformed is crucial. Examining the current "Double First-Class University Plan" (MoE, 2017), we notice that there is limited scope for reform of internal governance of universities, including student involvement.

Our findings are consistent with some early studies regarding China's HE governance (Jin, 2014; Rong, 2017); however, the strong party-leading model of Chinese HE is far different from the global decentralizing HE governance trend (Daun and Mundy, 2011). For instance, Wang (2010) concluded that the coexistence of dual controlling mechanisms (the CCP and the university administrative system) and neoliberal practices showed an innovative scope of the state capacity in China's HE, which hardly can be observed in other developing countries. Furthermore, both Chinese and international HE governance are undergoing dynamic changes (Huang et al., 2018). With continuous massification, there is an increasing trend toward a neoliberal managerial model of governance both in China and globally (Lynch and Grummell, 2018). These are inevitably also affecting student representation in higher education. Scholars should pay special attention to the representativeness and autonomy of SGs in Chinese HE and investigate the potential effects of SG membership on student development. It is essential for high-quality HE to have high-quality internal governance, and more rigorous studies should be conducted in this regard in the Chinese context. Most contemporary studies on students in Chinese HE focus on the accumulation of human capital. However, HE is not merely about training a qualified labor force, but also about cultivating qualified citizens.

Notes

- 1 In 2017, Chinese government unveiled the national “*Double First-Class University Plan*,” its most ambitious attempt yet to improve higher education quality (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2017).
- 2 “Department” is used to indicate all different names in university administration, such as school, faculty, and college. “Major” is used to indicate the smallest unit of the university management.
- 3 Over 95 percent of surveyed students have been CYLC members since high school. Many noted that students are often encouraged to join CCP-affiliated student organizations in primary and middle school.
- 4 Since the late nineteenth century, when China began its modernization, the rule of law has been promoted by central government, and during the early 2000s, it has been further promoted among the common people.
- 5 In some works, we also see it has been translated as Students Representative Council (SRC). However, we believe there are differences between the USC and SRC. The recent promoted USC is not only an institutional student involvement so that students’ voices being heard, but also decisions can be made and enforced by the USC in Chinese HE institutes. In this sense, the USC is promoted to gain power in actual governing the students’ related affairs, and the CYLCs/CPCs will step back from SGs.

References

- Altbach, P.G. (1984). Student politics in the third world. *Higher Education* 13(6): 635–55.
- Altbach, P.G. (2009). One-third of the globe: The future of higher education in China and India. *Prospects* 39(1): 11–31.
- Christopher, J. (2012). Governance paradigms of public universities: An international comparative study. *Tertiary Education and Management* 18(4): 335–51.
- Currie, J. (2003). *Globalizing Practices and University Responses: European and Anglo-American Differences*. Praeger.
- Daun, H. and Mundy, K. (2011). (rep.120). *Educational Governance and Participation: With Focus on Developing Countries*. Institute of Education Report.
- Day, M. (2012). Dubious causes of no interest to students? The development of National Union of Students in the United Kingdom. *European Journal of Higher Education* 2(1): 32–46.
- Dill, D. (2007). Quality assurance in higher education: Practices and issues. In McGraw, B., Baker, E. and Peterson, P. (eds.), *International Encyclopedia of Education* (3rd ed.). Elsevier Publications.
- Giannakis, M. and Bullivant, N. (2016). The massification of higher education in the UK: Aspects of service quality. *Journal of Further and Higher Education* 40(5): 630–48.
- Green, A. (2007). Globalisation and the changing nature of the state in East Asia. *Globalisation, Societies and Education* 5(1): 23–38.
- Grove, J. (2017). *China Targets “World-Class” Status for 42 Universities*. Times Higher Education. September 20, 2019. <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/china-targets-world-class-status-42-universities>
- Hawkins, J. (2000). Centralization, decentralization, recentralization: Educational reform in China. *Journal of Educational Administration* 38(5): 442–54.
- Hirsch, W.Z. (2001). Initiatives for improving shared governance. In Hirsch, W.Z. and Weber, L.E. (eds.), *Governance in Higher Education: The University in a State of Flux* (p. 204). Economica.
- Hornsby, D. and Osman, R. (2014). Massification in higher education: Large classes and student learning. *Higher Education* 67(6): 711–19.
- Houwing, J.F. and Kristjanson, A.M. (1975). *Composition of Governing Bodies of Canadian Universities and Colleges*. Association of Universities and College of Canada.

- Huang, F. (2006). Incorporation and university governance: A comparative perspective from China and Japan. *Higher Education Management and Policy* 18(2): 35–49.
- Huang, Y., Pang, S. and Yu, S. (2018). Academic identities and university faculty responses to new managerialist reforms: Experiences from China. *Studies in Higher Education* 43(1): 154–72.
- Huang, W., Yao, P., Li, F. and Liao, X. (2021). Student governments in Chinese higher education: Reflection on college students' and student cadres' political trust. *Higher Education* 82: 387–409.
- Jessup-Anger, E. (2020). Student government. In David, M. and Amey, M. (eds.), *The SAGE Encyclopaedia of Higher Education* (pp. 1436–7). SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Jin, Y. (2014). College students' participation in university management: Origins, perspectives and its future. *China Higher Education* 2: 29–32 (in Chinese).
- Johnstone, B. (2003). Cost sharing in higher education: Tuition, financial assistance, and accessibility in a comparative perspective. *Czech Sociological Review* 39(3): 351–74.
- Jones, G.A. and Skolnik, M.L. (1997). Governing boards in Canadian universities. *Review of Higher Education* 20(3): 277–95.
- Klemenčič, M. (2014). Student power in a global perspective and contemporary trends in student organising. *Studies in Higher Education* 39(3): 396–411.
- Klemenčič, M., Bergan, S. and Primožič, R. (eds.). (2015). *Student Engagement in Europe: Society, Higher Education and Student Governance* (Council of Europe Higher Education Series No. 20). Council of Europe Publishing.
- Li, X. and Zhao, G. (2020). Democratic involvement in higher education: A study of Chinese student e-participation in university governance. *Higher Education Policy* 33: 65–87.
- Liu, Q., Turner, D. and Jing, X. (2019). The “double first-class initiative” in China: Background, implementation, and potential problems. *Beijing International Review of Education* 1(1): 92–108.
- Luescher-Mamashela, T.M. (2013). Student representation in university decision making: Good reasons, a new lens? *Studies in Higher Education* 38(10): 1442–56.
- Luescher, T.M. (2020). Student governance. In David, M. and Amey, M. (eds.), *The SAGE Encyclopaedia of Higher Education* (pp. 1434–5). SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Luescher, T.M. and Klemenčič, M. (2016). Student power in twenty-first century Africa: The character and role of student organising. In Brooks, R. (ed.), *Student Politics and Protests* (pp. 1–21). Surrey University.
- Lynch, K. and Grummell, B. (2018). New managerialism as an organisational form of neoliberalism. In Sowa, F., Staples, R. and Zapfel, S. (eds.), *The Transformation of Work in Welfare State Organizations: New Public Management and the Institutional Diffusion of Ideas*. Routledge.
- Marginson, S. and Considine, M. (2000). *The Enterprise University: Power, Governance and Reinvention in Australia*. Cambridge University Press.
- Ministry of Education (2016). *Temporary Regulation on Student Associations in China's Higher Education Institutes*. September 20, 2019. http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_xwfb/s5147/201601/t20160113_227746.html (in Chinese).
- Ministry of Education (2017). *The New Regulations on Campus Violence*. September 20, 2019. http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_xwfb/s5148/201703/t20170315_299659.html (in Chinese).
- Mok, K.H. (2016). Massification of higher education, graduate employment and social mobility in the Greater China region. *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 37(1): 51–71.
- Mok, K.H. and Han, X. (2017). Higher education governance and policy in China: Managing decentralization and transnationalism. *Policy and Society* 36(1): 34–48.
- Neubauer, D. and Gomes, C. (2017). *Quality Assurance in Asia-Pacific Universities: Implementing Massification in Higher Education*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Ngok, K. (2008). Massification, bureaucratization and questing for “word-class” status higher education in China since the mid-1990s. *International Journal of Educational Management* 22(6): 547–64.
- Obondo, A.T. (2000). *Politics of Participatory Decision-Making: The Case of Kenyatta University of Nairobi, Review No. 19*. French Institute for Research in Africa.

- Parejo, J.L. and Lorente, J. (2012). From student associations to CEUNE: The development of student representation in Spain. *European Journal of Higher Education* 2(1): 78–94.
- Peters, M.A. and Besley, T. (2018). China's double first-class university strategy: 双一流. *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 50(12): 1075–9.
- Rong, Z. (2017). The theoretical foundation of student involvement in higher education governance. *Fudan Education Forum* 6: 33–9.
- Rytmeister, C. (2009). Governing university strategy: Perceptions and practice of governance and management roles. *Tertiary Education and Management* 15(2): 137–56.
- Serger, S., Benner, M. and Li, L. (2015). Chinese university governance: Tensions and reforms. *Science and Public Policy* 42: 871–86.
- Stensaker, B. and Michelsen, S. (2012). Governmental steering, reform and the institutionalization of student interest in higher education in Norway. *European Journal of Higher Education* 2(1): 20–31.
- Tu, Y. (2011). Citizenship with Chinese characteristics? An investigation into Chinese university students' civic perceptions and civic participation. *Frontiers of Education in China* 6(3): 426–48.
- Turner, K.G., Feinerman, J.V. and Guy, R.K. (2000). *The Limits of the Rule of Law in China*. University of Washington Press.
- Vidovich, L. and Currie, J. (2011). Governance and trust in higher education. *Studies in Higher Education* 36(1): 43–56.
- Wang, L. (2010). Higher education governance and university autonomy in China. *Globalization, Societies and Education* 8(4): 477–95.
- Yang, D.P. (2005). The new development paradigm and China's education. In Ru, X., Lu, X., Li, P., Huang, P. and Chen, G. (eds.), *Analysis and Forecast of the Chinese Social Situation*. Social Sciences Literature Press.

On the Meaning of Student Elections: The Case of an Indian Campus

Jean-Thomas Martelli

Political science scholarship presents various forms of electoral contests as a way of measuring support for an individual, a party, and the ideas it promotes. Yet, student elections' campaigning often plays a modest role in the work of student outfits globally, while legitimate representation is sought alternatively, notably through mobilizing students and performing public service. As a result, it is often difficult to specify the nature of the interaction between those representing and represented through the lens of student elections only. Does the voter express ideological commitment or a form of political patronage? In this chapter, I examine the data collected by political activists in various years since 2004 at a flagship university in the social sciences in India's capital: the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU).

Through an analysis of the voting process, I outline the centrality of the electoral process in making political organizations legitimate in representing students in campus. Through the following quantitative study of student elections which is complemented by a prolonged ethnography, I proxy organizational influence in JNU before the interruption of student elections in 2019. I examine in particular how student activists consider certain vote combinations to estimate whether students vote for an organization or for the individual personality of their candidates. The chapter further argues that student elections are important tools to help activists to gauge organizational presence, which is the principal outcome of a socialization process brought about under the leadership of political parties and their student wings. I suggest that in campuses where such political socialization is prevalent, elections are substantial tools for student representation rather than mere passageways for institutional recognition by university administrations.

Introduction: Why Examine Student Elections?

Campus politics occupies a small space in Indian democracy for two reasons. Understandably student elections are local in scales, contrary to state and general elections. The 2014 Lok Sabha elections mobilized a cohort of voters larger than the entire European population while the Jawaharlal Nehru Student Union (JNUSU) election gathered 4,640 voters only out of around 8,000 students. Moreover, few of the 711 Indian universities (University Grants Commission, 2015) actually organize elections in their premises. The 2006 Lyngdoh recommendations, which provided guidelines for the conduction of student elections in universities, extensively considered campus election as a source of law and order malfunctions entailing violence and

the participation of outsiders involved in party politics. Most elections in university campuses are limited to mere nomination by the administration or class representation, which means that the organization of student elections is not permitted by university administrations. In 2006, out of 229 universities surveyed, only 41 followed a direct election system (Lyngdoh, 2006). Most major educational institutions of the country do not organize elections at all, including the prestigious Indian Institutes of Technology, major state universities (Madras, Bombay, Patna, Osmania, etc.) and leading universities such as Presidency University, or the Banaras Hindu University. As a result, the formal right to represent students is not generalized in India and vary substantially across states and institutions. Moreover, elected student councils often have overall limited decisional responsibilities. As a former President of the Jawaharlal Nehru University Students' Union (JNUSU) in New Delhi puts it: "what we have is a representative post, not a power post". Yet, while pointing out the uniqueness of politics in JNU, this chapter aims at showing the relevance of the study of campus elections in an Indian context. The two following points are put forward:

- a. Elections are not only a tool for selecting political candidates and cadres; they are a process in which a carnivalesque democratic culture is in display, intertwining political matters with personal leisure.
- b. The analysis of voting behavior shows a "combined voting" method in JNU which indicates the importance of party identification in the vote determination. Elections are not just votes, but the intangible sign of allegiance being crystallized on the basis of group identification.

Polls or Festival? JNU Elections as Cultural Artifacts

Political Science tends to apprehend elections as a statistical phenomenon, looking in a theological manner at who won, who lost, and by how much (Spencer, 2007). This approach fails at understanding interactions between individuals and political structures—what Dwaipayana Bhattacharyya (2009, 2011) calls Party-Society—and how these participate in the creation of a particular political culture. Therefore, this chapter does not have the ambition of discussing the various batches of elected representative in JNU. For the purpose of this chapter it is enough to say that several leftist outfits, mainly the Communist Party of Indian (Marxist) and the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist), dominated campus politics through their respective student unions, SFI and AISA,¹ since the first election in 1974 (Martelli, 2021). "The first generation [...] came to JNU from red-brick British universities where they had acquired avant-garde left-wing tendencies. They believed that the ideas generated and the thoughts encouraged on the JNU campus by avowed Marxist intellectuals would pave the way for the social and political salvation of the country" (Lochan, 1996).

Prior to 2018,² elections happened twice a year in JNU, in September for designating representatives at the school and the university level, and in April for the selection of student representative of the Gender Sensitisation Committee against Sexual Harassment (GSCASH)—the offshoot of a national provision which is hardly implemented in other Indian universities. Campaign periods see a dramatic intensification of political events organized on campus.

From the crack of dawn till deep into the night activists organize, monitor, and participate in countless political activities initiated by his student organization. The repertoire of contention (Tarrow, 2006) will include protests in Jantar Mantar (the official place for demonstrations in Delhi) with police sometimes arresting protestors, protest marches (*juloos*) in campus, torch-light marches, effigy-burning of personalities, sit-ins (*dharnas*, *dera dalos*), public events, meetings in the school cafes, human chains, presentation of fact-finding expeditions, welcoming of political guests, pamphleteering on mess tables at breakfast, lunch, and dinner time, campaigning in front of school entrances, meeting for planning strikes and reading groups, General Body Meetings (GBMs—school wise voting on a specific agenda and preceded by discussions), UGBMs (same process but at the university level), cultural events, film screenings, street plays, memorial lectures, political workshops, room campaigns, class campaigns, mess campaigns, signature campaigns, *chanda* campaigns (money contribution), one-on-one discussions, personal phone calls to solicit voting, reading groups, and more recently campaigns through Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, etc. Even hunger strikes around different issues planned ahead of elections are held to show the dedicated nature of future candidates.

The Tribunician Body on Stage: Presidential Debate as Oratory Performance

As Mukulika Banerjee (2015) noted in her ethnography of 2009 General Election, one of the important aspects of campaigning in India is to be seen and address speeches. In JNU like elsewhere, the activist must perform in crowded areas and exercise his “political tongue” (Bourdieu, 1979) in order to mobilize the students in GBMs, campaigns, and one-to-one discussion. The body public of the activist is *tribunician* because of the parliamentary and democratic outfit that the JNU campus election space tends to exhibit. Captions of senior JNU activists engaging in public activities is an indication of how comfortable they are in taking center stage and addressing various audiences. The activist must learn specific sloganeering and the specific time in which she should perform it. The activists’ oratory ability will be assessed when in diverse settings she will perform, appealing to a specific network of sympathizers, deciding whether to address a speech in English or Hindi, finding a rhetorical pirouette to avoid uncomfortable questions, or knowing how to keep cool temper after being insulted by the opposite organization.

The “body public” of the activist is fundamentally a performing one, in two senses. First, in a theatrical way, the activist has to be recognized as an activist, a “real one,” which will include the wearing a specific outfit (it can be called a costume), comprising unshaved beard for men, an unwashed and old drab-colored *Kurta* (loose collarless shirt), *chappals* (thongs, flip-flops) even in winter, *gamcha* (thin cotton towel protecting from the sun) in summer, and a *jhola* (jute satchel). This jute bag “makes students think that activists are going to work with the masses by bus just after their speech ... just as if they were always in movement, busy, so that they have to keep their things always with them”. This embodied communication technique is a reflection of the Indian left who have developed a specific aesthetic in order to associate with the poor, the peasant, and the worker. The visual image of declassing is definitely a marker of the left identity of JNU as it appeals to the “semiotic register” (Kaviraj, 2011) of party workers as martyrs who served the cause of the oppressed with meagre possessions.

On Counting Day: Sweat, Naras, and Booze

FIEDLNOTE

“As a first year student, it is difficult to mould completely into the JNU ethos. Who you hang around with defines your political affiliation I suppose.” Aarti, a newly registered student in Japanese studies was witnessing her first electoral night in the campus of New Delhi. Organizations from different political backgrounds were dancing—five out of seven main ones being part of the Marxist-Leninist ideological umbrella—drumming, chanting and shouting slogans in favour of their much supported candidate, and affiliated individuals were siding in different corners of the lawn while the Election Committee (all formed by voluntary students) were announcing intermediary results every 100s odd votes counted. Coming from an activist tent, where a student organization had installed mats, blankets and mattresses in order camp for the night, an activist’s friend was coming to us with voice hoarse from sloganeering; “the election in JNU is like a party were *naras* [slogans] replace songs.”

During political campaigns, JNUSU contestants have to sweat a lot, repeat same political slogans over a very long period of time, and convince professors to let them speak two minutes to students in ongoing classes. A senior activist told me once: “Only pregnant women know the pain of giving birth; the same occurs with campaigning activists” (Akbar, personal communication, 2014). Common students will be potentially in contact with political messages at any time of the day or night. When important campaigns are going on, teams of activists will make speeches in the mess of hostels at breakfast time.

Professors invited by student organizations tackle burning issues until late in the night, and politicized talk over *chai* is seen around night stalls until two or three in the morning. As a senior activist puts it, “there is no pause in the political game” (Aardra, personal communication, 2015) and this puts activists under constant pressure, since they need to *reach out* all day long until exhaustion. “I cannot wait for the election to finish, then I can write my paper. Nowhere in India activist are more dedicated than in JNU. [4 months later] I am very burned out man, I am waiting for the march of the 26 and then I will take rest for a while” (Balu, personal communication, 2014, 2015). Before the polling, main organization will make sure they approach each individual “at least two times” in their hostel room with teams of two to three “foot soldiers” (Chintu, personal communication, 2015).

At election time, speeches will be addressed in messes for breakfast, in classes in the morning, in messes for lunch, at General Body Meetings (GBM) at 12:30 p.m., at political events in the afternoon, for songs and slogans on the way to the next public performance and on the way from it. Later pamphleteering will resume, the activist-candidate will monitor the performing of a street play in the evening, then campaign room to room later in the night and take brief coaching advices from seniors between two rooms she visits. It appears that the learning process of political repertoires is quintessentially social. On one campaigning day, puzzled, I asked a new JNU student how come he could recite such a long Malayali song. “I learned that during my MA days in Trivandrum. The

song...by hearing you learn, the juniors learn from seniors” (Sakkariya, personal communication, 2015). Bhojpuri song interpreted by AISA activists on GSCASH counting day 2015.

PEPSI COLA—COCA COLA (*PROTEST SONG*)

The rich has access to all resources. They drink Pepsi-cola
whereas the poor don't even have access to clean drinking water ...
and are left with drinking their tears.

The new education policy is designated in such a way that the
ministers can send their children to good schools, but the poor in order
to subsist send their children to shepherd cattle and work in the field.

Campaigning activists are dutifully cheerful and outgoing, relating to hundreds of students, and share a sense of camaraderie and kinship. Sharing food will be one of those revealing elements of the affinity between the contestant and the common student. Lenin, former president of JNUSU, would come down to the cafe of his school in a hurry and put his hand on the shoulder of a sitting student. Then he would plunge his hand in the hot aloo paratha the person is currently eating; he would carve out a chunk with his hand before putting that to his mouth. The discussion would go on for a couple of seconds and he would leave as suddenly as he came.

The night-long counting process of the student-led Electoral Commission gives space for contestants and cadres to echo partisan radical slogans, spreading in chorus the clamor of “Laal Salam” (Red Salute) and “Inquilab Zindabad” (Revolution Will Win) in every corner of the campus. It is not surprising therefore if the exterior of academic buildings is covered this year again with vermilion portraits of heroes of the left (and some right) iconography, including Irom Sharmila, chained factory workers, or Hugo Chavez who in 2005 gave a speech here to a packed audience.

In many respects, the day of the election is the moment where the JNU community imagine itself a united group, celebrating its democratic ethos. As a culturally shared event, the election of JNUSU can be seen as a festival in which the JNU community reifies its group-identity (Durkheim, 1912; Rao, 2001). The latter is not only self-conscious and politically oriented; it is also implicit, associated with the endogamous JNU traditions group. In Bourdieu's words this unselfconscious level of identity exists as *doxa* and serves as a naturalized process of social reproduction of the community (Bourdieu, 1977; Guneratne, 2002). Celebrating elections is accepted as part of the given order of JNU life and serves as an actor-oriented (Hughes-Freeland and Crain, 1998) vector of differentiation (Bell, 1992; Shneiderman, 2015). JNU polling can be seen as a cultural practice that fosters feelings of belonging to the JNU community. In *Myth and Meaning* (1996), Levi-Strauss admits that “in order for a culture to be really itself and to produce something, the culture and its members must be convinced of their originality and even, to some extent, of the superiority over the others.”

JNU election also shares *carnavalesque* features as it abolishes the distinction between the ideological activists and nonaffiliated common students. On that specific night only (with the exception of Holi celebrations) many student leaders can be seen in a state of inebriation, putting aside for a couple of hours their responsibility as protector of the student community. This will last until morning and then activists will start being worried again about their respectability on campus, and those who drink *daru* (alcohol) will do so in the secretive space of a locked hostel room. The leveling effect of this carnival (Bakhtin, 1985; Banerjee, 2015) can also be seen in terms of sloganeering. Once again the distinction between activists and other students

is temporarily obliterated as groups shout festive and ironical slogans that mimic the traditional ones but subvert their meaning. Traditional *naras* are derided and activists are mocked publicly. Laughter is here to deride for one night the seriousness of left ideology and its promoters. The content of the jokes shouted is not anecdotal; they reveal how rooted the political culture is in JNU. The jokes do not point primarily at a sexual or religious imaginary; it concentrates on the political folklore of the campus and those who represent it.

ORIGINAL SLOGAN

Jab laal laal lehrayega, tab hosh thikaane aayega

(when the red flag flutters, you will come to your senses!)

PARODIC VERSION

Jab laal laal lehrayega, tab saand peechhe aayega

(when the red flag flutters, the bull will come running after you!)

This electoral carnival reveals the pervasiveness of a campus *culture legitime* (Bourdieu, 1979) in which terms of the political debates are categorized around ideas like social redistribution and liberal values. Interviews and memories of right-wing student activists bring to the fore striking similarities with the left-leaning political argumentation. It is possible to assume a certain cross-organization standardization of acceptable views on topics like woman's rights, socialism, rights of lower castes, and democratic deliberation: "Off the record, I am Marxist, like Ram, my concern is how to feed people ... promote equality" (ABVP cadre, personal communication, 2015).

Partisanship in JNU Electoral Culture: The Organizational Vote

While the spirit of the elections is captured in the carnivalesque, the nuances of political partisanship and participation in the election culture of JNU can be understood through the "Organizational Vote." This specific voting behavior, detailed in the two next sections, expresses an unconditional support of the voter for a specific student organization. There are multiple players that are actively engaged in this electoral process, and among them are cadres, activists, political leaders, ideologues, and even professors.

The subsequent analysis suggests that student organizations structure the political culture through methods of capturing a monopoly of representation on campus. Through an analysis of election data, I argue that political organizations push sympathizers, cadres, and new students toward the Organizational Vote. These voting patterns are strong indicators of the strength student outfits on campus.

Two Types of Elections under Scrutiny

Elections are held according to the JNU Constitution and subsequently according to the Lyngdoh Committee reforms.³ As mentioned above there are two elections that take place on campus. The first one is a one-round general election where students elect representatives for two levels of

posts to the Student Union. There are four posts at the central panel (President, Vice-President, Secretary, Joint Secretary). Major schools (School of Social Science, School of International Studies, School of Languages) elect a school panel of Councillors. These schools have five councillor posts while small schools have only one or two. The number of posts depends on the number of students enrolled in that particular school.

The other elections in a calendar year are for the post of two student representatives for the GSCASH (other committee members include faculty representation, legal expert, social worker, and psychologist). The *Gender Sensitisation Committee against Sexual Harassment*, the offshoot of a national provision, is hardly implemented in other Indian universities and has therefore become with years a symbol of the progressive ethos of JNU. This election is a closed-list proportional election in which voters cast two votes. The two candidates with the largest number of votes are elected to the committee. As a matter of convention candidates do not campaign officially as members of political organizations, but still enjoy their backing. Prior to elections, conversations around tea stalls and cafes indicate that party affiliations of candidates are fairly obvious. However in the past two elections the convention has been broken and some political organizations issue pamphlets and posters with the name of the candidate as endorsed by the organization.

The Dataset

It is three in the morning and the venerable student-run Electoral Commission (EC) declares results to a trickle. Every hour the vote-count is announced through loudspeakers followed by partisan sloganeering and febrile drumming. Meanwhile, shut in one academic building counting agents sent by different organizations discretely collect precious information, the so-called “panel vote” and “freeze vote.”

Political organizations are allowed to have polling agents at the election booth and at the vote-counting chamber. As every voter enters the booth, the election committee member calls out the name and school of the voter and the polling agent marks him or her off the list. Through this process the organizations can keep track of voter turnout. After lunchtime cadres and leaders call, message, or go to rooms of students to persuade them to turn up for the voting. There are cadres and sympathizers that assist students whose names are not on the list owing to technical errors. They facilitate a speedier registration for such students, so they are eligible to vote. By the end of the day, the polling agents and the organizations can compute how many students from each school have turned up for election. This data is collected by polling agents inside the counting chamber. As each school’s votes are counted, they are marked off on a separate sheet. Since each student casts four votes for the central panel on one sheet and for the five councillors on one sheet, it is easy for the agents to note if one voter has voted for a single organization, two organizations, or across organizations. I accessed my data from some activists and organization offices who had kept older records. While I trawled through various sources for this data, I could find the records only for 2004, 2012, 2014 central panel elections and 2012–15 for GSCASH elections. I filed for information with the Election Committee, but I was told it is a matter of convention to destroy records after every election. As a result, I could not update my results with the more recent electoral cycles of 2016, 2017, and 2018.

Defining the Organizational Vote: Panel Votes and Freeze Votes

A vote cast in all four central panel positions for candidates of one organization is termed a “panel vote.” Panel votes are similarly identified for councillor posts as well. My tables are based on the correlation of both sets of data—that from the voting booth and from the counting chamber. I collected poll data from the organizations and use their same method, tabulating turnouts per school alongside panel and non-panel votes.

In interviews conducted, leaders of political organizations admit that this helps them strategize for subsequent elections—they are able to broadly identify potential sympathizers and cadres per school. It also helps them decide which candidate to float for subsequent elections—a councillor candidate that garners votes from panel votes as well as mixed votes is a good choice for the central panel the next year. As one senior activist underlines “in electoral terms Panel Votes are crucial.” A former students’ union president and now a professor in the university recognizes how crucial those were in his past victory, and out of 800 votes he could get 600 through panel votes. But the significance of panel votes is not merely numerical, it is symbolic. One senior leader tries to make sense of panel votes:

VIGNETTE

Panel Votes means that people are committed and loyal to your politics, they have recognised your work, your vision ... without any diversion, despite rumour mongering. Shafkat [AISA candidate with the shorter experience as activist, therefore seen as the weakest contender in the organization] got the minimum votes, 1300 ... this is our Panel Vote. They [students] have recognised your activism, despite all the fake campaigns ... the opposition to our party has made a grand alliance, left agenda was “defeat AISA, reject ABVP.” Last time we got 1,600 something Panel Votes. People have not voted for that person, they have voted for AISA (Chintu, personal communication, 2014).

A panel vote is a form of Organizational Vote, an acknowledgment of the work and political orientation of one political structure irrespective of the particular composure of candidates. A faculty member and former SFI activist notes: “Panel Votes allow you to discriminate political votes from individual choices and strategic voting” (i.e., selecting the expected strongest contestant). This kind of vote expresses therefore a clear form of loyalty toward a campus organizational structure. A former contender corroborates this claim: “Panel Votes show the deep trust of students in the organization ... these votes are the result of a long association.” The State Secretary of a student union in the opposition (SFI) rephrases the same idea with more crude words: “When somebody starts giving Panel Votes it becomes a habit ... in 2007 we committed political mistakes and people started voting AISA, now they are in last year PhD and keep their trust to AISA.” Clearly, student organizations use panel votes to assess the penetration of their movement around the student community. “At the school level, in the School of Languages AISA people convinced 149 persons to vote for four candidates only out of five just because one of their candidates got disqualified ... this show the real strength of the organization.” Panel votes are also used to speculate about political trends, and results of the previous year are used to craft

new expectations for the upcoming electoral deadline. The student wing of SFI for instance uses Panel votes to nourish new ambitions for next September elections; “our vote share increased by 165 per cent while AISA lost more than 200 Panel Votes,” notes one of its leaders. Panel votes are thus used as “political barometer” and allow organizations and us to identify schools and centers where the organization can develop and increase its support.

Apart from the panel vote, another way of identifying the Organizational Vote is the “freeze vote” in the GSCASH elections. Even though the system of voting allows for two votes for two candidates, it has been a convention that each organization floats only one candidate. Since the agenda of the GSCASH committee is gender equality and gender justice, the left organizations have a tacit understanding not to turn it into an organizational election. In the last election, however, the ABVP floated two candidates. On the day of election, as students approach the Student Union building to cast votes, they pass through a gauntlet of activists and sympathizers sloganeering for each candidate. Even though no organization admits to it on the record, my experience and interviews indicate that students are asked to cast only one vote instead of two—thereby *freezing* the guaranteed election of one candidate over others. A temperate observer of student elections there deplors that “many of us approaching the voting centre today were asked to cast a Freeze-Vote, and the requests came from almost all political groups and candidates.” Asked about this practice the All India vice president of AISA explains that “a second vote might go to a direct opponent, so that we have no guarantee to win anymore.” Concretely, in a neck-to-neck contest freeze vote allows an organization to deprive rivals from precious votes. Cadres of organizations may also cast only one vote to bolster their organizations’ candidate. In the general elections as well, voters may cast votes only for some candidates of one organization. Both these conditions are what I term as a freeze vote. The incidence of freeze voting has been identified in our ballot analysis and is detailed below.

Party Identification and Organizational Vote

The “Organizational Voting” is a specific voting behavior in which a student elects university representatives on the sole base of party affiliation in campus. Organization Voting is therefore seen as an expression of a political statement; “I vote for these candidates because of their political etiquette.” At a collective level this can be the reflection of a social and ideological bond between a section of the general student body and a single political organization. Such voting pattern eventually indicates sympathy and loyalty to a local political structure and the idea it expresses. A panel vote or a freeze vote is thus an indicator of Organizational Voting. In this chapter I claim that the importance of the Organizational Vote lies in the fact that irrespective of the identity and personality of candidates, the winning organization can bank on its networking presence and account for the penetration of political orientation during the previous academic year.

In this chapter I assumed that party identification involves a psychological association with an organized group, and this identification has predictable relationships with their perceptions, evaluations, and actions (Campbell, Gurin and Miller, 1954; Kothari, 1971; Prysby and Scavo, 2013). I adopt here the Michigan theory of party identification which assumes that identification is primarily affective (Burden and Klofstad, 2005). Every contestant represents a student

organization that has its own political identity and party affiliation. Relying on text analysis of a large corpus of pamphlets issued by political organizations over JNU’s history, I identified out the dominance of specific lexical fields that employed by each locutor in JNU campus (2016, 2019). Broadly, campus organizations can be understood across the political spectrum. As I can outline from the table (see Figure 14.1), ABVP tends to favor the vocabulary of the Right focusing its campaigns on nationalism, Islamophobia, mythology, Hinduism, and using oppositional geographies of China and Pakistan recurrently. The three main Left organizations—AISA, SFI, AISF—spend space criticizing the nationalism of the ABVP and pointing to the faults of the BJP and the RSS in national politics. I also see a strong focus on domestic crisis of farmers, minorities, and lower classes and castes.

	1st Topic^a	2nd Topic
ABVP	[Hindu Nationalism] Mataram, nationalism, nationalist, Bharat, Pakistan, China, Parishad, anti-national, Jai, Vandemataram, civilization, Vivekanand(a), Chinese, Tibet, Nationalist, Bharatiya, western, science, separatist, colonize, Aurobindo, Tibetan, Hinduism, partition, Anti-National, Motherland, secessionist, civilization, Beijng, Pakistani.	[Hinduism & Islamophobia] (1) Ram, ancient, cultural, religious, Ramayana, Hanuman, Sita, history, Hindu, Swadeshi, culture, motherland, Indian, Sanskrit, temple, Ravan, Lord, faith, unholy, God, Vedic, Durga, Valimiki, worship, Ayodhya, Mother, goddess; (2) Bangladeshi, Assam, terrorist, Muslim(s), Islamic, Islam, terrorism, infiltration, population, fundamentalist, church, immigration, beef.
AISA	[Anti-Establishment viz. Hindu Right & Israel] (1) Sangh, communal, racist, BJP, Golwalkar, VHP, Gujarat, sena, Ayodhya, nationalism, Modi, hate, Vajpayee, Saffron, Parivar, fascism, BJP-NDA, Hitler, Shiv, khaap, BHU, Achin; (2) Israeli, Palestinian, Sharon, Ariel, Bush, American, Iraq, Saddam, Guantanamo, Jews, Iran, Jewish, Imperialist, Gaza.	[Anti-Establishment viz. Capitalism & Military] (1) grab, Corporate, MNC(s), SEZ, contractor, expansion, corruption, boycott, super-rich, Wage, Poor, peasant, worker, farmer, labor, NREGS; (2) AFSPA, POTA, Killer, blast, massacre, Manipur, crackdown, kill, repression, murder, Army, shoot, Lalgarh, torture, troop, Surrender, LTTE, brigade, Violence, CRZ, witch-hunting, rioting, Bodies.
SFI-AISF	[Campus-Issues] MCM, Scholarship, SFCs (Student-Faculty Committee), CMP, forthcoming, agreement, IDSA, hostel, university, seat, GBM, composition, demand, accommodation, center, gain, mobilize, library, admission, debate, fight, effort.	[Anti-Establishment viz. Imperialism & Communalism] (1) attack, imperialism, secular, imperialist, bourgeoisie, bourgeois, forward, crisis, Chavez, exemplify, IMF, isolate, position, unity, struggle, Indo-US, anti-people; (2) Communal, RSS-BJP, goon, RSS-ABVP, lumpen, NDA.

	1st Topic ^a	2nd Topic
NSUI	[Nationalism] Hind, India, Gandhi, Congress, Mahatma, leftist, Gandhiji, comrade, we, nation, China, community, Marxist, our, vision, Chinese, nationalism, dream, ideology, lumpens, Swaraj, prestigious, anti-national.	[Secularism] secular, tradition, bouquet, Kalam, Khan.
UDSF	[Caste Identity & Reservation Rights] (1) Bahujan(s), manuvadi, Caste, SC Shudra, Ambedkar, ancestor, Dalit(s), Babasaheb untouchable, self-respect, lover; (2) OBC, cut-off, reservation, AIBSF, mark, ST, fill category, MHRD, criterion, arbitrary, anti-reservation implement, Cut-Off.	[Origins of Caste and Caste Discrimination] Ram, Brahmin, Ramayana, Valmiki, cruel, culprit, conspiracy, Sita, Ravan, Aryan, Bhakti, Jat manuputras, justice, Brahminical, casteist, scripture treacherous, goondaism, Lord.

^a Words contained in topics where chosen among those who have a high chance (99.9 percent, equivalent to a specificity score $S > 3$) to be overrepresented in specific sub-corpus of the various organizations.

Figure 14.1 Lexical specificities of student organizations in JNU (organized by topic).

To some extent, AISA upholds internationalism as a principle and raises questions of Palestine, Iraq, Afghanistan, etc. The centrist NSUI focuses on nation building, policy programs, deriding the right and the left alike and speaks of national leaders equivocally. The subaltern organization UDSF criticizes Hinduism, mythology, and nationalism while talking about immediate issues of lower caste and tribe students.

The Organizational Vote can be perceived as an indicator of a sense of belonging that shapes political understanding of the surrounding world, both inside and outside campus. In an era where governments face more and more distrust from their representatives (Della Porta and Andretta, 2013), a good proportion of the students have a positive opinion of activism on campus. The result of the survey conducted with 1,223 respondents (September 2014) shows that 76.7 percent of JNU students have an opinion of politics in JNU campus that is “Excellent,” “Positive,” or “Fair.” The correlation between party affiliation and satisfaction is solid; the vast majority of those who declare themselves “completely satisfied” declare themselves as part of a student organization. For a significant section of the student, the support for a specific campus-based party is unconditional and is possibly reflected in the practice of casting panel votes and freeze votes.

Contrary to other local elections across the world, votes casted by students in JNU campus are not equal. Because each ballot paper at the counting booth is read out by the Electoral Commission, organizations can fairly assess their mass base through the counting of panel votes and freeze votes; it is possible for them to know how many sympathizers (and cadres) they can rely on in each school. The access to the information on panel votes and freeze votes allows organizations to adjust campaigning strategies and target more efficiently their core audience.

“When we have identified who has pro-AISA sympathies we approach them in priority,” recognizes an aspiring campus leader. “We are not the only ones to do that, this practice is made irrespective of ideological orientations.”

Quantifying the Organizational Vote

To understand the intensity of the Organizational Vote in determining the political space in the JNU campus, I turn to an analysis of the data collected from past elections. From Figure 14.2, I see that panel votes can range from 36 percent to 48 percent in a given election and contribute to the majority of the votes of the five major parties. Figure 14.3 indicates ABVP and SFI had a maximum share of the panel vote in the 2004 elections but this was upturned by the massive share of panel votes for AISA in the 2012 election. While the panel vote share for AISA drops down in 2014 election, I see the ABVP getting a large chunk of panel votes from some schools. The biggest proportion of its vote share from panel votes (62 percent) comes from the School of Languages while half of AISA’s vote pool is composed of this kind of voting behavior. Interestingly enough,

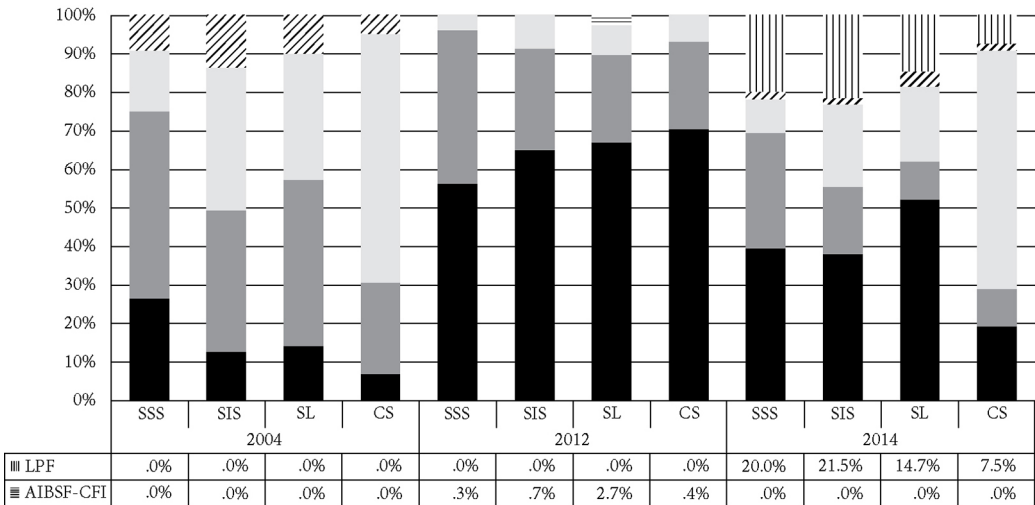


Figure 14.2 School-wise distribution of vote patterns at the 2004, 2012, and 2014 elections for central panel in JNU.

Average panel votes in 2004: 48.0 percent (1,571 voters out of 3,272 counted). Total votes casted: 3,346. Total number of students on the voter list: 4,769. Approximate total turnout: 70.2 percent.

Average panel votes in 2012 (March election): 36.5 percent (1,679 voters out of 4,606 counted). Total votes casted: 4,637. Total number of students on the voter list: 7,551. Approximate total turnout: 61.4 percent.

Average panel votes in 2014: 40.8 percent (1,839 voters out of 4,505 counted). Total votes casted: 4,640. Total number of students on the voter list: 8,061. Approximate total turnout: 57.5 percent.

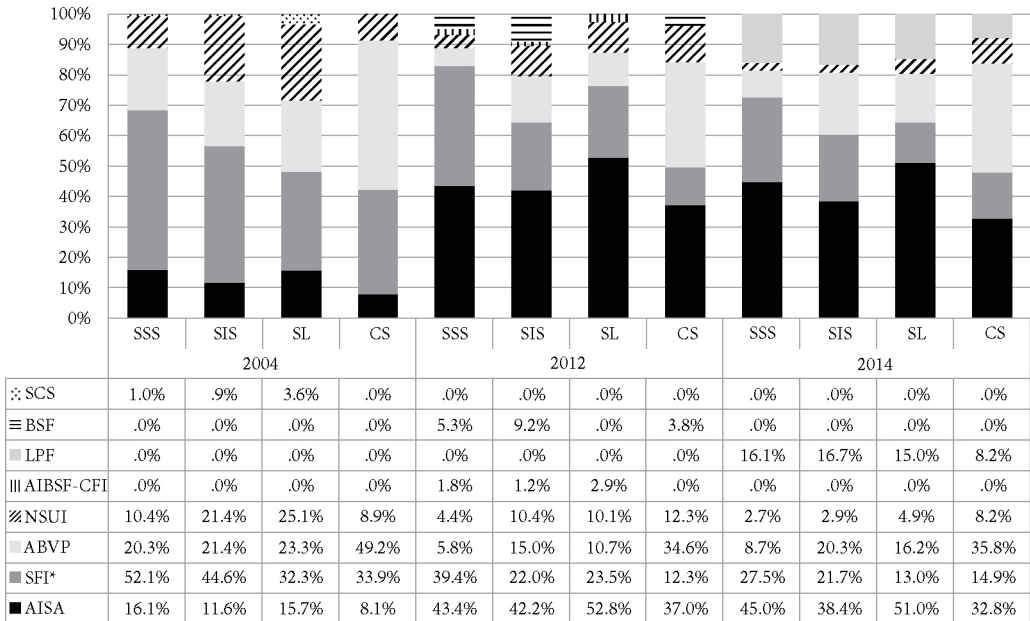


Figure 14.3 Organization-wise distribution of panel votes at the 2004, 2012, and 2014 elections for central panel in JNU.

* In 2004 SFI contested elections in alliance with AISF but not in 2012 and 2014.

the proportion of panel votes has decreased in the past years (for instance, nearly half of the voters opted for panel voting in 2004 students’ elections).

This distribution indicates a few tendencies of campus elections. First, the propensity of panel votes indicates that there are sizeable cadres that work with each organization. This is corroborated with estimates of membership numbers from the field study. Second, this also indicates the persuasiveness of organizations over new and old students to have a dedicated voting group that recurrently votes for one organization regardless of central panel, councillors, or GSCASH representatives. Third, while in every election, the campaign is based on current student issues and national politics, this dedicated vote share indicates a political socialization process that is necessary for organizations to maintain—without the support of such sheer numbers, it would be difficult to win elections.

Another voting pattern I identify (Figure 14.4) is that of the *Panel Break*. I define a panel break as voting where majority of votes will be for an organization while one of the votes would be for candidate of another organization. The tendency for this increases if there is a candidate who appeals across left-sympathetic voters as a leader as was in the case of election of Lenin in 2012. When I look at school councillor elections, I see the tendency to vote for freeze vote reduces and other patterns emerge. A *Quasi-Panel* is similar to a panel break, but one vote is kept blank. Panel breaks and quasi-panels show a strong support of the organization but not at the cost of following the voting for all candidates unlike the cadres, thus indicating the non-cadre, yet sympathizer vote.

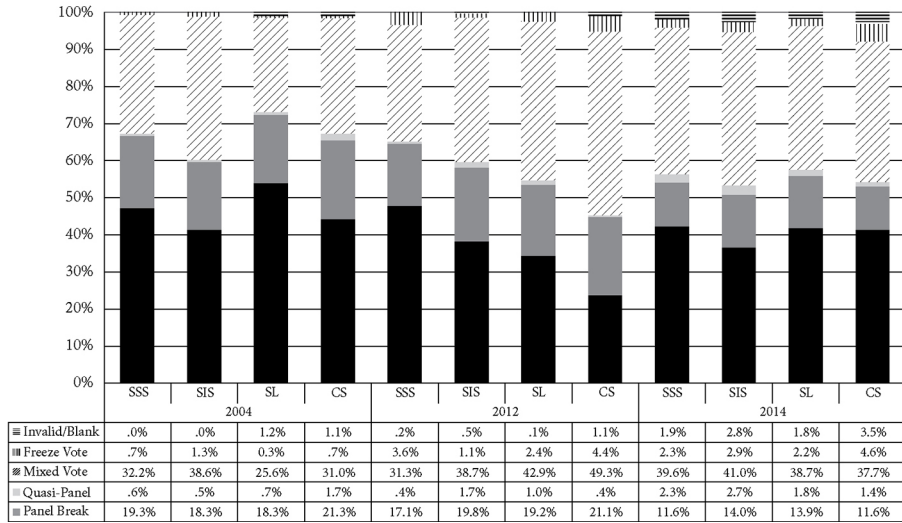


Figure 14.4 Organization-wise distribution of panel breaks and quasi-panel at the 2004, 2012, and 2014 elections for central panel in JNU.

* *ibid.* Figure 14.2.

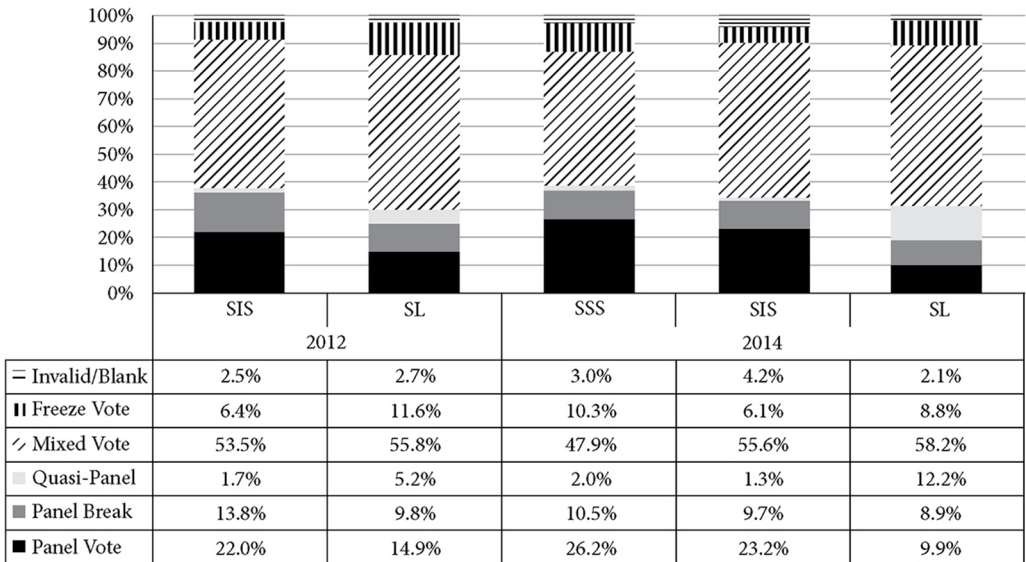


Figure 14.5 School-wise distribution of vote patterns at the 2012 and 2014 elections for school panel in JNU.

All the data collected for school votes was not suitable for analysis. Data was kept in the School of Languages (2012, 2014), School of International Studies (2012, 2014), and School of Social Sciences (2014).

One of the significant ways in which this is identified (Figure 14.5) is by looking at school councillor elections. I can see that barely 10 percent of votes are freeze votes and 10–25 percent of votes are panel votes. Even panel breaks account for 8–14 percent of votes. However, close to 50–60 percent of votes are mixed votes showing no tendency to vote for a single organization or two organizations. This mix in the counsellors is indicative of the socialization and politicization process on campus identified elsewhere. In brief I can summarize this process as one where the voting in the school is a smaller social affair—since voters personally know the candidates, votes are cast on the basis of friendship and visibility of the candidate around the school. The second reason I identify from the interviews is that organizations do not always have enough effective leaders to fill five candidatures for election. Thus organizations push other candidates who may have leadership potential for positions in later years to learn campaigning, speaking, debating.

Cadres and strong organizational sympathizers may also cast freeze votes, especially in the case of GSCASH elections (but is also noticed in councillor and central panel elections). Looking at the numbers provided by the organization (Figures 14.6 and 14.7), it appears that the strategy is of great efficacy. Around one-third of the voters have chosen this method of voting. The organization benefiting the most from this behavior varies depending on the election year, but overall the benefit from this practice is heavenly distributed across parties. Those who have “frozen” their vote have not only followed a voting recommendation from their student organization, they also renounced half of their democratic right to vote. Abstaining to cast a vote for political reason is a tradition in democratic cultures (i.e., the option of None of the Above, or NOTA, had been introduced for the first time this in 2015 JNU students’ union election) but I can safely assume here that “freeze voting” is for part of a process of discipline in which students align their voting strategy to the one of the parties they are affiliated to. Once again, we face here a form of “Organizational Vote” in which the students manifest their attachment to a specific political structure.

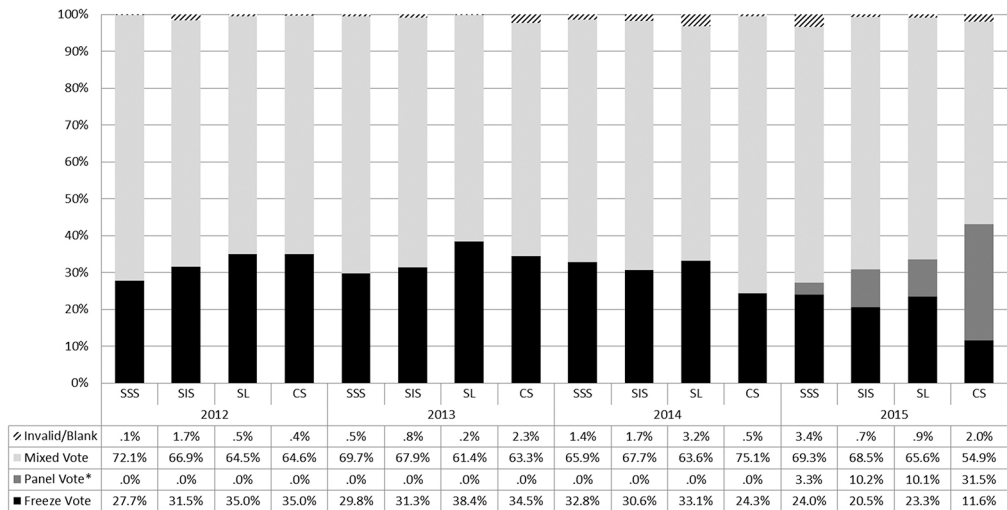


Figure 14.6 School-wise distribution of vote patterns at the 2012 till 2015 elections for GSCASH in JNU.

* In 2015, ABVP filed two GSCASH candidates instead of one, which is the custom for this election. Therefore, instead of asking students to freeze their vote, ABVP requested them to cast panel votes.

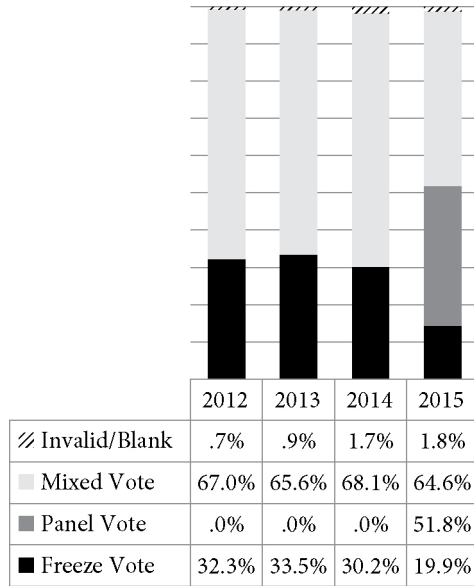


Figure 14.7 Distribution of freeze votes at the 2012, 2013, 2014, and 2015 elections for GSCASH in JNU.

We see that when it comes to GSCASH elections, the tendency for freeze vote is significant across parties. From 2012 to 2014 I see at least 30 percent of ballots cast tend to have a freeze vote. In 2015, a chunk of freeze votes were translated to panel votes since ABVP put up two candidates for the election. This indicates that even after subtracting the potential 10 percent vote for previous years, when it comes to the agenda of gender justice, organizational politics in the left organizations takes primacy over issue-based politics. However, this table also points out that regardless of ABVP’s floating of two candidates, almost 65 percent of ballot is divided across two candidates—this indicates that the larger share of student body while they may sympathize with left organizations, they can be distinguished from the cadre since they do not largely fall under freeze vote.

Conclusion: Elections as Student Representation

The pervasiveness of Organizational Voting, understood as the electoral expression of broader loyalties toward a political structure, has benefited parties that could effectively create a strong sense of belonging among the student community. We show that attitudinal factors such as party identification and ideological orientation play an important role in JNU elections. Crystallization of allegiances in JNU campus can be explained through socialization.

I suggest that student wings of two left parties, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist), could develop a form of campus representation in JNU over the years based on strong and constant interpersonal relations. Except in two occasions,

all the presidents in the near fifty years-long history of the university belonged to a Marxist party, in contrast to the broader political environment largely dominated by the Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party. This alternative political presence could be the mark of a successful attempt from campus leaders to fuel the anti-establishment character of the university. This presence is maintained by creating both patron-client types of relations with students and through the systematic attempt to politicize campus. Ultimately, it is by bridging the student community with their elected Union that communist parties contributed to the establishing of JNU at the crossroads of Indian left tradition and political counterculture. One of the ways to assess this phenomenon has been to look with an ethnographic eye at JNU elections and see that student organizations are the main actors of a festival that leads large sections of the JNU population in collective celebrations. While the revelry and festivities of campus elections suggest a manifestation of the *carnavalesque* which indicates a certain light-heartedness, the vote analysis suggests an entrenched system of politicization, mobilization, and strategic calculations that organizations and voters make as conscious political choices.

This chapter contributes to our understanding of student government in three different ways. First, it lays out the conditions under which electoral processes achieve student representation. As indicated in this volume (Genelot, 2023), when political socialization in campus is low, student elections are mainly used as legitimizing tools by activists to engage the university administration. Conversely, for student organizations which have a sustained political interaction with the students, elections serve to successfully claim student representation and not only to foreground an upcoming rapport the force with the university administration.

The chapter also exemplifies the tenuousness of electoral student representation in the South Asian context. Elections are the exception rather than the norm in most campuses, and they are widely associated with misconduct, violence, and the promotion of neoliberal values (Jeffrey, 2010; Kuttig, Suykens and Islam, 2020; Lukose, 2009). In India however, those campuses which have been enforcing peaceful student democracy have been targeted by the government, and many of their public faces have been jailed (Payal, 2022). Even in JNU, one of the most politically active campuses in the country, elections have not resumed and the political culture of the university has declined due to the constant administrative witch-hunt of student activists (Baumann, 2022). Last but not least, this account illustrates the multiplicity of usages political student organizations make of electoral contests. Beyond the simple count of votes received by their candidates, activists look at vote combinations—panel votes in this case—to better understand students' voting behaviors and assess the strength of their organization irrespective of the individual personalities of contestants. This study hence exemplifies the importance activists give to ideas and ideological positioning in the conduct of student politics in key Indian campuses. In the context of the Jawaharlal Nehru University, student elections demonstrate the centrality of the use of “arguments” over the one of “muscle.”

Notes

- 1 AISA stands for the All India Students Association, SFI for the Students' Federation of India. The latter has been in many instances in coalition with the Communist Party of India's student wing All India Student Federation (AISF). Other visible political organizations in JNU are: DSF (Democratic

- Students' Federation, associated to Left Collective), DSU (Democratic Students Union, supporter of the Communist Party of India Maoist CPI(Maoist)), the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), student wing of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, and NSUI (National Students' Union of India, student branch of the Indian National Congress).
- 2 The GSCASH (see this page) was discontinued in 2018 by the then administration of JNU, putting an end to the annual election of its student representatives. In 2019, the Jawaharlal Nehru University Students' Union elections were stalled due to the Covid-19 pandemic and did not resume at the time of writing (October 2023).
 - 3 Lyngdoh Committee, set up by the Ministry of Human Resource Development to reform electoral regulations in campuses, was implemented by the Supreme Court in 2006. JNU activists, who refused to implement these recommendations, led the Supreme Court to ban elections in 2008. In March 2012 the latter were restored and organized under partially relaxed norms of the Lyngdoh recommendations. The latter limited the central panel tenure to one year and imposed elections to be held between six and eight weeks from the date of commencement of the monsoon semester.

References

- Bakhtine, M. and Robel, A. (1985). *L'oeuvre de François Rabelais et la culture populaire au moyen'ge et sous la renaissance*. Paris: BNF.
- Banerjee, M. (2015). *Why India Votes?* London: Routledge.
- Baumann, C. (2022). Untold stories of international students at Jawaharlal Nehru University. In *Universities as Transformative Social Spaces* (pp. 108–25). New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Bell, M.M. (1992). The fruit of difference: The rural-urban continuum as a system of identity. *Rural Sociology* 57(1): 65.
- Bhattacharyya, D. (2009). Of control and factions: The changing “Party-Society” in rural West Bengal. *Economic and Political Weekly* 44(9): 59–69. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40278555>
- Bhattacharyya, D., Ghosh, A., Guha-Thakurta, T. and Nair, J. (2011). Party society, its consolidation and crisis: Understanding political change in West Bengal. In *Theorizing the Present: Essays for Partha Chatterjee* (pp. 226–50). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1977). *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1979). Les trois états du capital culturel. *Actes De La Recherche En Sciences Sociales* 30(1): 3–6.
- Burden, B.C. and Klofstad, C. A. (2005). Affect and cognition in party identification. *Political Psychology* 26(6): 869–86.
- Campbell, A., Gurin, D. and Miller, W.E. (1954). *The Voter Decides*. New York: Row, Peterson, and Company.
- Della Porta, D. and Andretta, M. (2013). Protesting for justice and democracy: Italian indignados? *Contemporary Italian Politics* 5(1): 23–37.
- Durkheim, É. (1912). *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse. Le système totémique en Australie*. Paris: Les Presses universitaires de France.
- Genelot, Q. (2023). Strategies and actions of student organisations for the conquest of representativeness: The case of the French student elections. *Bloomsbury Handbook on Student Politics Globally*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Guneratne, A. (2002). *Many Tongues, One People: The Making of Tharu Identity in Nepal*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Hughes-Freeland, F. and Crain, M.M. (1998). *Recasting Ritual: Performance, Media, Identity*. Abingdon: Routledge.

- Jeffrey, C. (2010). *Timepass: Youth, Class, and the Politics of Waiting in India*. Redwood City: Stanford University Press.
- Kaviraj, S. (2011). The enchantment of the state: Indian thought on the role of the state in the narrative of modernity. In Akhil Gupta and K. Sivaramakrishnan (eds), *The State in India after Liberalization: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Kothari, R. (1971). The political change of 1967. *Economic and Political Weekly* 6(3/5): 231–50. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4381547>
- Kuttig, J., Suykens, B. and Islam, A. (2020). *Student Politics and Political Violence in Bangladesh*. Ghent: Conflict Research Group.
- Lévi-Strauss, C. (1978). *Myth and Meaning*. London: Routledge.
- Lochan, K. (1996). *JNU: The Years: An Anthology by the Silver Memoir Committee*. Mumbai, Maharashtra: Popular Prakashan.
- Lukose, R. (2009). *Liberalization's Children: Gender, Youth, and Consumer Citizenship in Globalizing India*, Durham: Duke University Press.
- Lyngdoh, J.M. (2006). *Report of the Lyngdoh Committee, Ministry of Human Resource Development*. New Delhi: Government of India.
- Martelli, J.T. (2016). Historicising student activism and their pamphleteer discourses: A textometric analysis, *13th International Conference on the Statistical Analysis of Textual Data-JADT 2016*.
- Martelli, J.T. (2021a). The spillovers of competition: Value-based activism and political cross-fertilization in an Indian campus. *Samaj* 22(1): 1–41.
- Martelli, J.T. (2021b). The politics of our selves: Left self-fashioning and the production of representative claims in everyday Indian campus politics. *Modern Asian Studies* 55(6): 1972–2045.
- Rao, V. (2001). Celebrations as social investments: Festival expenditures, unit price variation and social status in rural India. *Journal of Development Studies* 38(1): 71–97.
- Spencer, J. (2007). Anthropology, politics and the state. *Democracy and Violence in South Asia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Payal, K. (2022). *A Night of Knowing Nothing* (documentary). Paris: Petit Chaos.
- Prysbly, C. and Scavo, C. (2013). *Voting Behavior: The 2008 Election*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Institute for Social Research.
- Shneiderman, S. (2015). *Rituals of Ethnicity: Thangmi Identities between Nepal and India*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Tilly, C. and Tarrow, S. (2015). *Contentious Politics*. Second Revised Edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- University Grant Commission (2015). *Annual Report*. New Delhi: Government of India.

The Omani Model of Student Representation in Higher Education

Faisal Al Balushi

Introduction

Student representation in higher education (HE) governance is a relatively recent phenomenon in Oman. Indeed, the student advisory councils (SACs) were only first introduced to higher education institutions (HEIs) in Oman in 2014. This chapter is the first of its kind to offer an original account of the Omani model of student representation in HE and introduces a unique case for student involvement in HE decision-making. It focuses on SACs, which serve as student representative associations at universities and colleges in Oman. The chapter explores the organizational characteristics of SACs and their role in the governance of HEIs. It finds that while there seems to be some sincere effort made by SACs to represent students, the representation mechanisms within university policies make SACs serve narrowly defined purposes and yield limited changes for HE students. Data¹ in this chapter are drawn from the following sources: a content analysis of formal documents and seventy-three interviews with student leaders, HE students, staff at four HEIs, and others who are directly involved in HE governance in Oman. The focus on institution-level student representation is deliberate as there are as yet no national-level student representative associations in place.

In the first section of this chapter, I review the literature on student representation and student politics as two distinct but interrelated facets of student politics and explore the rationales behind and objections against including students in HE governance. The next section covers the methods used to collect the data. Pertinently, the main questions that this research aims to answer concern the context in which SACs have been established and the nature of SAC's representation in HE decision-making. The third and fourth sections provide general accounts of the Omani context and highlight the early emergence of SACs in HE. Thereafter, in fifth section, the discussion explores the legal framework that enables the formal functioning of SACs at HEIs. The sixth and seventh sections compare the findings from the Student Impact on Higher Education Globally (SIHEG) survey for student leaders at a local level (LOC-SIHEG) in the case of three HEIs in Oman. Moreover, an insight into the nature of SAC's participation in HE decision-making is explored. Finally, the conclusion forwards further suggestions for future research into student representation in Oman.

Review of Literature and Conceptual Framework

This section presents key literature for student representation research in HE which is usually discussed as part of the broader theme of student politics. It also offers the conceptual framework for studying the emergence and the function of SACs in Oman. The most prominent researcher to have contributed to this field in the last half-century is Phillips Altbach (Luescher, 2018). He suggested that student politics consists of student organizations and movements post-school level and can influence political, cultural, and societal issues (Klemenčič, 2020a, c). Meanwhile, Klemenčič and Park (2018) described student politics as “the students” political activities associated with the governance of the student body and its influence on both the higher education institution and the society to which they belong.

Student politics is mainly viewed in two strands of activities: representation and activism (Klemenčič, 2020a). Both strands are important for the investigation of student representation in Oman. The establishment of SACs, which are the main student representation groups in Oman, has been paved for through student activism. Through representation, students can take part, usually formally, in institutional governing bodies or other task forces to advocate student issues and influence decisions on behalf of the student body (Klemenčič, 2012). Klemenčič and Park (2018) suggested two conditions for representation to occur: the existence of formal student associations within the institution, which can be in the form of a student government, union, council, or guild, and the institution of formal channels that student representation groups can use for representation and intermediation.

On the other hand, activism has been defined as “any political engagements of students to bring about political and social change” (Klemenčič, 2020a, p. 2). It can come in various forms that can be distinguished based on collective or individual action, one-off acts or events, or organized and durable engagement and violent or nonviolent actions (Klemenčič, 2020a). The greatest distinction between activism and representation is that in the former, students’ engagement in claim-making usually occurs through contentious political activities, such as protests (Klemenčič and Park, 2018). In representation, students use formal channels, such as seats in the governing bodies of higher education institutions to demand and intermediate students’ interests.

Among the different aspects of student politics, political activism was seen by Altbach as the most significant aspect to impact HE systems and institutions and can make students a potent political power (Klemenčič, 2020a). Pertinent examples of students engaging in HE politics were protests by German students who were able to reverse policies that had sought to end free HE, and the demonstrations by Chilean high school and university students for better quality education and a reduction in tuition fees (Altbach and Klemenčič, 2014). These examples demonstrated that student politics is deemed a potent force that can assume a role in altering education policies in the interests of students.

Student activism has also been a potent force in influencing social and political policies related to freedom of speech and democratization within societies (Klemenčič, 2020a). For instance, students were very active during the various waves of the Arab Spring that impacted most countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region and forced the long-ruling presidents (i.e., the Egyptian, Tunisian, and Libyan) out of office (Altbach and Klemenčič, 2014).

Similarly, the Arab Spring protests in Oman, in which students also participated, have played a vital role in forcing the authorities to change major political policies and concede to demands

concerning HE policies like the establishment of SACs, as will be discussed later in this chapter. It is worth mentioning that there have been no studies to explicitly focus on SACs' establishment and student representation in HE in Oman except for one book which is published in Arabic titled *The History of Ten Arab Public Universities*. One chapter discusses the general history of Sultan Qaboos University² (SQU) and includes a brief section about SACs' formation.³

Other parts of the world have also had the experience of student representations engaging in protests and eventually participating constructively in university governance. For example, universities in Western Europe and North America underwent drastic changes after mass student activism and protests in the 1960s and early 1970s (Altbach, 2006). Luescher-Mamashela (2013) reported that recent surveys indicated that student involvement in university decision-making had become "close to universal" in its application and became a tradition in the US and UK higher education systems, though with varying contexts, institutions, and agendas (Persson, 2004).

Yet, there exist different rationales for and objections against student representations that are relevant to understanding the purpose and the function of SACs in Omani HE. Some of the circumstances that provide the main justifications for student involvement in university decision-making can be explored using Luescher-Mamashela's (2013) seminal typology of four cases. In the first case, students are seen as a potent "internal politically significant constituency of the university" that exert influence at political and social levels. Therefore, it is argued that the absence of formal communication channels in a university may potentially be a cause for violent protests similar to the waves of protests that took place in London in 2010 (Luescher-Mamashela, 2013). Klemenčič (2020c), however, maintained that arguments against making the students an internal politically significant constituency point to the oppositional positions students usually hold; the normal university decision-making process could be stalled or completely impeded should the student representation groups be given more formal powers.

The second case for the involvement of student representation is related to the university's perception of students as consumers and clients of the services provided by the university (including teaching and learning services) (Luescher-Mamashela, 2013). Thus, to gain the satisfaction of consumers, university governance seeks to identify any potential issues and opportunities to improve students' experience by meeting with and listening to the students. Nevertheless, student activists and student representatives have rejected this concept which features students mainly as consumers and the HE as a commodity (Luescher-Mamashela, 2013).

The third case for student representation runs counter to the consumerist case. Here, students are viewed as part of the community. Therefore, their representation is justified based on community members with certain rights (Luescher-Mamashela, 2013). This case resonates with McCulloch's (2009) conception of "co-production" whereby students and others working in the university are engaged in "a cooperative enterprise which is focused on knowledge, its production, dissemination and application, and on the development of learners" (McCulloch, 2009, p. 181). Thus, the students alongside the university are engaged in bringing about changes to the educational processes as they share the "collective experience of the learning group and on community and the involvement of individuals" (McCulloch, 2009, p. 178). Nonetheless, this stance has been countered with the argument that the students are considered juniors in their

fields and that their knowledge and experience are limited compared to staff members (Zuo and Ratsoy, 1999). Therefore, a typical argument used against student representation has been that understanding the complex factors that are necessary to establish long-term quality institutional performance is difficult for students to grasp (Klemenčič, 2020c, 2024a, b).

In the fourth case, students' representation in university governance is seen as vital as a way of promoting citizenship culture and democratic values (Luescher-Mamashela, 2013). This sort of involvement may be introduced in "newly democratized countries, in which the transition to democracy is often incomplete. In such contexts, universities may positively contribute to the consolidation of a national democratic culture through student representation in university decision making" (Luescher-Mamashela, 2013, p. 1451). Although this statement has been widely agreed upon in the literature, Bergan (2004) argued that there is little evidence to support it. For example, it has been indicated that "students at three African universities in 2009 showed no significant difference in their understanding of democracy, and their level of support for democracy, between students who had previously been formally involved in university decision making and their non-participating peers" (Luescher-Mamashela, 2013, p. 1451).

In addition to the different cases of student representation involvement in HE governance, there is also a considerable variation in the practice of involving students at the different levels of student representation (i.e., institutional and national levels) or between public and private HEIs (Klemenčič, 2020c). Klemenčič (2020b, c, 2024b), moreover, suggested four degrees of intensity of student involvement in HE governance. In the first degree, students are involved to provide information on some pertinent issues. Secondly, student representatives are invited by officials to be consulted over student complaints. In the third degree, the involvement of students becomes more advanced and in structured dialogues with HE management or quality assurance agencies to build trust and instill HEI's values among students. In the fourth degree, student representatives formally become partners with other members of the governing bodies and have equal decision-making entitlements and obligations, and this form is deemed the strongest form of student involvement in HE governance (Klemenčič 2018, 2020c, 2024a, b).

In cases of inclusion or exclusion of student representation groups in HE governance, the organizational characteristics of these student groups can be identified. These student groups are usually established as autonomous in the way they govern their structure and organize their activities independently (Klemenčič, 2020c, 2024a, b). Nonetheless, autonomy for these student groups does not always equate to financial and legal independence. These groups get either institutional financial support or fees that contribute toward membership (if membership is not automatic for all enrolled students). In some institutions, these student groups are considered administrative units and have administrative staff who work under the university rules and regulations, meaning these groups are under the legal constitution of the hosting institution (Klemenčič, 2020c, 2024a, b).

The above discussion, which serves as the conceptual framework, has viewed the literature on both strands of student politics (activism and representation), its impact on policies and the cases and degrees of involvement of students in HE decision-making. The conceptual framework has informed the design of this study to investigate SACs' representational position in Omani HE. The next section looks at the methods used to carry out this study.

Methods

This section outlines the methods used to investigate student representation in HE in Oman. Qualitative research was used in this study, utilizing the following three data sources: semi-structured interviews; the Local Student Impact on Higher Education Globally (LOC-SIHEG) survey (2022)⁴; and formal documents. The primary data source is semi-structured interviews which enabled the capture of authentic experiences of student representatives as well as institutional leaders with the novel institution of SACs. Seventy semi-structured telephonic interviews were conducted in Arabic with student leaders, students, college staff from four HEIs, and others who are directly involved in HE governance in Oman. The interviews with government officials guided an investigation into the rationales behind establishing SACs and their envisaged purpose. Purposive sampling and snowballing methods were used to recruit participants. Meanwhile, a special recording device was used after receiving the consent of each participant. All recordings were transcribed and kept confidential.

The second source of data was the LOC-SIHEG (2022) survey which was used to interview three SAC leaders at three HEIs (two public and one private) located in different major cities in Oman. The survey was translated into Arabic by the researcher and conducted in private zoom meetings with the three SAC leaders. The method of recruiting the SAC leaders also entailed snowballing methods, and a special recording device was used after receiving consent from each participant.

Furthermore, content analysis of formal documents was performed with a specific focus on references to student representation. In particular, the following legislative documents were analyzed: the Basic Statute of the State (No. 06/2021); the Ministerial Decree (No. 71/2014) about the issuance of the Student Advisory Council Regulatory Guide (SACRG) at Higher Education Institutions; and the Ministerial Decision No. 72/2004 that sets out the bylaws that govern the Colleges of Technology in Oman.

The findings⁵ here are specific to these three institutions (henceforth called HEI A, B, and C). However, given the SACRG which regulates all SACs in Oman, the situation is fairly similar across HEIs. HEI A is an elite public teaching and research university with a student population of between 10,000 and 20,000. HEI B is a (teaching only) public technical college that hosts between 500 and 5,000. However, HEI C is an elite private for-profit (teaching and research) university hosting between 5,000 and 10,000 students. All three SAC leaders were male bachelor students aged between 18 and 24 years.

The above section reviewed the methods used to collect data; the research participants and the ethical procedures followed before data collection. The next section sets the particular Omani context and the major developments it has witnessed in the last half-century.

The Omani Context

This section particularly considers the context of Oman including its political structure, geographical location, and recent developments it has witnessed since the early 1970s. The Sultanate of Oman is a developing country, located in the southeast of the Arabian Peninsula. It

shares borders with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) to the west, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to the north, and Yemen to the southwest (Al'Abri, 2015). It is a rentier country dependent on oil and gas and is seen as a middle-income state in comparison with the neighboring Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states (Al Shabibi, 2020). It has undergone historic changes since the late ruler, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said, took reign on July 23, 1970 and started building health, education, and other basic infrastructure. This marked the start of a renaissance for Oman and since then the country has experienced drastic modernization and developments in all aspects of life.

As stipulated in the Basic Statute of the State⁶ (the Constitution), Oman, currently led by His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tariq, is an Islamic country, and a monarchy with complete sovereignty (The Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs, 2021). Moreover, Oman's political system, as defined by the Constitution, follows a royal and hereditary system of governance. It makes the leader possess sovereign power and ultimate authority to make any decision for the welfare of the country and he is supported by the Council of Ministers in general state planning and execution of policies (The Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs, 2021). In addition to his ruling position, other important ministerial positions, such as exterior, finance, and defense, are retained by him. For this reason, some authors like Alhaj (2000, p. 98) have described Oman's governance as an "autocracy." Moreover, political parties are not allowed in Oman and, in this regard, Alhaj (2000) maintained that formal democratic organizations, compared with Western democracy, do not exist in Oman. Instead of political parties, the Omani government established a parliamentary council known as the Council of Oman which comprises two councils: the State Council (with members appointed by the Sultan) and the Consultation Council (whose members are elected by the citizens every four years). The main responsibility of the Council of Oman is to "approve or amend draft laws and discuss developmental plans and the state's general budget, and it may propose draft laws" (The Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs, 2021). It had no legislative powers when first established, but it has been granted some regulatory and legislative authority after demands were made in the so-called Arab Spring protests that took place in many countries in the MENA region in 2011.

Oman has also witnessed drastic developments in the education sector. Until 1970, Oman had only three primary schools and HE was completely absent. Since then, the Omani government has been determined to bolster the educational infrastructure in all regions of the country to achieve comprehensive schooling and HE systems (Al lamki, 2009). While the first public HEI was created in 1986, the Ministry of Higher Education⁷ was only created in 1994 to supervise and implement HE policies in Oman. Currently, according to the National Centre for Statistics & Information (NCSI) in Oman (2020), there are sixty-six HEIs (thirty-nine public and twenty-seven private) under the supervision of various governmental bodies like the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (MOHERI), the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Endowment and Religious Affairs. Similar to the governance of essential sectors like health and transportation, Al'Abri (2015) asserted that "HE governance and policy development are state-centric in character and the State is fully in charge of its public HEIs, as well as regulating and supervising the private HEIs" (p. 21). This controlled approach is reflected also in the way SACs are represented and involved in institutional governance as will be explored in subsequent sections. The discussion in the next section covers the way SAC has been established given the political developments in the region and the nature of the HE governance system.

The Establishment of SACs

This section elucidates how the social upheaval in Oman has unfolded and played a role in the establishment of the first formal student representation groups at all Omani HEIs in 2014. Before the formation of SACs, student representation groups did not exist formally and consistently at HEIs. However, the recent political upheavals in the region have, almost certainly, contributed to the formation of SACs at all HEIs (Al Maamari, 2018). Oman was among the many countries affected by the Arab Spring in 2011 (Behbehani, 2016). There were substantial protests over low wages and a constant rise in food prices in different major cities, including Muscat, Sohar, and Salalah. Other demands included “more job opportunities and measures to curb rising prices and inequalities, along with an end to corruption, the promulgation of a constitution to replace the Basic Law, the guarantee of a separation of legislative, executive, and judicial powers, and above all, the appointment of a prime minister” (Behbehani, 2016, pp. 142–3).

Elsewhere, the Arab Spring protests gave the HE students a moment to capitalize on the ongoing instability across the country and region (Spinner, 2011). As the events stretched out, their expectations and awareness of their rights and responsibilities toward society deepened after the protests (Al Hashimi, 2013). They needed a platform where they can be properly represented to exercise their rights and responsibilities as student citizens and to voice their concerns at least on educational matters (Al-Sadi, 2015). However, formal HE student representation platforms are uncommon in the Arab states in general and in the GCC in particular, except for Kuwait where HE student representation has been established since the 1960s (Ashti, 2018). Although in Oman, specifically at SQU, there were persistent demands made by students in 1996 and again in 2001 to establish a student union, the demands were rejected by the university leadership. Yet, after the protests in 2011, according to Al-Sadi (2015), “a relatively bigger margin of freedom was being witnessed ... Youth, including students, can now express themselves and voice their concerns to officials more openly than before” (p. 6). Amid the highly sensitive circumstances and to avoid further unrest of which the HE student activism was a part, Badry and Willoughby (2015) claimed that it was incumbent for the Omani government to concede to students’ demands to establish SACs (instead of a union) (Al Maamari, 2018) albeit with rather limited functions and to serve defined purposes. The Omani model of SAC establishment aligns with that of other researchers who have suggested that the formation of a student representative association could be a form of preventing student unrest by appeasing students through the provision of formal channels of communication (Klemenčič, 2014; Klemenčič and Park, 2018; Luescher-Mamashela, 2013).

In this section, the discussion of the literature was centered around the political developments during the Arab Spring that showed how the social groups in which HE students participated brought about the establishment of SACs in Oman.⁸ The next section looks at the legal framework that enabled SAC’s formation and functions within the HEIs.

New Legal Provisions Validating SACs

This section discusses the legal framework that enables the formal functioning and role of SACs at HEIs. It covers the nature of activities SAC can undertake and the parameters in place. The

section also provides overall findings of SACs' legal provisions; however, a specific discussion of the three HEIs cases is considered in later sections. Following the unrest in 2011 and after constant demands from students as discussed in the previous section, the MOHERI⁹ issued a ministerial decree in 2014 mandating all HEIs in Oman to establish SAC at the institutional level. The SACRG was embedded in the ministerial decree to regulate the functions and the terms of reference for SACs vis-à-vis the governance of the HEIs. According to The Ministry of Higher Education (2014) SACRG, "a council shall be established at the institution's location" (p. 2). This article declares the internal legitimacy and legal existence of SACs in all HEIs in Oman. Nevertheless, any form of interaction with other student groups or unions inside Oman is banned without official permission. Moreover, there are some immediate limitations which were placed on SAC's autonomy to function outside Oman, as dictated in the SACRG:

The council shall not coordinate or cooperate in any way with counterparts (authorities or institutions) abroad before obtaining written approval from the council's committee.

(The Ministry of Higher Education, 2014, p. 7)

The above-cited article stipulates that SAC can only function at district and national levels and no activities and representation outside the host institution are allowed without the prior consent of the central committee named the Higher-Education Institutions Student Advisory Councils Committee (HEISACC) that monitors all SACs' activities, leading to the curtailment of SAC's external legitimacy. This legal provision restricts SAC and deprives it of being autonomous, a common organizational characteristic of such student groups (Klemenčič, 2020c).

With regard to SAC's objectives, the SACRG prescribed ten¹⁰ objectives for SAC. From the ten objectives, SACs are mainly expected to focus on services and educational needs. SACs are expected to generally create a conducive learning environment in which students' teaching and learning issues are resolved. Although certain objectives in the SACRG go beyond the normal activities (i.e., student services and technical issues) and into developing creative citizenship, these objectives should be cautiously achieved politely and responsibly. The students are encouraged to abide by the cultural norms and values with the importance of being "proud of the nation" constantly stressed. As far as SAC's political agenda and activities, SAC's capabilities are also confined. According to the SACRG:

The council shall not be involved in any political, sectarian, tribal, racial, or regional issues. The council shall not practice any activity against or contrary to traditions, customs, social and religious values, or institutional regulations or systems.

(The Ministry of Higher Education, 2014, p. 7)

Similar to the previous restriction on interacting with external bodies, the article above places a ban on SACs from being involved in the activities listed (*political, sectarian, etc.*), curtailing the political agency to represent and participate in other issues that are outside the HE context. While this seems to be a genuine attempt to institutionalize student representation structures in the HE system in Oman fulfilling one condition of student representation (Klemenčič and Park, 2018), the implementation steps of the new policy have been carefully designed to serve certain purposes. In other words, the purpose of creating SACs seems to allow student voice within

the HE context. Instead, the mechanisms that govern SACs' functions limit student voice and place it under the university leaders' authority, preventing it from associating with other student organizations. These precautionary procedures in place thwart SACs from posing any political or social impact which is common for student activism (Klemenčič, 2020a).

This section has exposed the overall legal framework within which SACs at all HEIs are functioning. While SAC has become an official and independent entity for student representation within the HEI, the various limits placed on SACs show it lacks autonomy. The next section draws a comparison of the organizational features of the three cases of SACs.

Similarities and Differences in SACs' Organizational Capabilities

This section compares the organization and function of SACs at three Omani HEIs using the LOC-SIHEG survey. Since all SACs are following the same guidelines, the differences between the three SACs are minimal. At the three HEIs, annual elections are conducted for SAC membership and leadership without any remuneration. Every student has the right to vote and choose SAC members, the number of which should be proportionate to the number of registered students at the given HEI. For example, the number of elected SAC members would be eleven if the number of students in the institution was 1,500 or less, fourteen members if there are 1,501–3,000 students, and seventeen members if there were more than 3,000 students. Since the student population at the three participating HEIs in the survey is more than 3,000, there are seventeen members in these HEIs. After the election of the seventeen members, internal voting procedures which are stipulated in the SACRG are followed to elect the leadership and other positions in SAC. The three SACs share similarities in terms of structure and the source of funding. They have been formed as administrative units within the institution; thus, they are neither legally nor financially independent and they do not own any real estate. Instead, all three SACs are financially dependent on annual institutional grants which come directly from the budget of the HEI, as also suggested by Klemenčič (2020c, 2024b).

The public HEIs receive their budgets from the government and the private HEIs are dependent on internal incomes and tuition fees and sometimes they get government grants. However, the amount received by the three SACs, which ranges from US\$2,500 to US\$20,000, is different. Although the budgets appear to be allocated to SACs, the three SACs confirmed that the money is kept in the HEIs' bank accounts as SACs have no bank accounts on their own. Whenever the SAC members need funding for certain activities, a request is made to the institution's administration to sanction the required amount to the SAC's office as per the earlier planned activity/program. Other sources of funding the three SACs also share can include gifts and donations or income from SAC-organized activities, albeit all should be approved by the Head¹¹ of the HEI. These financial and administrative systems reflect the heavy dependence of the three SACs on the HEIs' management, which impede SAC's autonomy (Klemenčič, 2020c, 2024b).

In terms of physical resources, the three SACs run offices that are fully furnished, given by the HEI administration and mainly occupied by students. However, one difference between the three SACs is related to human resources. Unlike SACs at HEI B and C, SAC at HEI A has an

employed staff member who is an employee of the host university and helps the SAC's office with some administrative work. Indeed, while there are some minor differences between SACs in the three HEIs, these SACs share the same organizational characteristics. The three SACs lack financial, administrative, and legal autonomy.

With regard to the SAC's links to any political parties or unions, neither students nor the SACs at the three HEIs have any ties with any political movements or trade unions because the affiliation requires government approval. Moreover, the three SACs work on similar agendas in the HEIs which are only related to academic and educational subjects. For example, because all HEIs had to close during the Covid-19 pandemic, many students were complaining about online assessments, and the three SAC leaders actively engaged with the HEI leaders to resolve these issues through representation in institutional governing bodies. Moreover, other activities in which the three SACs are very active are related to voluntary work, particularly socially oriented activities like supporting disabled people and environmental protection. Indeed, the three SACs are more prone to service provision than political engagement. From the above organizational characteristics of the three SACs, it can be concluded that under the current legal framework, the Omani student representation groups lack the political potency to influence the HE policies. Instead, the representation strand of student politics is being made to focus on limited areas that can be allowed within the HE Omani context. However, the activism strand of student politics (Klemenčič, 2020a), which can have a potent impact on politics and society, is forcibly restricted in Omani HE. The next section discusses the SAC's involvement in the HE decision-making in the three HEIs.

SAC Representation at the Three HEIs' Governance

This section compares data from the case study of the three institutions and examines how the three SACs participate in HE governance and what the rationales are behind their involvement. The section highlights some ambiguity around the procedures for involving SACs in HE decision-making which causes a low degree of involvement of SACs or total exclusion from the decision-making process. Generally speaking, most HEIs in Oman have external boards of trustees that are responsible for general policymaking and strategy setup, as well as having an overseeing authority for most private HEIs to manage all affairs and safeguard the HEIs' best interests.

As far as the three institutions are concerned, there are differences in organizational structures. For example, HEI A is governed by a university council and an academic council. The former is headed by the Minister of MOHERI and has the mission of formulating general and future policies to achieve university objectives and the latter is headed by the university vice-chancellor with deans of different colleges making up the rest of its membership. The councils' main duties include proposing policies and regulations on teaching, research, students, and academic affairs at the university. HEI B's internal governance, which is performed by its college council, makes all types of internal decisions related to the management and operation of the HEI as well as suggests and proposes all administrative, financial, and educational initiatives to the relevant ministry that governs the given HEI which has the ultimate authority to make decisions. HEI C's internal governance is performed by its university council and it takes all required decisions to ensure university requirements are met. Hence, the independent nature of the organizational

structure at HEIs A and C could make it easier for the leaders of these HEIs to decide on SAC's involvement in HE decision-making. However, in HEI B, SAC's involvement may require further approval from the ministry that governs the HEI even though the representation of SACs in governing bodies of all HEIs in Oman is now deemed legitimate, but not mandatory, by the HE authorities. Pertinently, the SACRG dictates:

The academic board of the institution (university—college—institute) shall invite the president of the SAC to attend meetings if the items on the agenda include students' welfare, services, activities and issues and whenever the academic board of the institution deems appropriate.

(The Ministry of Higher Education, 2014, p. 4)

According to the above article, SAC is only involved in internal governing bodies (i.e., academic boards or college councils) when it is invited and when the agenda includes student-related issues. It is not clear what happens if the issues on the agenda are not related to students. Hence, the provisions for SAC's involvement in Omani HE decision-making as given in the SACRG do not fit Luescher-Mamashela's (2013) typology of HE student involvement.

The interviews with the three SAC leaders reveal that they are similar when it comes to involvement in governing bodies. The SAC leaders stated that they have never been involved or represented in HEIs' external governing bodies. However, they are occasionally invited to partake in HEIs' internal governing bodies at their institutions. The SAC leaders at HEI A and B maintained that they have no formal seats and that their attendance at such governance meetings is irregular and sometimes tokenistic. The SAC leader at HEI A described the situation as follows:

During the University Council, our attendance was tokenistic, we only attended almost at the end of the meeting. But during Covid—19, I attended the meetings and I was the only student ... they (University Council Members) referred to me in some matters, and I gave them a general overview of students' ideas.

(SAC Leader at HEI A, personal communication, January 27, 2022)

The above interview excerpt indicates that the SAC leader in HEI A has no formal seat in its internal governing body. Representation in the governing body meetings becomes exceptionally necessary during a crisis (i.e., Covid-19). This allows the SAC leader to promote the needs of the student population. Meanwhile, the SAC leader at HEI C maintains that SAC has a seat in the governing body but can only vote on some matters like exams, requests for changes to assessments, and other student requirements within the campus. In addition, although the SAC leaders at HEI A and HEI C hold private meetings with the vice-chancellors at least once in an academic term, it is the dean/assistant dean or manager of student affairs with whom the three SAC leaders have the most frequent contact. Indeed, this shows that there are some differences between the three HEI cases in terms of representational characteristics in HE governance such as having a seat in governing body. However, from the four degrees of intensity of involvement as suggested by Klemenčič (2020c, 2024b), the three participating SACs in this study reveal that the Omani case can be placed under the second degree of intensity of involvement (i.e., consultation).

In addition to representational practices which place SAC in a low degree of intensity of involvement, there is ambiguity with some procedures which causes the exclusion of SACs from HE governance meetings as exposed by the leader of HEI B:

Interviewee: One cannot make decisions except through the College Council or the Ministry. The process must be organized for the Student Advisory Councils, the Dean, his assistants, and the heads of departments ... you know how decisions are made and how the organizational structure and the terms of reference should exist. If the terms of reference do not exist, the whole process will not be organized.

(Institution Leader, personal communication, April, 20, 2020)

The above HEI leader indicated that student representation procedures in governance bodies are unclear. When it comes to decision-making, the College Council at HEI B can only function within the limits of the system in place, which is usually governed by HEI B's bylaws. Nevertheless, SAC's involvement in decision-making and student representation within this institution is not stipulated by the HEI's bylaws. Given the structure of the College Council and the nature of its authority (i.e., top-down governed by the ministry) as well as the terms of reference stated in the HEI's bylaws, there is a conflict in the obligations stated by the SACRG, which is issued by the MOHERI, and the obligations in the HEI's bylaws, which are issued by the relevant ministry that governs HEI B. Therefore, for HEI B's governance body and as per the college bylaws, it is ambiguous as to when SAC should or should not be involved in governance meetings, leaving the option to involve SAC at the discretion of the governing body. For this reason, some interviewees pondered whether SAC's capability to influence HE decisions had been constrained by such regulations:

To what extent is there drafting of legal formulation or legislation to take into account the students' voice, meaning do students vote in the presence, for example, of their representatives, in the presence of departmental councils and colleges, or participate in voting on certain issues at the university? This also determines the impact of the student's voice.

(Academic and Researcher, personal communication, April 7, 2020)

The above participant suggested that the effectiveness of SAC in making an impact in representation initiatives requires legitimization of their presence at different levels of meetings within the HEIs such as in college boards, department councils, or any other permanent college-wide committees, a gap which the three SACs share. Moreover, coupled with being allowed to attend the meetings, the above participant suggests that SAC would need to also enjoy equal voting powers with other board members. For the above interviewee, students' participation in HEI governance and the decision-making power given through voting rights are a prerequisite for students to have their voices heard within the HEI, which is currently not granted to the three SACs consistently.

Nonetheless, when it comes to educational and quality assurance, research committees, and departmental or study program meetings, the SAC leaders, except at HEI B, reported that they are sometimes invited but that no voting rights are afforded. The only committees in which the three

SAC leaders confirm their involvement are the student affairs committees (e.g., student life and extracurricular activities) where the two public HEIs (A and B) are occasionally given voting rights.

Another example that suggests ambiguity in the regulations around involving SAC in governance bodies was also revealed by another HEI leader. As the SACRG is not clear enough about SAC's involvement in HEI governance, this HEI leader believes that SACs can only be present decision-making bodies when a specific need or emergency arises. When asked about SAC's participation in decision-making in HEI governance, this HEI leader claimed the following:

They just participate only when we are genuinely in need of their participation ... Participation takes place when there is a real need and in times of crisis.

(Institution Leader, personal communication, April 20, 2020)

This HEI leader demonstrated that SAC can participate only when the administration sees value in their participation, and this scenario suggests a boundary that limits SAC's function. For example, as mentioned by the SAC leader at HEI A, during the Covid-19 crisis, and because there were many uncertainties for students due to HEI's closure, there was a real need for the SAC leaders from both the HEI administration and the student population. The SAC leaders in HEI A and B assisted the administration in implementing many decisions related to online teaching and learning, which were opposed by many students due to the lack of network and internet infrastructure, especially in some remote areas. One explanation for this involvement of SAC at such a critical time was put forward by Luescher (2020) when he outlined that "students have a right to be part of the process of making decisions, not the least because students are directly affected by most decisions and have 'practical expertise and experience to positively contribute to better decision making. By participating in the making of decisions, it is hoped that students may also more easily accept their outcomes'" (p. 169). SAC's involvement was particularly inevitable for the HEIs' management when the issue may attract substantial dissent from other students. This point was equally vindicated by the MOHE policymaker when talking about SAC participation in decision-making:

Perhaps there is a policy that has been approved but it is expected that it may trigger the reaction of the students ... Therefore, it is explained to the member of the SAC, who is also a member of the Academic Board, the consequences and justifications for the existence of this policy and how this policy can serve the students, etc. so that they (Academic board members) have someone to represent and defend this policy before the students.

(Official at the Ministry of Higher Education, personal communication, March 12, 2020)

According to the ministry official, some decisions may already be made without the involvement of SACs which would only become involved later. The purpose of SAC's representation is to pass certain controversial policies that would otherwise be difficult for students to accept. SACs are used here to show that such controversial policies have been discussed, negotiated, and approved by a formal student representative body, and therefore, the administration has followed the correct

procedures before approving the given bill. Consequently, this strategy spares the administration from any conflict with other students and relieves it of any potential blame or dissent.

From the above regulations and policies placed on SAC's involvement in HE decision-making, the restriction on interacting with external bodies and the ban from involvement in any political activities as discussed in the previous section, it can be maintained that the voice of SAC and the involvement in HE decision-making are intentionally stalled. The rationale behind the involvement of SAC is to curb and quiet any potential upheavals to avoid similar events that took place during the Arab Spring. This is attained by, on the one hand, allowing the involvement of the student representations in HE decision-making through formal mechanisms like SAC and, on the other hand, by fully monitoring and controlling these student organizations and preventing them from associating with one another and only offering a low degree of involvement (i.e., consultation at the discretion of the HEI's management). Therefore, it can be argued that the Omani case (and most likely the GCC's) of student involvement does not fit Luescher-Mamashela's (2013) typology of four cases for student involvement in decision-making. Given the political nature and the state-controlled HE governance system in the GCC states such as Oman, which have not been researched before, this chapter introduces a unique case for student involvement in HE decision-making.

Conclusion

The theme of student representation in HE governance is relatively new in the Arab world in general and Oman in particular. After the Arab Spring in 2011 in which student activism played a significant role, students' political potency helped to yield the establishment of SACs as legitimate student representation groups to be formally involved in HE governance. From the various cases of student inclusion in HE governance, these cases do not seem to apply to the case of SAC in the Omani HE context because student representation and involvement in Oman are justified differently. In HE governance, SACs sometimes perform as a platform for the implementation of some policies that may be unpopular with students or when there is a genuine crisis or emergency. While there seems to have been some sincere effort made by SACs to represent students at all levels and in all areas, the representation mechanisms within university policies leave SACs in a very limited position to deliver any substantial impact on students. For those at the top of the hierarchy, the pace at which SACs are evolving should be kept to a minimum until further assurances are given and more experience is gained about these potentially politically significant actors. The adopted approach toward student representation in HE governance in Oman presents a unique case and it deserves further attention and improvement from HE policymakers. Moreover, HE students could be better integrated within HEIs (and society) to truly build a better citizenry for the future. Until then, students' true representation and impact on HE (and society) will remain modest. As a consequence, this may affect the SACs' legitimacy and other students' confidence therein. More seriously, alas, if the situation remains unchanged, it could be argued that similar forms of student activism that took place in 2011 could be repeated. This chapter has instigated to unpack the concerns of the SAC leaders so that more consistent and democratic approaches to student representation in HE governance could be sustained. Moreover, further research is also needed to explore the feasibility of establishing a national student representation in similar contexts like Oman's.

Notes

- 1 This chapter is part of the author's PhD research on the role the student advisory council (SAC) has in student voice, commenced at Cardiff University.
- 2 The first and the most elite public HEI in Oman which was established in 1986.
- 3 See Al Maamari (2018).
- 4 This chapter is part of the author's PhD research on the role the student advisory councils (SACs) have with respect to the student voice in HEIs in Oman, undertaken at Cardiff University.
- 5 To align the initial PhD research with a global comparative project on student representation globally, the LOC-SIHEG (2022) survey was implemented with three SAC leaders to gain data on the functioning of SACs.
- 6 First written in 1996 but redrafted in 2021, and comprises ninety-eight articles.
- 7 Recently, the research and innovation sectors were added to the Ministry of Higher Education to form the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (MOHERI).
- 8 In addition to SAC creation, there are other HE changes that took place following the unrest such as increasing the number of HE students intake in public HEIs (Al Hashimi, 2013) and a rise in the students' stipends (Barany, 2013).
- 9 It was called the MOHE at the time of SAC's establishment.
- 10 See The Ministry of Higher Education (2014, Article 18: 7).
- 11 "Vice-chancellor of a university—Dean of a college—Director/Manager of an institute" (The Ministry of Higher Education, 2014: 3).

References

- Al'Abri, K. (2015). Higher education policy architecture and policy-making in the sultanate of Oman: Towards a critical understanding, PhD Thesis., The School of Education, The University of Queensland, Australia.
- Alhaj, A. (2000). The political elite and the introduction of political participation in Oman. *Middle East Policy* 7(3): 97–110.
- Al Hashimi, S. (2013). *The Arab Spring—Its Contexts and the Significance*. Beirut: dar-alfarabi.
- Al Iamki, N. (2009). The beliefs and practices related to continuous professional development of teachers of English in Oman. PhD Thesis., The School of Education, The University of Leeds, Leeds.
- Al Maamari, S. (2018). Sultan Qaboos university: Changes and developments in thirty years. In Adnan, A. (ed.), *The History of Ten Arab Public Universities* (pp. 505–54). Doha: Arab Centre for Research and Policy Studies.
- Al-Sadi, H. (2015). Learner autonomy and voice in a tertiary ELT Institution in Oman. PhD Thesis, School of Education, The University of Sheffield, Sheffield.
- Al-Shabibi, I. (2020). Planning for entrepreneurialism in a rentier state economy: Entrepreneurship education for economic diversification in Oman. PhD Thesis, The School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University, Cardiff.
- Altbach, P.G. (2006). Student politics: Activism and culture. In James Forest. J.F. and Philip, G.A. (eds.), *International Handbook of Higher Education* (pp. 329–45). Dordrecht: Springer.
- Altbach, P.G. and Klemenčič, M. (2014). Student activism remains a potent force worldwide. *International Higher Education* (76): 2–3.
- Ashti, F. (2018). *Reading in the Book: The History of Ten Arab Public Universities*. Qatar: Arab Centre for Research and Policy Studies.

- Badry, F. and Willoughby, J. (2015). *Higher Education Revolutions in the Gulf: Globalization and Institutional Viability*. London: Routledge.
- Barany, Z. (2013). Unrest and state response in Arab monarchies. *Mediterranean Quarterly* 24(2): 5–38.
- Behbehani, B. (2016). *Surviving the Arab spring: The Gulf cooperation council and the case study of Kuwait (2011–2012)*. PhD Thesis, Institute of Middle Eastern Studies, King's College London, London.
- Bergan, S. (2004). Higher education governance and democratic participation: The university and democratic culture. In Sjur, B. (ed.), *The University as Res Publica* (pp. 13–30). Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing.
- Klemenčič, M. (2012). Student representation in western Europe: Introduction to the special issue. *European Journal of Higher Education* 2(1): 2–19.
- Klemenčič, M. (2014). Student power in a global perspective and contemporary trends in student organising. *Studies in Higher Education* 39(3): 396–411.
- Klemenčič, M. (2018). The student voice in quality assessment and improvement. In Ellen, H., Hamish, C. and Alexander, C.M. (eds.), *Research Handbook on Quality, Performance and Accountability in Higher Education* (pp. 332–44). Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Klemenčič, M. (2020a). Student politics. In Shin, J.C. and Teixeira, P. (eds.), *Encyclopedia of International Higher Education Systems and Institutions* (pp. 1–6). Dordrecht: Springer.
- Klemenčič, M. (2020b). Students as actors and agents in student-centered higher education. In Sabine, H. and Manja, K. (eds.), *The Routledge International Handbook of Student-Centered Learning and Teaching in Higher Education* (pp. 92–108). London: Routledge.
- Klemenčič, M. (2020c). Higher education governing boards: Student board members. In Miriam E.D. and Marilyn J.A. (eds.), *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Higher Education* (pp. 715–17). Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.
- Klemenčič, M. (2024a). The rise of the student estate. In Amaral, A. and Magalhães, A. (eds.), *The Handbook on Autonomy and Governance of Higher Education Institutions*, Chapter 29. Cheltenham: Edgar Elgar Publishing.
- Klemenčič, M. (2024b). A theory of student impact on higher education. In Conner, J., Raaper, R., Guzmán-Valenzuela, C. and Gauthier, L. (eds.), *The Bloomsbury International Handbook of Student Voice in Higher*, Chapter 18. London and New York: Bloomsbury Publishers.
- Klemenčič, M. and Park, B.Y. (2018). Student politics: Between representation and activism. In Coates, H., Cantwell, B. and King, R. (eds.), *Handbook on the Politics of Higher Education* (pp. 468–86). Cheltenham/Northampton: Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Luescher-Mamashela, T.M. (2013). Student representation in university decision making: Good reasons, a new lens? *Studies in Higher Education* 38(10): 1442–56.
- Luescher, T.M. (2018). Altbach's theory of student activism in the twentieth century: Ten propositions that matter. In Burkett, J. (ed.), *Students in Twentieth-Century Britain and Ireland* (pp. 297–318). Gower: Springer.
- Luescher, T.M. (2020). Student governance and activism—Implications for higher education and student affairs. In Roger, B.L. and Birgit, S. (eds.), *Student Affairs and Services in Higher Education: Global Foundations, Issues, and Best Practices* (pp. 167–73) (3rd ed). Berlin: Deutsches Studentenwerk.
- McCulloch, A. (2009). The student as co-producer: Learning from public administration about the student–university relationship. *Studies in Higher Education* 34(2): 171–83.
- The Ministry of Higher Education (2014). *Ministerial Decision No. (71/2014) about the Issuance of the Regulatory Guide of Student Advisory Councils at Higher Education Institutions*. Muscat: The Ministry of Higher Education.
- The Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs (2021). Sultani Decree (No. 06/2021) promulgating the basic statute of the state (6): Official Gazette. Available online: <https://mjla.gov.om/eng/legislation/decrees/details.aspx?Id=1296&type=L> (accessed July 12, 2021).
- The National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) (2020). *Statistical Year Book*. Muscat, Oman: The National Centre for Statistics and Information.

- Persson, A. (2004). Student participation in the governance of higher education in Europe: Results of a survey. In Bergan, S. (ed.), *The University as Res Publica: Higher Education Governance, Student Participation and the University as a Site of Citizenship* (pp. 31–82). Strasbourg: Council of Europe.
- Spinner, J. (2011). Oman's days of rage: A sleepy little sultanate erupts in unexpected anger. *Foreign Policy*, February 28. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2011/02/28/omans-days-of-rage/> (accessed September 18, 2019).
- Zuo, B. and Ratsoy, E.W. (1999). Student participation in university governance. *Canadian Journal of Higher Education* 29(1): 1–26.

History of Student Representation in Pakistan and Future Prospects for a New Kind of Student Union

Muhammad Arfan and Muhammad Usman

Introduction

Pakistan People's Party (PPP), a leading mainstream political party in Pakistan, announced the restoration of student unions at educational institutions in the Sindh province in February 2022.¹ Restoring student unions in the country has been a long-standing demand of different student associations for the last three decades since a ban on them was imposed in 1984 (Javid, 2019). However, such announcements have not borne any fruit,² often due to resistance from HE institutions and their vice-chancellors, who announced their disapproval of the idea in 2008 and equated the student's right to association with violence at HE institutions³ (Dawn, 2013). To understand contemporary student politics and its posture painted in mainstream media, one must look at its historical development in the country and the factors leading to the contemporary situation.

Pakistan is considered the fifth largest population of youth in the world, with around 63 percent of the population between the age bracket of fifteen to thirty-three years (Hafeez and Fasih, 2018). Pakistan is placed 150th out of 189 nations in the UNDP's 2018 Human Development Report, with an HDI value of 0.562 (with 1 being the maximum value). In terms of regional comparison, only Afghanistan trails behind Pakistan in terms of educational statistics. Compared to Pakistan, all other regional nations have improved their HDI scores. The total enrolment in the universities and degree awarding institutions is 1.576 million. Out of these 1.266 million (80 percent) students are enrolled in public sector, whereas 0.309 million (20 percent) students are studying in private universities and degree-awarding institutions. The total male enrolment in the universities is 0.881 million (56 percent), whereas the female enrolment is 0.695 million (44 percent)⁴ (Pakistan Education Statistics 2017–18). However, this young population does not have a democratic voice in educational bodies with decision-making power over critical issues shaping their future.

Historically after 1947, students were represented through elected student bodies that received representation in university senates (Khan, 2009). These student bodies were limited to a university, with no national or regional coordination between them. However, this gap was filled by student organizations that organized student unions informally into national or provincial-level organizations (Jones and O'Donnell, 2012). Various political parties had been

experimenting with organizing students as a young political force through their student fronts even before the partition of the subcontinent. This practice continued after independence in 1947 as student organizations were renamed and new student organizations were formed in the newly created state of Pakistan (Hussain, 2012). In the country's early decades like the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, these political fronts and some independent student organizations organized election campaigns for like-minded student union candidates in universities. These elected student unions were able to impact national-level educational policies and, to some extent, even national-level political decision-making through their student organizations (Ahmad, 2000). This practice continued until the countrywide ban on student unions was imposed in 1984. Following the ban, student political action changed its focus to fight for the fundamental constitutional right to associate freely, which it continues until the present times. Student organized herself at limited scale informally into national and regional student associations based on different ideological inclination and the most of these student associations having links with different mainstream and religious political parties. These student associations have no formal role in the decision-making at HE institutions and often students face the expulsion if administration finds someone to involve in any kind of student activism at educational institutions.

In this chapter, we highlight the impact of students through representation on higher education and the effect of higher education policies in shaping an ideological variation of student politics. To make our argument, we draw on extant literature, including historical documents, content analysis of student organizational manifestos and charters of demands, key informant interviews, student representative responses to the LOC-SIHEG survey tool, and the lived experience and deep cultural and institutional knowledge that we have as student activists and researchers based in Pakistan. The argument in this chapter navigates into three sections. First, we provide a brief overview of the history of student politics and movements at Pakistani HE institutions. Second, we offer the current national context for student representation and categorize the student movement based on ideological variations. Third, we show students are represented in the governance of HE institutions and their associated bodies. Finally, a conclusion to the chapter is provided.

Methods and Sources

We relied on primary and secondary data sources to make our argument. LoC-SIHEG survey tool was sent to twenty-one student organization representatives throughout the country. In response, we received thirteen organizations which represent almost all ideological streams. The responses we received covered all spatial regions of Pakistan: Punjab, Sindh, KPK, and Balochistan. On institution bases we received responses from ten major universities of the country. These organizations are Islami Jamiat Taulba (IJT), Mustafvi Student Movement (MSM), Peoples Students Federation (PSF), National Students Federation (NSF), Progressive student Collective (PSC), National Students Federation Pakistan (NSF-Pakistan), Insaf Student Federation (ISF), Sindhi Shagrid Tehreek (SST), All Pakistan Muttehda Student Organization (APMSO), Baloch Student Organization (BSO), Youth Action Committee (YAC), Rajput Student Federation (RSF), and Pakpatan Student Society (PSS). Moreover, we conducted a content analysis of student organizational manifestos compiled with and published by Bargad Organization.⁵ This document

compiled and collected student organizations manifesto based on all Pakistan student organization meeting held in 2009. This document contains twenty-one student organization manifestos from all over Pakistan. We interviewed IJT, ISF, NSF, BSO, and SST student organization national presidents for more in-depth deliberation to explore details regarding the responses received in the LOC-SIHEG survey. Meanwhile, we did key informant interviews with former student activists who contested the student union election before the 1984 ban. Based on content analysis of the manifestos and LOC-SIHEG responses, we grouped the student organization into four distinct broader groups that shared same ideological understanding as presented in Table 16.1.

Table 16.1 Ideological categorization, structure, and organizational capacity of student organizations at national level

Theme	Religious right-wing [IJT,MSM]	Mainstream center right wing [PSF,ISF]	Progressive groups [NSF,PSC]	Regional and ethno nationalist groups [SST,BSO,APMSO]
Educational and ideological worldview				
Education system	Struggle for an Islamic Education system.	Education must meet modern needs and be based on Islamic principles.	Struggle against a class-based education system and demands for a scientific and secular education system.	Struggle against a class-based education system.
Political worldview	Struggle for Islamic Society. Protect Islamic culture from socialist ideas and Western civilization.	Struggle for a democratic and just society based on the principles of the 1973 Constitution.	Struggle for national self-determination and raise voice against historic injustices.	Struggle for national self-determination with a right to succession.
Student representation in higher education institutions	Demand to uplift ban on student unions in HE institutions.	Demand to uplift ban on student unions in HE institutions.	Demand to uplift ban on student unions in HE institutions.	Demand to uplift ban on student unions in HE institutions.
Medium of education	Demand medium of education in national language which is Urdu.	Medium of instruction in Urdu.	Demand for mother languages as medium of instruction.	Demand for mother languages as a medium of instruction.

(continued)

Theme	Religious right-wing [IJT,MSM]	Mainstream center right wing [PSF,ISF]	Progressive groups [NSF,PSC]	Regional and ethno nationalist groups [SST,BSO,APMSO]
Views about regional and ethnolinguistic diversity	Struggle against regional and linguistic pluralism and struggle for the unity of Pakistan.	Recognize diverse regional identities.	Reorganize existing provinces keeping in view historical, geographic, linguistic, and cultural bases.	Reorganize existing provinces keeping in view historical, geographic, linguistic, and cultural bases.
Organizational structure and capacity				
Membership range	5,000–10,000	1,000–5,000	100–1,500	100–10,000
Legal status	Branch Unit of Political Party.	Branch Unit of Political Party.	Not Registered as a legal entity.	Branch Unit of Political Party.
Funding sources	Ex-student members' support.	Support of Political Party.	Membership fee.	Support of Political Party.
Annual budget range (USD)	5,000–7,000	250–600	500–3,000	2,500–5,000
Leadership position	Elected	Appointed	Elected	Elected
Nature of links with political parties	Open and direct institutional relations with political parties.	Open and direct institutional relations with political parties.	No formal link with political parties but some elected representatives have personal links.	Open and direct institutional relations with political parties.

Source: Authors own illustration based on student organization manifesto and Loc-SIHEG 2021 responses.

History of Student Politics and Movements

Historically, student politics in Pakistan can be divided into four distinct phases between 1947 and 2022. *The first phase* (1947–70) started after the country’s independence in 1947. At that time, Pakistan did not have a coherent educational policy or a constitution (Ziring, 1978). A vibrant youth that played an active role in the Pakistan movement was demanding educational and political rights, but the ruling elite was interested in taming student political

activism at universities (Ziring et al., 1971). Independence required policymakers to address the many educational policy issues, such as the choice of the national language as a medium of instruction. As a result, we see the formation of the Commission on National Education (1959), the Commission on Student Issues and Wellbeing (1966), the Manpower and Education Commission (1968), and the New Education Policy (1970) during this time. Several key movements on various higher education issues in the country started during this phase. The student movement of 1952 was mainly focused on areas in East Pakistan, present-day Bangladesh, to demand national language status for the Bengali language (Umara, 2004; Zaheer, 1994). The student movement of 1953 fought against increases in tuition fees (Bajwa, 2015). The student movement of 1960 was the response of student bodies to the increase in the length of an associate degree from two to three years (Ahmad, 2000). Finally, in 1968, a student movement that started against the university ordinance widened its scope and demanded the resignation of military dictator General Ayub Khan for undermining the national interest during the historic Tashkent Pact (Ali, 2008).

In the second phase (1971–7), Pakistan saw its first election based on the one-man-one-vote principle, and student political participation in both parts of the country (East and West) was at its peak (Khan, 2009; Malik, 1995). Following the election, mishandling of national-level policy issues resulted in the country separating into two, with East Pakistan becoming the newly independent state of Bangladesh. Following this event, the ruling elite again focused on national education and developed the National Educational Policy 1972–80 and a new constitution for the country. In this phase, the country saw the widespread nationalization of private educational institutions, partially also in response to student involvement in the Anti-Ayub movement.

In the third phase (1977–2000), the first elected government of Pakistan was toppled by the military regime, which imposed martial laws, abrogating the constitution and its fundamental rights (Mushtaq, Amir, Sohail and Ahmad and et al., 2020). The nationalization process was undone. After a radical change in Afghanistan in 1978, the region becomes a battle ground between Soviet Union and United States of America. Pakistan chooses to be partner with the United States in this war. This alignment impacted the social fabric of Pakistan very much. Pakistan military regimes started training camps for *Jihadi* to fight foreign invasion of USSR in Afghanistan. To counter the possible resistance from the progressive sections of the universities, Pakistan's ruling elite decide to use its educational institutions as a launching pad for creating an enabling environment for the Islamization of educational curricula (Shah, Waris, and Basit et al., 2016). All educational directives and decisions focused on addressing a war in Afghanistan. Student unions were banned in 1984 under the guise of curbing violence in educational institutions (Javid, 2019), and the imposition of radical Islamization on the education curriculum was attempted. Student organizations, however, remained at the forefront of agitation to uplift the ban on student union elections (*The Diplomat*, 2018).

In the fourth phase (2000 onwards), following 9/11, there was a significant shift in international politics with the beginning of the war on terror and the launch of a liberalization program under the military dictator General Pervez Musharraf. In 2007 a large movement led by lawyers across the country began to take form against the Pervez Musharraf regime. Several student organization factions participated in this movement, which led to a resurgence of student politics and renewed demands to uplift the ban on student unions in educational institutions and the formation of a

student action committee (Bajwa, 2015; Javid, 2019; Kalra, 2018; Mushtaq, Amir, Sohil and Ahmad et al., 2020).

The current political system in Pakistan is democratic; there are curbs on the freedom of speech and right of association. These are particularly experienced by students and student organizations. There are several instances in which the government has imposed sedition charges against student and civil society activists. The student representation system at the national level can be described as the clandestine model (Klemenčič, 2024) after the 1984 ban on the student union. Currently, student representatives don't have any representation mechanism in place at the national or provincial level.

Current National Context of Student Politics and Typology of Student Organizations

Typology of Student Organizations

Based on the interviews and content analysis of student organization manifestos (Riaz, 2009), we have drawn a typology of student organizations and clubs into four groups based on their overlapping ideas reflected in the manifestos presented in Table 16.1. These ideas are related to the education system, political worldview, student representation in HE, medium of education, and views about regional and ethnolinguistic diversity. These student groups are categorized into the religious right, mainstream center right, left and progressive, and regional ethno-nationalist. Based on these ideological variations, there are mainly two coalitions/alliances that have been formed. These two main alliances invited like-minded student organizations to create an ideological hegemony and play its role more effectively at national scale. This struggle for hegemony remained surfaced throughout the 1970s and 1980s resulted in an ideological clash between left- and right-wing student organizations. Azizudin Ahmad and Khalid Ahmad—left- and right-wing intellectual, respectively—remarkably focused these events during the 1970s and 1980s in their writings. Still, grooved of these sad events haunt the student unity at national level for common goal to uplift ban from student union in educational institutions. Both right- and left-wing student organizations much focused on the broader ideological worldview of the educational system and its external linkages to political system rather than to immediate common goal, i.e., Student Union.

We find that due to the ban on political student activism and the educational migration of students from different parts of the country, student associations are formed on the bases of various commonalities like city, caste, ethnicity, and religious sect.

National-Level Student Organizations

All major political parties have student factions acting as the political party's branch unit. However, some student groups work as informal associations or are registered as NGOs.

The leadership of student groups affiliated with a political party is predominantly selected by the top leadership of the political party except for some religious and leftist student groups, in which a tradition of election prevails, and leadership is selected through an election from the membership. Most leaders work on voluntary bases, while in some student groups, the leadership is compensated through an honorarium system and reimbursement of actual expenses. In mainstream political parties, the leadership of the student faction is compensated through an honorarium or patronage in government offices as a political bribe (Javid, 2019). While ideological groups accommodate diversity in their leadership composition, mainstream political parties seldom care about diversity. Some religious groups have organized female students into separate organizations to prevent mixing both genders (Student Leader MSM/IJT, personal communication, October 17, 2021).

Ideological progressive groups don't share formal links between student associations and political parties but elected student representatives within student associations/movements have personal ties to political parties. In comparison, student factions of mainstream political parties openly canvass for their respective political parties. Only leftist student associations appreciated external links with trade unions (Student Leader PSC, personal communication, December 28, 2021).

The topic of student politics continues to be divisive, with little consensus on viewpoints and movements. In 2022, two major student alliances are operational. The first, Muttahida Tulaba Mahaz, is headed by right-wing religious student groups and student fronts of mainstream center-right political parties, and the second, Student Action Committee (SAC), is composed of ethnic minority, left, and progressive student groups (Student Leader YAC, personal communication, May 1, 2022). The main issues concerning student organizations mobilizing around student agency varied from region to region. Students from mainstream political parties mobilized students for mass political rallies of their respective parties, whereas religious groups mobilized their support base for different religious events. The only exception in the religious stream is the *Islami Jamiat Taulba*, the largest student organization in Pakistan, which organizes occasional campaigns on fee hikes, hostel issues, and lifting the ban on student unions. However, its relationship with progressive and regional nationalist student groups is contentious, with frequent violent actions between their members (Kalra, 2018).

Progressive student groups and regional ethno-nationalist groups mobilize their support base around the legal representation of students in higher education institutions, the release of missing student leaders from the peripheries (Student Leader BSO, personal communication, January 12, 2022), quotas for ethnic minorities, and representation for female students in committees to eradicate sexual harassment (Student Leader YAC, personal communication, February 16, 2022). The most common modes of political action for these groups are protest, protest campaigns, and educational workshops.

Membership in these national student organizations is voluntary, i.e., students opt-in/choose whether to become members. Membership levels range from 100 to 10,000 individuals per organization, depending upon the organizational capacity of the student movement and the ideology it espouses. Caste, ethnicity, and religious identity play a significant role in the membership drives. In some regions (for example, Punjab and Karachi), religious and caste identity plays a major role, whereas, in others (such as Balochistan and Sindh), ethnic identity plays a role in membership. Student membership in different associations remains less than 10

percent. Most of the student population prefers not to join any association due to their illegal status and negative portrayals and propaganda from state machinery, painting those who join the organization as nonserious students.

The source of funding for student organizations is in-kind support by the host organization in the case of a branch unit of a political party and membership fees or, in some instances, ex-students (who provide funding through a pool) in the case of independent groups. Student organizations' annual budgets also vary and depend on the scale at which they are organized. None of the student associations own any property. Some student associations have their own offices, and most local groups don't have any facilities.

Student Representation in Governance of Higher Education Institution

This section is based on the student representative responses from ten different major universities all across the country. However, below described student representation model equally applicable to all public and private universities of the country. The salient feature of this model extracted from the LOC-SIHEG responses and supplement with student leader interviews. Students are occasionally invited to provide specific information but don't have formal seats in the internal and external bodies of the HE institutions (LOC-SIHEG-Pakistan, 2021). Student representatives are not included in quality assurance/institutional research committees, working groups, or task forces. However, student representatives are included in student affairs committees to organize departmental professional society events. Student representatives can meet with the top representatives of HE institutions informally, on an ad-hoc or need basis when the students or the institutional leader initiates the meetings. Student involvement in institutional governance is not mentioned or defined in any formal documents of HE institutions. "Students are supposed to submit an affidavit that they won't be involved in any kind of political activities (including student affairs)" (Student Leader PSC, personal communication, December 28, 2021).

Most universities in Pakistan have director student affairs posts to deal with and manage student-run groups. However, these posts only entertain and deal with student-run university and departmental societies, not political student groups or organizations. A large majority of student organizations are dissatisfied with the current affairs and consider things as going in the wrong direction with no voice for the students to influence the direction of HE institutions. Student groups consider going on the streets as the only way to influence the laws and policies of HE institutions. Political parties, even those with student fronts, do not include student demands in their manifestos and largely remain silent on student issues. Students, even as consumers, have terrible consumer rights.

Student protests have increased on a large scale over the last five years. Student issues related to tuition fee increases remained the main driving force for mobilizations. Student representatives have mixed feelings about their power to influence the decisions in HE institutions.

Through a vast literature review, we believe that government educational policies are projected to control the educational sector for its drivel political goals, rather than to lead for a renaissance. Pakistan's current and past governments are mostly selected from the military and bureaucracy, adhering to the pre-independence British Indian government's established framework. As a

result, agitational politics, rather than persuasion and compromise, became popular. Pakistan has survived several ferocious storms during its brief existence. It is debatable whether it can take many more. Its primary challenge remains national unity, and its future is highly dependent on its ability to unite disparate regions into a single coherent nation. Hence, the student community played a critical role in articulating, if not exploiting, community anger. Also, the governing authorities were preoccupied with maintaining law and order, and they saw student interest in politics as a significant threat to their power. Thus, a clash between the student unions and an authoritarian bureaucracy was an obvious setup, which could open doors for the future.

Conclusion: Students Organizations Looking for the Lost Union

There is a consensus amongst student organizations of all ideological shades that the ban on student unions should be lifted and student bodies should be engaged in the decision-making process of HE institutions (Student Leader NSF, personal communication, January 29, 2022). Students have a right to associate for political purposes—Pakistan’s Constitution guarantees the same under Article 17 as a fundamental human right (Student Leader IJT, personal communication, October 17, 2021). As can be seen, students’ political association has not ceased. Still, the academic bodies of universities under the leadership of vice-chancellors have unanimously opposed any legislation allowing students to associate freely, terming it as a disruption in the academic atmosphere of educational institutions (University Official MUET, personal communication, April 12, 2022).

Different HE institutions have introduced various academic councils/societies for volunteer work (like organizing academic conferences/seminars/workshops) without voting rights. Student organization representatives do not consider these an alternative to student unions. There is an ongoing debate in policy circles about the right form of student unions in HE institutions.

Since unions were outlawed in 1984 (Javid, 2019), the dynamics of the education sector have undergone a significant transformation. Numerous things have changed as a result. While Pakistan had 21 universities in 1984, there are now over 174 (HEC 2022). A significant number of these universities are from the private sector, which was almost nonexistent before the prohibition on student unions. This notable change in the education sector demands a new “kind” of student union with a properly defined “code of conduct.” There is still little fresh knowledge and little scholarship on these topics. Most ideas for a new “type” of student union trace their roots to the Supreme Court of Pakistan’s decision in 1993.

However, there is a need to flesh out new ideas which address extreme discourses around student unions, from a complete ban on student activism within campuses to a highly politicized affiliated and financially sponsored activism. For that matter, there is a need to prepare a “code of conduct” in consultation with all relevant stakeholders like university academic bodies, political parties, student organizations, and civil society members (University Official GCUF, personal communication, May 24, 2022). This “code of conduct” should entertain an eligibility criterion for students to contest union elections requiring bona fide students of the respective university with a specific age limit, setting financial expenditure limits on union elections, and restraining political parties from financing nonstudent actors to hijack the student union space. This would

prevent political donations and guarantee that qualified candidates might emerge regardless of socioeconomic status. It is past time that such pressing issues were discussed and settled behind an iron curtain.

On the form that new student unions may take, a broad consensus has to be developed, and a sense of direction on these matters needs to be established for the future. The lack of student unions has only helped to alienate students from the political process, depoliticizing and misinforming them while demoralizing the entire student community. However, when we examine the ban's real history, we see that college violence soared and became more lethal following the ban, which undermines the ban's ostensible justification—namely, that of campus violence (Ex-Student cum Trade Union Representative MLF, personal communication, May 1, 2022). Student federations, such as Jamiat, MSF, NSF, DSF, and, more recently, ISF, continue to be active among students. The ISF has especially inspired the students. Utilizing all-pervasive technologies, especially online ones, challenges conventional methods of building a support base. The prohibition cannot succeed in today's online-based society since it hasn't been able to prevent students from getting politically affiliated, which goes against its core premise. This reinforces the consensus among students that student unions should be restored to provide a formal structure for Pakistani youth's current social involvement and political keenness.

Notes

- 1 <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2343107/sindh-lifts-ban-on-student-unions-after-38-year-hiatus>
- 2 Student union in Pakistan still facing the ban and there is no formal functioning mechanism for student representation in HE institutions. Student organizations canvassing to lift ban on student union. Student Action Committee organized a student solidarity march held in November 25, 2022 to withdrawal ban on the student union.
- 3 <https://www.dawn.com/news/1050331>
- 4 <http://library.aepam.edu.pk/Books/Pakistan%20Education%20Statistics%202017-18.pdf>
- 5 Bargad is a nongovernmental organization working for the betterment of the Youth. The printed version of these manifestos can be accessed from the Bargad organization or authors of this chapter www.bargad.org.pk, info@bargad.org.pk

References

- Ahmad, A. (2000). *Pakistan mein Tulaba Tehreek*. Lahore: Mashal.
- Bajwa, S. (2015). "Agents and articulators of change": Student politics and the state in West Pakistan 1940s–1971. *Masala: Newsletter Virtuelle Fachbibliothek Südasiens* 10(1): 12–18.
- Baloch, S.M. and Musyani, Z. (November 16, 2018). *Pakistan's Dark History of Student Extremists*. Washington, D.C., USA: The Diplomat. <https://thediplomat.com/2018/11/pakistansdark-history-of-student-extremists/>
- Hafeez, E. and Fasih, T. (2018). Growing population of Pakistani youth: A ticking time bomb or a demographic dividend. *Journal of Education and Educational Development* 5(2).
- Hussain, M. (2012). Students as the pressure group in Pakistan's politics 1947–1958. *Pakistan Journal of History and Culture* 33(1): 157–72.

- Javid, H. (2019). Patronage, populism, and protest: Student politics in Pakistani Punjab. *South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal* (22). <https://doi.org/10.4000/samaj.6497>
- Jones, B. and O'Donnell, M. (2012). *Sixties Radicalism and Social Movement Activism: Retreat or Resurgence?* (Vol. 1). London, United Kingdom: Wimbledon Publishing Company.
- Kalra, V.S. (2018). Student organising in Pakistan: New spaces for articulating old political forces. *Research Journal (Arts)* 1.
- Khan, L. (2009). *Pakistan's Other Story: The 1968–69 Revolution*. Lahore, Pakistan: Struggle Publications.
- Klemenčič, M. (2024). The key concepts in study of student politics and representation in higher education. In Klemenčič (ed.), *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Student Politics and Representation in Higher Education*. London: Bloomsbury Publishers.
- Malik, I.H. (1995). Review of the separation of east Pakistan. The rise and realization of Bengali muslim nationalism, by H. Zaheer. *Journal of Islamic Studies* 6(2): 313–16. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26195394>
- Mushtaq, A.Q., Amir, N., Sohil, F., Ahmad, M.A., et al. (2020). History of student politics and its revival in Pakistan. *Pakistan Vision* 21(1): 131.
- Riaz, A. (2009). *What Students Organization Want?* Bargad (Vol. 1).
- Shah, A.S., Waris, M., Basit, A., et al. (2016). Islamization in Pakistan: A critical analysis of Zia's regime. *Global Regional Review* 1(1): 260–70.
- Umara, B. (2004). *The Emergence of Bangladesh: Class Struggles in East Pakistan, 1947–1958* (Vol. 1). Karachi, Pakistan: Oxford University Press.
- Zaheer, H. (1994). *The Separation of East Pakistan: The Rise and Realization of Bengali Muslim Nationalism*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Ziring, L. (1978). Dilemmas of higher education in Pakistan: A political perspective. *Asian Affairs: An American Review* 5(5): 307–24.
- Ziring, L., et al. (1971). *The Ayub Khan Era: Politics in Pakistan, 1958–1969*. New York: Syracuse University Press.

Singapore: The Metamorphosis of Student Unions

Musarrat Maisha Reza and Eileen Y.L. Goh

Introduction

Early in 2021, after the Military chief in Myanmar took power and imposed a state of emergency, Myanmar nationals residing in Singapore were planning to protest against the ongoing political situation. The Singapore Police Force issued a warning to individuals encouraging protests via social media, reminding the public that “organising or participating in a public assembly without a police permit in Singapore is illegal and constitutes an offence under the Public Order Act” (CNA, 2021). Such a law, in place to maintain peace and harmony as a cornerstone of our social fabric, often come as a shock across the globe where protesting is a central tool of political expression in many democracies.

A context like this would remind one that political activism and organizing, let alone student movements or pressure groups, would be weak to nonexistent in Singapore and that the culture promotes only diplomacy and dialogue. However, in our rather forgotten and rarely told history, student activism and involvement in the political sphere was once robust, vibrant and a force to be reckoned, with students organizing in masses to speak out and fight against a myriad of issues relevant to them.

Student politics in Singapore has evolved in context of a stable and paternalistic state. Our incumbent government, comprising of the People’s Action Party (PAP) majority, has been elected to power since 1959 enabling the continuity of policies and stability of governance over the past sixty-two years. Singapore is well reputed as a paternalistic state with notable social and economic policy interventions. This approach is visible also in the governance of the higher education sector (Tan, 2004), which continues to operate under close state supervision (Mok and Tan, 2004).

The two publicly funded universities [National University of Singapore (NUS), Nanyang Technological University (NTU)] have gained more autonomy over time resembling the organizational autonomy of Singapore Management University (SMU), which was at its establishment, incorporated as a private company although funded publicly. The government gradually transitioned from a “state control model” with a bureaucratic governance style to a “state supervision model,” involving deregulated governance (Mok and Tan, 2004). Subsequent years saw the establishment of several local universities totalling to six publicly funded autonomous universities. Singapore has since also allowed several branch campuses of foreign universities that are privately funded to be set up in the country.

Relevant to the evolution of student politics are also changes in demand for higher education. University education in Singapore has become more inclusive over the decades from a highly elitist model with 5 percent of each age cohort enrolled in 1981, to 34.2 percent of each cohort enrolled in publicly funded universities in 2016 (Ministry of Education, 2017). The Ministry of Education (MOE) has targeted a 40 percent cohort enrollment rate by the year 2020 in these autonomous universities. Furthermore, Confucian educational traditions have significantly shaped higher education through four principles: (1) strong nation-state shaping of structures, funding, and priorities; (2) a tendency to universal tertiary participation, partly financed by growing levels of household funding of tuition, sustained by a private duty to invest in education grounded in Confucian values; (3) “one chance” national examinations that mediate social competition and university hierarchy and focus family commitments to education; (4) accelerated public investment in research and “world-class” universities (Marginson, 2010). The model promotes state interference in executive autonomy and academic creativity. However, over the decades in Singapore’s higher education policy, we have seen the government take a step back not only in university management, functions, and creative academic freedom but also in funding of higher education while other nonstate stakeholders gained greater stakes in the higher education sector. This allowed for diversification, decentralization, and corporatization within its governance structure (Quah, 2010).

This chapter depicts the metamorphosis of student unions in Singapore. By a review of secondary literature, the first explores the development of student organizations and student representation in higher education governance in Singapore since the colonial times. The analysis of the contemporary characteristics of student organizations and representation is built on primary data obtained through a survey of student leaders active at institutional level, content analysis of formal documents, and expert interviews. We argue in this chapter that student unions in Singapore underwent a metamorphosis from autonomous entities to closely supervised university clubs.

Student Movements from the Colonial Days to 1980s

Chinese-Medium and English-Medium Education before 1980

From the colonial days, there was a strong tendency to classify the ethnic Chinese population in Singapore into Chinese and English educated groups due to distinct educational institutes that implemented either English or Chinese as their medium of instruction. This created, within our education system, a clear language divide, which was extended to and became the undertone of discourse on student activism (Jianli, 2006).

The first Chinese-medium higher education institute, then known as Nanyang University, was formed in the 1950s, led by Chinese community leaders and was community funded. However, University of Singapore was an English-speaking university until our first Prime Minister, Lee Kwan Yew, initiated the merger of the two institutions into the English-speaking, present-day National University of Singapore (NUS) (Tan, 2018), citing Nanyang University’s challenge with student academic standards and staff recruitment and retention (Tan, 2018). In 1987, Singapore became one of the first countries in the world to adopt English as the language of instruction for most school subjects, key to economic development and developing a national identity (The PIE Blog, 2018).

Much of the student movement and activism in Singapore had mirrored the political climate and developments across the decades. Historical accounts have also portrayed students and student activists in Singapore's higher education system in a binary fashion, where Chinese-medium and English-medium students had little or no overlap between their needs and aspirations, with very different activism style and overall passion (Jianli, 2006, 2008; Liao, 2010). Our late Prime Minister Lee, who was initially deeply impressed with the Chinese stream students, in his memoir, commended "their seemingly total dedication to the cause of revolution, their single-minded determination to overturn the colonial government in order to establish a new world of equality and fairness" (Yew, 1998, pp. 165–6, 168, 171, 173). In contrast, he described the English educated students as those "who spoke diffidently, lacked self-confidence, and were psychologically hobbled when they used a language that was not their mother tongue" (Yew, 1998, p. 88). He praised the Chinese educated students for their political commitment, discipline, and vitality while remaining unimpressed by the apparent apathy and poor self-confidence of English educated students (Yew, 2000, p. 173).

While Lee's memoir has provided a window into the history of student politics, more voices have come forward to provide alternative narratives highlighting the collaboration and solidarity shown between the two groups of students and the intersectionality of their issues. The two groups of students undoubtedly faced differences in terms of their practices, organizational strength, lifestyles, campus culture, and sociopolitical contexts. However, there were prominent collaboration and engagement between them where they shared common ideals and identities, rising above their inherent differences (Liao, 2010).

Students Uniting across Institutions for Common Ideals

In fact, the People's Action Party, whose founding members include the late Prime Minister Lee (Leong, 2004), was founded together with both English and Chinese educated student activists who sought his legal advice after the first recorded major student protests in 1954, nine years before independence from the British colonial rule (Jianli, 2006). Students from both Chinese-medium and English-medium higher education institutes like Nanyang University and University of Singapore respectively (Jianli, 2006) have often worked together and supported one another. For example, in 1963, Operation Cold Store where more than 100 unionists, anti-colonial activists, and politicians were detained without trial in a series of arrests (Lowy Institute, 2018) was targeted at mainly Chinese educated Nanyang University students and alumni. They were then supported by English educated student unions of the Singapore Polytechnic and Singapore University who issued a joint manifesto condemning the government for the detentions and ban on student publications (Jianli, 2006).

Collaboration was also a practical strategy for these students across the language streams. In 1966, the Thong Saw Pak Report was launched, recommending the Chinese-medium institute, Ngee Ann College, be changed to a public institution offering diploma courses in engineering and commerce. However, the recommendations were perceived by students as an effort to destroy Chinese education. The report not only triggered combined student demonstrations at the City Hall but even prompted the temporary formation of the National Student Action Front with the mission of uniting students across all tertiary institutions in the country, which was aborted subsequently (Jianli, 2006, 2008).

Restructuring Student Unions, Reducing Their Autonomy

The student protests and demonstrations highlighted above were just a few of the many examples where students worked together to ensure their voices were heard. However, for a relatively young government determined to create the new Singaporean identity, economic prosperity, and sociopolitical harmony and stability, student organized movements started to become a direct clash to its mission. The government stepped in to take action to prevent anti-establishment beliefs from becoming a norm and gaining legitimacy (Far Eastern Economic Review, 1975). Government fundings to the unions were withheld under the claim of financial irregularities found within the union's financial accounts. Consequently, in 1975, the Minister of Home Affairs led the change of the Students' Union's constitution through Parliamentary legislation. The Vice-Chancellor of University of Singapore supported the proposal with the promise that students' interest would be central to the reconstitution of the union (The Straits Times, 1975).

The overarching paternalistic view that the government and higher education institutions had toward students became embedded when the University of Singapore (Amendment) Act was passed in Parliament despite protests from 200 students (The University of Singapore [Amendment] Bill, 1975). Passing the legislation then removed the Union's autonomous status and transferred their finances under the authority of the state/administration who also now had the final and approving power of all constitutions developed by any student organization there forth (The Straits Times, 1975). The government moved the union under the Societies Act, 1966, transitioning it from an elected student leadership body into faculty clubs and nonfaculty bodies with a political association open only to citizens of the country. This decentralized student leadership and limited student power, according to scholars, marking the end of student activism (E.G., 1992).

Some of these historical accounts illustrate how deeply embedded students were in political activism, actively fighting for rights and protesting for social and political issues that they believed in. In fact, student-led political activities and activism were issue-oriented, uniting students across Singapore regardless of their language streams or background. It also gives us a brief picture on the birth of government- and university-led control of student unions and their constitution, resulting in student unions losing their autonomous power and becoming answerable to university administration. Yet, it is interesting to note that historical events like these have not featured in school curricula or engaged in official discourse (Heng, 2010). In fact, student activism since the 1980s had become less upfront and students since then have been gradually transitioning into political apathy.

Attempts to Combat Apathy in the New Millennium

In 1999, during a talk with students at NTU, former Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong suggested that students could form student associations aligned with different political parties to re-energize students out of the deeply growing political apathy. Goh proposed, "go and form one. And if there's interest, we may have to change the rules of universities, NUS and NTU, to allow students to form associations—not political parties—but students associations which are identified with the PAP, ABC party, or DEF party" (The Straits Times, 1999a).

While this proposal took many by surprise since government leaders would often encourage students to focus on their education instead of engaging in politics, most students who were interviewed highlighted their preference in keeping their societies non-partisan to err on the side of caution and avoid political party influence (*The Straits Times*, 1999a). Students responded that they “wanted to have the liberty to think and feel as we want” and “not be propaganda tool of political parties” (*The Straits Times*, 1999a). Nonetheless, the suggestion by Prime Minister Goh was later clarified that he does not see such a change happening soon as students were not ready yet (*The Straits Times*, 1999b).

In more recent years, government-led efforts to engage students in political discourse saw them launching events such as the mock Parliamentary sessions in 2000 for 220 secondary and junior college students by former Prime Minister Goh (*The Straits Times*, 2000). In 2001, the current Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong touched on the issue of youth apathy to 450 youth leaders, social workers, and Education Ministry officials at a conference. He encouraged them to be engaged in the challenges Singapore faces (*The Straits Times*, 2001). This, however, was not received positively by the public where a member labeled it “lip service” (Jianli, 2006).

In the same year, out of 600 students from NUS who were surveyed on political participation, awareness, attitudes, and expectations, 77 percent had noted that they were currently not interested in political participation and 88 percent felt there were barriers that prevented them from entering politics, including the fear of authorities. Much of the engagement that government leaders encouraged were channeled through reading and discussions in preparation for potential political activism as adults in the future (Jianli, 2006).

Student activities in higher education became largely focused on social and community involvement projects. Party politics on campus remained banned and political engagement on campus remained a taboo (Jianli, 2006). Moreover, students often avoided anything that deemed political, which may have further amplified student apathy and lack of political participation.

We have seen a snapshot of the evolution of student activism since the 1960s. In the next section, we discuss the methodology of the study and present primary data collected from student leaders of prominent universities who have recently left office. We investigate the current state of student activism and student politics and how they perceive their impact on the higher education sector.

Methodology of Data Collection

While there are thirty-four universities in Singapore, only six are classified as national universities. This chapter will focus on student representation of Singapore’s six publicly funded autonomous universities as recognized by Singapore’s Ministry of Education (MOE) (2022). These include NUS, NTU which have had a robust and vibrant history of student representation and SMU, Singapore University of Technology and Design (SUTD), Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT), and Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS), universities that have been established after 1975, when student unions were restructured through Parliamentary legislation. Currently, the Graduate Employment Survey, conducted by MOE (2021), also includes these six institutions annually to understand how graduates fare in the job market six months after their final exams.

Interestingly, two out of the six institutions, SIT and SUSS, have no formal or informal student unions or student governance mechanism and hence are excluded from the data collection process. The Student Impact on Higher Education Globally (LOC-SIHEG) survey 2021 had been distributed to the Presidents of NUS, NTU, SMU, and SUTD who served their universities between 2018 and 2020 and responses were received from NUS, NTU, and SMU (75 percent of publicly funded autonomous universities that had any form of student governance within their institutions) which surpassed the expected 25 percent responses from all members. However, due to the small number of institutions, the focus on the responses has been on the qualitative aspects of the LOC-SIHEG survey with occasional references to the quantitative aspects. The student leaders were given a period between September 2021 and February 2022 to provide responses. Former student leaders of NTU and NUS (reportedly anonymously) were contacted for further inputs to substantiate responses received in the LOC-SIHEG survey and obtain deeper analysis of the state of student governance within institutions, as well as their impact on higher education nationally.

Data from both the survey and interview questions have been reported in a confidential manner to prevent identification of independent respondents. The data was substantiated by investigating institutional statutes, new theories developed in literature, as well as local news on student unions and student representation in Singapore.

Extent of Influence of Contemporary Student Leaders

Taking a closer look at the national “Education Act, 1957, revised 2020” and the Education Advisory Council, who advises the education minister and proposes on matters of educational policy and development, there are no mention of students, student leaders, or representatives in any formal, documented capacity. The council consists of the following members, extracted directly from Clause 9 (2) for the Education Act, 1957:

- a. the Director General as Chairman;
- b. all other members of the Finance Board;
- c. the medical officer of schools appointed under Section 51;
- d. the Director-General of Social Welfare;
- e. eight representatives of such educational institutions, organizations, or associations, including trade unions of teachers, as are approved by the Minister for that purpose, such representatives to be nominated by their respective institutions, organizations, or associations; and
- f. six other persons to be appointed by the Minister.

Student Representation Nationally

Student leaders highlighted through the LOC-SIHEG survey, the unstructured and informal communication between government officials and student leaders, resulted in differing perspectives of students’ involvement in setting the tone of higher education. The student representatives also differed in their opinion on “being respected by government officials” (LOC-SIHEG-Singapore,

2021). Although the government recognizes these student unions as a part of the university, the communication and engagement are not established in a bilateral fashion between student unions and government bodies. Instead, it reflects how the inclusion, consultation, and partnership with student leaders within higher education policies rely largely on the initiative of respective student leaders to make connections and the reciprocal good will of government officials toward those initiatives, since official governing documents do not mandate the consultation and engagement with student leaders (LOC-SIHEG-Singapore 2021).

Although student leaders collectively agreed that they not typically consulted or engaged when national higher education laws and policies are drafted, they do agree that students do not need to go “on the streets” to have their voices heard (LOC-SIHEG-Singapore, 2021). An ex-student leader from NTUSU shared the ease of access student leaders have to Ministers and government officials and commented, “I think I paved the way for direct access to Ministers and in fact, recently the Minister of Education sent me a text to request to get to know the new student union presidents ... we are being heard, so why would we need to engage in drastic actions (referring to activism in the 1980s)?” (NTUSU ex-student leader, personal communication, 2021).

This is a clear and distinct shift from the student movements that were observed before the 1980s where protests on issues were frequent and student leaders mobilized large populations of students to raise issues relating to their lives and education.

However, overall, contemporary student leaders expressed greater confidence in having their voices heard in an informal and ad-hoc/needs-based capacity despite no obligation from the government to do so through legislation, statutory, or other formal documents (LOC-SIHEG-Singapore, 2021). Student representatives have also raised that student issues are not at the heart of electoral or political agendas nor are students viewed as consumers of education with strong consumer rights nor are they considered as an important electoral group (LOC-SIHEG-Singapore, 2021).

Exploring the Institutional Statutes

Societies Act, 1966

Under the statutes for universities including NTU, SMU, SUTD, as well as SIT and SUSS (both institutions without a formal recognized student governance body), specific clauses exist that bind the institutions under the Societies Act, 1966, under the section “Application of 1966 to student bodies” with the following two clauses:

- “To avoid doubt, the 1966 applies to any student body constituted under the provisions of the constituent documents of the university company.”
- “The Minister charged with the responsibility for societies may, by order in the Gazette, exempt any student body mentioned in subsection (1) from all or any of the provisions of the Societies Act, 1966, subject to any conditions specified in the order.”

Regulation by the Societies Act requires student unions to report to the registrar of societies. However, NUS and NTU, Singapore’s oldest higher education institutions, whose student

unions were established in 1980 and 1982 respectively, have an additional clause within both the National University of Singapore and Nanyang Technological University (Corporatization) Act 2005, Miscellaneous Section, Clause 19 which states:

“On April 1, 2006, the students’ association known as the National University of Singapore Students’ Union (NUSSU)/Nanyang Technological University Students’ Union (NTUSU) and its constituent bodies are deemed to be constituted pursuant to the provisions of the constituent documents of the university company.

While this shifts the authority of the unions from the Registrar of Societies to their respective universities, it does not provide NUSSU and NTUSU full autonomy. Instead, the NUS and NTU administrations are responsible for and have oversight of the unions’ activities. A more detailed analysis of NUSSU is shown in the following section.

Statutes and Regulations of Universities

Examining the students’ union of the oldest established university in Singapore shows clearly how the regulation and supervision of NUSSU from the university board mirror the paternalistic governance style of Singapore. As of May 15, 2007, NUSSU was granted an exemption order from the Societies Act (1966) and hence was no longer required to report to the Registrar of Societies, as mentioned above. However, according to the National University of Singapore Statute 5, Student Associations and Activities, NUSSU is constituted according to the NUS constitution and its constituent bodies are approved by the Board of Trustees of the university. Of note, it states:

- “The Board of Trustees shall have power to make Regulations, rules, policies and procedures for or with respect to the constitutions, functions, governance and other matters relating to the Union and any of its Constituent Bodies.”
- “No Constituent Body, other than the Students’ Political Association (a Constituent Body of the Union as prescribed by the Statutes and Regulations) may engage in, or make pronouncements on matters of a political nature. The Board of Trustees may, in its absolute discretion, decide whether any matter is of a political nature.”
- “No person, other than members of the Union, shall participate in any activity of the Union and its Constituent Bodies without the prior approval of the Dean of Students. This shall not apply to activities of a social nature or to activities jointly organised by the Union and/or its Constituent Bodies with external bodies, which have been approved by the Dean of Students” (National University of Singapore Statutes).

These clauses in the statute clearly reiterate the hypothesis of the chapter that university student unions have evolved from autonomous entities to closely supervised university clubs.

Relatively younger institutions such as SMU, SUTD, SUSS, and SIT have no mention of student unions or organizations within their statutes. It is known that SMU has an established student’s association, the Singapore Management University Students’ Association (SMUSA), and SUTD has their established student governing body, “Roots.”

While the statutes of SUSS and SIT clearly acknowledge the possibility of the incorporation of a student body under the Societies Act, it is interesting to note that no student governance

bodies have yet to be formed in both the institutions. No current literature or publicly available information reveals if students within the institution are working together with their university administration to form an official student governance body.

Student Unions' and Leaders' Influence within Institutions

The LOC-SIHEG survey was further analyzed to investigate how much influence student unions and student leaders have within their institutions in Singapore. None of the unions identified themselves as independent legal entities but rather as administrative units of their institutions or as non-registered informal associations, which are funded by student membership fees, government grants, and are supported with office spaces by the respective institutions for day-to-day functioning of the unions (LOC-SIHEG-Singapore, 2021). This is a sustainable funding model for the unions since all students enrolled in the institution are automatically members of their respective student unions and pay a mandatory membership fee. The fees are used for projects and initiatives of the union and not meant for compensatory purposes for student leaders, who volunteer their services throughout their term (LOC-SIHEG-Singapore, 2021). It should be noted that although unions are allocated funds from student membership fees, they are managed and audited by the university administration and not by the union's executive committee (NUSSU ex-student leader, personal communication, 2021).

The student leaders from the different institutions surveyed in the LOC-SIHEG survey had differing opinions on whether they were considered partners in the academic community, possibly because it is highly dependent on the university leadership on how they choose to engage student representatives. However, they were all included in education-related committees and working groups at the institutional level, on a consultative and advisory role albeit without voting rights. They are only given voting rights on committees and working groups involving student affairs including student life and extracurricular activities (LOC-SIHEG-Singapore, 2021). Student leaders regularly and formally meet with top representatives of their institutions such as the Associate Provost for Student Life or Dean for Student Affairs and "somewhat agree" that there is trust between student representatives and institutional leaders and administrators (LOC-SIHEG-Singapore, 2021). This could be a consequence of how student leaders are bound by the direction of university administration and while they are able to have full autonomy over the internal processes of their unions, perhaps the impact they have within the university is limited despite student unions being included in the university statutes.

Interviews amongst former student leaders from NUSSU and NTUSU affirmed that there is no official documentation that institutionalizes the need for university administration to consult students on any student-related issues, and that the involvement of student leaders in higher-level discussions is dependent on the goodwill of the administration. The findings of where power lies, in student-related structures, are to a very large extent held by the administration, where the administration does closely supervise the unions and their activities, with formal request and approval structures required to be adhered to by the unions. "The school does not need to consult us on any changes, so if they do consult us, it is out of goodwill ... They consult us on education for example through the regular Board of Undergraduate studies meeting per semester where we can raise any issues."

The ex-student leader from NTUSU confirmed that they too can engage directly with university leadership if required, “We can just go straight to the Provost or the President of the university if required and may not need to go through the Dean of Students.”

Student leaders acknowledged that their unions have complete autonomy in deciding on how to organize internal structures and decision processes without interference (LOC-SIHEG-Singapore, 2021), though they are closely supervised by the university administration. “The Student Affairs Office (SAO) does keep a close watch over our activities. In general, we have been able to do the things we wanted to do (as a union) but these are non-controversial ... We need to seek approval from the SAO when we want to conduct any events ... If it is an event that is not endorsed, we could potentially be disciplined by the Board of Discipline” (NTUSU ex-student leader, personal communication, 2021).

Student leaders agreed that their unions have the autonomy in their internal functions, including the right to elect their representatives. An ex-student leader from NUSSU affirmed that the union members cannot be removed from their positions by the university since they have been democratically elected. With regards to elections, while voter turnout to elect student representatives in the unions has been rising, the voter turnout stands at less than 10 percent of these institutions, with one institution claiming to see less than 1 percent of the student population turning up to vote for their representatives (LOC-SIHEG-Singapore, 2021), indicating a myriad of problems with engaging the regular student population with student activism or convincing students the purpose of representation. Poor voter turnout could be a significant reason for collisions between student representatives and university administration citing lack of legitimacy and that elected student representatives barely represent the full student population.

An ex-student leader from NUSSU commented on student representation, “Usually, NUS has less than 1% of the student population who come out to vote for the students’ union. We have less than ~4,000 students voting ... It is a double-edged sword when we say we are the representation of student voice, because they (the university administration) will come back and say that less than 1% of the students voted for you and use this against you ... but I was officially elected regardless of how many people voted for me.”

Despite the small sample size that was available, it is promising to have gained access to primary insights from student leaders of NUS, NTU, and SMU, three of the oldest publicly funded autonomous universities in Singapore, which would help fulfill the objective of the chapter. Collectively the three unions claim to represent approximately 62,000 students, and their student leaders are democratically elected representatives within their institutions.

A New Era of Student Activism: Towards a Unified Student Voice

Formation of Quad Unis

Historically and up until July 2022, there has been no formal coordinated student representation in Singapore. In June 2018, the Chairperson of the Commonwealth Students’ Association, who happened to be a Singaporean, partnered with the President of the NTUSU to organize an informal

meeting with the then Minister of Education, One Ye Kung, and the presidents of four other student unions from NUS, NTU, SMU, and SUTD, to discuss student engagement with Ministers so that student voices can be better heard, and issues around graduate employment prospects can be discussed. This triggered the formation of an informal group consisting of presidents or heads of student unions from the four public autonomous universities, which they informally called the “Quad Unis.”

An ex-student leader from NTUSU shared that “it is true that student unions have been run like a university club, focused on events, but that is shifting now with more advocacy taking place, which started from meeting Minister Ong, without which maybe the change would not have happened. It is up to the resourcefulness of the student union president (as to how advocacy is shaped).”

Endorsed by the education minister and led by NTUSU, the unions worked together to organize Singapore’s first inter-varsity students’ union-led conference, “Hiring beyond Grades: The First Step” in January 2019, to discuss student employability and the overemphasis on academic grades. More than 250 undergraduates from six autonomous universities in Singapore along with 300 CEOs and their human resource leads attended the conference engaging in critical dialogues on hiring practices and the importance of academic grades and skills (U Insight, 2019). This conference was well in line with the rapidly shifting focus from ‘grades to skills’ as a key aspect of education (The Straits Times, 2019). This marked the first collaborative project among student unions from public autonomous universities in Singapore which opened the path for a new wave of student representation through “collaborative dialogue” where student leaders and government officials engage readily on issues with the aim of reaching a common understanding and working toward common goals through open conversation. Collaborative dialogue would build on the premise that all parties aim to be on the same page to prevent conflict or escalating disagreements.

During “The First Step” conference, the Singapore Manufacturing Federation signed a memorandum of understanding with NTUSU, which introduced the Transformative Leadership Programme, providing access to students in NTU to more than 3,000 companies to develop career and leadership opportunities. This was a welcomed move given the strong interest of students in employment prospects after graduation. Despite the informal nature of the collaboration among student unions in Singapore, the outcomes of the partnership have translated into tangible, positive actions. It appears that this first inter-varsity conference organized collaboratively by student leaders across Singapore’s autonomous universities has set the tone for a new era of student leaders-led diplomacy and dialogue. This is a distinct shift from the historical model of student activism involving the mobilization of students on the streets to protest issues of interest. Given the paternalistic governance approach in Singapore along with the restructuring of student unions, student activism has now metamorphosized into a new shape, adapting to the current legal, political, and cultural climate. This is a positive trajectory in the journey of student movements, especially from the political and organizing apathy developed after the 1980s and into the 1990s and early 2000s.

Support from National Youth Council

The optimism and positive impact of the collaborative dialogue among students, university leaders, and industry leaders did not stagnate after the success of the 2019 conference in

January. Soon after, NTUSU, NUSSU, and SMUSA collectively organized the Students' Union Youth Voices Forum, featuring a closed-door dialogue with the Minister for Home Affairs and Minister for Law, K. Shanmugam, in June 2019, with the support of the National Youth Council (NYC).

Singapore's NYC was established by the government in 1989 with its primary role to coordinate national youth affair and act as the focal point for international youth affairs. Since 2015, NYC acts as an autonomous agency under the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth; it is unlike most national youth councils globally that operate as youth-led organizations. Singapore's NYC aims to provide platforms for youth to share their view and ideas with the government and engage in dialogue, provide resources and networks for youth development and a platform for youth to network and contribute to the community (National Youth Council, 2022). In this forum, the NYC potentially serves as an ideal partner to bridge students and student leaders with Singapore's government officials.

The Students' Union Youth Voices forum was timed right after the Protection from Online Falsehoods and Manipulation Act (POFMA) was passed in Parliament in May 2019, with the aim of clarifying online falsehood as a primary measure and removal of falsehood as the secondary measure. This was a proactive measure by the government to prevent misinformation from circulating online in Singapore, so that the public can make informed decisions with accurate information being presented (U Insight, 2019b). This issue was of particular interest among youth and students since social media and digital source of information are embedded in their lives.

The agility of the students' unions in collectively organizing a forum in a timely fashion for undergraduate students to understand the POFMA Act and facilitating a direct access to the minister to engage in discourse with was another positive move in the contemporary student activism movement. The accessibility to government officials to discuss pertinent matters was well appreciated by students who attended the dialogue due to its "intimate" and "candid" nature which enabled better awareness and understanding of an Act that directly impacts youth and students.

Formation of the Inter-University Network Interfaced by NYC

The numerous collaborations and dialogues between Quad Unis and the NYC continued, and since October 2021, work had begun to formalize the network of universities in partnership with the NYC to form the Inter-University Network (IUN) (*The Straits Times*, 2022). The IUN consists of five of Singapore's universities, including NUS, NTU, SMU, SUTD, and Yale-NUS. Yale-NUS falls under the umbrella of NUS but has established its own students' union. Since SIT and SUSS do not have formal student governance, they are excluded from the IUN. The network collective represents 65,000 undergraduate students to "represent, protect and empower the interests of undergraduates and young people on a national level" (*The Straits Times*, 2022) and was launched on the February 26, 2022. During the launch of the IUN, the President of Root, SUTD's student government, said, "Coming together shows our commitment to advocate for youths and effect change, and will provide a unified youth voice for policy recommendations"

(Youthopia, 2022). Whether the IUN will be included in any form of official government documentation is unclear, but what is clear is that the IUN is now recognized as the official national student voice. Perhaps this would be an opportune time for the IUN to be appointed as a permanent member of the Education Advisory Council as one of the eight representatives of clause 9(2)(e) (Education Act, 1957).

It is interesting to note that student leaders surveyed in the recent LOC-SIHEG “somewhat agreed” when asked if students in Singapore are considered troublemakers and agreed that being a student representative meant taking on personal risks (LOC-SIHEG-Singapore, 2021).

Despite the apprehension, the formation of an inter-university network in Singapore to collectively represent the student voice, with the support from NYC and the Singaporean government, is indeed a ground-breaking and bold step in contemporary student representation on a formal capacity and a much welcome move among student leaders.

The NYC will act as the facilitator between IUN and government agencies (Youthopia, 2022) and is in an ideal position as an autonomous organization, with the aim of empowering young people and students. The Chief Executive of NYC, David Chua, affirmed, “In the spirit of providing opportunities for youths to be heard, be empowered and be the change, the Inter-University Network will provide recommendations for the Government to consider on issues that matter to youths” (Youthopia, 2022). It is, in fact, unsurprising that the NYC has become the intermediary between student leaders and the government, providing NYC close oversight on the structure and functioning of the IUN.

Some of the priorities of the IUN include to highlight issues faced by students but may not be a current priority in the country’s administration, including a focus on mental health and building a more robust mental support system in universities, climate change, and graduate employment. Since its inception, the IUN has implemented its first project and the report published a large-scale survey of 470 undergraduate students from four universities and Yale-NUS show that close to 90 percent of undergraduate students are stressed by their studies and work obligations. As many as 75 percent of students asked for more support for their studies, help for students with learning disabilities and proposed “grace days” where “allowable delays beyond a specified deadline that can be applied to all assignments” (Today, 2022). It also highlighted the stigma associated with students seeking help for their mental health as a barrier. The report entitled UCare Mental Health Report was presented to the Minister for Culture, Community and Youth on June 21, 2022. Student leaders also committed to following up on the recommendations of the report with their respective universities. The impact the IUN has made in a short period of time since its inception should be celebrated while it remains to be seen how receptive university administrations are toward the findings of the IUN UCare Mental Health Report.

It is likely that the formation of the IUN will strengthen the voices of student unions within their respective institutions since the network is made up of student union representatives of the autonomous institutions and is now backed by NYC and government ministers. An ex-student leader from NTUSU commented, “This shows that the student union movement is going strong ... I hope the student unions can increase their presence within their student body, I think the unions are likely to be more activist in future and government will be more open to consult student union leaders and be more open to their views. I won’t be surprised if in (the) future student unions are part of some institutionalized policy or consultative committee.”

Can Alternative Student Voices Be Just as Powerful?

The Singapore government through its paternalistic governance structure consistently reminds the people of the vulnerability of the country and how social, racial, and religious harmony is critical for its survival and progress. The government has also enforced laws that hinder any form of protesting or organizing on the grassroots level that may in turn become a threat to the current infrastructure of power within the country. Given that organizing and mobilizing on a large scale is illegal and a criminal act, this often acts an impediment for Singaporeans to advocate for causes, as it may deem to threaten the social harmony of the country.

While the formal student representation nationally has been established, student advocacy and voice should not only be defined through student unions or the IUN. IUN is, in fact, not the only association of students. Students across the country are becoming more aware and passionate about the range of local to global issues that impact them and are starting to feel more emboldened to speak up and take action. It seems that student voice and representation can indeed be diverse and yet, highly impactful, when provided the right level of consideration and legitimacy.

Diversifying Student Voices, a Brief Case Study on S4F

A group of students from NUS, NTU, SMU, SUTD, and Yale-NUS (same institutions that make up the IUN) formed a coalition named Students for a Fossil Free Future (S4F) had launched a two-week campaign in January 2022 urging universities to divest all investments, partnerships, and funding with fossil fuel firms by 2030, and implement climate crisis education within the university curriculum, among their list recommendations (Students for a Fossil Free Future, 2022). The coalition, which launched a data-driven, sixty-eight-page report, Fossil-Fueled Universities, which they worked on over a period of three years, revealed how closely involved higher education institutes in Singapore are with fossil fuel giants who are the main drivers of climate change (CNA, 2022). S4F is made up of sixty students, alumni, academics, and lawyers. The team successfully engaged in discussions both online and offline with the findings and recommendations made in the report. While the team expressed that most of their recommendations have not been engaged with or acted upon (Eco Business, 2022), the unique and unprecedented style of student-led activism of the group, the report and its findings have been picked up and published by media outlets across the country and have not gone unnoticed by government bodies, as well as universities, generating buzz, and conversation.

In response, NUS had reaffirmed its commitments to find solutions for environmental sustainability and agreed to divest from polluting assets, further inviting students to share ideas on environmental sustainability (Eco Business, 2022). NTU reiterated its sustainability framework to meet their climate goals while also justifying their investments to ensure growth of the institution while preventing disruption to students. SMU and SUTD had also responded positively with their sustainability plans (Eco Business, 2022). Although the universities did not directly address the recommendations by S4F and did not reveal the information requested transparently, the campaign launched by the S4F has generated significant traction and engagement across the country and without the significant backlash the students had expected.

A student from NTU, also a part of the S4F, shared, “As students, we’re constantly worried about backlash, censorship, and reprisal from publicly questioning the status quo ... yet, we press on and dedicate countless hours, weekends, and months of our lives to this, knowing that our short window of time to act to ensure our planet remains habitable is almost gone. We cannot rest without doing everything we can” (CAN, 2022).

The Chief Executive of NYC, David Chua, responded to the campaign after a week and acknowledged that the national goals fall short, suggesting more activists should be brokers to bridge the gap between the government and activists. He further asked young people to be patient to give the government space to make more ambitious climate goals (Eco Business, 2022).

The significant point of note is that students and collaborators on this project were mindful of the potential retaliation that they might face for publicly challenging powerful institutions, but persisted regardless, because of how important the movement was to them. It seems that youth and students are placing greater importance on gaining understanding and raising awareness about issues that impact them and feel empowered to take action within their capacity which exemplifies the strength of student- and youth-led movements. While student-led actions and campaigns representing a unified student voice can be powerful, student movements may not need to be restricted by utilizing student unions as the primary channel.

Activism through “Pragmatic Resistance” in Singapore

An article by Rice Media (2019) argues that contemporary student leaders are now employing pragmatic resistance to have their voices heard, which they identified as the distinguishing factor between student movements of the past and present. They further argue that protests were common in past student activism, but it has now become illegal both nationally and on campus (Rice Media, 2019). However, student leaders do not need to resort to those tactics as they are employing pragmatic resistance “emphasising the need for popular support when pursuing particularistic goals like climate change, and working with, rather than against, the authorities” (Rice Media, 2019).

Associate Professor Lynette J. Chua coined the term “pragmatic resistance” as the balance between managing legal boundaries and the culture of society. She mentions, “Activists adjust their tactics according to changes in formal law and cultural norms and push the limits of those norms while simultaneously adhering to them” (Chua, 2012).

The LGBTQ movement in Singapore has employed pragmatic resistance as a tool for activism within the social climate where the LGBTQ community is bound by Section 377A of the Singapore Penal code that “prohibits sexual relations between consenting men in public and in private” (*The Diplomat*, 2022). Adopting the strategy of pragmatic resistance, the LGBTQ movement has not engaged in public street protests that are confrontational, does not employ any tactic that may be deemed illegal nor do they piggyback on international movements and campaigns on human rights which are often deemed as option for Western values, a threat for the country’s more conservative Asian values (CAPE, 2022) The LGBTQ movement gradually shifted from online platforms, which were more loosely regulated to physical events such as

“Pink Dot,” a classic example of using social stability and patriotism to push for change (Pinkdot, 2022). The movement focuses on the Asian value system of family, close bonding, love, and community in an attempt to align with conservative Singapore values. This attempts to prevent the polarization of people based on their sexual orientation (Pinkdot, 2022).

Activists have also been sending in petitions and appeal submissions to repeal Section 377A utilizing the existing legal framework. Despite multiple dismissals of these appeals (*The Diplomat*, 2022), the Minister for Home Affairs and Minister for Law, K. Shanmugam, iterated the government is considering the “best way forward with [Section] 377A.” On August 21, 2022, PM Lee Hsien Loong announced that Singapore will repeal Section 377A, which will decriminalize sex between men, though he stated that there were no plans to change the legal definition of marriage between a woman and a man (Reuters, 2022). The slow but gradual shift toward engaging in the conversation is precisely the intended outcome of pragmatic resistance (*The Diplomat*, 2022).

Pragmatic resistance may be the ideal path for those wishing to engage in activism in Singapore on issues that challenge social and legal norms without employing confrontational tactics like protests.

The question points to whether student leaders are also employing pragmatic resistance to amplify their voices like the LGBTQ movement in Singapore. The answer is both yes and no. At present, it appears that the issues that are being raised by the IUN are challenging neither the law nor sociocultural norms. Issues such as mental health, safeguarding students on campus, and environmental sustainability are now much more mainstreamed among youth of the nation. The aim of the IUN was not a platform for students to hold the government accountable but rather a collaborative platform to raise the concerns on social issues from the student perspective. Hence, this chapter argues that despite the elevation of student representation and voices through the IUN, pragmatic resistance does not accurately define the student movement, but the more compatible strategy would be collaborative dialogue.

The advocacy strategy that the S4F has employed is more aligned with pragmatic resistance. The group has successfully mobilized students and professionals, from across the universities, albeit not to conduct a physical protest, but to present an independent research report, challenging the investments made in fossil fuel companies while recommending divestment. They have also successfully grabbed the attention of the nation without employing any confrontational or illegal tactics, despite fear of potential backlash. The S4F has also requested universities for accountability on their investments in energy companies unlike the IUN which began its work with a collaborative approach.

Conclusion

This chapter aimed to provide a glimpse into the unique and very different microclimate that Singapore has carefully cultured and operated in over the years. Born out of necessity to create a new, stable, and united identity as a young independent nation, the beliefs, practices, and most crucially the rules and regulations have inevitably outgrown to become limiting. While there were irrefutable benefits, these regulations developed a generation of youth and students with

high level of political apathy. Contemporary youth and students are rightfully concerned on global issues and their eagerness to feel heard will only grow. If world leaders do not ensure that youth and students have a safe and effective platform to be heard, through history, we have learnt and witnessed the different drastic tactics that may resurface.

There is much to analyze and learn from the metamorphosis of students and youth-led groups in Singapore, in identifying the most effective and yet, least disruptive engagement strategies to engage both youth and student groups, and policymakers.

Should pragmatic resistance be superior to collaborative dialogue, or can both coexist and empower each other's movement and purpose of student-led efforts? The answer is not yet clear, as ground-up movements in Singapore move into uncharted waters, but the way forward should be decided by youth and student leaders themselves. Regardless of the path that initiatives like the IUN or student representation like S4F takes in the future, student-led movements have indeed been reignited in Singapore, though in a completely different and distinct form from the strategies witnessed in Singapore's history and the contemporary student activism in the region and globally.

Contemporary student activism has evolved and adapted in Singapore, this time with the support of government. If this movement sees success soon, it could become a model for neighboring countries, on how government bodies and student bodies can work together toward a common vision. Pragmatic resistance should, however, not be quelled as it becomes rather easy for collaboration and dialogue to become complacent and comfortable falling into groupthink in the desire to achieve consensus. Youth and students should continue to take responsibility and find legitimate ways of making their voices heard on issues important to them and meaningfully challenge status quo.

References

- CAPE (2022). Pragmatic resistance. <https://cape.common.yale-nus.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/sites/108/2020/12/Pragmatic-Resistance-Lynette-J.-Chua-1.pdf> (accessed August 3, 2022).
- Chua, J.K. (2012). Pragmatic resistance, law, and social movements in authoritarian states: The case of gay collective action in Singapore. https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/23357910.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A8346a9b0cb9f11b424e50c718b5d1200&ab_segments=&origin=&acceptTC=1 (accessed August 12, 2022).
- CNA (February 5, 2021). Police warn against plans to protest in Singapore over situation in Myanmar. <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/police-warn-against-protest-plans-singapore-over-myanmar-14119078> (accessed August 3, 2022).
- CNA (2022). Channel News Asia, 2022. Student coalition highlights "extensive" links between Singapore universities and fossil fuel industry, urges full divestment by 2030. <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/singapore/extensive-links-singapore-universities-fossil-fuel-industry-student-coalition-2439301> (accessed August 3, 2022).
- The Diplomat (2022). Singapore's slow but steady path toward decriminalizing homosexuality. <https://thediplomat.com/2022/04/singapores-slow-but-steady-path-toward-decriminalizing-homosexuality/> (accessed August 10, 2022).
- Eco Business (2022). Singapore universities, energy firms respond to student fossil fuel divestment campaign. <https://www.eco-business.com/news/singapore-universities-energy-firms-respond-to-student-fossil-fuel-divestment-campaign/> (accessed August 3, 2022).

- Education Act (1957). <https://sso.agc.gov.sg/Act/EA1957> (accessed August 1, 2022).
- Education Act (2020). <https://sso.agc.gov.sg/Act/CEA2000> (accessed August 1, 2022).
- E.G. (1992). Review of *A History of Singapore, 1819–1988*, by C.M. Turnbull. *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 112(1): 177. <https://doi.org/10.2307/604650>.
- Focus: Singapore '75. *Far Eastern Economic Review* 89 (15 August 1975): Focus 1–46.
- Graduate Employment Survey (2021). <https://www.moe.gov.sg/-/media/files/post-secondary/ges-2021/joint-web-publication-4-aus-ges2021.ashx?la=en&hash=2CB3200A8C1B7D935D0253470072DE82DDF49B42> (accessed August 1, 2022).
- Heng, D. (2010). The scripting of a national history: Singapore and its pasts by Hong Lysa and Huang Jianli Singapore: NUS Press. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 41(1): 183–5.
- Jianli, H. (2006). Positioning the student political activism of Singapore: Articulation, contestation, and omission. *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 7(3): 403–30. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649370600849280> (accessed August 3, 2022).
- Jianli, H. (2008). The young pathfinders: Portrayal of student political activism. In Barr, M., Barr, M.D. and Trocki, C.A. (eds.), *Paths Not Taken: Political Pluralism in Post-war Singapore* (pp. 188–205). Singapore: NUS Press.
- Leong, C. (2004). PAP 50: Five decades of the People's Action Party (pp. 12). Singapore: People's Action Party. Call no.: RSING 324.25957 LEO.
- Liao, E. (2010). Reclaiming the Ivory Tower: Student activism in the University of Malaya and Singapore, 1949–1975. Unpublished master's thesis, National University of Singapore. <https://core.ac.uk/reader/48633950>
- LOC-SIHEG-Singapore (2021). Local student impact on higher education globally survey 2021. Global Student Forum.
- Lowy Institute (2018). Operation Coldstore: Singapore's struggle to confront history. <https://www.lowyinterpreter.org.au/the-interpreter/operation-coldstore-singapore-struggles-confront-history> (accessed August 1, 2022).
- Marginson, S. (2010). Higher education in East Asia and Singapore: Rise of the Confucian model. *Higher Education* 61(5): 587–611. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-010-9384-9>
- Ministry of Education (2022). Autonomous Universities. <https://www.moe.gov.sg/post-secondary/overview/autonomous-universities> (accessed August 1, 2022).
- Ministry of Education (2017). *Education Statistics Digest 2017*. Singapore: Ministry of Education.
- Ministry of Education, Graduate Employment Survey (2021). <https://www.moe.gov.sg/-/media/files/post-secondary/ges-2021/joint-web-publication-4-aus-ges2021.ashx>
- Mok, K. and Tan, J. (2004). *Globalization and Marketization in Education: A Comparative Analysis of Hong Kong and Singapore*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.
- Nanyang Technological University (Corporatization) Act (2005). <https://sso.agc.gov.sg/Act/NTUCA2005#:~:text=An%20Act%20to%20provide%20for,matters%20relating%20to%20that%20company> (accessed August 1, 2022).
- National University of Singapore (Corporatization) Act (2005). <https://sso.agc.gov.sg/Act/NUSCA2005#:~:text=An%20Act%20to%20provide%20for,matters%20relating%20to%20that%20company> (accessed August 1, 2022).
- National University of Singapore Statutes. <https://www.nus.edu.sg/registrar/administrative-policies-procedures/undergraduate/nus-statutes-and-regulations> (accessed August 2, 2022).
- National Youth Council (2022). About us. <https://www.nyc.gov.sg/en/about-us> (accessed August 3, 2022).
- NUS Constitution. <https://www.nus.edu.sg/registrar/docs/info/administrative-policies-procedures/nusstatutesregulations-full.pdf> (accessed August 1, 2022).
- The PIE Blog (2018, December). How Singapore became an English-speaking country. <https://blog.thepienews.com/2018/12/how-singapore-became-an-english-speaking-country/> (accessed August 3, 2022).
- Pinkdot (2022). About pink dot Singapore. <https://pinkdot.sg/about-pink-dot-sg/> (accessed August 3, 2022).

- Quah, J. (2010). Public administration in Singapore: A selected bibliography. In Quah, J.S.T. (ed.), *Public Administration Singapore-style* (pp. 257–77). (Research in Public Policy Analysis and Management, Vol. 19). Bingley: Emerald Group Publishing Limited. [https://doi.org/10.1108/S0732-1317\(2010\)0000019018](https://doi.org/10.1108/S0732-1317(2010)0000019018)
- Reuters (2022). Singapore will decriminalize sex between men, prime minister says. <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/singapore-will-decriminalise-sex-between-men-pm-2022-08-21/> (accessed August 24, 2022).
- Rice Media (2019). Student activism is proving that Singaporean apathy may soon no longer exist. <https://www.ricemedia.co/current-affairs-features-student-activism/> (accessed August 3, 2022).
- SIT (2022). Singapore Institute of Technology. *Life Readiness*. <https://www.singaporetech.edu.sg/life-at-sit/life-readiness> (accessed August 3, 2022).
- Societies Act (1966). <https://sso.agc.gov.sg/Act/SA1966?ProvIds=Sc-> (accessed August 3, 2022).
- The Straits Times (1975). Varsity union: Pledge to students. *The Straits Times News Paper* (November 18, 1975), p. 7.
- The Straits Times (1999a). What the Prime Minister said. *The Straits Times* (May 14, 1999). p. 39.
- The Straits Times (1999b). Don't be sycophants, Singaporeans told. June 17, 1999, p. 21.
- The Straits Times (2000). Debates Whet Pupils' appetite for politics. June 17, 2000.
- The Straits Times (2001). What if things go seriously wrong for S'pore? *George Gascon*. July 28, 2001, p. 6.
- The Straits Times (2019). NTU student-led forum aims to spark dialogue on hiring beyond grades. <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/ntu-student-led-forum-to-spark-dialogue-on-hiring-beyond-grades> (accessed August 3, 2022).
- The Straits Times (2022). Five S'pore university student unions form new network to champion youth issues. <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/parenting-education/five-spore-university-student-unions-form-a-new-network-to-champion-youth-issues> (accessed August 3, 2022).
- Students for a Fossil Free Future (2022). Press release: Student coalition publishes report recommending universities to reconsider partnerships with the fossil fuel industry. https://www.studentsforafossilfreefuture.org/_files/ugd/c4c32f_0dd8fe8bd99545f29e7104f23ff1b918.pdf (accessed August 3, 2022).
- SUSS (2022). Singapore University of Social Sciences. *LEAD Academy*. <https://www.suss.edu.sg/experience-at-suss/lead-academy> (accessed August 2, 2022).
- Tan, J. (2004). Singapore: Small nation, big plans. In Altbach, P.G. and Umakoshi, T. (eds.), *Asian Universities: Historical Perspectives and Contemporary Challenges* (pp. 175–97). Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Tan, J. (2018). Higher education systems and institutions, Singapore. In Teixeira, P. and Shin, J. (eds.), *Encyclopedia of International Higher Education Systems and Institutions*. Dordrecht: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-017-9553-1_513-1
- Today (2022). Large-scale survey of S'pore undergrads finds work and study commitments as main stressors, desire for academic "grace days." <https://www.todayonline.com/singapore/survey-singapore-undergrads-work-study-stress-academic-grace-days-1929776> (accessed August 3, 2022).
- U Insight (2019a). Hiring beyond grades: The first step. <https://u-insight.com/2019/03/30/the-first-step/> (accessed August 3, 2022).
- U Insight (2019b). Students' union youth voices forum with Mr K Shanmugam. <https://u-insight.com/2019/07/14/youth-voices-forum/> (accessed August 3, 2022).
- The University of Singapore (Amendment) Bill (1975). Bill No. 51/1975. <https://sso.agc.gov.sg/Bills-Supp/51-1975/Published/19751111?DocDate=19751111>
- Yew, L.K. (1998). *The Singapore Story: Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew*. Singapore: Times Editions.
- Yew, L.K. (2000). *From Third World to First: The Singapore Story—1965–2000* (1st ed.). Singapore: Times Editions.
- Youthopia (2022). Inter-University network formed between five student unions to represent undergrads' concerns. <https://youthopia.sg/read/inter-university-network-formed-between-five-student-unions-to-represent-undergrads-concerns/> (accessed August 3, 2022).

Finding a Way Forward amidst the Contemporary Challenges to Sri Lankan Student Politics

W. Sachinda Dulanjana

Introduction

Student activism has marked some crucial milestones in the political history of Sri Lanka as it “... has always reflected the social and political changes in the country” (Samaranayake, 2015, p. 23). This close connection between universities and social change is a common phenomenon in similar country contexts because “universities do not function in a vacuum, and they are especially related to and dependent on their societies in the Third World” (Altbach, 1984, p. 637). Thus, student activism in Sri Lanka can be studied in relation to contemporary social and political events, as students’ political engagement has reflected these throughout history. This chapter focuses on student activism in Sri Lanka. First, the chapter looks into the historical background of student activism while examining its impact on the higher education sector in Sri Lanka. Then, the chapter examines the challenge ahead of Sri Lankan student activists in maintaining their traditional contentious politics and methods of political mobilization. The chapter draws on LOC-SIHEG 2021_Sri Lanka survey data gathered from local student unions in state universities in Sri Lanka and interviews with university leaders. In conclusion, the author proposes a new model for student activism in Sri Lanka.

The evolution of student politics in Sri Lanka is central to state universities in Sri Lanka. State universities are fewer compared to private higher education institutions yet vibrant places for student politics. “The Ministry of Higher education and the University Grant Commission exists as the main policymaking bodies regarding the state university system ... ” (Kumari and Ferando, 2021, p. 86) in Sri Lanka. However, in terms of private higher education institutions, “Ministry of Higher Education and University Grants Commission do not have purview over these institutions. Further, these private higher education institutions have never received the status of the state universities and not referred to as universities in the country” (Wickramasinghe, 2018, p. 10). Thus, whenever someone refers to “university student activism” in Sri Lanka, it has always been the state universities. Also, an act of Parliament has legitimized university student unions and faculty student unions in state universities to act as the official representative of the student community in their respective institutions. Thus, these student unions are mandated to work in consultation with their institutions’ governing bodies in enhancing student experience. However,

the student movement of Sri Lanka is led by Inter-University Student Federation (IUSF) which does not have any legal mandate as such even though IUSF's membership is composed of local student unions from state-owned higher education institutions. By mobilizing its membership, IUSF mostly intervenes with policy decisions at national level, whereas university student unions and faculty student unions are mostly active at institutional level.

The reasons for more political activism at state universities are several (cf. Klemenčič 2014, 2024a, b). Unlike students in state universities, students in private higher education institutions do not have a national-level representation to collectively engage in national politics. Furthermore, securing a place in a state university is a highly competitive process because “increasing the number of students [intake] to the universities is limited and the main reason for this is the scarcity of resources in the universities” (Tharmaseelan, 2007, p. 183). Even though the successful completion of General Certificate of Education (GCE) Advanced Level examination determines the eligible students for university admissions, out of those students “... just about 15 percent are selected to the state universities of Sri Lanka leaving the rest of the people (85 percent) losing their dream to enter state university education” (Alawattagama, 2020, p. 9). So, state universities are populated by highly competent students, many from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, who are committed to free education and study for free. Such university context tends to be especially conducive to student activism.

Student activism in Sri Lanka is deeply connected to the free education system of the country which provides education from primary level to higher education. As suggested by Alawattagama (2020, p. 5), “the introduction of free education policy in 1944 was a paradigm shift in the history of the education system in Sri Lanka” because Free Education Policy (1945) paved the path to an environment which makes educational attainment available for everyone despite their socioeconomic background. “October 1945, the Free Education Policy came into effect; stating that every child above the age of 5 and not more than 16 is entitled to free education” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs-Sri Lanka, n.d.). It could be observed that preserving the Free Education Policy (1945) has become part and parcel of student politics because “a key mobilizing factor is the issue of free education and opening up tertiary education to the private sector” (Samaranayake, 2015, p. 29). According to Kumari and Fernando (2021), this demand for social justice through free access to education from state university students can be explained by looking at the socioeconomic composition of the student population at these universities. Namely, “the majority of [students at state universities] are from rural lower—or middle-income families who have experienced numerous hardships in life” (Kumari and Fernando, 2021, p. 86). This may also be the reason why leftist political parties heavily influence the student movement in Sri Lanka because the student demands are more aligned with leftist political ideologies.

The introduction of the Free Education Policy (1945) could be considered as a groundbreaking political decision but still “there is a visible disparity across regions in educational attainment or students' performance, with regard to facilities, quality of education, teachers, etc.” (Liyanage, 2014, p. 122). As discussed earlier, selection to state universities is highly competitive with only about 15 percent of students who successfully completed the General Certificate of Education (GCE) Advanced Level securing a place. Access to free higher education is thus severely limited and one of the major grievances mobilizing students to activism demanding more education facilities to accommodate students who wish to pursue higher education in Sri Lanka. At the same time, “the concept of private universities has been severely criticized and

opposed by the students' movement and some of the social pressure groups (Alawattegama, 2020, pp. 9–10). The main reasons behind state university students' objection to private higher education can be identified as twofold. First, private higher education is considered as a way of widening the prevailing social and economic disparities in Sri Lanka. Second, private higher education is associated with the risk of declining the quality of education. According to Doss (2017) doors can be shut for the lower classes of society if education is reduced into a commodity which would only be available to the economically privileged ones. Using arguments which were raised around state university students' protests against the private medical university which was called South Asian Institute of Technology and Medicine (SAITM), he further explains how the quality of education could be dropped if "the providers of education driven by motives of profit would invariably supply the cheapest of resources and expect the maximum of profit; which in reality would mean lowest quality education in anticipation of the maximum profit margin" (Doss, 2017).

Historical Background of Student Activism in Sri Lanka

The history of student unions in Sri Lanka runs back to the nineteenth century as the Sri Lanka Law Student Union (LSU), the main student body of Sri Lanka Law College, is seen as the oldest student union in the country, having been established in 1894 (The Law Students' Union of Sri Lanka, 1998). LSU's scope has been limited to the internal matters of the institution and law student community. According to Samaranyake (2015, p. 23), "Sri Lanka did not have a single student movement until 1960" (Samaranyake, 2015, p. 23). Weeramunda's (2008) timeline of conflicts in universities from 1953 to 1993 reports a clash between the students from the University of Peradeniya (then known as University of Ceylon) and the police in 1953. According to Daily Mirror (2016), this incident took place in connection with the "*harthaal*" (a closure of shops) and protests organized by Marxist parties to oppose the economic policies of the government. This could be identified as the first notable intervention of university students on a national-level political issue even though they did not have a unified student movement at the time.

According to Samaranyake (2015), the increase in the number of universities led to growth in student unions which represented an important part of radical or leftist political parties. Consequently, "after 1971, university student politics became a part and parcel of insurrectionary violence and guerrilla warfare in Sri Lanka" (Samaranyake, 2015, p. 24). The connection between student politics and the political party called Janata Vimukti Peramuna (famously known as JVP), or People's Liberation Front can be considered as crucial in this regard. JVP led both youth insurrections in 1971 and 1988/9, utilizing its student wing called the "Socialist Student Union (SSU)." Being influenced by leftist ideologies, university students played a prominent role in both of these youth uprisings. The 1971 insurrection can be identified as a major landmark in the political history of Sri Lanka as well as in student politics because "... thousands of predominantly Sinhala-educated and rural-based youth, ostensibly belonging to the JVP ... attempted to overthrow the recently elected United Front government by capturing police stations throughout the island" (Hewage, 2020, p. 186). The government suppressed this youth uprising by declaring a state of emergency which was "... defined by disappearances, torture,

summary executions, and the detention of some eighteen thousand JVP suspects in prison camps” (Hewage, 2020, p. 186). Nevertheless, this uprising demonstrated the ability of JVP in mobilizing Sri Lankan youth, in particular university students. After this insurrection, JVP and SSU were banned under the emergency regulations but “the strategy of confrontational politics was resumed by the SSU once the JVP became a recognized political party after 1977” (Weeramunda, 2008, p. 34). Arguably, the SSU strategy was successful because “by 1979 the leadership of the students’ movement in universities was with the JVP” (People’s Liberation Front—JVP Sri Lanka, n.d.). The realization of their ability in mobilizing university students incentivized the JVP to take a similar approach during the youth uprising in 1989/9.

Wijesiriwardena (2011) explains how the government formed by the United National Party (UNP) published a “White Paper on Education” in 1981 that proposed school management committees in order to transfer the burden of seeking funds to run schools to the parents of school children. The resistance to this “White Paper on Education” mainly arose from university students. By 1981, Socialist Students Union of the JVP “was in power in most of the students’ councils in universities” (People’s Liberation Front—JVP Sri Lanka, n.d.). As suggested by Senevirathne (2002), students fought against the “White papers” even in a situation where the opposition of the parliament was not in a strong position to fight against the government. He also mentions that “the students scored a victory of sorts, I suppose, for the UNP was forced to withdraw the document and resort to surreptitious means of implementing its proposals” (Senevirathne, 2002, p. 11). Thus, it can be considered as a historically important event because students could reverse the decision of the government. This was another instance which shows the connection between student activism in Sri Lanka and its focus on preserving the “Free Education Policy.” As suggested by Senevirathne (2002, p. 11), “[t]he whole process was captured best by the slogan that was seized by our youth in the late eighties, *kolambata kiri apata kekiri*.” The Sinhala phrase means that people in urban areas get the best of everything whilst rural people get a secondary-level treatment. The slogan was used as a metaphor to express how students from rural parts of the country were disadvantaged, whilst the students from Colombo (the commercial capital of the country), who had privileged backgrounds, could be benefited from the proposed reforms.

It is not a secret that Sri Lankan student politics has always been under party political influence since the 1970s. However, “at the same time, attempts by the post 1977 government to counter the influence of leftist parties in student politics, particularly the JVP, by setting up a pro-government student organization only contributed to intensifying inter-student conflicts” (Weeramunda, 2008, p. 29). Being unable to avoid another youth uprising in 1988/9 indicates that the attempts to set up alternative student movements had not been successful. The insurrection in 1988/9 was led by the JVP based on the following three demands: “a rejection of the policy of economic liberalisation which had benefited some but not all of society, a rejection of the Indian presence; and a rejection of the use of political criteria for job allocation” (Little, 1997, p. 83). This youth uprising was suppressed by the government using military power with massive loss of life. The JVP had been considered as the political party which fuels the most prominent national-level university student movement in Sri Lanka, the “Inter-University Student Federation (IUSF),” famously known among the students as “Anthare.” According to JVP Sri Lanka (2016) the IUSF was operational under the guidance of JVP and the leadership of SSU, even during the struggle against “White paper on education” in the 1980s.

The student engagement in the initial stage of the thirty-year war between the Sri Lankan government forces and The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)—a militant separatist group fighting for a homeland for Tamils in Sri Lanka—cannot be disregarded. Amarasingam (2013) explains how student movements such as Thamil Manavar Peravai or the Tamil Students Union (TSU) were formed in the 1970s in response to the new policies on university admission which were discriminatory to Tamil students. According to Sabaratnam (2003), TSU also operated as an armed group among many other militant groups during the early stage of the war. Thus, it is evident that student activism in North and Eastern provinces took a different shape from the South due to the prevailing armed conflict between the Sri Lankan armed forces and LTTE in those areas.

Inter-University Student Federation (IUSF)

IUSF is the largest student movement in Sri Lanka and it has been dominating the sphere of student politics for many years. “Although it is not a legal entity recognized by the University Act of 1978, it functions as a de facto student federation” (Samaranayake, 2015, p. 29). So, IUSF works as the central hub for local student councils which are established in state universities. Given that “... current student councils are highly politicized bodies and the universities are strong centers of youth led agitation” (Samaranayake, 2015, p. 23), it is not surprising to understand why IUSF, which is well known for its confrontational politics, still has a stronghold in state universities.

Examining the aspirations of IUSF, it could be observed that they are not confined only to issues on educational affairs or universities because:

when the Inter-University Students Federation began in 1978, there were three main organisation goals, ... The first is unconditionally standing up for the rights of the people of this country, the second is fighting for the right to free education, and the third is intervention in educational affairs and student welfare of universities. (Wasantha Mudalige, 2022, cited in Francisco, 2022)

According to Mudalige (2022) who is the former convener of IUSF, these aspirations remain the same for them. Thus, IUSF’s intervention in other national-level issues, which are experienced by the people of Sri Lanka, is not surprising given that it has been one of their organizational aspirations since the establishment of the organization. Also, it is important to note that the continuous struggle to preserve the right to free education is also reflected in above aspirations.

IUSF holds its weekly meetings with the participation of student leaders from state higher-education institutions. However, IUSF has only one leadership position which is called “the convener.” The convener of IUSF is usually appointed with mutual agreement of student leaders from local student unions. In case if there is a necessity to hold an election, every institution has one vote. IUSF forms the student movement in Sri Lanka by mobilizing the local student unions, predominantly in state universities. As an example, if there is a need to protest a political decision, local student unions are instructed by IUSF to organize small protests in their cities and universities. Depending on the intensity of the issue, sometimes students from different state universities are invited to join large-scale protests which are organized to be held at a central

location (most of the time, in the capital city). Often, the end of these protests is marked by a clash between students and police forces. It is not uncommon to see police forces using tear gas to disperse the student protests while making some arrests depending on the seriousness of the situation. The most recent example is the clashes between students and police forces, during the protests which demanded the former president of the country to resign due to his government's handling of the country's economy (*BBC News*, 2022b; *Daily Mirror*, 2022). It is also important to note that the former convener of IUSF, Wasantha Mudalige, was held in custody for over 150 days after being arrested with a group of other student activists during a protest in August 2022. The arrests were made under the provisions of the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA), a law that has faced criticism from numerous local and international human rights organizations for its draconian nature (Amnesty International, 2023; Farzan, 2023).

In spite of the ability to collectively engage, student activism in state universities is heavily criticized for the practice called "ragging" which senior students use to politically socialize and welcome new students. Though "political socialization is manifest when political feelings, values, beliefs, etc. are transmitted explicitly" (Bender, 1967), it is questionable whether "ragging" could realize such objective because it is usually defined as "the verbal, physical or psychological abuse that newly enrolled students undergo when entering universities in Sri Lanka" (Hulangamuwa, Lowchiong and Dharmakirti, 2021). It has become an embedded component in student activism in Sri Lanka because "the student political groups use ragging as a weapon to control the new students and to indoctrinate them" (Wimalasuriya, 2012). They also consider it as a crucial part of the student subculture in state universities. Weeramunda (2008)'s timeline of conflicts in universities shows that even in the 1960s, students had engaged in protests and demonstrations against the punishments given for ragging. Liyanage (2014) has also mentioned how the ragging group was mainly led by the political leadership of JVP. However, it is also important to note that "JVP has not been able to mobilize the youth over the last decade" (Gunaratnam, 2012, cited in Colombo Telegraph, 2012). Even though the political leadership of Sri Lankan student politics has now been shifted to the Frontline Socialist Party (FSP), still the abusive practice of "ragging" allegedly exists. Most importantly, it should be also noted that "milder ragging has its supporters as an equalizing ritual which seems to transcend ethnic divisions" (Haviland, 2012). Thus, it is not impossible to find a considerable portion of students, past students, and university staff who do not oppose "ragging" even though it is clearly declared as a punishable criminal offence under "Prohibition of ragging and other forms of violence in educational institutions act, no. 20 of 1998."

However, when it comes to student engagement with IUSF through local student unions, a clear division among students could be seen across many state universities because there is a considerable proportion of students in state universities who do not obey ragging groups. Eventually, these nonragging groups are not involved in student activities organized by IUSF or local student unions, and they are considered as the "Ala" group, using the first two letters of the Sinhala term "Athharina ladha" which means "abandoned." This informal division essentially determines the membership of IUSF at local university level because only the first-year "ragged" students are invited to partake in the activities conducted by the student unions. However, this connection between the political socialization process inspired by leftist ideologies and ragging culture could be considered as a barrier to reaching the fullest potential of the Sri Lankan student movement as it restricts the political engagement of a considerable number of students.

As it was mentioned above, “IUSF is allied politically” (Devapriya, 2022) with Frontline Socialist Party (FSP), which was formed in 2012 by a group of members who split off from JVP. FSP “... has been backing university student unions to find ground as powerful bodies within the university system” (Wickramasinghe, 2020). Thus, the FSP has a stronghold in state universities through IUSF replacing JVP who ruled the student movement in Sri Lanka for many years. Recently, IUSF has given leadership to university students and other civil actors in opposing the detrimental measures taken by recent governments, which aimed to commercialize education without a proper regulatory and quality assurance mechanism. Among those struggles, the fight against the SAITM could be identified as one of the most important milestones because “SAITM has been the centre of many controversies as students from state-run schools and doctors in government services have questioned its educational standards and medical facilities” (Rezwan, 2017).

Also, in 2021, IUSF played a key role in mobilizing state university students against the proposed “General Sir John Kotelawala National Defence University Bill” which posed a threat of militarization of higher education. Namely, “... the new Act excludes the Kotelawala University from the purview of the University Grants Commission (UGC), which is in charge of the administration of State universities in Sri Lanka” (Ariyaratne, 2021). In 2022, student activists also joined forces with mass citizen protests known as “Aragalaya” (meaning “struggle” in Sinhala), demanding the resignation of Sri Lanka’s former President, Gotabaya Rajapakshe. These revolutionary protests primarily targeted the President and his family members who held government positions, often referred to as the Rajapakshes because “he and his family have been blamed for a deep economic crisis, with Sri Lankans facing acute shortages of food, fuel and other basic supplies” (*BBC News*, 2022a). The significant role played by student activists in this critical juncture could be identified as remarkable. Most importantly, it could be observed that for the first time ever in history, these protests have united both state and private university students to a certain extent as they fought for a common cause along with other citizens.

Currently, each state university has a main student union as well as faculty student unions. Faculty student unions consist of students from respective faculties of a university. In comparison with main student unions, it could be observed that some of these faculty student unions are politically neutral as they only focus on faculty-specific student matters and organize student activities within the faculty. However, there are some faculty student unions which are politically active and they join hands with main student unions to politically respond in addressing student issues. Most importantly, there is a Parliament Act which legitimates student representation in state universities in Sri Lanka—Universities Act, No. 16 of 1978. The Act has established the University Grants Commission as the main regulatory body which governs Sri Lankan state universities. Part XIV and the schedule to Section 112 of the Act stipulate specific details regarding the establishment and functioning of university students unions and faculty students unions. The Act also states the duties and functions of the university student unions and faculty student unions.

Even though student activism in Sri Lanka is subjected to heavy criticisms by many parties for their confrontational politics and abusive practices such as “ragging,” the contribution of student activists to protecting the Free Education Policy from continuous challenges and threats is remarkable. In spite of the fact that “the cost of activism includes the incidents of deaths, injuries, custody, arrest, suspension of students; damaging public properties, and closure of universities”

(Kumari and Fernando, 2021, p. 86), student activists from state universities are inspired and politically socialized to fully commit to their cause even with their lives. Thus, the story of student activism in Sri Lanka, written with blood and tears, could be summed up in this famous quote by Rohana Wijeweera, the JVP leader who led the 1971 and 1988–9 youth uprisings: “We may be killed but our voice will never die” (1973, cited in Jeyaraj, 2014).

Student Representation at State Universities in Sri Lanka— Findings from a LOC-SIHEG Survey

With the aim of gathering primary data from the student unions at local (institutional) level, LOC-SIHEG 2021_Sri Lanka was shared with student leaders in Sri Lankan state universities. One representative from each student union filled the survey and the total number of five state university student unions who responded to the survey, which is more than 25 percent of the total number of state universities in Sri Lanka. Other private and state higher education institutions were not considered for the data collection as student activism in Sri Lanka is mainly spread across state universities. All the student leaders who filled the survey were registered undergraduates and held the office of “President” in their respective student union. Eighty percent of them were following a bachelor’s degree and in the ages between eighteen and twenty-four years. It should be also noted that the same percentage of respondents had answered the survey without the involvement of any other student officials.

Out of the five student unions which took part in the LOC-SIHEG 2021 survey, only one student union mentioned that they are not connected to the national-level student movement. All other student unions declared that they are part of the IUSF. These data indicate that Sri Lanka has a neo-corporative model of student activism with one central student body connecting other local student unions which are legitimate entities within their respective universities. According to the main Parliament Act on state universities, “the University Students Union of each Higher Educational Institution shall be representative of the entire student community of the Institution” (Schedule—Universities Act, No. 16 of 1978). Also, it was found that every student union has an office in a building given by their education institution for free.

In examining the membership of student unions, it was found that the student union membership does not comprise the total student population. According to four student unions, being a union member is voluntary whereas one student union mentioned that membership is automatically given to students when they are enrolled as students of that particular state university. Also, each student union had at least more than 70 percent of membership cadre out of their total student population. These numbers divulge the fact that there is a considerable portion of the student population who are not members of local student unions. These students could be mainly identified as anti-ragging groups in state universities.

Membership fees and revenue from student-led projects were the main source of income for the local student unions. Grants from the government and their universities were mentioned along with “street fundraising” which is famously known as “keta” (it is the Sinhalese word for tills). It is the prevailing state university subculture in which the first-year students are sent to the streets with tills. They have to reach out to the general public on streets and public transport, asking

for small donations to fill their tills. It was also found that there are some occasions where local student unions are getting funds from IUSF to organize campaigns. It is important to note that none of these student unions owned any businesses. Thus, it can be clearly seen that student unions have to regularly depend on external funding or generate revenue via street funding. So, it is not surprising to see why any of these local student unions had not paid employees. However, 80 percent of the student unions said that they have an independent student-led media unit/newspaper/radio channel/TV channel. It could be also observed that many of these student unions were using social media as well, in particular, Facebook. This could be identified as a strength as it enables them to reach out to a large number of students with minimum effort.

Sixty percent of the student unions were electing their leaders whereas others were appointing them. There was no uniform mechanism of selecting leaders which was common to all local student unions. Examining the background of candidates for these leadership positions, 40 percent of the respondents denied that there was a hesitation among the students who were coming from low economic backgrounds, to run for positions in student unions. However, the same percentage of student leaders accepted that it is true to a certain extent. Even though one student union said that there was 80 percent of voter turnout, according to 40 percent of the respondents, there was a decrease in the voter turnout in student union elections. Also, it could be noted that most of the student unions did not have adequate data to analyze the patterns of voter turnout even though they had responded to above questions. Most importantly, despite the method of selection, all these leadership positions are voluntary. Also, it was found that there is no criterion to ensure the diversity of representatives taking these positions. So, it was not surprising why all the student leaders who responded to the survey were males. In a country which has a very low female political representation in Parliament, the arena of student politics could be seen as an untapped potential to politically socialize female students. However, the gathered data indicates that there was no proper mechanism within student unions to do it.

The common perception about university student unions is that they are closely connected to the leftist parties, in particular Frontline Socialist Party (FSP). However, the data also revealed a growing disconnection between the university student unions and FSP even though IUSF is still under the direct influence of FSP. Sixty percent of the respondents said that they do not have a close connection with one political party. One student leader mentioned that even though student unions do not have direct connections with the political parties, whenever it is necessary they discuss issues regarding students and society with them. Only one student union accepted that they have close connections with one political party. Nevertheless, the revealed disconnection between local student unions and political parties could be identified as a major turn in Sri Lankan student activism.

Also, 60 percent of the local student unions who took part in the survey mentioned that their professional and political agenda is independently decided without any influence from external parties. Having 40 percent of the student unions who did not either disagree with above or had a neutral opinion indicate that the professional and political agenda of local student unions seems to be still influenced by external parties to a certain extent. Eighty percent of the respondents said that they have no connections with multiple political parties. It shows the limited exposure of these student activists to different political ideologies because currently, IUSF is strongly influenced only by the leftist ideologies of FSP. However, all the student unions agreed that they have the sole discretion on internal structures and decision-making of their organizations. Having

their own bank account also implies financial independence to a certain extent even though IUSF provides financial support to local student unions for some campaigns. In terms of the connection between the student unions and trade unions, 40 percent of the student respondents said they have close connections whilst the same percentage of respondents disagreed. Thus, it shows that the connection between the local student unions and trade unions is not the same for all state universities.

Examining their political agenda for the year 2021, it could be noted that all local student unions had more or less similar issues, ranging from internal matters such as administration and student welfare, to cases with national-level importance such as privatization of higher education (e.g., proposed bill on Kotalawala Defense University). Student welfare issues were mostly about hostel facilities, university cafeterias, and Mahapola bursary (a monthly stipend given by the government to the students from low-income families). The importance given to these issues regarding facilities provided by the university for free or reduced price indicates how state university students consider these facilities as an entitlement. Prof. Sudantha Liyanage also mentioned that the dependent mentality of state university students has caused many issues even though “Free Education Policy” was a progressive measure which allowed many students to pursue their dreams regardless of the economic background of their families. He further mentioned that the current system needs some timely changes including educational reforms which could save the time of students by making sure that students graduate on time or take necessary actions for early graduation, while empowering them to stand from their own feet to conquer the world of work (S. Liyanage, personal communication, February 1, 2022).

Given that the in-person lectures at education institutions were disrupted due to Covid-19 pandemic, student unions had also demanded to reopen the universities with adequate Covid safety measures. One of their major demands from the government in the year 2021 was to solve the 2019 Advanced level Z score issue without delaying the university admissions. This issue was specific to that particular year as the government had failed to finalize the university admissions in time. Thus, the Z score issue and Covid-19 safety measures could be considered as exceptions which may not be repeated in their agendas like other common issues such as resistance toward student activism. Most importantly, 60 percent of the student unions said that they had large-scale protests in their universities during the previous year in response to above-mentioned issues. It shows that their political responses in the year 2021 were majorly based on contentious politics. However, all the student unions mentioned that usually, they use representation in the internal administration to politically respond in addition to contentious activities such as street protests, parades, and picketing. So, it could be seen as a progressive trend because student activism in Sri Lanka is mostly known for massive street protests which cause inconvenience to the general public.

75 percent of the participants mentioned that information on student representation in administration is available in institutional documents such as university constitution. However, all state universities do not follow the same method when it comes to student representation in internal administration structures. In some universities, there was a dedicated seat for a student representative with voting rights. Some universities were inviting students to the meetings in special circumstances in order to obtain specific information. Also, in some cases, there was a student representation for the board meetings of the institution. However, one respondent said

that neither they have a dedicated seat for student representatives nor they are regularly invited for the meetings. Thus, it could be implied that there is no uniform standard “in practice” for student representation in internal administration structures of universities. External administration structures did not have a student representation at all so that they were more disconnected with the student community.

According to 40 percent of the participants, student representatives were involved in their institutions’ committees, task forces, and working groups on education. These student representatives had voting power too. Another 40 percent said that they were involved as specialist consultants without voting powers. Also, 75 percent of the participants mentioned that students are involved as expert consultants without voting powers in committees, task forces, and working groups on quality assurance as well as in student welfare and external activities. Only one student union claimed that they were not involved in any of the above committees. Thus, it is evident that there is a necessity of increasing student representation in these specific committees as they allow student representatives to meaningfully contribute to the decision-making process within institutions. However, it could be identified that university departments have been more progressive and consistent in promoting student representation in the decision-making process because 80 percent of student unions mentioned that student representatives were taking part in department meetings or academic meetings regularly or sometimes. The main reason could be the provisions in the Universities Act, No. 16 of 1978 which stipulated a uniform standard for student representation in university faculties. According to the Universities Act (1978), every faculty of a university shall have a faculty board which consists of “two students elected by the students of the Faculty from among their number.”

Most importantly, according to 40 percent of the participants, it was possible for them to meet the highest position holders of the institution. The same number of participants said that they could informally meet them once in a while if any specific requirement emerges. These meetings could be initiated either by the students or administration. Student leaders having access to higher administration is an advantage because it could help to maintain a good rapport between the above two parties. However, Dr. Chandra Embuldeniya had a different opinion on this (C. Embuldeniya, personal communication, January 22, 2022). According to him, some vice-chancellors try to maintain a good rapport with student leaders in order to avoid or minimize student resistance toward administration. He further mentioned that the cost of this relationship makes higher administration to turn a blind eye to the ragging incidents or any other disciplinary breaches which are reported within their universities. According to Ranawana (2020), there were instances where some universities could nearly eliminate ragging due to the bold action taken by the vice-chancellors and rectors who personally took an extra risk.

The survey data revealed that student representatives have a close connection with all administrative officers including Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor. According to 80 percent of the participants, the institutional administration and student representatives had mutual trust and understanding to a certain extent. Sixty percent of the respondents agreed to a certain extent that institutional heads and administration take an authoritarian approach toward students despite the mutual understanding which was mentioned above. Considering these data, it could be implied that the relationship between the higher administration of state universities and student unions is a special connection which influences the direction of student activism as well as the institutional decision-making process of state universities.

Further examining the impact of student activism on higher education institutions, a progressive trend could be observed as 60 percent of the student unions said that the power of student representatives to influence the decisions of their institutions has been increased during the last five years. However, one concern raised by a participant is the declining ability of student representatives to effectively mobilize students, as student unions face significant resistance and violations from the authorities. This could be a growing concern for the student unions on top of the considerable portion of students who avoid student politics in state higher education institutions due to “ragging.” Also, moving academic activities to online platforms during the Covid-19 pandemic severely affected student activism, because it restricted student unions from mobilizing new students and their existing members through in person activities including “ragging.”

It could be found that usually, there are no part time or hourly basis jobs for the students within the higher education institutions in Sri Lanka. Forty percent of the respondents mentioned that undergraduates get such job opportunities on very rare occasions. According to them, half of those limited opportunities are library-related jobs. Information technology-related jobs and course assistant positions amount to the other half. As per survey results, all the student leaders had a moderate opinion regarding the convenience of finding information about such job opportunities. Eighty percent of them had a moderate opinion regarding the transparency of the selection process for those available student jobs. It could be assumed that lack of information regarding student jobs could cause doubts among students regarding the transparency of the selection process. However, it was interesting to note how all the respondents disagreed that only students who are having economic difficulties apply for these student jobs. Thus, it could be assumed that the students who come from privileged backgrounds have an advantage in securing these limited student jobs as many of them are not restricted by the English language barrier.

Sixty percent of the student leaders said that there are plenty of volunteering opportunities for students within their institutions, whereas the rest of them mentioned that they have volunteering opportunities to a certain extent. It was found that all the state universities provide volunteering opportunities to students, such as poster campaigns, organizing events, and cleaning campaigns. Also, it must be noted that most of the state universities in Sri Lanka have volunteer youth movements such as AIESEC, Leo, and Rotaract. These youth movements connect their members with students from other state and private universities as well as with other youth groups. It could also be observed that the majority of students who are taking part in these movements are anti-raggers because such opportunities allow them to create their own social space and engage in student activities without being a part of main student unions.

Only 40 percent of the participants said that their universities have a separate office to coordinate student-led activities. One student leader revealed how student-led activities are independently carried out without any support of their institution. Sixty percent of the student leaders said that their student movement supports and manages the student-led activities within the institution. This shows how student unions take ownership in creating social experience for the students. In terms of addressing student grievances, 80 percent of the participants said that their universities have a unit where students can present their grievances to. Only one respondent said otherwise. Student counselors were also mentioned as an option which students could utilize to inform their grievances to the institution. Though the above facilities were provided by the universities, only 40 percent of the student leaders could find consumer rights which students are

entitled to, in their institution's website. Same percentage of respondents were not even aware of such rights. Also, 60 percent of the respondents said that they are unaware whether their institution's website or any publications refer to students as service users or customers. Only one student leader said that their institution refers to students as "service users." Thus, it shows that institutional administration and relevant authorities have not taken adequate measures in order to make students aware of their consumer rights while referring to them as service users or customers of higher education.

Looking at the academic experience from student leaders' perspective, 80 percent of them fully or partially agreed that students are encouraged to get involved in discussions. According to the same percentage of student leaders, it is partially true that students have a choice to a certain extent with regards to the assessment process. Nobody said that it is impossible to challenge the learning content but 60 percent of them agreed it is true to a certain extent that teachers take an authoritarian approach in teaching. Thus, it is important to further examine the nature of student-teacher relationship within this context where students challenge university lecturers who take an authoritarian approach in teaching.

The survey data revealed that all the student leaders were extremely unhappy with the prevailing situation of the country. Also, 60 percent of them said that the intervention by the education institutions is extremely negative or negative to a certain extent in addressing such situations. Thus, it is not surprising why all the participants agreed that the higher education sector is moving in the wrong direction. The survey data indicated that the higher education sector needs to intervene in nation building with more authority. So, it is important to find the right directions for the higher education sector which could unleash its untapped potential. Most importantly, 80 percent of the participants said that students could largely change the direction of higher education in Sri Lanka, whereas one participant said that they can completely change it. However, 80 percent of these student leaders completely or partially agreed that street protests were the only way of making an influence on the national policies and laws on higher education regardless of their belief in the usefulness of student representation in internal administration to influence decision-making for the betterment of students. Also, it should be noted that only 40 percent of the participants agreed to a certain extent that government officials treat student representatives with respect. This could be also identified as a reason why they have more faith in taking their cause to the streets. Examining the recent student-led campaigns to influence national policies on higher education, it could be noted that massive street protests gained some wins for them though such demonstrations are inconvenient for the general public due to the heavy traffic caused by them.

Even though the political will is important to strengthen the higher education sector, current Sri Lankan context would not allow it to bring it up as an important issue. Eighty percent of the participants also mentioned that higher education-related matters were discussed in last elections to a certain extent but it was not a prioritized matter. Only 40 percent of the participants partially believed that if a political party needs to win an election, they cannot ignore the demands of the students. However, 60 percent of the respondents fully or partially believed that a political party could still win an election even if they disregard the student demands. Thus, it could be implied that political parties are not pressurized enough to consider the higher education sector as a priority when they prepare their political agenda. If student activists could create a strong public demand on this matter during the election periods, it would also make it easier for student unions

to reach out to political authorities, regarding the issues faced by students. Politicians would consider them serious if student demands are backed by the general public.

According to 60 percent of the participants, students in higher education are considered as adults. The rest of them believed that they are still considered as children. Also, 60 percent of these student leaders believed that they are seen as change agents in society. So, they also symbolically called themselves “a flame.” This data makes a strong case for the reasons behind the disconnection between the government authorities and student leaders because student leaders consider themselves as adults and change agents though other government authorities may not have the same view. One participant accepted that they are seen as troublemakers in society. Sixty percent of the participants partially or fully agreed that there is a risk in becoming a student activist in Sri Lanka. Considering the number of student leaders who were killed throughout history, their view on the risk involved in student activism is justifiable. However, it should also be noted that 40 percent of them had a neutral opinion about it.

Considering LOC-SIHEG 2021_Sri Lanka survey results, it should be noted that there are many areas to be developed in order to amplify the student impact on the higher education sector in Sri Lanka. The data indicates that necessary action should be taken by both institutional administration and government authorities. Such action should be accelerated and amplified with strong advocacy campaigns run by student activists. It is also evident that Sri Lankan student activism itself needs some modifications to overcome the challenges which hinder its progress despite their significant gains from confrontational politics though it has always been in the face of public criticism.

Conclusion

Student activism in Sri Lanka has a short history in comparison with other South Asian countries. However, student activists have been able to firmly establish their position in the political and social discourse in Sri Lanka. The notable role played by students in important historical events such as 1971 and 1988/9 youth uprisings as well as in the thirty years’ war and citizens’ protests to oust the President of the country in 2022 (famously known as “*Aragalaya*” which means “the struggle”) could be highlighted in this regard. Most importantly, the continuous struggle to preserve the “Free Education Policy” has been fueling student activism in Sri Lanka while making it the breeding ground for many student activists from state universities.

Throughout history, it could be clearly observed that one after another, the student movement in Sri Lanka has been heavily influenced by two leftist political parties, namely JVP and FSP. The fact that the majority of the local student unions did not acknowledge that they are connected with a political party indicates how influence by FSP on student movement takes a top-bottom approach rather than developing a strong ideological base at the local university level. Also, having the discretion on decision-making regarding the internal structures indicates that local student unions are not completely restricted from giving a new shape to their organizations as well as student activism in Sri Lanka.

Firstly, student unions in state universities need to strengthen their internal democracy. Holding elections to elect leadership positions would allow more students to democratically engage in

the decision-making process through their elected student representatives. Also, introducing a criteria to ensure diversity in leadership positions could take student activism in Sri Lanka to the next level. Most importantly, if the student unions could actively empower more female student leaders, that would ultimately contribute to filling the vacuum of female political representation in the country. Given that Sri Lanka is a country which needs to do more on peace-building and reconciliation after the end of thirty years of armed conflict, proposed diversity criteria for leadership positions should also take ethnic composition in state universities into consideration to make student unions more inclusive.

Secondly, it is very important for student unions to figure out innovative ways to politically socialize and mobilize their youngsters because the act of “ragging” has tarnished the reputation of student activism in Sri Lanka to a greater extent. The authorities and higher education institutions must be proactive and impartial in taking legal action against the perpetrators of “ragging.” Student activists must create a safe and welcoming environment for all students regardless of their socioeconomic backgrounds. The involvement of such a diverse student community will ultimately strengthen the student movement in Sri Lanka. It will also increase the quality of political response from the student unions in addressing important issues in the country as well as in the higher education sector.

Even though the survey data showed that student unions could influence the decisions within their universities, it is evident that student activists need to take an alternative approach when it comes to the national-level policymaking on higher education. This is due to the lack of attention given by the politicians who do not consider the higher education sector as a priority even though they briefly talk about it in their election campaigns. So, it is necessary to pressurize political parties to include the higher education sector in their election manifestos as a prioritized matter. If student unions could mobilize the university students as one voting bloc during the elections, politicians will take them seriously because their main concern is on the number of votes they get. Even after the election, student unions need to hold them accountable for what they promise to deliver. Student unions could look into the possibilities of amplifying their current usage of social media networks in order to gain more visibility to their campaigns and get the support from the general public. Student unions could also use legal tools such as “Right to Information Act, No 12 of 2016” which allows them to obtain necessary information from government authorities as it will help them to lead campaigns with data-driven decision-making. So, it is time to rethink the practicality of contentious student politics in an era where we could find more alternative ways to effectively and meaningfully advocate for positive change.

The dependent mentality of the majority of students from state universities could be identified as an issue which needs to be addressed with caution because state university students heavily relied on the government during their studentship as well as job-seeking period once they are done with their academic programs. It is important to change this mentality to allow the university student community to meaningfully contribute to the higher education sector as well as the development process of the country. The student unions were also relying on public donations and government funding. In order to get rid of this dependent mentality, student unions could set an example by starting to run business ventures so that they do not have to send first-year students to the streets to collect funds from the general public. Bringing in such an entrepreneurial mindset would completely change the narrative of student activism in Sri Lanka. They could also use such entrepreneurship schemes as an alternative for the act of “ragging,” to politically socialize

new students. Such programs will equip new students with employability skills which could be immensely useful when they enter the world of work.

This study emphasizes the importance of government authorities taking a holistic approach toward the higher education sector. Introducing national policies which could empower students while strengthening the institutional frameworks is a necessity. Such institutional frameworks should promote students as service users of the higher education sector who are entitled to strong consumer rights. Also, student representation should be increased in specific committees, task forces, and working groups which operate within state universities. However, such student representation should not amount to tokenization. So, it is important to give them voting power and get their direct involvement in these committees. Also, if state universities could create more student jobs within institutions, it would allow students to cover their expenses without solely depending on government bursary. This measure will also help them to get rid of the heavy-dependent mentality.

In conclusion, Sri Lankan student activism is now at a critical juncture where it needs a total transformation. Introducing a new model of student activism could be the solution to many problems in the higher education sector as well as in the sphere of student politics. Such model should be non-partisan so that student leaders could advocate for necessary policy changes without any political party biases. Student unions should also be developed as self-sustaining entities who could champion entrepreneurship, innovation, and sustainability. Most importantly, student activists need to get rid of the abusive subculture of “ragging” and transform that energy into something meaningful. Also, the proposed model should reflect the strengths and values of the diverse student community while getting rid of traditional patriarchal practices. It is crucial for student activists to figure out more effective and meaningful ways to politically respond in addressing important matters for the student community. Being creative would allow student activists to detach the proposed model from traditional confrontational approaches and innovate more powerful and effective strategies for advocacy and lobbying. The author believes that all young people in Sri Lanka should be given equitable opportunities to pursue their higher education in an environment where the quality of education is assured through strong regulations and periodic reviews. Thus, student activists may need to set aside their traditional slogans built around the goal of “preserving free education policy” and come up with new slogans on higher education such as “create equitable opportunities for everyone while ensuring the quality of education without leaving anyone behind.”

Acknowledgment

This endeavor would not have been possible without the guidance and support of Dr. Manja Klemenčič and Dr. Maisha Reza. The author would also like to acknowledge the support from Dr. Chandra Embuldeniya, Prof. Sudantha Liyanage, Malinda Senevirathne, and all the Sri Lankan student leaders who actively participated in the survey. The author expresses his deepest gratitude to Ioana Staicu and Bandini Jayasena who reviewed the drafts while repeatedly offering unwavering encouragement and support. The author is also thankful to Dinuli Francisco, Viduri Sulakkhana, and Anuradha Vidanage for their assistance during the data collection phase. Last

but not least, the author extends heartfelt appreciation to his loving father, W. Wijerathne, and his loving mother, Ashoka Dissanayake, for their constant moral support.

References

- Alawattagama, K.K. (2020). Free education policy and its emerging challenges in Sri Lanka. *European Journal of Educational Sciences* 7(1) (March 2020 edition): 1–14. DOI: 10.19044/ejes.v7no1a1
- Altbach, P.G. (1984). Student politics in the third world. *Higher Education* 13(6) (December, 1984): 635–55. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3446867>
- Amarasingam, A. (2013). *Pain, Pride, and Politics: Social Movement Activism and the Sri Lankan Tamil Diaspora in Canada*. [online] JSTOR. University of Georgia Press. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt183q481> (accessed September 12, 2023).
- Amnesty International (2023). *Sri Lanka: End Arbitrary Detention of Student Activist* [PDF]. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa37/6353/2023/en/> (accessed May 30, 2023).
- Ariyaratne, K. (2021). Killing free education with the Kotelawala national defence university bill. *Groundviews*. <https://groundviews.org/2021/07/16/killing-free-education-with-the-kotelawala-national-defence-university-bill/> (accessed September 7, 2021).
- BBC News (2022a). Sri Lanka seeks way forward after president quits. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-62176758> (accessed August 25, 2022).
- BBC News (2022b). Sri Lanka: Tear gas and water cannon used in Kandy. <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-asia-60977417> (accessed August 25, 2022).
- Bender, G.J. (1967). Political socialization and political change. *The Western Political Quarterly* 20(2): 390–407, Part 1 (June, 1967) <https://doi.org/10.2307/445412>
- Colombo Telegraph (2012). Sri Lanka: The politics of the frontline socialist party—Interview with Premakumar Gunaratnam. *Colombo Telegraph*. August 8. <https://www.colombotelegraph.com/index.php/sri-lanka-the-politics-of-the-frontline-socialist-party-interview-with-premakumar-gunaratnam/> (accessed August 06, 2021).
- Daily Mirror (2016). 63rd Anniversary of Hartal August 12, 1953 Hartal! ‘Shoot on sight’ Reds re-claiming rice rations. <https://www.dailymirror.lk/114018/-rd-anniversary-of-hartal-august-hartal-shoot-on-sight-reds-re-claiming-rice-rations-> (accessed August 5, 2021).
- Daily Mirror (2022). IUSF protest march tear-gassed. https://www.dailymirror.lk/latest_news/IUSF-protest-march-tear-gassed/342-240629 (accessed August 25, 2022).
- Devapriya, U. (2022). A constructive critique of the IUSF. *Ceylon Today*, July 21. <https://ceylontoday.lk/2022/07/21/a-constructive-critique-of-the-iusf/> (accessed August 25, 2022).
- Doss, M. (2017). The protesting student & what he may have to say. <https://www.colombotelegraph.com/index.php/the-protesting-student-what-he-may-have-to-say/> (accessed August 25, 2022).
- Embaldeniya, C. (2022). *Student Impact on Higher Education Globally(SIHEG)—Student Politics in Sri Lanka* [Interview], Via Zoom technology with Dulanjana, W.S., January 22, 2022.
- Farzan, Z. (2023). Wasantha Mudalige released from PTA case, but will return to remand custody. *News 1st*. January 31, 2023. <https://english.newsfirst.lk/2023/1/31/wasantha-mudalige-released-from-pta-case-but-will-return-to-remand-custody> (accessed May 30, 2023).
- Francisco, D. (2022). Election only after a new Constitution—IUSF Interview with IUSF Convener Wasantha Mudalige. *Daily Mirror*, July 28. <https://www.dailymirror.lk/hard-talk/Election-only-after-a-new-Constitution-IUSF/334-24192> (accessed August 25, 2022).
- Haviland, C. (2012). Sri Lanka show tackles ‘horror’ of new student rituals. *BBC News*, October 28. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-20097878> (accessed August 25, 2022).
- Hewage, T. (2020). ‘Event, archive, mediation: Sri Lanka’s 1971 insurrection and the political stakes of fieldwork. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 62(1): 186–217. DOI: 10.1017/S0010417519000458

- Hulangamuwa, H.M.T.Y.K., Lowchiong, S.R. and Dharmakirti, S.K. (2021). A study on the laws related to ragging in universities in Sri Lanka. *Colombo Telegraph*. 1 April. <https://www.colombotelegraph.com/index.php/a-study-on-the-laws-related-to-ragging-in-universities-in-sri-lanka/> (accessed August 5, 2021).
- Jeyaraj, D.B.S. (2014). JVP Leader and Revolutionary Rohana Wijeweera's demise 25 years ago. *Daily Mirror*, November, 14. <https://www.dailymirror.lk/opinion/jvp-leader-and-revolutionary-rohana-wijeweera-s-demise-25-years-ago/172-56565> (accessed August 24, 2022).
- Klemenčič, M. (2014). Student power in a global perspective and contemporary trends in student organising. *Studies in Higher Education* 39(3): 396–411.
- Klemenčič, M. (2024a). The rise of the student estate. In Alberto Amaral and António Magalhães (eds.), *The Handbook on Autonomy and Governance of Higher Education Institutions*. Chapter 29. Cheltenham: Edgar Elgar Publishing.
- Klemenčič, M. (2024b). A theory of student impact on higher education. In Conner, Jerusha, Raaper, Rille, Guzmán-Valenzuela, Carolina and Gauthier, Launa (eds.), *The Bloomsbury International Handbook of Student Voice in Higher Education*. Chapter 18. London and New York: Bloomsbury Publishers.
- Kumari, D. and Fernando, R.L.S. (2021). Dealing smoothly with student activism: Reflections of activists and administrators in Sri Lankan state university system. *MJSSH Online* 5(3): 85–99. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33306/mjssh/141>
- The Law Students' Union of Sri Lanka (1998). The law students. Union of Sri Lanka- Rules of 1970- As amended in 1991 & 1995'. *Law College Review*, pp. 103–20.
- Little, A.W. (1997). The value of examination success in Sri Lanka 1971–1996: The effects of ethnicity, political patronage and youth insurgency. *Assessment in Education* 4(1): 67–86. DOI: 10.1080/0969594970040105
- Liyanage, I.M.K. (2014). Education system of Sri Lanka: Strengths and weaknesses. In Arai, E. (ed.), *“Post-Civil War Sri Lankan Economy” Research Report Asia*. Chiba: Institute of Developing Economies, pp. 116–40.
- Liyanage, S. (2022). *Student Impact on Higher Education Globally (SIHEG)—Student Politics in Sri Lanka* [Interview], Via Zoom technology with Dulanjana, W.S., February 1, 2022.
- LOC-SIHEG_Sri Lanka (2021). Local student impact on higher education globally survey 2021. Global Student Forum.
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs-Sri Lanka (n.d.). *Free Education Policy in Sri Lanka*. https://mfa.gov.lk/cool_timeline/free-education-policy-in-sri-lanka/ (accessed August 24, 2022).
- People's Liberation Front—JVP Sri Lanka (n.d.). *History of the JVP (1965–1994)*. <https://www.jvpsrilanka.com/english/about-us/history-of-1965-1994/> (accessed August 25, 2022).
- Prohibition of Ragging and Other Forms of Violence in Educational Institutions Act No. 20 of 1998 (1998). <https://med.cmb.ac.lk/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/ragging-act-no.-20-of-1998.pdf> (accessed September 22, 2022).
- Ranawana, K. (2020). Opinion: Onus on University staff to enforce discipline to stop ragging. *EconomyNext*, September 6. <https://economynext.com/opinion-onus-on-university-staff-to-enforce-discipline-to-stop-ragging-73618/> (accessed August 24, 2022).
- Rezwan—Global Voices (2017). Why doctors and students are protesting against Sri Lanka's only private medical college. *Groundviews*, May 21. <https://groundviews.org/2017/05/21/why-doctors-and-students-are-protesting-against-sri-lankas-only-private-medical-college/> (accessed September 7, 2021).
- Sabaratanam, T. (2003). *Pirapaharan: Vol.1, Chap.5 Tamil Youths Turn Assertive*. Pirapaharan: Vol.1, Chap.5 Tamil Youths Turn Assertive—Ilankai Tamil Sangam. <https://sangam.org/pirapaharan-vol-1-chap-5-tamil-youths-turn-assertive/> (accessed September 7, 2021).
- Samaranayake, S. (2015). Changing university student politics in Sri Lanka: From norm oriented to value oriented student movements. *Social Affairs* 1(3): 23–32.
- Senevirathne M. (2002). Reflections on the coming fire. *The Island* (June 23): 11.
- Sri Lanka Law College (2018). *Law Student Union and Societies*. http://www.sllc.ac.lk/sub_pgs/union_societies.html. (accessed September 7, 2021).

- Tharmaseelan, N. (2007). Tertiary education in Sri Lanka: Issues and challenges. *Bulgarian Journal of Science and Education Policy (BJSEP)* 1(1): 173–90. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/44279664>
- Universities Act, No. 16 of 1978 (1978). https://ugc.ac.lk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=49&Itemid=195&lang=en (accessed September 7, 2021).
- Weeramunda, A.J. (2008). Report of the research study on “The Socio Political Impact of Student Violence and Indiscipline in Universities and Tertiary Education Institutes.” National Education Commission Sri Lanka, Study Series No. 5 (2007/8).
- Wickramasinghe, K. (2020). Colombo University incident Escalating trend towards youth violence. *Daily Mirror*, January 16. <https://www.dailymirror.lk/news-features/Colombo-University-incident-Escalating-trend-towards-youth-violence/131-181292>. (accessed August 5, 2021).
- Wickramasinghe, V. (2018). Higher education in state universities in Sri Lanka—review of higher education since colonial past through international funding for development. *International Journal of Educational Management* 32(3): 463–78. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEM-01-2017-0028>
- Wijesiriwardena, P. (2011). Sri Lankan government undermines public education. *World Socialist Web Site*. February 16. <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2011/02/sled-f16.html>. (accessed August 25, 2022).
- Wimalasuriya, D. (2012). Brutal ragging in the Sri Lankan universities: Video evidence. *Colombo Telegraph*, June 9. <https://www.colombotelegraph.com/index.php/brutal-ragging-in-the-sri-lankan-universities-video-evidence/> (accessed August 5, 2021).

Part D

Student Politics and Representation in the Caribbean, Latin America, and North America

The Construction of a Political Actor in a Post-Dictatorship and Neoliberal Context: Persistence, Success, and Challenges of the Chilean Student Movement (1990–2020)

Cristián Bellei and Cristóbal Villalobos

Introduction

This chapter analyzes the trajectory of the university student movement in post-dictatorial Chile (1990–2020), focusing on its main milestones, demands, and tactics.¹ We relate this movement with the main features of Chilean education, characterized by the development and consolidation of a market-oriented educational system, with extreme privatization, high levels of socioeconomic-based inequity, and massive student debts. As we will argue, the student movement has been remarkably successful in both obtaining social support and affecting the educational policy agenda.

Specifically, four main aspects of the student movement are highlighted and empirically analyzed using longitudinal data: (i) the cyclical but increasingly massive student protests; (ii) the tendency to increasingly push demands that seek structural changes in education; (iii) the increasingly diversified use of protest tactics, including rallies, performances, and building occupying; and (iv) the evolution of the student organization, and the capacity for adaptation and institutionalization of the main student leaders, including entering in the political arena.

Based on this analysis and a review of the specialized literature on this topic, our general thesis is that the Chilean university student movement can be considered a hybrid case of a social movement organization and an interest group (Klemenčič, 2012), which mixes with different intensities an extensive support network and a hierarchically coordination based on the *Confederación de Estudiantes de Chile*, CONFECH (Confederation of Students of Chile); a broader political agenda combined with a strong critique to educational policies; and a mode of action that includes, with different intensities, massive protests and boycotts, and lobby and political representation. This hybridism could explain the most outstanding feature of this case: the high efficacy for questioning the educational system and, at the same time, triggering a broad process of change of the neoliberal Chilean society.

After this brief introduction, the chapter is organized as follows. We, first, describe Chilean higher education as a market-oriented system shaped by a rapid and socially segmented massification process; then, we present our original longitudinal data on student protests,

covering the thirty years after the Chilean dictatorship ended in 1990; third, we analyze the development of the student organizations that have led the movement; fourth, we describe the consequences and effects of the student movement to argue that it has been a highly effective and influential movement, not only in the field of education but in the Chilean society as a whole. Finally, we conclude proposing three hypotheses that relate politics, society, and the university movement, highlighting the interplay between the neoliberal society, the generational change, and the accelerated politicization of the new social movements in contemporary societies.

Higher Education in Chile: Market and Segmented Massification

Chilean education has been characterized as a market-driven system and, in this sense, is considered a paradigmatic case in the world (Bellei, 2015; Treviño, Mintrop, Villalobos and Órdenes, 2018). This institutional feature is core to understanding its main characteristics, recent evolution, and conflicts, especially the student movement of the last decades. The origin of this institutional arrangement is found in a deep reform inspired by neoliberal ideas applied to the economy and social services as a whole in Chile during the 1980s (Gárate, 2012). In education, this reform was expressed through the introduction of competitive public funding mechanisms, the promotion of educational privatization, and a substantial decentralization and deregulation of the system. More recently, several instruments of performance-based accountability have been applied, resulting in a hybrid educational policy model (Bellei and Muñoz, 2021; Díaz-Ríos, 2019).

The application of these policies to higher education sector structured a doubly stratified system (Brunner, 2008; Salazar and Leihy, 2013). First, there is institutional stratification. At the apex, universities have greater prestige and institutional complexity; they concentrate research and academic production, extended training of professionals, as well as postgraduate teaching. Then come the professional institutes, exclusively teaching courses of up to four years (thereby excluding high-status professions) and short technical careers. Finally come the technical training centers, which only teach vocational courses lasting a maximum of two years, leading to short degrees. This vertical stratification reproduces a scale of academic prestige that is coupled with a clear socioeconomic differentiation of the student population (Kuzmanic, Valenzuela, Villalobos and Quaresma, 2021). Additionally, Chilean higher education is stratified by superimposing a second principle of socio-academic selection. At the top of this prestige scale are most of the traditional universities (which predate the 1980 reform and have historically educated the country's political, professional, and economic elite) and some relatively recently created private universities focused on the upper social sectors and aspiring to dispute the historical hegemony of the traditional ones, especially with respect to the economic elites (Brunner, 2012; Villalobos, Quaresma and Franetovic, 2020). At an intermediate level, some traditional universities (especially outside the capital city) and several recent private universities educate the professionals who will typically make up the middle class (Leihy and Salazar, 2022). Finally—comprising most of the system—are the institutions imparting mostly technical degrees or shorter professional courses, as well as the mass private universities that are focused on lower-middle and lower social segments (Labraña and Vanderstraeten, 2020; Quaresma, Villalobos and Torres-Cortés, 2022).

This doubly stratified character of Chilean higher education determines the type of educational experience to which young people have access (Canales, Guajardo and Orellana, 2020; Orellana, Guzmán, Bellei, Gareca and Torres, 2017). Thus, a socio-academic elite group is educated in a small set of highly selective institutions/professions and experiences their education in a highly segregated manner. Despite the vast expansion experienced by Chilean higher education in the past two decades, these institutions have remained closed, persisting as springboards for occupying privileged positions in the future (Quaresma and Villalobos, 2022; Zimmerman, 2019). More generally, traditional universities (both the elite and intermediate levels) have not expanded significantly because the design of market policies has not favored them (Brunner, 2015; Salazar and Rifo, 2020). Thus, the massification of higher education has been led by the recently created nonselective private universities and nonuniversity educational centers, which are also less academically selective.

Indeed, this is the second characteristic feature of higher education in Chile: its high level of privatization. Private universities account for 83 percent of Chilean students graduating with Bachelor or equivalent degrees (also, practically 100 percent of nonuniversity post-secondary education students attend private institutions); in other words, public institutions only represent 17 percent of Chilean Bachelor or equivalent graduates, being the most privatized educational system in the OECD (OECD, 2021). Moreover, an important number of the private institutions that concentrate enrollment growth have been identified as for-profit institutions (even though many of them are formally nonprofit), which have applied aggressive business models to Chilean higher education, even involving some large international companies (Bellei, Cabalín and Orellana, 2014).

Privatization has also been expressed in the financing of higher education in Chile. Within the framework of self-financing policies that pressured institutions into securing their own resources, traditional institutions of higher education, both public and private, expanded the sale of their services and established high fees for their students (Salazar and Leihy, 2013). Although there have been some scholarship programs, the vast majority of students who do not have the money to pay have had to take out loans, a policy that—with state backing—massively increased indebtedness to private banks, especially since 2005.² All this means that the economic burden of the expansion of higher education in Chile has mainly been assumed by families and students. In fact, by 2012, only 22 percent of the financing of this level in Chile was public, a proportion notably lower than the OECD average of 69 percent (OECD, 2013). Moreover, given the market deregulation and dynamics that have prevailed, higher education in Chile is pricey, one of the most expensive in the OECD relative to family incomes. Only recently has this changed, mainly through the policy of free education, which has allowed students of the lowest 60 percent income in the country to enter universities with higher levels of accreditation, free of charge (Delisle and Bernasconi, 2018). Thus, between 2015 and 2018 Chile increased public spending in tertiary education by about 46 percent in real terms, the largest increase among OECD countries; as a result, by 2018, 41 percent of the spending on tertiary education was public in Chile (correspondingly, private spending accounted for 59 percent of the national spending in tertiary education in Chile, almost double compared to the OECD average of 30 percent) (OECD, 2021). As is explained further ahead, this law was promoted precisely as a response to student demands.

Therefore, the middle and lower social sectors that have only recently gained access to higher education have done so in a very different system from that of the previous generation: massified,

strongly stratified, highly differentiated, privatized and with high fees that they or their families have had to pay. The low quality of many higher education institutions, together with the inadequate preparation received by many of their new students in school (in an inequitable, segregated, and low-quality primary and secondary school system) and the aforementioned massification, has meant that, for many new professionals, their entry to the labor market and the salary returns obtained have not met expectations (Canales, Guajardo and Orellana, 2020). This has certainly aggravated the phenomenon of youth indebtedness, especially for the high proportion of higher education dropouts (Pérez-Roa and Ayala, 2019). Although some quality assurance and performance-based accountability policies have been applied in higher education, the fact is that the workplace relevance of many training programs has been sharply questioned (Meller, 2010; Rodríguez, Urzúa and Reyes, 2016).

All these processes have strongly reconfigured the Chilean higher education system, which is experienced by students as an inequitable system that does not promote public education and turns social mobility into an illusion. This perception has been the basis of student protest in recent decades, in the demands of student organizations and in some of the recent public policies that have attempted to respond to their demands, as we discuss in the rest of this chapter.

Student Mobilization in Post-Dictatorship Chile

An additional feature of the Chilean educational system in recent decades has been its high level of conflict. In particular, student organizations have led remarkably persistent and—at times—mass mobilization processes. Although their demands have varied over time, it is possible to affirm that there has been a historical continuity in terms of their challenge to the central characteristics of the institutional market framework we have described.

From an empirical study based on the identification of protest events (Villalobos and Ortiz-Inostroza, 2019), we have constructed the longest and most complete series of university student protest events existing in Chile in the post-dictatorship (1990–2019). According to these estimates, in the period studied there were 908 protest events with the participation of university students (out of a total of 1,764 protest events in the educational field, also including teachers and high school students). Thus, on average, university students have organized and participated in thirty protests per year. As shown in Figure 19.1, although there have been variations in concentration, the tremendous persistence of university protests throughout the three decades under study is particularly of note: university protests take place in Chile almost every year and, with a few exceptions, exceed fifteen events per year, reaching more than fifty protests in the most active years (2000 and 2011). It is important to note that many of these protests were at a national scale (13.7 percent of the total for the period)—a trend that became more acute over time, representing 19.5 percent of the protests over the past decade.

The process of Chile's transition to democracy that began in 1990, within the framework of a democracy restricted by legal and institutional legacies of the dictatorship, signified the maintenance and consolidation of neoliberal-inspired institutional reforms in education. Moreover, these reforms were consolidated and extended in several aspects due to the progressive democratic governments' pervasive confidence in the market for regulating and dynamizing the educational

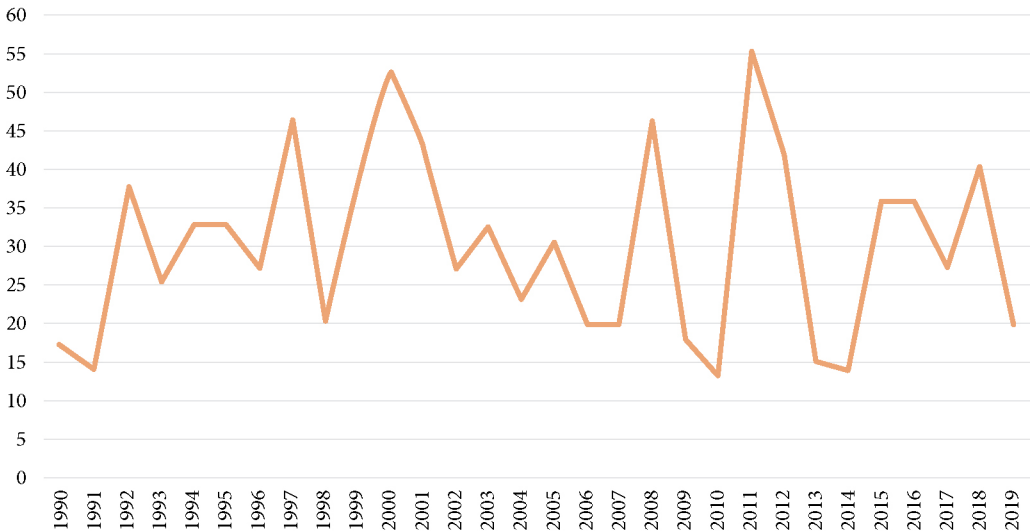


Figure 19.1 Number of university protests by year, 1990–2019.

Source: Prepared by the authors.

field (Villalobos, 2016). Although some protests took place during the 1990s, the hegemony of market-oriented educational policies began to be confronted more aggressively by the secondary and university student movements, particularly from the early 2000s (Thielemann, 2016). This was reflected in a growing increase in the massification of university protests, especially in the 2010s. As shown in Figure 19.2, in the past decade, university student mobilizations reached much higher participation levels than in previous decades. In 2006 and noticeably after 2010,

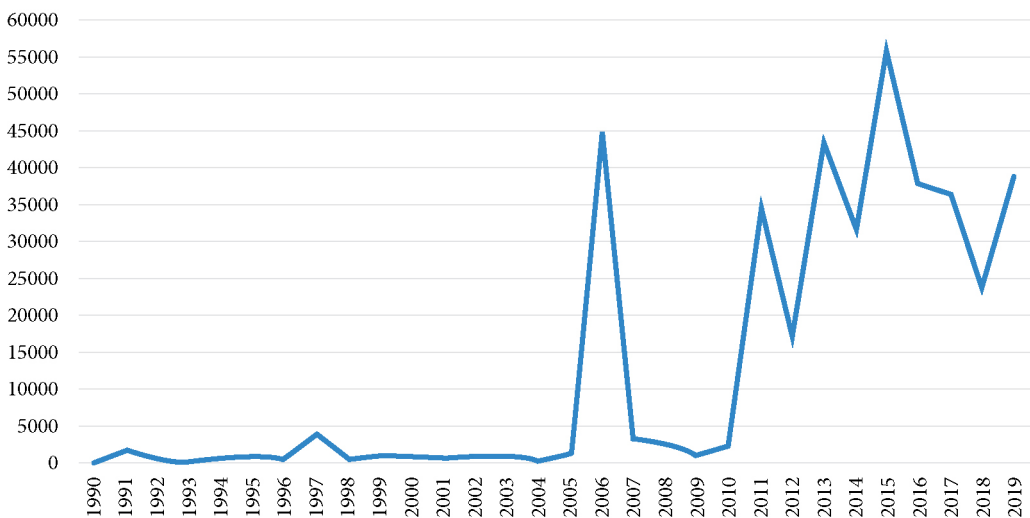


Figure 19.2 Average number of participants in each university protest, per year (1990–2019).

Source: Prepared by the authors.

protests became a genuinely mass phenomenon (with around 30,000–50,000 participants per protest event on average). This probably explains its enormous impact on public opinion and the educational policy debate, as we will discuss further on.

Along with its massification, student protests acquired a more public character in recent years, with marches and other forms of street expression becoming the dominant tactic, especially since the cycle of protests that began in 2006. As shown in Figure 19.3, “transgressive-irruptive” tactics, such as the occupy of university faculties (an emblematic form of protest within the educational field), having been very relevant in the 1990s, have been decreasing, while more “conventional contained” protest tactics (such as marches, rallies, and other demonstrations in public space) have become more typical. On the other hand, “cultural contained” tactics, which include demonstrations of a performative and symbolic nature, have increased slightly, being especially relevant in 2010 and 2011, proving enormously effective in their ability to impact audiences, especially on social networks and in public opinion (Paredes, Ortiz and Araya, 2018). Certainly, this massification and taking to public spaces of the student protest anticipated a process of re-emergence of social mobilizations in Chile in other fields. This would reach a climax in the so-called “Chilean Social Outbreak” in 2019, the most massive and violent protests in the country in many decades (Villalobos, 2021), which paved the way to a still-ongoing Constitutional process.

Lastly, along with taking to the streets, student protests have increasingly become a more violent phenomenon (see “violent transgressive” in Figure 19.3), in terms of both tactics and the police repression to which they have been subjected. According to our estimates, in the past decade, 25 percent of protests have used some kind of tactic that could be considered to involve high levels of violence (including, for example, direct confrontations with the police, destruction

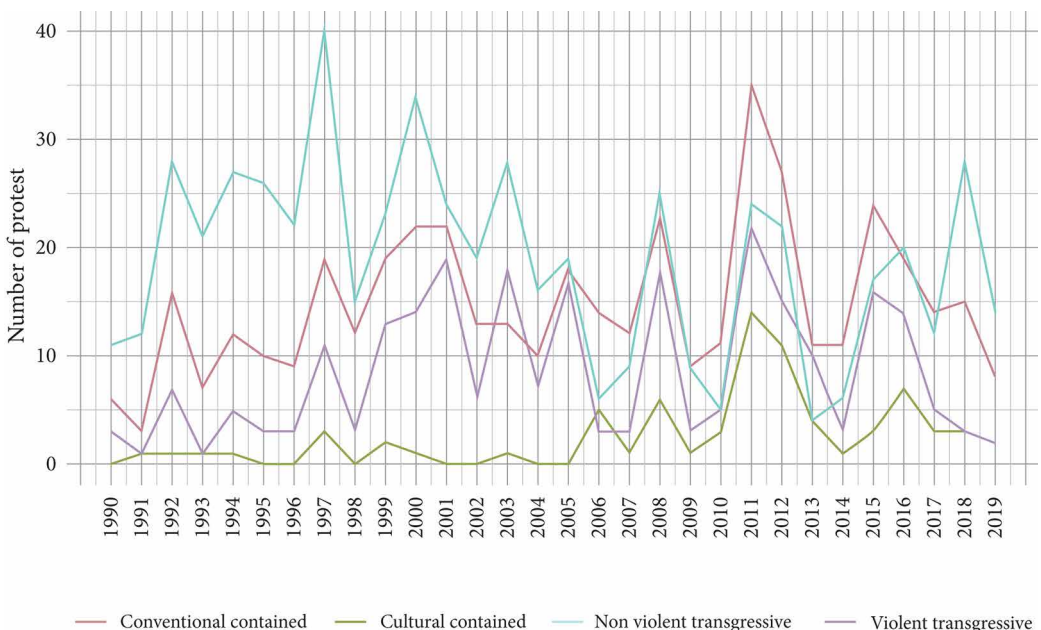


Figure 19.3 Student protests, by tactics (1990–2019).

Source: Prepared by the authors.

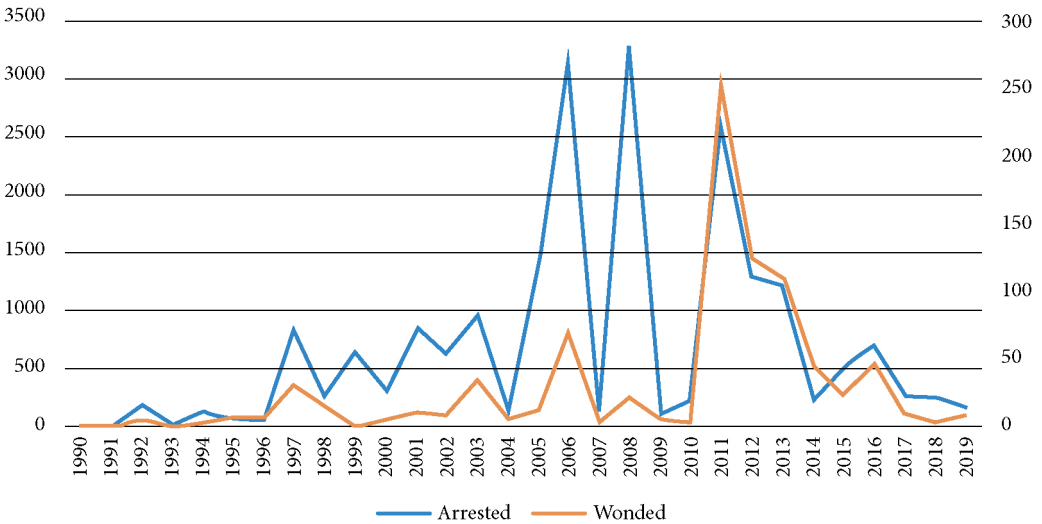


Figure 19.4 Total number of people injured (right axe) and arrested (left axe) per year in university protests.

Source: Prepared by the authors.

of public or private property, and throwing Molotov cocktails), compared to 12 percent in the 1990s. This process has been accompanied by greater and more aggressive police repression.³ As shown in Figure 19.4, between 2004 and 2014 the number of people injured and/or arrested in university mobilizations increased, with a peak in the year of the mass demonstrations of 2011, which continues—albeit decreasingly—with high levels of arrests and injuries until 2013. All this has generated a growing process of upheaval in the educational field and university protests.

What have been the fundamental contents of student demands? The intense protest of the university movement has combined demands of multiple types, both internal demands of specific institutions and general demands for the organization of the university system. Although funding issues have been the most prevalent throughout the analyzed period, it is possible to identify a trend toward the thematic diversification of the protest over time (Villalobos and Ortiz-Inostroza, 2019).

In its most general sense, the university student movement has sought to replace the market organization of the educational field with one that defines education as a social human right within the framework of a welfare state actively guaranteeing it. This alternative regulatory framework to neoliberalism has been characterized by the student movement based on four key components (Bellei, Cabalín and Orellana, 2014). Firstly, to expand and make access to higher education more egalitarian, first through the policy of differentiated fees according to family income level, and then under the demand for free university education and soft loans not linked to private banks. Secondly, to strengthen and expand public education through the State’s preferential treatment, including noncompetitive institutional funding mechanisms. Thirdly, to eradicate from the educational system the private for-profit institutions and, more generally, the rule of a business approach in how the university system is managed (which, given the self-financing policies, also

affects public universities). Finally, to increase the ability of the State to regulate and guide the operation of the higher education system, including the quality and relevance of courses, the use of resources, and student participation, to mention some of the main areas.

The Development of Student Organizations

Student organizations have played a historical role in Chilean politics, including a central part in the university reform in the late 1960s and in the social reforms of the Frei (1964–70) and Allende (1970–3) governments (Brunner and Flisfisch, 2014), as well as in the struggle against the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet (1973–90) in the 1980s (Campero, 1986). However, since the end of the dictatorship, student organizations experienced a period of withdrawal and loss of political center stage. The incipient university protests that emerged after the dictatorship were characterized by weak organizations, led by pro-government political youth, with little ability to convene and low levels of internal validation. This process of withdrawal and disorganization reached the extreme when the historic Student Federation of the University of Chile (FECH) failed to be established in 1994 due to a lack of participation (Thielemann, 2016).

Since 1997, associated with a peak of mobilizations that questioned the government regarding the poor economic conditions surrounding studying (credits and scholarships, mainly), we can detect signs of change and organic recomposition of the university student organization. Four facts influenced this recomposition. On the one hand, the largest university student organization, CONFECH,⁴ began to gradually welcome student's federations from private universities (Bellei, Cabalín and Orellana, 2014), which brought massification to the movement and allowed CONFECH to expand its repertoire, margin of action and capacity to mobilize students. Secondly, the internal organization of CONFECH was transformed, strengthening more transversal leadership and promoting the coordination between different federations by geographical zones (north, center, and south of the Country) to generate common territorial demands and jointly convoke activities. This change strengthened organizational influences in cities outside the capital, such as Temuco, Valparaíso, and Iquique, reinforcing a movement that was never restricted to Metropolitan Santiago (Mella and Valenzuela, 2021). Thirdly, the student organizations—guided by CONFECH—supported tactical alliances—especially since 2006—actively collaborating with secondary students' organizations and teachers' unions as well as with workers' organizations outside the educational field and other grassroots movements (Bellei, Cabalín and Orellana, 2018; Montero, Muñoz and Picazo, 2017). Lastly, CONFECH diversified its social and communicational deployment. The multiple forms of action, which included marches, occupying buildings, gathering signatures, symbolic and performative protests, and cyber-actions, made it possible to make the student discourse visible and spread it to broad audiences in society (Bellei, Cabalín and Orellana, 2018; Villalobos and Ortiz-Inostroza, 2019). This period of recomposition mainly developed between 2006 and 2014 and had its peak in the mass protests of 2011, guided by an escalated plan of mobilizations organized by CONFECH (Campos-Martínez and Olavarría, 2020).

Over the past decade, a new phase of CONFECH and its associated students' federations developed characterized by a gradual process of institutional integration, including the adoption

of its main demands as public policies, the integration of some of its previous leaders as public officials and political authorities, and the creation of political parties and coalitions by previous student leaders. Thus, although the student organizations maintained their independence from political parties and the government, four of the main student leaders and CONFECH spokesmen and spokeswoman—Camila Vallejo, Karol Cariola, Gabriel Boric, and Giorgio Jackson⁵—run for and were elected to the National Congress in 2013.⁶ In their new role, they lead the public discussion to include student demands in the political-legislative agenda (Bellei, Cabalín and Orellana, 2018), promoting an institutionalization of the agenda of student’s organization in the public arena. This institutionalization process deepened during the second government of Michelle Bachelet (2014–18) (Palacios-Valladares and Ondetti, 2018). Bachelet arrived at the Presidency proposing a program of educational reforms that incorporated the most important demands of the student movement (Bellei and Muñoz, 2021). In this period, various former university student leaders joined the government as advisors,⁷ assuming key roles in the public administration (Donoso, 2021), what can be read as an institutionalization of student’s actors in the political field (Muñoz and Durán, 2021). This institutional integration of student’s leaders was further enhanced by the creation of new political parties, which brought together various actors of the student movement, such as *Revolución Democrática* and *Convergencia Social*—which later formed the left-wing *Frente Amplio* political coalition—together with the revitalization of traditional leftist parties close to the student movement, especially the Communist Party (Álvarez, 2019; Aránguez, 2020; Muñoz and Durán, 2021).

Finally, this process of institutionalization of both the demands and the former student leaders reached a remarkable historical depth in 2022, when Gabriel Boric—one of the main student leaders of the 2011 movement and spokesmen of CONFECH that year—was elected president of Chile, incorporating four important former CONFECH student leaders into his cabinet (Camila Vallejo, Giorgio Jackson, Izkia Siches, and Nicolás Grau),⁸ and adding dozens of other former student actors in key government positions (Lovera and Parro, 2022). Boric’s government program sought to consolidate and deepen some of the educational policies initiated in previous years, within the framework of a major transformation toward a “social democratic welfare state” that is intended to be constitutionally enshrined, definitively replacing the Constitution imposed by the dictatorship in 1980 (Siches and Bellei, 2022). To these national authorities we must add the important presence of former student representatives in charge of municipal governments (Jorge Sharp, Claudio Castro, Carla Amtmann) and in parliament (Karol Cariola, Camila Rojas, Emilia Schneider, Jorge Brito, Gonzalo Winter, Gael Yeomans), which confirms the centrality achieved by former student leaders in the political-institutional arena.

An Effective and Influential Movement: Consequences and Effects of the Student Movement

The student movement led by CONFECH and other student organizations has had a noticeable impact on Chilean educational policy in recent years: it triggered a social and political questioning of the existing institutional framework of market-driven education in Chile, spawning a process of change and reform that has been going on for a decade, now, and which, to a significant extent,

is still in full swing. In this sense, the Chilean student movement can especially be seen as a highly effective and incidental social movement for at least three reasons. First, on a *symbolic-cultural* level, the student organizations were able to establish a medium- and long-term political-social agenda. In this sense, one of their first achievements was to put their demands at the center of the public agenda and to keep them there for decades, using the media—especially, but not exclusively, television—and communicating its ideas to the various political sectors and actors of Chilean society (Montero, 2018; Somma and Donoso, 2021). In addition, the student organizations succeeded in questioning the public’s perception of the role of education in society (Picazo and Pierre, 2016), challenging basic assumptions about what education should be and how it should be organized. This resulted in a widespread and intense national discussion about the mission, purpose, and organization of higher education (Salinas and Fraser, 2012; Somma, 2012), which exceeded the boundaries of university campuses and flooded Chilean society as a whole (Bellei, Cabalín and Orellana, 2018). This discussion even extended beyond the borders of the country, influencing the discourses of other student movements, especially in Brazil, Colombia, and Mexico (Ordonika, 2022).

Secondly, the student organizations had a *procedural* capacity to establish themselves as key actors in the educational debate. This procedural influence was marked by a progressive process of legitimization of the movement’s organizations and student leaders through three paths. On the one hand, student leaders were recognized by the government and the country as relevant political actors. Thus, the statements and opinions of the movements became fundamental in the educational debate (Bellei and Cabalín, 2013; Bellei, Cabalín and Orellana, 2018), with their leaders being frequently invited to debates, forums, and discussion tables. In addition, CONFECH, as well as the two most important student federations (the Federation of Students of the University of Chile (FECH) and the Federation of Students of the Catholic University of Chile (FEUC)), managed to position themselves as representative and unifying actors of the student movement (Fleet and Guzmán-Concha, 2012), being, by the same token, organizations legitimized by the government. Lastly, several leaders of the student movement developed communicational strategies that made them well-known actors in the public discussion (Lobos, 2014). The recurrent use of national and international data sources, the generation of discourses based on dialogue—but without abandoning social mobilization—the strategic use of social networks, and the search for collaboration with other key actors (mainly university rectors, parliamentarians, and academics) allowed the leaders of the movement to position themselves as people with high levels of political capital, high valuation, and social recognition and great convening capacity (Fernagni, Villalobos and Quaresma, 2022).

Lastly, a social movement can play a key role in triggering various transformations in the political-institutional system, driving *substantive* changes in institutional policy. In this sense, the Chilean student leaders, mainly from CONFECH, critically addressed the implementation of public policies for the privatization, commercialization, and deregulation of higher education, while also promoting the passing of laws and policies to change course. Although the demands during the 1990s were focused on improving the higher education financing system and increasing resources for the public sector (Thielemann, 2016), since the beginning of the millennium students pushed for developing structural changes in the higher education system, being especially crucial in the educational policies of the Piñera (2010–14) and Bachelet (2014–18) mandates.

Piñera's government—the first right-wing government since the end of the dictatorship—faced the gigantic wave of student protests from 2011 and the following years (Villalobos and Ortiz-Inostroza, 2019), producing an acute political confrontation that resulted in the resignation of two Ministers of Education and the subsequent dismissal (by Congress) of a third, demonstrating the power achieved by students in the political arena (Somma and Donoso, 2021). To contain the protest, the government had to drastically reduce interest rates for student loans, remove private banking from its administration, and propose significant changes in the accreditation system to improve and standardize the quality of institutions, and financial and regulatory oversight, especially regarding the prohibition of profit (Bellei, Cabalín and Orellana, 2014)—changes not considered in its government plan.

In the case of Bachelet, the influence was more profound, as the educational proposal of her government plan came about as a response to student demands (Palacios-Valladares and Ondetti, 2018; Véliz, Pickenpack and Villalobos, 2022). This shaped a broad agenda of changes in the sector, which included the creation of two state universities and sixteen regional technical education centers (these are the first public higher education institutions created after the reforms of the 1980s), the elimination of a law that prohibited student participation in university governance, and the enactment of legislation to improve coordination among state universities. It also included three central policies that sought to promote the generation of a more equitable and inclusive education system: the implementation of a Law of Free Higher Education (2016) that benefits students belonging to the 60 percent lowest socioeconomic levels attending accredited institutions; the enactment of a Higher Education Law (2017) that improves the regulation of this field, especially in matters of quality, admission systems, governance, and supervision of higher education institutions; and the creation of the Program for Accompaniment and Effective Access to Higher Education (2016) that facilitates university admission of high school students of good performance and low socioeconomic level. Despite each having different effects, this set of policies has led to new discussions and challenges in the higher education system, highlighting more prominently the role of the public sector and the centrality of equity as the articulating axis of the system.

Politics, Society, and Student Mobilization: Three Explanations

The process of change promoted by the Chilean university student movement is of great interest, in comparative terms. Within the framework of a system that experienced accelerated massification, but whose dominant market dynamics structured it in a highly unequal and privatized manner, student organizations grouped in CONFECH managed to modify the educational policy agenda to reduce its neoliberal orientation and bring it closer to one in which the State is committed to guaranteeing higher education as a social right under conditions of greater equality. This has been possible, thanks to the persistent and increasingly massified student protests, combined with the institutionalization of the student movement, characterized by the implementation of several public policies to respond to students' demands, the direct participation of many previous leaders in relevant roles of the State administration, and the creation of highly successful political

parties and political coalitions by previous student leaders, which has made them enormously influential in national politics. In this sense, the Chilean case departs from the “iron law” of the student’s activism (Altbach and Klemenčič, 2014) because, especially in the last decade, the student movement has become a central (and not marginal) actor in the institutional political arena in Chile. In order to interpret the unique trajectory of the university protests, the role of the students’ organization, and the effects of the movement in Chile, we conclude by proposing three hypotheses on the relationship between politics, society, and the university movement.

Firstly, understanding the emergence, strength, and persistence of the Chilean student movement requires looking at it within a broad framework that goes beyond the educational field. In a political-generational sense, we can state that the discursive limits of the transition to Chilean democracy—marked by the creation of political consensus and the explicit or implicit acceptance of neoliberal economy—have been overcome by the emergence of this new generation of actors who were able to articulate an alternative vision to the institutional frameworks imposed by the dictatorship (Bellei and Cabalín, 2013). Until recently, these frameworks were accepted as the rules of the game, whose maximum expression was the Political Constitution of 1980. This Constitution is now in the process of being replaced as a consequence of the social protests initially driven by young high school and university students (Cummings, 2015). This “generation without fear,” as it has been described, for example, by Sandoval and Carvallo (2019), was born after the end of the dictatorship and therefore did not live under military repression. Neither does it feel solidarity with the political agreements that defined the limits of a semi-sovereign democracy (Hunneus, 2014), one of whose features was the low intensity—if not outright exclusion—of organized social participation. This is how the student movement led by the students’ organizations has expanded the horizons of what is possible for the whole of post-dictatorship Chilean society, representing a social and generational movement with values, organizational strategies and forms of action different from those of previous decades.

However, the generational hypothesis does not explain the contents and ideological orientation assumed by the Chilean student movement. In this dimension, an evident paradox emerges, already identified by the analysis of the social conflict: the student protest was led precisely by the generation that has had greater access to post-secondary education in Chile, whose massification occurred indeed in this period (Fleet & Guzmán-Concha, 2012). Here, it is key to understand the effects that neoliberal modernization has had on Chilean society (Araujo and Martuccelli, 2012; Moulian, 1998, PNUD, 2017). Although poverty levels have rapidly been reduced and consumption levels and access to goods and services have drastically increased, economic inequality has remained high. Most of the population earn salaries that barely allow them an adequate standard of living, which they supplement with enormous levels of debt, in a context of instability and precariousness of working conditions and persistent social unrest (see, for example, Pérez-Roa, 2019 and Ossandón, 2014). In addition, the lack of public guarantees of basic social rights (such as health, housing, pensions, and education itself, all of which are also strongly marketized in their distribution) has meant that Chilean families have to make a great deal of effort to acquire these services in highly privatized and poorly regulated markets.

Thus, neoliberal modernization has been accompanied by high levels of social insecurity, a widespread perception that opportunities for social mobility (i.e., to advance on the social ladder, in relative terms) remain very scarce for the lower and middle social sectors, and a widespread sense of mistreatment, injustice, and discrimination (Araujo, 2019). As is known, in modern

societies, greater access to education has been presented as a core factor of the meritocratic promise to compete with equal opportunities for better living conditions. In neoliberal Chile, this meritocratic promise appears to be broken, to the extent that education itself manifests as strongly biased by economic conditions, not only in the unequal distribution of school achievement (a characteristic well studied by social science) but also by the fact that it is, in turn, governed and distributed by the dynamics of the private service market. This last feature of “advanced neoliberalism,” as Chile could be characterized, makes it very difficult to reverse, to the extent that it affects the very ability of the State to implement effective policies in the opposite direction, even if the government authorities so desire (Bonal, 2003; Verger, Fontdevila and Zancajo, 2016). In this crisis of legitimacy, the university student’s organizations have strongly contested the commercialization of education and have sought to replace it with the demand for a Welfare State that guarantees social rights. This allowed them to gain influence and recognition in public opinion and made possible to have an impact on the discussions of Chilean society as a whole.

Lastly, the case of the student movement allows us to rethink the relationship between social movements, youth, and politics in contemporary societies. In a scenario marked by the progressive separation between institutional and noninstitutional politics and by processes of youth disaffection with politics, the Chilean university movement appears as a case of accelerated politicization (Cortés, 2022) or of rapprochement between politics and society (Donoso, 2016; Garretón, 2016). Through a flexible combination of historical and current demands, using diverse action tactics and through a progressive process of approaching institutional politics, the Chilean student organizations generated a social discussion process that encompassed much more than educational issues. The demands of Chilean students also included issues related to health and pension systems, showing how neoliberal policies affected other aspects of their lives and those of their families, and emphasizing the need for institutional transformation in all these areas (Lustig, Mizala and Silva, 2012). Likewise, and with particular strength since 2006, students questioned the legitimacy of the social order through a challenge to the national legal framework crystallized in the Constitution of the Republic (Cortés and Villalobos, 2018), a vision that would later be supported by the vast majority of Chilean society, when on October 25, 2020, in a national Plebiscite, almost 80 percent of voters decided to initiate the mentioned constituent process, the first democratic process of rewriting a Constitution in Chilean history. This way, the student movement also triggered discussions on the organization of the country and socioeconomic development, being a central actor in the configuration of a new political era (Cortés, 2022).

Notes

- 1 Support from ANID/PIA/Basal Funds for Centers of Excellence FB0003 is gratefully acknowledged by Cristián Bellei. Cristóbal Villalobos acknowledges the National Research and Development Agency of Chile (ANID) for the support provided for the development of this chapter, within the framework of the Fondecyt Project No. 11190198.
- 2 The Crédito con Aval del Estado (known by its acronym CAE, in Spanish) was created in that year. The CAE is a loan focused on the middle and lower sectors of the population, organized through bank loans guaranteed by the State. A recent report by the MINEDUC (2022) showed that 70 percent of CAE debtors earn less than 750 thousand pesos (two minimum wages), affecting women and people

who did not finish their studies in greater proportion. According to official data, in 2017, 12.4 percent of Chilean families had education loans, being the second most relevant kind of debts affecting Chilean families (in terms of amount, only mortgage loans are higher than educational debts, on average) (Banco Central de Chile, 2018).

- 3 The causality is not unidirectional. While it is true that some students have increasingly used violent tactics that likely increase police repression, it is also true that in Chile there are well-founded complaints about the criminalization of social protest that tends to be violently repressed even when it is peacefully manifested. This phenomenon came to a critical point during the social outbreak of 2019, for which various national and international human rights organizations denounced the existence of mass human rights violations by police forces as a way to repress social protest (INDH, 2019).
- 4 Broadly, CONFECH and its associated university student federations have led the Chilean university student movement in recent decades. CONFECH brings together the student federations of the Chilean universities. It is the only national student organization and has more than thirty years of history. CONFECH works through plenary sessions, where each federation has one vote (all votes are worth the same, regardless of the number of students it represents). The coordination of CONFECH is exercised by an “Executive Board,” made up of nine federations. In 2020–1, CONFECH included sixty student federations.
- 5 Previously, all of them were presidents of the main students’ federations of Chilean universities: Camila Vallejo and Gabriel Boric from the University of Chile, Giorgio Jackson from the Catholic University of Santiago, and Karol Cariola from the University of Concepción.
- 6 See <https://www.americaeconomia.com/politica-sociedad/ex-dirigentes-estudiantiles-de-chile-desde-las-protestas-en-la-calle-hasta-la-camara-de-diputados> Also, Muñoz and Durán, 2021.
- 7 See <https://www.elmostrador.cl/noticias/pais/2014/05/02/de-rebeldes-a-funcionarios-petersen-sarmiento-y-los-ex-confech-que-entraron-al-gobierno/>
- 8 See <https://elpais.com/internacional/2022-01-22/la-generacion-estudiantil-chilena-entra-en-la-moneda-por-la-puerta-grande.html> and also <https://www.pauta.cl/politica/autoridades-gobierno-boric-dirigentes-universitarios>

References

- Altbach, P. and Klemenčič, M. (2014). Global: Students activism remains a potent force worldwide. *International Higher Education* (76): 2–3. <https://doi.org/10.6017/ihe.2014.76.5518>
- Álvarez, R. (2019). ¿Un pie en la calle y otro en el gobierno? El Partido Comunista en el segundo gobierno de Michelle Bachelet (Chile 2014–2018). In En Nuñez, D. (ed.). *El Partido Comunista de Chile y la experiencia del gobierno de la Nueva Mayoría (2014–2018)* (pp. 19–81). Valparaíso, Chile: América en Movimiento.
- Aránguez, R. (2020). Los jóvenes debemos disputar el poder. Las Juventudes Comunistas de Chile y el movimiento estudiantil universitario (2000–2011). *Cuadernos de Historia* 53(1): 167–90.
- Araujo, K. y D. Martuccelli (2012). *Desafíos comunes: Retrato de la sociedad chilena y sus individuos*. Santiago: LOM Ediciones.
- Araujo, K. (ed.) (2019). *Hilos tensados. Para leer el Octubre chileno*. Santiago, Chile: Editorial USACH.
- Banco Central de Chile (2018). *Encuesta financiera de hogares 2017*. Banco Central de Chile. <https://www.efhweb.cl/ES/EFH>
- Bellei, C. and Muñoz, G. (2021). Models of regulation, education policies, and changes in the education system: A long-term analysis of the Chilean case. *Journal of Educational Change*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10833-021-09435-1>
- Bellei, C. (2015). *El gran experimento. Mercado y privatización de la educación chilena*. Santiago, Chile: LOM.

- Bellei, C. and Cabalín, C. (2013). Chilean student movements: Sustained struggle to transform a market-oriented educational system. *Current Issues in Comparative Education* 15(2): 108–23.
- Bellei, C., Cabalín, C. and Orellana, V. (2014). The 2011 Chilean student movement against neoliberal educational policies. *Studies in Higher Education* 3: 426–40.
- Bellei, C., Cabalín, C. and Orellana, V. (2018). The student movements to transform the Chilean market-oriented education system. In Cortina, R. and Lafuente, C. (eds.), *Civil Organizations in Latin American Education. Case Studies and Perspectives on Advocacy* (pp. 63–84). New York: Routledge.
- Bonal, Xavier (2003). The neoliberal educational agenda and the legitimization crisis: Old and new state strategies. *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 24(2): 159–75.
- Brunner, J. (2012). La lucha por la educación de las elites: campo y canales formativos. *Revista UDP* (9): 119–43.
- Brunner, J.J. (2008). *Educación superior en Chile. Instituciones, mercados y políticas gubernamentales*. Santiago: UDP.
- Brunner, J.J. and Flisfisch, A. (2014). *Los intelectuales y las instituciones de la cultura*. Santiago: Ediciones Universidad Diego Portales.
- Brunner, J.J. (2015). Medio siglo de transformaciones de la educación superior chilena: un estado del arte. In Bernasconi, A. (ed.), *La Educación Superior de Chile: transformación, desarrollo y crisis* (pp. 21–107). Santiago: Ediciones UC.
- Burnstein, P., Einwohner, R. and Hollander, J. (1995). The success of political movements: A bargaining perspective. In En Jenkins, J. and Klandermans, B. (eds.), *The Politics of Social Protest. Comparative Perspectives on States and Social Movements* (pp. 275–95). London: UCL Press.
- Campero, G. (1986). Luchas y movimientos sociales en la crisis: ¿se constituyen movimientos sociales en Chile?. In Calderón, F. (ed.), *Los movimientos sociales ante la crisis* (pp. 289–326). Buenos Aires: CLACSO—IISUNAM.
- Campos-Martínez, J. and Olavarría, D. (2020). Learning from Chile's student movement: Youth organising and neoliberal reaction. In A. Choudry and S. Vally (eds.), *The University and Social Justice: Struggles Across the Globe* (pp. 98–115). Pluto Press.
- Canales, M., Guajardo, F. and Orellana, V. (2020). La élite del llano: de la promesa a las desilusiones en la trayectoria postsecundaria de los jóvenes de la nueva clase media. *Ultima Década* 28(53): 78–102.
- Cortés, A. and Villalobos, C. (2018). El derecho a la educación en el Chile contemporáneo. Cuatro argumentos para su reconocimiento constitucional. In Gajardo, J. y Vásquez, Y. (eds.), *Nueva constitución. Ideas y propuestas para el cambio constitucional* (pp. 135–54). Santiago: Rubicón Ediciones.
- Cortés, A. (2022). *Chile, fin del mito. Estallido, pandemia y ruptura constituyente*. Santiago: RIL.
- Cummings, P. (2015). Democracy and student discontent: Chilean Student Protest in the Post-Pinochet Era. *Journal of Politics in Latin America* 7(3): 49–84.
- Delisle, J. and Bernasconi, A. (2018). Lessons from Chile's transition to free college. *Evidence Speaks Reports* 2(43).
- Díaz-Ríos, C. (2019). Domestic coalitions in the variation of education privatization: an analysis of Chile, Argentina, and Colombia. *Journal of Education Policy* 34(5): 647–68.
- Donoso, S. and Somma, N. (2019). You taught us to give an opinion, Now learn how to listen: The manifold political consequences of Chile's Student movement. In Arce, M. and Rice, R. (eds.), *Protest and Democracy* (pp. 145–172). Calgary, Canada: University of Calgary Press.
- Donoso, S. (2016). When social movements become a democratizing force: The political impact of the student movement in Chile. Protest, Social Movement and Global Democracy since 2011. *New Perspectives Research in Social Movements, Conflicts and Change* 39(1): 167–96.
- Donoso, S. (2021). El movimiento estudiantil chileno y su (re)articulación con la política institucional. In Garretón, M.A. (coord.). *Política y movimientos sociales en Chile. Antecedentes y proyecciones del estallido social en Octubre 2019* (pp. 77–102). Santiago: LOM.
- Fernagni, M., Villalobos, C. and Quaresma, M.L. (2022). La construcción del capital político en una universidad de élite. Redes, aprendizajes y estrategias de socialización en los estudiantes de la Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile. *Universum* 37(1): 159–81.

- Gárate, M. (2012). *La revolución capitalista de Chile (1973–2003)*. Santiago, Chile: Ediciones Universidad Alberto Hurtado.
- Garretón, M.A. (2016). La ruptura entre política y sociedad. Una introducción. In Garretón, M.A. (coord.). *La gran ruptura. Institucionalidad política y actores sociales en el Chile del siglo XXI* (pp. 11–20). Santiago, Chile: LOM.
- Guzmán-Concha, C. (2012). The students' rebellion in Chile. Occupy protest or classical social movement? *Social Movement Studies* 11(3–4): 708–415.
- Hunneus, C. (2014). *La democracia semisoberana: Chile después de Pinochet*. Santiago, Chile: Penguin Random House.
- INDH (2019). *Informe Anual de la situación de los derechos humanos en Chile en el contexto de la crisis social*. <https://bibliotecadigital.indh.cl/bitstream/handle/123456789/1701/Informe%20Final-2019.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>
- Klemenčič, M. (2012). Student representation in Western Europe: introduction to the special issue. *European Journal of Higher Education* 2(1): 2–19.
- Kuzmanic, D., Valenzuela, J.P., Villalobos, C. and Quaresma, M.L. (2021). Socioeconomic segregation in higher education. Evidence from Chile (2009–2017). *Higher Education Policy*. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41307-021-00258-6>
- Labraña, J. and Vanderstraeten, R. (2020). Functional differentiation and university expansion in Chile. *Social and Education History* 9(3): 252–77.
- Leihy, P. and Salazar, J. (2022). Huasos y huachos: una taxonomía de las universidades tradicionales en las regiones de Chile. *Estudios Pedagógicos* 48(1): 367–88.
- Lobos, M. (2014). La influencia de las organizaciones políticas universitarias en la formación de élites políticas en Chile: El caso de las federaciones de estudiantes de la Universidad de Chile y Universidad Católica. *Revista de Ciencia Política* 52(2): 157–83.
- Lovera, A. and Parro, S. (2022). De la dirigencia universitaria a las decisiones de Estado. <https://www.pauta.cl/politica/autoridades-gobierno-boric-dirigentes-universitarios>
- Lustig, N., Mizala, A. and Silva, E. (2012). ¡Basta ya! Chilean students say “enough.” In Byrne, J. (ed.). *The Occupy Handbook* (pp. 223–32). New York: Back Bay Books.
- Mella, M. and Valenzuela, P. (2021). *Querer, Poder y Saber. El impacto de la CONFECH en las movilizaciones estudiantiles (2011–2015)*. México DF, México: Tirant Humanidades.
- Meller, P. (2010). *Carreras universitarias. Rentabilidad, selectividad y discriminación*. Santiago: Uqbar.
- MINEDUC (2022). *Primer Informe del Crédito con Aval del Estado (CAE): Características de la población deudora e impactos*. Santiago, Chile: Ministerio de Educación.
- Mönckeberg, M.O. (2005). *La Privatización de las Universidades. Una historia de dinero, poder e influencias*. Santiago, Chile: Copa Rota.
- Montero, V., Muñoz, C. and Picazo, M.I. (2017). Estrategias y recursos empleados por el movimiento estudiantil en el 20. *Universum* (Talca) 32(1): 137–57.
- Montero, V. (2018). Movimientos sociales y consecuencias político-institucionales. Del movimiento universitario 2011 a la reforma en educación superior. *Persona y Sociedad* 32(2): 46–68.
- Moulian, T. (1998). *Chile actual. Anatomía de un mito*. Santiago: LOM Ediciones.
- Muñoz, V. and Durán, C. (2021). La Nueva Acción Universitaria y el origen de Revolución Democrática. Trayectorias de centro-izquierda estudiantil en la Universidad Católica de Chile (2008–2012). *Izquierdas* 50: 1–32.
- Muñoz-Tamayo, Víctor and Durán-Migliardi, Carlos (2019). Los jóvenes, la política y los movimientos estudiantiles en el Chile reciente. Ciclos sociopolíticos entre 1967 y 2017. *Izquierdas* 45(1): 129–59.
- OECD (2013). *Education at a Glance 2013: OECD Indicators*. Paris: OECD Publishing.
- OECD (2021). *Education at a Glance 2021: OECD Indicators*. Paris: OECD Publishing.
- Ordonika, I. (2022). Student movements and politics in Latin America: A historical reconceptualization. *Higher Education* 83(12): 297–315.
- Orellana, V., Guzmán, C., Bellei, C., Gareca, B. y. and Torres, F. (2017). Elección de carrera y universidad en Chile: sentido y utilidad de la acreditación. *Cuadernos de investigación en aseguramiento de la*

- calidad 7(1). Santiago de Chile: Comisión Nacional de Acreditación. Serie Cuadernos de Investigación en Aseguramiento de la Calidad.
- Ossandón, J. (2014). Sowing consumers in the garden of mass retailing in Chile. *Consumption Markets & Culture* 17(5): 429–47.
- Palacios-Valladares, I. and Ondetti, G. (2018). Student protest and the Nueva Mayoría reforms in Chile. *Bulletin of Latin American Research*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/blar.12886>
- Paredes, J.P., Ortíz, N. and Araya, C. (2018). Conflicto social y subjeti -vación política: performance, militancias y memoria en la movilización estudiantil post 2011. *Persona y Sociedad* 32(2): 122–49.
- Pérez-Roa, L. (2019). Consumo, endeudamiento y economía doméstica: una historia de tres tiempos para entender el estallido social. In Araujo, K. (ed.), *Hilos tensados. Para leer el octubre chileno* (pp. 83–106). Santiago, Chile: USACH.
- Pérez-Roa, L. and Ayala, C. (2019). The transition to the adult world with debt: Characterizations of new economic insecurities of indebted young professionals in Santiago de Chile. *Journal of Youth Studies* 23(1): 1–19.
- Picazo, M.I. and Pierre, C. (2016). La educación como derecho social: La construcción del referencial de acción pública del movimiento estudiantil chileno. *Revista Uruguaya de Ciencia Política* 25(SPE): 99–120.
- Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo (PNUD) (2017). *Desiguales. Orígenes, cambios y desafíos de la brecha social en Chile*. Santiago de Chile: PNUD.
- Quaresma, M.L. and Villalobos, C. (2022). Elite universities in Chile: Between social mobility and reproduction of inequality. *Tuning Journal for Higher Education* 9(2): 29–62.
- Quaresma, M.L., Villalobos, C. and Torres-Cortés, F. (2022). The massification of higher education and the promise of social mobility. In Baikady, R., Sajid, S., Przeperski, J., Nadesan, V., Islam, M.R. and Gao, J. (eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Global Social Problems*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-68127-2_258-1
- Rodríguez, J., Urzúa, S. and Reyes, L. (2016). Heterogeneous economic returns to post-secondary degrees: Evidence from Chile. *Journal of Human Resources* 51(2): 416–60.
- Salazar, J.M. and Leihy, P.S. (2013). The invisible handbook: Three decades of higher education policy in Chile, 1980–2010. *Education Policy Analysis Archives* 21(34): 1–35.
- Salazar, J. y Rifo, M. (2020). Bajo el péndulo de la historia: Cinco décadas de masificación y reforma en la educación superior chilena (1967–2019). *Economía y Política* 7(1): 27–61.
- Salinas, D. and Fraser, P. (2012). Educational opportunity and contentious politics: The 2011 Chilean student movement. *Berkeley Review of Education* 3(1): 17–47.
- Sandoval, J. and Carvallo, V. (2019). Una generación «sin miedo»: análisis de discurso de jóvenes protagonistas del movimiento estudiantil chileno. *Ultima Década* 27(51): 225–57.
- Siches, I. and Bellei, C. (2022). *Ciudadanos, no clientes. Cómo garantizar el derecho a una salud y educación dignas*. Santiago, Chile: Editorial Planeta.
- Somma, N. and Donoso, S. (2021). Chile’s student movement: Strong, detached, influential—and declining? In Cini, L., Della Porta, D. Guzmán-Concha, C. (eds.), *Student Movements in Late Neoliberalism, Social Movements and Transformation* (pp. 241–267). New York: Palgrave McMillan.
- Somma, N. (2012). The Chilean student movement of 2011–2012: Challenging the marketization of education. *Interface: A Journal for and about Social Movements* 2: 296–309.
- Thielemann, L. (2016). *La anomalía social de la transición. Movimiento estudiantil e izquierda universitaria en el Chile de los noventa (1987–2000)*. Santiago de Chile: Tiempo Robado.
- Treviño, E., Mintrop, R., Villalobos, C. and Órdenes, M. (2018). *What Might Happen If School Vouchers and Privatization of Schools Were to Become Universal in the U.S.: Learning from a National Test Case—Chile*. National Education Policy Center. <http://nepc.colorado.edu/publication/chilean-voucher>
- Véliz, D., Pickenpack, A. and Villalobos, C. (2022). Policy translation of social movements demands: The case of free-tuition in higher education in Chile. *Berkeley Review of Education* 11(2): 118–40.
- Verger, A., Fontdevila, C. and Zancajo, A. (2016). *The Privatization of Education: A Political Economy of Global Education Reform*. New York: Teachers College Press.

- Villalobos, C. and Ortiz-Inostroza, C. (2019). Continuidades y rupturas de la protesta universitaria en el Chile de la post-dictadura (1990–2014). *Temas Sociológicos* 1: 89–120.
- Villalobos, C. (2016). El campo educativo en Chile post-dictadura (1990–2013). Continuidad y ruptura en la implementación del neoliberalismo en educación. In Pinol, A. (ed.), *Democracia versus neoliberalismo. 25 años de neoliberalismo en Chile* (pp. 159–78). Santiago, Chile: Fundación Rosa Luxemburgo-ICAL.
- Villalobos, C. (2021). Una continuidad discontinua. Análisis retrospectivo del 18-O a la luz del ciclo de protestas juveniles en el campo educativo. In Alé, S., Duarte, K. and Miranda, D. (eds.), *Saltar el torniquete. Reflexiones desde las juventudes de octubre* (pp. 41–7). Santiago, Chile: Fondo de Cultura Económica.
- Villalobos, C., Quaresma, M.L. and Franetovic, G. (2020). Mapeando a la élite en las universidades chilenas. Un análisis cuantitativo-multidimensional. *Revista Española de Sociología* 29(3): 523–41.
- Zimmerman, S. (2019). Elite colleges and upward mobility to top jobs and top incomes. *American Economic Review* 109(1): 1–47.

The Role of CONFECH in the Fight for Education in Chile

Carla Trigo Argomedo, Javiera Aymara Molina Barboza, Nicolás Javier Carrancio Fuentes, María Josefa Guzmán, Giuseppe Lipari, Cresente Cristóbal Lizarbe Luna, Josefa Javiera González Palma, and Igor Gonçalves Pereira

Introduction

In recent years, in Chilean society there have been various social demonstrations that question the prevailing neoliberalism and seek to change it. In these mobilizations, the role that students have played to push the state and the political system to legislate laws that guarantee the right to education stands out.

In order to position itself against the challenges of higher education in Chile, the Confederation of Students of Chile (CONFECH) was founded in 1984 during the National Congress of University Students between October 26 and 28. CONFECH is made up of student federations from every part of the country that have carried out confederation processes (Statutes of the Confederation of Students of Chile, 2018). The Confederation engages in informal bargaining with the Government of Chile on educational policy, and its members, that allow its functioning, are involved in decision-making and management of campuses in formal or informal ways and with different institutional frameworks in each university.

The CONFECH has been the backbone of student mobilization against neoliberal policies in Chile, in the educational sector, and in other social spheres, such as demands for pensions, access to health, among others. The confederation is conceived as a space of confluence between students, of organization, linkage, and political voice of young students.

For the purposes of this study, our central question is: What is the role of CONFECH in the fight against neoliberalism in educational policies in Chile? For this reason, this chapter aims to make a brief recount of the trajectory of the struggle against neoliberalism and to present the organizational structure of CONFECH, based on information obtained through interviews with leaders of the Chilean student movement.

CONFECH has mainly mobilized for better financing of higher education; access, universal gratuity, and a new educational model; effective measures to guarantee equity in access to education in the context of the Covid-19 health emergency; student mental health and an education free of violence (24 hours, 2022). Advances in these areas are key to understanding the political, articulating, and linking role that CONFECH has had in the fight against neoliberalism in education.

For this reason, in the data collection for the construction of this chapter, a form was made following the model structured by SIHEG, Chile (2021), in addition to meetings with leaders

of CONFECH itself, allowing us to know from the point of view of its members the political and articulating role that the organization has played. In relation to the ethical conduct and positionality used here, the data provided is for the exclusive use of the investigation, the interviewees being informed of the nature of the investigation and their confirmation or not of the linking of this information and subsequent publication of the information. same. The authors are student leaders with direct experience in CONFECH and scholars from other countries with a background in the student movement. Considering its positionality, the authors practiced a transparent data collection process to describe the Chilean situation reliably.

The chapter is composed of three main parts. The first section analyzes the context of higher education in Chile, with a focus on laws, regulations, and services that allow an understanding of the student condition in the country, to get concluded with a resume of political standings of CONFECH with this regard. The second section describes the structure of the organization and explains its recent mobilizations, defining the peculiar Chilean systems of student representation and intermediation, and considering the involvement of CONFECH in nonsectoral mobilizations as well. The third section enters the local level, looking at the student unions that compose CONFECH, trying to give an idea of the variety of its membership and of how student voice is articulated in Chilean universities.

Context of Higher Education Policies in Chile and Student Protests

The Educational System and Neoliberalism in Focus

Universities work with contracts from external companies to carry out tasks and activities related to teaching and the other basic needs of the institution (food, maintenance, security, etc.). When externalization is in place, it is more difficult to address the university for the lack of quality of for the violation of students and workers' rights, given the separation between institution and service providers. The types of contracts with teachers and other employees of the education system are usually precarious and there are various forms of contracting that do not allow these professionals to organize in unions. Today, there are a large number of these contracts that prevent the reorganization and the fight for their labor rights.

This implies avoiding all kinds of benefits, the tenders are quite strict and end up being precarious for public universities, since they do not seek quality. In the case of Catholic universities, it is the churches that receive the State subsidy, for example, at the Catholic University of Temuco only 20 percent of the students pay tuition while the rest are financed with scholarships or credits. There are also differences in the monthly fee. In Chile, the difference in fees between private and public universities is considerable. The case of a career can vary between 4 million pesos per year in a public university and 6 million pesos per year in a private university.

Regarding the reservation of vacancies by the well-known "social quotas," these do not exist in Chile. There are ways to enter through other modalities, such as the so-called "PACE Program for Access to Higher Education." Universities are also seeking to implement gender quotas in courses such as engineering, math, and other historically male majors. Unfortunately, the government does not have a direct participation in these measures; they are initiatives of the universities.

Students who are without scholarships can apply for so-called “universal scholarships” which are classified by socioeconomic level. There are also scholarships offered by the State itself and others offered by the university itself.

In 2019, all the problems that led to the so-called “social outbreak” came from many years ago and CONFECH has always remained mobilized, calling on the population to fight for the flags defended until then. The entity actively participated in the construction of long days of struggle in Chile (Limón, 2021); the political context was also crossed by neoliberalism, represented in the figure of former President Sebastián Piñera, former member of the National Renovation Party (RN). Regarding his government, he also witnessed permanent mobilizations such as the “popular revolt,” large demonstrations of rejection of the economic model implemented in the country, which occurred between 2019 and 2020 (Limón, 2021).

The pandemic made the organization of the student movement more complex because it was online, since there were health restrictions by the government, so mobilizing was complex. “In 2020 there was a great mobilization around issues related to education, since many students did not have internet, a computer and therefore a call was made for them to have access to education, which is essential in the resumption of education. previous fights” (El Mostrador, 2022).

Regarding the fight against neoliberalism, CONFECH fights against market education and seeks to make it a social good. That is why they were against the creation of universities without any type of regulation by private capital, which according to them is only interested in making profits. That is why one of its flags is the fight for the regulation of private education in the country, with a request of radical reform of tuition fees and student grants that stayed central in different waves of student mobilization in the country (Penaglia and Mejías, 2019).

In perspective, the historical demands of CONFECH are related to the constitutional changes implemented in the Military Dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet (1973–90). Before the coup, the student organizations—student federations—had a presence and influence in the university councils and binding participation through the vote in the Rector elections. This situation changed with the 1980 constitution relegating student participation, reducing their participation in councils and denying participation in the Rector elections. This is considered a setback in university democracy and is sought to be reversed by CONFECH. Although the new Law on State Universities is currently in force, which seeks to reverse this situation, this has not been achieved because the participation of the student community—teachers, officials, and students—is restricted to the elections of directors and deans, without being able to participate in the rector elections.

Although in this research we focus on Chilean education, it is worth mentioning that neoliberalism is implemented in the 1980 Constitution; it permeates and structures social areas such as health, pensions, housing, and education. The main characteristic is that it reduces the presence of the state and establishes it as a subsidiary. Over the years it has generated a precariousness of life and that its solvency is through credit. Therefore, returning to the study of education, the CONFECH and the student mobilizations are against, in repudiation of neoliberalism and its authoritarian character in the country. For this reason, one of the most relevant historical demands is the fight for education to be enshrined as a constitutional right, this being a way of directly combating neoliberalism and the educational market that it has generated. One of CONFECH’s other proposals is to freeze tariffs so that they do not continue to rise until there is free education for all in Chile (Cooperativa.cl 10/07/2011).

For a Universal Free Policy in Higher Education: A Brief Review of the Struggles of the Chilean Student Movement

Reviewing the moments in which the Chilean student movement has had the greatest strength to combat neoliberalism, we identify that the mobilizations given in the years 2006, 2011, 2018, and 2019 have been key to advancing the historical demands. Next, we discuss the particularities of each one.

In Chile, the great mobilizations of secondary school students in 2006 became known as “the revolt of the penguins.” The name was related to the student uniform, which consists of the “jumper or blue blazer with white shirt.” Among the reasons for this mobilization were the demands for improvements in the educational system (Romancini, 2019), which translates into demanding an end to the Constitutional Organic Law (LOCE) that, among other things, regulates education centers for high school students. This demand is accompanied by the requirement of free admission to the University Selection Test (PSU), school pass, and differentiated rate for students on public transport, among others.

The Chilean student movement, after the mobilizations against the increase in public transport ticket prices, through the actions “backpacking” and the “Rise of the Penguins,” made President Michelle Bachelet of the Socialist Party of Chile, back down on several policies of which the students were critical, as was the case of the mobilizations against the Constitutional Organic Law of Education—LOCE and the Full School Day—JEC (Campos-Martínez and Olavarría, 2020, pp. 102–4, Library of Congress, 2019, Romero Reyes 2021, p. 93, Somma and Donoso, 2021, pp. 250–2).

In 2011, during the first government of Sebastián Piñera, the mobilizations led by university and high school students were a milestone that challenged the heart of the Chilean education system. “Free and quality education” was the slogan that was raised on banners and chants of the massive marches throughout the country. Camila Vallejo Dowling, a militant of the communist party, stands out. At that time, she served as president of the Federation of Students of the University of Chile (2010–11) and CONFECH spokesperson for the same period; currently, she is Minister Secretary General of Government. Giorgio Jackson Drago, member of the Democratic Revolution party, served as president of the student federation of the Catholic University of Chile (2010–11) and CONFECH spokesperson for the same period. He currently serves as Minister Secretary General of the Presidency. Gabriel Boric Font, who was president of the student federation of the University of Chile (2011–12) and spokesperson for CONFECH for the same period, is currently the President of the Republic of Chile.

Regarding demands, higher education students demanded a reform of the university access system to ensure equal opportunities, an increase in the state’s contribution to state universities, among others. Meanwhile, the high schools raised the need for a constitutional reform to guarantee the right to education over the freedom of education and that it be: egalitarian, secular, free, and of quality. The demands are positioned against the given market in education and, in turn, against neoliberalism. This is what Leonora Reyes, an academic from the Department of Pedagogical Studies of the University of Chile, points out in her reflection on ten years of the 2011 student movement. state subsidy, “(...) is the focus of the questioning of a crucial aspect of the Constitution of ‘80, which is that the right to education is subject to freedom of education, understood as this possibility of trading with education” (Jara, 2021). Thus, the students mobilized for more than eight months for changes in the country’s education; one of the slogans was “Free

and quality education” for which classes were systematically suspended, leading many students to being unable to complete high school that year, which delayed the completion of their studies and weakened the student movement for the following years (Jara, 2021).

In relation to the progress made in higher education policy as a result of this mobilization, we can cite the law that guarantees that higher education is for everyone, called the “State University Law,” which was approved in Chile only in 2018, which seeks to democratize state universities after years of student struggle, beginning in 2011, until today (Somma and Donoso, 2021, p. 254). However, over the years some of the demands of the students have been answered.

During 2015, the student movements resurfaced, giving way to 2016, the beginning of gratuity, which, although not universal, is a great advance for the historical demands of the student movement (Somma and Donoso, 2021, p. 261).

It is then, in the second term of President Bachelet with the entry of the Communist Party of Chile into her coalition, that an attempt will be made to approve some of the demands that until now had not been approved, but that are important for the Chilean people. In this same discussion, a way was proposed for the State to implement higher education for all. Until that moment, the way in which financing was delivered in higher education for those who could not pay the fee in the public universities of the country proposed a benefit for the formal period of the career, which lasts approximately five years, in which you receive a scholarship to finance your university degree during the school years of professional training, where it raises the current demand that “there is no universal gratuity,” because it does not guarantee the fundamental right to universal access to Higher Education. That is, it is for a single sector understanding the socioeconomic level; however, a large part of the population is middle class and this benefit should not discriminate against the ability to pay. Even in the university management voices were raised for the gratuity of education for all, in particular the Rector of the University of Bio-Bio claimed the end of discrimination based on students’ ability to pay, underlining the centrality of the public in the university system (UBB News, 2015).

In the same year that the “State University Law” was approved, which briefly responds to the student demands of 2011, demonstrations began throughout the country during the months of April–May 2018 on behalf of high school students and higher education denouncing sexual harassment and abuse in the classroom. This mobilization was recognized by the media as “the feminist May” or “the new feminist wave” (Montes, 2018).

In the petition of the students there is a criticism of the patriarchy of Chilean universities and the houses of study are challenged to combat it through the creation and implementation of protocols against harassment and generation of a nonsexist education (Ponce, 2020). This meant a moment of vindication and visibility for the role of women in the different disciplines of knowledge, arts, and sciences, with claims for training on equality, creation of gender units or offices in the student houses, and parity in the teaching bodies.

The social mobilizations of 2019 begin with the strike of teachers who mobilized for more than fifty days. Among their demands, the following stand out: Infrastructure of educational establishments, Curriculum Modification, Historical Debt Payment, among others (Romero, 2019). This mobilization, given during the winter of the second government of Sebastián Piñera, was questioned and sought to promote a constitutional accusation of Marcela Cubillos, who served as minister of education. She resigns after blocking the dialogue with the teachers’ college.

As for higher education students, they are mobilized in support of teachers. Once the teaching stoppage is over, the mobilization decreases, leaving some schools paralyzed due to internal

issues and others returning to classes. Until October 18, the day on which the public transport fare hike is applied, it is the high school students who organize themselves and begin a wave of ticket evasion (Tallardà, 2019). The government of Sebastián Piñera withdraws the measure but the boredom in the population is such that the demonstrations spread during the day to other regions and the government's response is to decree a state of emergency and repress the demonstrations with the military.

On October 18, a period of citizen mobilization begins without precedent in terms of the magnitude of the call. In the marches, banners are read against the pension system, the demand for a decent health system, an end to the waiting lists for operations, access to housing, cancellation of the credit debt with the guarantee of the State, free, and universal education, assembly constituent, among others. The mobilization recognizes itself without leaders and challenges the 1980 constitution. "On November 15, the government and various parties called for a national agreement, which establishes, among other things, a pact between different political forces and that begins a process for a new constitution" (Universidad, 2021).

The facts that we reviewed before are part of the main events in the history of Chile that impacted the reforms of higher education or other social changes in the country. Although progress is identified in the student struggle against neoliberalism, such as the implementation of partial gratuity and changes in income through a new model, which is reflected in the transfer of the "PSU" Selection Test University to "PDT" University Transition Test, no response has been given to the historical demands of the student movement. The main barrier to being able to advance in guaranteeing the right to education and in turn making transcendental changes in equality, such as the implementation of universal gratuity, is the 1980 constitution.

Among the current challenges of the student movement is the approval of the constitution drafted by the Constitutional Convention during 2021 and which will be voted on through a referendum on September 4, 2022. The confederation points out through a statement published on its social networks, among other things, that "this proposal for a New Constitution opens the door for unprecedented transformations in our social and political history." Since it establishes "the right to education, governed by the principles of cooperation, non-discrimination, inclusion, justice, participation, solidarity, interculturality, gender approach, pluralism, imparted free of charge and equitably, ensuring its quality (...)" (CONDATE, 2022). They close the statement, committing beyond the plebiscite, seeking to strengthen democracy and promoting spaces for participation in the social and student bases, which allow the implementation of this new constitution. From this latest statement, we understand that it is in the new constitution and its implementation that CONFECH contemplates achieving universal gratuity.

Mobilizations and Organizational Structures of the Chilean Student Movement

In the process of reviewing the mobilizations of the CONFECH in the present, we identify the following demands: increase in the food scholarship and end student loans with the guarantee of the State. Another key element is the support to the approval of the new Constitution on September 4, 2022.

The increase in the food grants is another concern. Food grants have not been readjusted for ten years. The amount that is granted monthly to the most vulnerable students is not enough to meet the minimum requirements of the basic food basket. The spokeswoman Verónica Parra explains in the education commission of the Chamber of Deputies:

In 2012, when the BAES was readjusted to 32 thousand pesos, the basic basket had a value of 31,029 pesos. In August 2021, the basic basket is 48,260 pesos according to information from the Ministry of Social Development.

(Mostrador, 2021)

For this reason, the confederation calls for the first mobilization of the year 2022 for March 25 under the government of President Gabriel Boric, with the motto “it’s not 32 lucas, it’s 32 years” and “pure bread, pure tea, that’s how Junaeb has us” (El Mostrador, 2022). In relation to the demand for the term of the credit with the guarantee of the State (CAE), from the confederation they hope that the construction of the mechanism and the deadlines to respond to indebted students will be built in conjunction with the Ministry of Education (Martinez, 2022) and is included in the discussion of this year’s budget law.

After a follow-up to the process and discussions carried out for more than three months, the confederation informed through a statement that they decided on July 2, 2022, “Support the option of approval in the exit plebiscite this September 4” (CONFECH, 2022). They pointed out that the proposal opens the doors for social and political transformations that allow the right to education to be consecrated.

These demands are accompanied by the challenge of rearticulating the student movement. This is what Maite Estay, CONFECH spokeswoman and president of the student federation of the Catholic University of Chile, points out in an interview with a digital newspaper:

This year we proposed rearticulating the student movement and taking care of the immediate and basic needs of the student body, with a view to achieving a rearticulation that transcends those needs, and that focuses on what is fundamental, which is the transformation of education.

(Arriagada, 2022)

Mobilizations and Organizational Structures of the Coordinadora Nacional de Estudiantes Lucha BAES (National Student Coordinating Committee BAES Struggle)

The National Student Coordinating Committee BAES Struggle (formerly Lucha BAES), which emerged in 2021 in the Chilean context, has as its main objective to advocate for improvements in the Beca de Alimentación para la Educación Superior (Higher education food scholarship) (BAES). It proposes an increase in the amount of the scholarship to \$64,000 per month, equivalent to two Unidades de Fomento in Chile. This movement, composed of students from various universities and careers, originated in the social outburst of 2019, although it was formalized in 2021. Initially, it had the support of the Confederation of Students of Chile (CONFECH); however, after disagreements, both

organizations took separate courses at the end of 2021. Among the main demands of the Coordinadora are the increase in the amount of the BAES, its readjustment, extension, and improvement in aspects of transportation and food focusing on the accessibility of education by students. It has also taken some flags, such as the CAE Condonation. In relation to this, Osvaldo Azócar, spokesman for Lucha Baes and former president of the Student Federation of the University of Concepción (FeUdeC) Los Angeles in the period 2020-2021, expressed his dissatisfaction with the priorities of President Boric, mentioning that the CAE condonation was a key proposal during the presidential campaign and criticized that it is now relegated to the background (Bobadilla González, 2023).

During 2022, two significant demonstrations were held, one in March in collaboration with CONFECH, and another in May, both focused on making visible the demands related to BAES and other educational issues. As a result of these mobilizations, Lucha BAES achieved several increases in the amount of the BAES in a period of less than two years: in June 2022, the amount increased from \$32,000 to \$37,000; in March 2023, it was increased to \$40,000; in July 2023, it was raised to \$42,000; and in September 2023, a future increase of \$3,000 was announced, setting the amount of the BAES at \$45,000 by the beginning of 2024.

In a meeting on March 25, 2022, the Undersecretary of Higher Education, Verónica Figueroa Huencho, together with the Ministry of Education team, received spokespersons from CONFECH and the Lucha BAES movement at the Palace of La Moneda. During this meeting, the Undersecretary expressed, “On this occasion we have received their petition, their demands, their concerns, we have been able to talk about the agenda that we have underway ... we understand that the way to move forward in improving not only the quality of student life, but to deliver dignity to our students in the higher education system is through dialogue, putting all issues on the table, listening to us and that has been the mandate we have been given” (Ministry of Education, 2022). Osvaldo Azócar, spokesman of Lucha BAES, thanked the authorities for receiving them and allowing the delivery of the petition that had been built and worked for a considerable time.

The National Coordinator of Students Lucha BAES has been represented by various spokespersons, among them, Osvaldo Antonio Azocar, Cresente Lizarbe Luna, Gary Diaz, Nicolas Henriquez, Alexander, Maria Jesus and Karla Escalante, who represents the Professional Institutes in Chile. This multifaceted representation shows a notable difference with CONFECH, where the Coordinadora leans more towards mobilization, protest and more effective and innovative negotiation, which has yielded significant results in a relatively short time.

In a session in the Education Commission of the Chamber of Deputies, the spokespersons of Lucha BAES, Osvaldo Azócar and Cresente Lizarbe, underlined the insufficiency of the current amount of the Higher Education Food Scholarships (BAES) and proposed a calculation in Unidades de Fomento (UF) to reflect the real cost of food, in addition to an extended annual coverage (Press Center of the Chamber of Deputies, 2022). Later, in an interview with ADN Hoy, Cresente Lizarbe detailed the students’ demands, focusing on an increase of the BAES to “\$63 thousand, equivalent to two UF”, and an extension and expansion of the benefit, including coverage in the months of January and February, and a diversification in the places and types of food covered by the scholarship (Bravo, 2022). Despite the dissatisfaction with governmental responses, especially regarding the monetary readjustments of the BAES, the Coordinadora, with the growing support of the student community, continues to be a prominent voice in discussions about higher education in Chile. This is evidence of the persistent student struggle in an increasingly costly higher education scenario, reaffirming the need to effectively and equitably address student concerns and needs.

The Organizational Structure of CONFECH

In relation to its organizational structure, the Confederation of Students of Chile during the last ten years is made up of forty-six federations and represents around 1.2 million students (MINEDUC, 2021). All Chilean student federations, democratically elected, belonging or not to the Council of Rectors, are members of the confederation, in compliance with the requirements indicated in their statute.

The declaration of principles states that CONFECH “is the social expression of the struggle of students and their families in search of a different educational model for the country, which consecrates education as a social right for all” (Statutes de la CONFECH, 2018, p. 1).

This confederation recognizes itself as belonging to the social movements, therefore “(...) it subordinates its actions to the citizenry and does not submit to any external political agenda or representation institutional” (Statutes of the CONFECH, 2018, 1). It currently does not have a legal personality. CONFECH is neither financed by the Chilean State nor by its agencies, and it does not have stable national offices. The organization of events and assemblies happens through the direct involvement of local university federations that are coordinated both at regional and national levels.

In relation to its internal organization, it has national spokespersons, whose tasks are “[...] to express the will of CONFECH before the corresponding media on the agreements established in the plenary sessions, as well as to relate to the educational authorities and maintain a direct contact with the other entities that are part of the social movement” (Statutes of the CONFECH, 2018, p. 4). The spokespersons are elected in each zone according to their statutes.

The “zonales” are coordination spaces for student federations based on the geographical area where they are located. Its objective is “[...] to deepen the specific problems and obtain a methodological and decentralized work” (Statutes of the CONFECH, 2018, p. 4). The confederation was subdivided into four zones: North (whose federations and their study houses are located between the regions of Arica and Parinacota up to the Region of Coquimbo); Metropolitan (federations and houses of studies that are located in the Metropolitan region); Fifth (federations and study houses that are located in the fifth region); and South (federations and study houses that are located between the sixth to the twelfth region and fourteenth).

The CONFECH management is represented in the Executive Board, “body in charge of executing the will of the confederation and ensuring compliance with the objectives set in the plenary sessions” (Statutes of CONFECH, 2018, p. 5). This executive body is made up of the spokespersons of each zone.

CONFECH, the Relationship with the Ministry of Education of Chile, and the Student Intermediation and Representation Systems

The student representation system has specific characteristics due to the presence of a primarily representative organization (the CONFECH), with its internal plurality, in a potentially plural context that saw the emergence of parallel structures in moments of great mobilization and political conflict (Ancelovici and Guzmán-Concha, 2019, p. 986; Somma and Donoso, 2021, pp. 256–7). CONFECH can be described as an umbrella organization, a “confederation of federations” with an independent structure and entirely organized by the same activists that compose it, without

a national office or a ministerial financing system (Ancelovici and Guzmán-Concha, 2019, p. 983). It is possible to define CONFECH as a “social movement organization” (Klemenčič, 2012, pp. 7–8), with a political agenda that is not exclusively sectoral and a perfect structure to favor noninstitutional forms of representation.

Currently in Chile there is no direct relationship between the Ministry and CONFECH or any student organization; however, it is possible to establish communication with this entity from any social (guilds, unions, etc.) or student organization by gathering information; according to whatever the context, a request is drawn up in the form of a letter and sent to the Ministry to make the need or request visible, as appropriate. Entities such as the National Accreditation Commission (CNA) maintain a link from the ministry to the study houses, but it does not consider the federations but rather the university itself; however, since CONFECH is the body with the greatest representation at the student level, it has greater visibility when making requests or showing demands. Negotiation with the government and institutions is a “political” and “unregulated” practice (Bellei et al., 2014, p. 433).

The distance between the student organization and the institutions places CONFECH in an informal intermediation system, as theorized by Manja Klemenčič (2012, p. 12). Conflict and mobilization are essential instruments of student vindication in Chile, and the media relevance of the protests is connected to the influence of the student movement on decision-making processes. The student movement can represent a serious threat to the popularity of government leaders, also reaching “appeasement” operations, concessions, and contrary to repression (Somma and Donoso, 2021, pp. 257–8; Yuan, 2016, p. 12, 57–60). The partisan youth have a role in CONFECH, thanks to the correspondence of leaders of the student movement and of these organizations connected to the political parties. This double function of some leaders had specific relevance in the individual stories, with leaders of the student movement accessing electoral politics immediately after finishing their positions, as in the emblematic case of Camila Vallejo, of the Communist Party of Chile (McSherry and Mejia, 2011, p. 4; Palacios-Valladares, 2017, p. 607). The proximity to the partisan “polities” allowed faster access and an intensification of informal relations with political leaders, but since 2008 a detachment began, characterizing the student movement in a different way and strengthening its conflictive position and alternative to traditional power.

CONFECH and the Struggles of the Chilean People

The mobilizations that CONFECH has given in recent years have also been the struggles of the Chilean people and vice versa. We recognize the first great demonstration, the penguin revolution of 2006 followed by the student mobilization of 2011, where high school and university students confronted the government and parliamentarians demanding that it is the duty of the State to guarantee the right to education. In this mobilization, CONFECH played a role of spokesperson, coordination, and linking the mobilized students with institutions and the media.

Between the years 2012 and 2017, the confederation mobilized, pushing the historical demands of the student movement, but it did not achieve such a call as what happened during the year 2011. In turn, the organization joins various social demands by participating in the coordination of demonstrations with the “no more AFP” movement, which seeks to put an end to

the system of individual capitalization of pensions, and calls for the right to health, environmental justice, among others.

It is until 2018, when the streets of Chile overflow with women demonstrating, called by the Chilean feminist movement. The marches and interventions in the public space took place throughout the national territory, lasting the entire year. The demonstration was motivated by the reports of abuse and harassment that existed in university spaces and the few safeguards by the institutions. CONFECH supported these mobilizations; it also played a linking and coordinating role between the different universities. A national petition is made whose centrality aims to demand a nonsexist education, which is accompanied by various marches and interventions in the public space. The main events were on campus through the feminist marches. The results were protocols for the prevention of harassment and abuse on university campuses and sanctions for these cases (Somma and Donoso, 2021, p. 262).

In 2018, the aforementioned mobilization entitled “Feminist May” was carried out, in which all universities (traditional, private, and public) saw the feminist movement against abuses (sexist comments, education and division of careers between men and women) and these abuses happened in all the departments and levels of the university (oppression of the men who make up the teaching, civil servant, or student classes against the women of the university community); after that, the protocols against mistreatment, harassment, abuse, and discrimination. The student movement fights for nonsexist education and safe spaces for all (Sola and Quiroz, 2021).

The protocols are different with respect to the demand of each university. For example, some universities are trying to streamline complaints and sanctions since it took years, often more than five years, and there was no response, so this protocol sought to streamline and implement victim care centers, not only students but the entire community in general; in the year 2021 Law 21,369 is enacted that regulates sexual harassment, violence, and gender discrimination in the field of higher education (Biblioteca del Congreso, 2021).

During the year 2019, there were important mobilizations in the Valparaíso region. The first was called by the “8M” coordination on March 8 for the commemoration of the international day of working women, seeing the participation of more than one million of people to the protest. The second, the mobilization against climate change, called by “Fridays for Future,” which called on the government to take an active role in the organization of COP 25, to be held that same year in the region (Diario Sustentable, 03/10/2019).

In October of the same year—2019—high school students are called to “jump the turnstiles” of the Santiago metro, as a form of protest against the repeated increases in the public locomotion ticket. The call was so massive that the students managed to paralyze the country’s capital, to which President Sebastian Piñera reacted with strong repression and decreed that same day a state of emergency, leaving the governance and security of the metropolitan region in charge to the armed forces. The level of repression suffered by young people was such that the next day massive protests began throughout the country. Although the mobilization is initiated by high school students, both university students and all citizens join them, paralyzing the universities and organizing interventions in each territory.

Regarding the role of CONFECH, its struggles, and coordination with student organizations in Latin America, we highlight its link with the Continental Organization of Latin American and Caribbean Students Organization (OCLAE). OCLAE has as one of its main objectives to build

educational cooperation, as a key step in the social and cultural development of the countries of the region and in the advance of the Latin American integration project (Summary 2021; Borges des Santos, Lipari and Romero 2024).

In this way, it was possible to perceive the relevance of this construction to understand the Integration of Latin America, from the formation of the educational policies present in the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), as well as to analyze the relationship of these movements with the flags of the anti-imperialist struggles, against machismo, racism, homophobia, and neoliberalism in the region.

CONFECH's Members/Local Branches Organization, Mobilizations, and Interactions in Governance of Universities

The student federations have dynamic structures; there is no general statute of the operation of each of the federations that are in the CONFECH, beyond a general framework that does not conflict with its general guidelines. Each federation has a different organization, and under the material conditions of their respective houses of study, we can find that these dynamics are not very different from each other. This is evidenced in its form of organization that is mainly located in the assembly.

It is possible to show that the federations are the instance of maximum student representation, but also in most of the houses of studies they are followed by the student centers, which are organizations that carry out a much more specific job, attending to the student demands regarding careers that they attend. This same work is fundamental for the organization of the federations, since the student centers are the ones in charge of generating the political discussions, taking into account the national situations as well as the university ones, and once the synthesis of these discussions has been generated, they are taken to an instance of assemblies, meetings where—mainly—the presidencies of the student centers meet and dialogue in a general way to find points in common and points of discussion. These points can lead to internal work at the university or territorial level, or they can be taken to national bodies such as CONFECH.

This is just one example, since there are universities that have advanced in recognizing delegations or representatives by faculties, or a figure attached to the federation but elected by a different process such as the Superior Councils. These bodies have a specific relevance in the stakeholding and sometimes in the management at faculty level that is different in each university and not uniformed across the country.

For the qualitative analysis carried out, a survey was applied to sixteen higher education institutions, which were answered by their respective representative student bodies. First, it is important to point out that all student bodies belong to CONFECH; in addition to this, there is territorial representation since they are divided among eight of the sixteen Chilean regions. The Santiago metropolitan region is the most representative, including the national capital and a greater concentration of Higher Education Institutions.

There are seven universities dedicated to research as part of the academic training that students receive, five only to teaching and four are defined as another type of higher education institution. In addition to this, six of these institutions are public, nine private nonprofit, and one is traditionally private.

The number of students, whether undergraduate or postgraduate, is also a relevant fact to analyze and from this we can highlight that four universities have approximately between 500 and 5,000 students, of which there is an average of 3,300, and of these most are associated with the association student being their automatic membership to be enrolled in the institution and governed by internal regulations. On the other hand, universities with 5,000–10,000 students have voluntary membership and participation ranges from 85 percent to 100 percent. In addition to this, the universities that have between 10,000 and 20,000 students also have a voluntary system where the partition is symbolic and of these four universities, one of them has automatic or compulsory membership, which shows the difference in participation since this institution has a participation of 15,000 students and another volunteer lowered the participation to 2,500.

There are only two universities with more than 20,000 students and it just so happens that they are private nonprofit, one of them with 100 percent participation and the other with 70 percent.

Regarding the status of the organization, six of them are not registered as a legal entity and the other ten are administrative units. They all have a budget, be it in the form of grants or project financing, which is around 24,200 USD, none of them own real estate; however, only two of them do not have a work office.

It is important to note that there is a unanimous response that the work carried out by the leaders is not compensated monetarily; everything is voluntary. The internal organization decisions are totally in the hands of students in 50 percent of the universities and 68 percent have an independent bank account.

Regarding the composition of the student organization, it is possible to find that nine of the sixteen organizations have a composition marked by diversity, among which gender parity and dissidence stand out. There is no formal link between political parties and the organization, but those who make it up do have personal ties. The political agenda is decided autonomously in twelve of the sixteen study houses, three remain neutral in the face of events and only one disagrees.

They all disagree or remain neutral, having close ties to political parties. However, more than 50 percent have union ties. The political agenda of the year 2021 was marked by the return to classes, Covid protocols, mental health, and feminism.

The form of organization or struggle adopted is diverse and is based on two great facts, representation in institutional spaces and protest.

The level of participation in the last elections borders between 50 percent and 13 percent in most organizations and most of them maintain that participation has been decreasing within the last five years.

We can know that the student federations throughout the country have undergone various changes over time, but of all of them the CONFECH has been able to bring together, during the history of the student movement, the variety of public, private, and traditional universities, forms of organizations within the study houses, a wide spectrum of political thoughts, and even different ways in which they move. But within all this we can know that something in common

is that all the federations that make up CONFECH itself are totally voluntary and they give part of their life to the service of the students. Finally, the CONFECH is independent of any political party or political agenda and functions more as an intermediary entity between the student body and government institutions.

Conclusions

In the study presented above, we have confirmed that the Chilean student movement has actively supported the political events called by student organizations and other social movements in the country. This has led the confederation to be part of great social transformations. An example of this is the recent consolidation of the construction process of the new Constitution in the country, which defeated the authoritarianism of the previous Constitution created in 1980 and implemented in the dictatorial regime of Pinochet. However, it is necessary to indicate that this process is the result of the critical social mobilizations that took place in 2019, which was characterized by being transversal and not having a leader in front, where social and political organizations supported the citizen calls. This great mobilization raised demands that have been historically ignored by the political class, including educational related ones. The broad support earned by students led to phases of intense political participation of citizens, questioning neoliberal education and even the broader constitutional asset of the country.

It is evident that the validity of the neoliberal values still present in the Chilean Constitution had a direct impact on the country's educational system; the collection of monthly fees even in public institutions of higher education, added to the nonexistence of universal gratuity, demonstrates deeply rooted values of the commodification of higher education.

However, the organization of the student movement through its organizations and leaders contributed to the fact that in a short span of time the country suffered significant changes in these policies, and at the same time the possibility of building other paths toward popularization and universal access to education based on the Constitutional Convention.

The change from the policy of acquiring scholarships to the fight for education as a universal good is one of the main flags of the organization and is directly related to the participation of CONFECH in the construction of the new constitution. The participation of the organization was fundamental because beforehand they were already building a Constituent Assembly. However, through an agreement between the aforementioned political parties, CONFECH supported another solution due to their principle of the importance of defending free education, always fighting against the vision of education as a market good.

Answering our question, what is the role of CONFECH in the fight against neoliberalism in educational policies in Chile? The confederation has played a role of articulation at the national level, as a spokesperson for students and as a link with social movements.

Support for the election of Gabriel Boric, a former student leader and president of the FECH, as president of Chile, was initially highly criticized for his "peace" agreement, which was agreed behind closed doors for the construction of the Constitutional Convention given that a majority sought the installation of a Constituent Assembly; therefore, there was criticism for the form of said agreements, these being not defined by the citizenry but by the political parties of the

majority coalitions in Chile. Currently with him elected and the last months of the campaign, this movement was seen as something favorable and showed that it can have articulations for a greater good. After the result of the first round, CONFECH positioned itself, probably for the first time in its history, in such an assertive manner, supporting a presidential candidate, in which case Gabriel Boric would be the candidate and then elected president of Chile (Martínez and Moreno, 2021).

Thus, the Chilean student movement and its main coordinator CONFECH are among the main actors in national politics, contributing to the development of ideas with approaches based on equity, leading mobilizations on relevant issues in the area of education and the selection of the new political leadership in the country. If the years of government of the Socialist Party meant a change in strategies and a more open stance than in the years of the right-wing government, it will be interesting to see what the decisions of the student movement will be in the face of a left-wing government led by people from direct origin from the CONFECH and the student associations.

Acknowledgments

Authors' contributions to the development of the chapter are as follows:

Carla Trigo Argomedo has been responsible for helping coordinate research, proofreading, and development. Carla has also helped in the process of articulating the application of the LOC-SIHEG questionnaire with Chilean students.

Javiera Aymara Molina Barboza has been responsible for the general review of the chapter, search for sources, and co-author of the section "For a universal free policy in higher education, a brief review of the struggles of the Chilean student movement." The work of Javiera has also regarded the conclusion and the process of articulation of the application of the LOC-SIHEG questionnaire with Chilean students.

Nicolás Carrancio Fuentes has been responsible for student leaders gathering for the dissemination of the LOC-SIHEG questionnaire and for the processing of the information used in the investigation.

María Josefa Guzmán: She has been responsible for contacting the leaders for the application of the LOC-SIHEG questionnaire and for the processing of the information used in the investigation.

Giuseppe Lipari has been the main author of the section "CONFECH, the relationship with the Ministry of Education of Chile, and the student intermediation and representation systems." He has led the adaptation and dissemination of the LOC-SIHEG questionnaire, and supported the connection among the team and the principal investigator. Giuseppe has coordinated different revision steps and supervised the collection of sources, cooperating with the rest of the team on the preparation of the entire chapter.

Cresente Cristóbal Lizarbe Luna has been responsible for the section "The federations in debate: how do they organize and act?" Cresente has also helped in the process of articulating the application of the LOC-SIHEG questionnaire with Chilean students. He has also been responsible for the processing of the information used in the investigation.

Josefa González Palma has been co-author of the section "CONFECH members/local branches organization, mobilizations and interactions in governance of universities."

Igor Gonçalves Pereira has been the main author of the sections “Introduction”; “CONFECH and the struggles of the Chilean people”; and “The educational system and neoliberalism in focus.” He has been co-author of “For a universal free policy in higher education, a brief review of the struggles of the Chilean student movement” and “The organizational structure of CONFECH.” He directed the organization, structuring and revising the chapter from the dialogue with the leaders co-responsible for the construction of the article, as well as mediating the dialogue between the different members of the team.

References

- 24horas (2022). *Conftech convoca la primera movilización nacional durante Gobierno de Boric*. TVN. <https://www.24horas.cl/nacional/conftech-convoca-la-primera-movilizacion-nacional-durante-gobierno-de-boric-5225260>
- Ancelevici, Marcos and César Guzmán-Concha (2019). Struggling for education: The dynamics of student protests in Chile and Quebec. *Current Sociology* 67(7): 978–96. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011392119865763>
- Arriagada, María (2022). Tras un largo silencio y enarbolando la bandera del Apruebo, la Conftech planifica volver fuerte a las temáticas nacionales. *El Mostrador* <https://www.elmostrador.cl/destacado/2022/07/18/tras-un-largo-silencio-y-enarbolando-la-bandera-del-apruebo-la-conftech-planifica-volver-fuerte-a-las-tematicas-nacionales/> (accessed July 23, 2022).
- Bellei, Cristián, Cristian Cabalin and Víctor Orellana (2014). The 2011 Chilean student movement against neoliberal educational policies. *Studies in Higher Education* 39(3): 426–40.
- Biblioteca Del Congreso (2019, mayo 6). *Ley General de Educación*. Biblioteca del Congreso Nacional de Chile (BCN). <https://www.bcn.cl/leyfacil/recurso/ley-general-de-educacion>
- Biblioteca Del Congreso (2021). *Ley 21369—REGULA EL ACOSO SEXUAL, LA VIOLENCIA Y LA DISCRIMINACIÓN DE GÉNERO EN EL ÁMBITO DE LA EDUCACIÓN SUPERIOR*. www.bcn.cl/leychile,2021. <https://www.bcn.cl/leychile>
- Bobadilla González, S. (2023). Former student leader expresses his concern about the CAE. *La Tribuna*. Retrieved from <https://www.latribuna.cl/educacion/2023/03/14/ex-dirigente-estudiantil-expresa-su-preocupacion-por-el-cae.html>
- Borges des Santos, B., Lipari, G. and C. Romero (2024). Regional student movement in latin and South America: The organización continental latinoamericana y Caribeña de Estudiantes —OCLAE (Latin American and Caribbean Continental Student Organization). In Klemenčič, M. (ed.), *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Student Politics and Representation in Higher Education*. London: Bloomsbury Publishers.
- Bravo, D. (April 7, 2020). Movimiento por la beca de alimentación llamó a universalización del beneficio. *ADN*. Retrieved from <https://www.adnradio.cl/nacional/2022/04/07/movimiento-beca-alimentacion-pide-universalizacion-beneficio.html>
- Campos-Martínez, Javier and Dayana Olavarría (2020). Learning from Chile’s student movement: Youth organising and neoliberal reaction. In Choudry, Aziz and Vally, Salim (eds.), *The University and Social Justice: Struggles Across the Globe* (pp. 98–115). Pluto Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvx077w4.10>
- Cárdenas Neira, Camila (2016). El Movimiento Estudiantil Chileno (2006–2016) y El Uso de La Web Social: Nuevos Repertorios de Acción e Interacción Comunicativa. *Ultima Década* 24(45): 93–116. http://www.scielo.cl/scielo.php?script=sci_abstract&pid=S0718-22362016000200006&lng=es&nrm=iso&tlng=es
- Cooperativa.cl (2011). Gobierno ofreció a Conftech el congelamiento de los aranceles 2012. *Cooperativa.cl*. <https://www.cooperativa.cl/noticias/pais/educacion/movimiento-estudiantil/gobierno-ofrecio-a-conftech-el-congelamiento-de-los-aranceles-2012/2011-10-07/073459.html>

- CONFECH (2018). Estatutos de la CONFECH. *Docer Argentina*. <https://docer.com.ar/doc/ncx0es8> (accessed July 23, 2022)
- CONFECH (2022). CONFECH LLAMA A APROBAR LA NUEVA CONSTITUCIÓN—Portal del Colegio de Profesores de Chile. *Colegio de Profesoras y Profesores de Chile*. <https://www.colegiodeprofesores.cl/2022/07/12/confech-llama-a-aprobar-la-nueva-constitucion/> (accessed July 23, 2022).
- CRUCH (sf). *Nuestra Historia*. Consejo de Rectores de las Universidades Chilenas. Recuperado 7 de enero de 2022, de <https://www.consejodirectores.cl>
- Cuevas Medina, Raúl (2018). “Cuestionamos este sistema político forjado por Pinochet”: la representación del pasado reciente en la confederación de estudiantes de Chile durante las movilizaciones del año 2011. *Aletheia* 9(17). <https://www.proquest.com/docview/2217011908/abstract/CEF7E3E99C544AD5PQ/1>
- Diario Sustentable. (2019). COP 25 Chile lanzó Festivales que recorrerán las 15 ciudades regionales del país. *Diario Sustentable*. <https://www.diariosustentable.com/2019/10/cop-25-chile-lanzo-festivales-que-recorran-las-15-ciudades-regionales-del-pais/>
- El mostrador (Septiembre 2017). Muñoz, Fernando. Participación triestamental en las universidades estatales: ¿hacia dónde se dirige el proceso legislativo? <https://www.elmostrador.cl/noticias/opinion/2017/09/22/participacion-triestamental-en-las-universidades-estatales-hacia-donde-se-dirige-el-proceso-legislativo/>
- El Mostrador, Mayo (2022). “Hemos decidido mirar hacia el futuro con esperanza”: Comisión de la CC aprueba propuesta de preámbulo de la nueva Constitución. <https://www.elmostrador.cl/dia/2022/05/27/hemos-decidido-mirar-hacia-el-futuro-con-esperanza-comision-de-la-cc-aprueba-propuesta-de-preambulo-de-la-nueva-constitucion/>https://www.mifuturo.cl/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Informe-Matricula-Pregrado-2021_SIES.pdf
- Fleet, Nicolas and Guzmán-Concha, César (2017). Mass higher education and the 2011 student movement in Chile: Material and ideological implications. *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 36(2): 160–76. <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/blar.12471>
- Foro Ciudadano, Septiembre (2011). ¿Cómo se organizan los estudiantes en Chile? <https://www.forociudadano.cl/programas-de-radio/%C2%BFcomo-se-organizan-los-estudintes-a-lo-largo-de-todo-chile/>
- Harvey, David (2008). Neoliberalismo: Historia y. Implicaciones. Sao Paulo, Ediciones Loyola.
- House of Representatives Press Center. (October 11, 2022). Educación aprobó garantizar contenido integral en horas de libre disposición de la JEC. Retrieved from <https://www.camara.cl/cms/noticias/2022/10/11/educacion-aprobo-garantizar-contenido-integralen-horas-de-libre-disposicion-de-la-jec/>
- (INFORME). https://www.mifuturo.cl/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Informe-Matricula-Pregrado-2021_SIES.pdf
- Jara, Camila (2021). A 10 Años Del Movimiento Estudiantil de 2011: Especialistas U. de Chile Analizan Sus Repercusiones En La Actualidad. *Universidad de Chile*. <https://www.uchile.cl/noticias/176399/especialistas-analizan-el-movimiento-estudiantil-de-2011-y-sus-efectos>
- JGM, Radio. Lucha Baes convoca marcha para el 27 de mayo: ¿qué exigen?. *Radio JGM* (2022). <https://radiojgm.uchile.cl/lucha-baes-convoca-marcha-para-el-27-de-mayo-que-exigen/>
- Klemenčič, Manja (2012), Student representation in western europe: Introduction to the special issue. *European Journal of Higher Education* 2(1): 2–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21568235.2012.695058>
- La Izquierda Diario, Marzo (2022). Movimiento estudiantil. 25 de marzo: El Confech debe exigir que la Convención Constitucional apruebe educación gratuita, democrática y no sexista. <https://www.laizquierdadiario.cl/25-de-marzo-El-Confech-debe-exigir-que-la-Convencion-Constitucional-apruebe-educacion-gratuita>
- Martínez, Catalina and Moreno, Deborah (2021). Confech Respalda Candidatura de Gabriel Boric de Cara a La Segunda Vuelta: “Su Programa Busca Crear Un Chile Más Justo, Equitativo y Libre”. *La Tercera*. November 27, 2021. section Política. <https://www.latercera.com/politica/noticia/confech-respalda-candidatura-de-gabriel-boric-de-cara-a-la-segunda-vuelta-su-programa-busca-crear-un-chile-mas-justo-equitativo-y-libre/K76CMAQ6KVEYDCNCUWOEBB366M/> (accessed July 1, 2022).

- Martínez, Sandra (2022). Confech busca que fin del CAE se incluya en Ley de Presupuestos 2022 para “no esperar 4 años más”. *biobiochile.cl*. <https://www.biobiochile.cl/noticias/nacional/región-metropolitana/2022/04/09/confech-busca-que-fin-del-cae-se-incluya-en-ley-de-presupuestos-esperamos-no-esperar-4-anos-mas.shtml> (accessed July 23, 2022).
- McSherry, J. Patrice and Molina Mejía, Raúl (2011). Chilean students challenge Pinochet’s legacy. *NACLA Report on the Americas* 44(6): 29–34. <http://www.proquest.com/docview/917755063/abstract/979EEA0B58394928PQ/1>
- Mella Polanco, Marcelo, Ríos Jara, Héctor and Rivera Gallardo, Ricardo (2016). Condiciones orgánicas y correlaciones de fuerza del movimiento estudiantil chileno. Una aproximación desde la Confech (2011–2015). *Revista Izquierdas* 27: 124–60. <http://www.izquierdas.cl/images/pdf/2016/n27/6.Mella.y.otros.pdf>
- Mella Polanco, Marcelo (2016). Composición, Correlaciones de Fuerza y Elaboración de Estrategias En El Pleno CONFECH (2011–2015). *Última Década* 24(45): 75–92. http://www.scielo.cl/scielo.php?script=sci_abstract&pid=S0718-22362016000200005&lng=es&nrm=iso&tlng=es
- MINISTERIO DE EDUCACIÓN DE CHILE (MINEDUC) (2021, 8 junio). *Matrícula de educación superior aumenta en 2021: total supera 1.200.000 estudiantes*. Educación Superior MINEDUC. Recuperado 12 de enero de 2022, de. <https://educacionsuperior.mineduc.cl/2021/06/08/matricula-de-educacion-superior-aumenta-en-2021-total-supera-1-200-000-estudiantes/>
- Ministry of Education. (2022). Subsecretaría de Educación Superior recibe en La Moneda a voceros Confech para abordar demandas en el marco de mesa de trabajo con estudiantes. Retrieved from <https://valparaiso.mineduc.cl/2022/03/28/subsecretaria-de-educacion-superior-recibe-en-la-moneda-a-voceros-confech-para-abordar-demandas-en-el-marco-de-mesa-de-trabajo-con-estudiantes/>
- Montes, Rocío. La nueva ola feminista chilena explota en las universidades. *El País*. May 16, 2018. section America. https://elpais.com/internacional/2018/05/16/america/1526477379_243906.html
- Mostrador (2020). *Confech inicia este martes paro online: acusa que el Gobierno no ha entregado respuestas a los alumnos durante la pandemia*. El Mostrador. <https://www.elmostrador.cl/dia/2020/09/01/confech-inicia-este-martes-paro-online-acusa-que-el-gobierno-no-ha-entregado-respuestas-a-los-alumnos-durante-la-pandemia/>
- Mostrador (2020). «Esto está recién empezando»: Camila Vallejo y Karol Cariola desde la masiva marcha feminista en el 8M. El Mostrador. <https://www.elmostrador.cl/noticias/multimedia/2020/03/08/esto-esta-recien-empezando-camila-vallejo-y-karol-cariola-desde-la-masiva-marcha-feminista-en-el-8m/>
- Mostrador (2021). Confech solicita aumento del monto de beca de alimentación: no se ha reajustado en nueve años. *El Mostrador*. <https://www.elmostrador.cl/dia/2021/09/20/confech-solicita-aumento-del-monto-de-beca-de-alimentacion-no-se-ha-reajustado-en-nueve-anos/> (accessed July 23, 2022).
- Mostrador. (2022). Primera marcha de la Confech del año: estudiantes exigen el aumento de los montos Junaeb. *El Mostrador*. <https://www.elmostrador.cl/dia/2022/03/25/primera-marcha-de-la-confech-del-ano-jornada-de-manifestaciones-estudiantiles-exigen-el-aumento-de-los-montos-junaeb/> (accessed July 23, 2022).
- Noticias, U.B.B. (2015). *En Cuenta Anual, Rector expuso mirada y aporte de la UBB al entorno regional y nacional*. Noticias Universidad del Bío-Bío. <http://noticias.ubiobio.cl/2015/04/10/en-cuenta-anual-rector-expuso-mirada-y-aporte-de-la-ubb-al-entorno-regional-y-nacional/>
- Palacios-Valladares, Indira (2017). Internal movement transformation and the diffusion of student protest in Chile. *Journal of Latin American Studies* 49(3): 579–607. <http://www.proquest.com/docview/1920407183/abstract/4E25184802CE4B59PQ/1>
- Penaglia, Francesco and Mejías, Silvanía (2019). El conflicto estudiantil chileno y sus efectos políticos. *Revista Polis México* 15(2): 7–38. <https://polismexico.izt.uam.mx/index.php/rp/article/view/667>
- Ponce Lara, Camila (2020). The Chilean student feminist movement of 2018: Continuities and ruptures between feminisms and global waves. *Izquierdas* 49: 1554–70. http://www.scielo.cl/scielo.php?script=sci_abstract&pid=S0718-50492020000100280&lng=en&nrm=iso&tlng=en
- Romancini, Richard (2015). Activismo y juventud: protestas estudiantiles chilenas (2006 y 2011) y brasileñas São Paulo, 2019.

- Romero, Edgar (2019). El paro de docentes en Chile entra en su sexta semana, ¿qué piden los profesores?. *RT en Español*. <https://actualidad.rt.com/actualidad/320504-razones-paro-docente-chile-seis-semanas>
- Romero Reyes, Rodolfo (2021). *La calle es nuestra*. <https://oceansur.com/catalogo/titulos/la-calle-es-nuestra> (accessed February 23, 2022).
- Somma, Nicolás M. and Donoso, Sofía (2021). Chile's student movement: Strong, detached, influential—and declining? In Cini, Lorenzo, Donatella della Porta and César Guzmán-Concha, *Social Movements and Transformation* (eds.), *Student Movements in Late Neoliberalism: Dynamics of Contention and Their Consequences* (pp. 241–67). Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-75754-0_10
- Sola-Morales, S. and Quiroz Carvajal, C. (2021). El Mayo feminista chileno de 2018, en la cresta de la cuarta ola. Uso y apropiación de las redes sociales. *Revista Punto Género* (15): 201–32. <https://doi.org/10.5354/0719-0417.2021.64413>
- Tallardà, Laura Andrés (2019). Los estudiantes: los protagonistas de la revolución en Chile. *La Vanguardia*. <https://www.lavanguardia.com/vida/junior-report/20191114/471602822586/estudiantes-protagonistas-revolucion-chile.html>
- Tinta, Limón (March 2021). Colección: Pensar en movimiento—Dossier “Chile despertó, La revuelta antineoliberal”. *Tinta Limón*. ISBN: 978-987-3687-76-1 ISBN: 978-987-3687-76-1. <https://tintalimon.com.ar/libro/chile-despertó/>. Consultado el: 09 ene. 2022.
- Unidiversidad (2021). 18 de octubre: A dos años del levantamiento social que cambió la historia de Chile. *Unidiversidad—sitio de noticias UNCUYO*. <https://www.unidiversidad.com.ar/a-dos-anos-del-levantamiento-social-en-chile> (accessed July 23, 2022).
- Villalobos-Ruminott, Sergio (2012). The Chilean Winter. *Radical Philosophy* 171: 11–15. <https://www.radicalphilosophy.com/commentary/the-chilean-winter>
- WordPress Confech. ¿Quiénes somos?. Octubre (2012). <https://confech.wordpress.com/quienes-somos/>
- Yuan, Weijun (2016). *Rodar con los Golpes: State responses and protest tactics in the Chilean student movements (2011–2015)* (unpublished MA). <http://www.proquest.com/docview/1836098185/abstract/442879111D584998PQ/1> (accessed 1 July 2022).

Colombian Student Movement: A Force for Dialogue and Struggle in Colombian Politics

Amanda Harumy

Introduction

In this chapter, the elements that characterize the Colombian student movement are presented: its history, organization, and political impact, specifically analyzing the movement's performance in democratic experiences, such as the Final Peace Agreement, the Popular Uprisings, and the Historic Pact. First, a brief historical contextualization of social movements is presented. This is followed by a theoretical analysis of how the student movement is organized as an active social structure in Colombian historical processes. The performance of social movements at the time of the 2010–16 Peace Dialogues and the movement's performance in the popular uprisings of 2019 and 2021 and the Historic Pact will also be addressed. The general objective is to understand the ability of student movements to act with the main political structures of the country. This chapter explores the participation of Colombian student movements as a factor of political mobilization in the country and in Latin America.

Latin America experienced a progressive and democratic cycle called Onda Rosa (“The Pink Wave”) or Onda Progressistas. A period of rise of the so-called “progressive governments” began with the victory of Hugo Chavez in 1998 and materialized as a movement when nine countries in the region elected presidents who identified with the progressive ideas. Compared to other countries such as Venezuela, Argentina, Bolivia, Ecuador, Uruguay, and Brazil, Colombia was not electorally present in this cycle of social and political advances, as its governments have always been aligned with neoliberal agenda. However, social movements have always resisted neoliberal agenda in education and defended the need for structural changes in Colombian politics. The Latin American student movement is a reference and an example of this struggle, as it has strong traditions of organization and mobilization. Colombia is a country of extremes in Latin America. It has deep relationships with violence, persecution of social movements, and state terrorism. Thus, analyzing the Colombian student movement is of great relevance to understand the new forms of resistance in Latin America. The main argument in this chapter is that the Colombian student movement has played a prominent role in the main democratic events in the country: the Peace Process, Popular Uprisings, and the Historical Pact.

In recent decades, the Colombian student movement has advanced in the accumulation of forces and is currently a widely recognized and legitimate social movement in the country. The

rise of the student movement started after the demolition of a higher education reform proposal in 2011. With large street mobilizations throughout the country and protests that stopped all public universities, students returned to being an example of unity in the left (Lobo Silva and Chagas, 2013). In search of its specific political objective—to interrupt the process of the higher education reform project—the student movement acts as a mobilizing agent with a national geographic scope and mobilizes large centers such as Bogotá, Medellín, and Cali. Its youth expressions around politics are characterized by imagination and creativity, public discussion, and coverage of different spaces, from the institutional to the street (Herrera, 2010).

To fully capture the characteristics and the role of student movement in Colombia, the chapter analyzes the history of the student movement, how it is organized, and who are the current mobilizers in Colombian politics. Data was obtained through interviews with leaders of the main entities of the student movement, to understand if students also have a voice in universities, how they interact with the institution, and how this impacts the democratization of universities as key social institutions. In Colombia there is not a single well-structured national entity, there are four main entities: Asociación Colombiana de Estudiantes Universitarios (ACEU), Federación de Estudiantes Universitarios (FEU), Asociación Colombiana de Representantes Estudiantiles (ACREES), and Federación Universitaria Nacional (FUN). Currently, FUN is paralyzed to restructure. Thus, ACEU and FEU were selected as central actors in this respective analysis, as they are recognized and linked entities to OCLAE Latin American and Caribbean Continental Organization of Students. The other two entities were also consulted and analyzed to complement the investigation. Three interviews were carried out with ACEU, FEU, and ACREES, respectively: Kevin Siza Iglesias, Secretary General de la ACEU, interviewed on January 11, 2022, in a virtual way by the Google MEET platform; Allison Morales Silva, national secretary of human rights, interviewed on March 23, 2022 by the GOOGLE MEET platform; and Cristian Fernando Cerne Castano, president of ACREES, interviewed by the MEET platform.

All interviews were guided by the questions available in the NAT-SIHEG Survey and the interviews were recorded and the transcripts are available for consultation. In addition, to characterize the performance of the student movement in the peace process, a survey carried out in a field work in Colombia in 2018 was used, where three political leaders gave face-to-face interviews (Oliveira, 2019).

Brief History of Social Struggles in Colombia

Latin America has common historical, political, economic, and social formations. However, each country carries specificities of how these structural elements are related. Colombia, for example, has a strong relationship between politics and violence. There are several moments in history of state violence against social movements. The country's history is marked by bloody periods, in which violence became a reality and a constant factor of attack on the population. From 1948 to 1965, there was a period called by historians as “La Violencia,” where the conflict between liberals and conservatives resulted in numerous deaths.

The phenomenon of this period of intense violence in the region was marked in deep layers of society. This period is directly related to the emergence of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia—People's Army (FARC-EP), in 1964. Colombia has been facing a civil conflict

between guerrillas for decades—the main ones being the FARC and the National Liberation Army (ELN)—and the State. State violence is linked to a complexity of actors in Colombian society, the dispute over land and the persecution of social leaders, which is also a constant fact in the country's history of violence. The violence of the State is linked to a complexity of actors in Colombian society, a dispute over land and the persecution of social leaders, which is also a constant fate in the history of violence in the country. Colombia is currently experiencing a new period of extreme violence, for there have been countless massacres in the country. Comparing 2018 and 2021, the homicide rate increased, there were 957 leaders, leaders and defenders of two human rights assassinated from August 7, 2018, to August 1, 2022 (INDEPAZ, 2022). This situation of persistence of armed violence is associated with deterioration of two social indicators of wellbeing of the population and shows the precariousness of policies (INDEPAZ, 2022). The return of intense violence in Colombia takes place in a post-Peace Agreement context and has many complex factors. In fact, there is a dispute over territory, power, and influence behind the massacres, which involve the State, political mafias, paramilitarism, drug trafficking, guerrillas, and dissident groups from the FARC.

Before going into a specific analysis of the way in which the Colombian student movements are organized and operated, it is necessary to illustrate the history of the struggles of social movements. Social movements have strengthened themselves as political protagonists in peace dialogues. In this way, it is possible to believe that where there is great economic inequality, social conflicts, and violence, fertile ground is created for a massive and popular uprising. The recent history of Latin America shows us that these experiences are positive for democratic structures and that important leaders have emerged from them for the transformation of the region. We must also remember that Colombian social movements have the political accumulation to resist yet another onslaught of neoliberalism and will be strong actors in Latin America's political resistance.

Education as a Commodity

Before describing the Colombian student movement, it is necessary to present the social and political context in which the Colombian education policies are developed. In the 1990s, in the midst of the political complexities of peace negotiations, which aimed to overcome the stage of armed conflict, Colombian politics advanced in the construction of a constituent process that aimed to modernize the State. However, this process was guided by the ideological guidelines of neoliberalism and the result was the interpretation of higher education as a commodity and not a fundamental right (interview, K. Iglesias, ACEU, January 11, 2022).

In 1991, the National Constituent Assembly advanced with the modernization of the State, but the neoliberal vision of this process resulted in the absence of Colombian higher education as a fundamental right. The reality of Colombian higher education is the result of a profound process of neoliberalism in the country. Education, and more specifically higher education, becomes a commodity, which only social classes that can afford it have access to. In the Law 30 of the new Colombian constitution, higher education is interpreted as a public service and not a fundamental right (interview, K. Iglesias, ACEU, January 11, 2022).

In 1992 Colombia approved a Law that guarantees university autonomy and democratization of the university. Even though it represents progress for the guarantee of higher education in the

country, it was written in a vertical manner, from top to bottom, as Colombia has no structured participation of students representation in its legislative bodies (interview, K. Iglesias, ACEU, January 11, 2022).

At the same time, Colombian higher education built on neoliberal guidelines fosters a reality of unequal access and extreme difficulty for students with economic vulnerability to remain. The number of public universities is not enough for the demand of the Colombian youth for enrollment. As so, private education finds a very propitious scenario to establish itself as the norm for higher education in Colombia, and creates a lucrative market for these private institutions. In other words, “the education market grew on top of the public deficit” (interview, K. Iglesias, ACEU, January 11, 2022).

Another complex and necessary point to be understood is the financing of Colombian public universities, which are public but not free. State funding is determined from the consumer price index. However, this pass-through formula proves to be flawed as the funding does not match the demand for growth in university spending. Colombian universities are deficient and the State has large debts with this sector (interview, K. Iglesias, ACEU, January 11, 2022).

The student struggles of the late 1970s returned in the 1990s. The student movement began to recover in 1997 and ten years later with greater strength. In the midst of this inflection, a new reform of higher education emerged, the Law 30 of 1992. Although the Gaviria government did not prioritize this point with due weight, it was necessary to adapt university departments to the new global and international context (Archila, 2012). The aforementioned law tried to reorganize the Higher Education System, defining education as a “public” service; it is worth noting that it understands it as a service and not as a right (Archila, 2012).

In addition to strengthening the State’s surveillance role—in the face of the blind proliferation of higher education establishments—formal bodies were created, coordinating agencies such as CESU (National Council for Higher Education).

The 1991 Constitution opened the door to a participatory nomination process in its official character, but in reality the State reserves the last word through the Higher University Council (Article 64) (Archila, 2012). The effects of this law on student representation in the governance of universities in practice prove to be insignificant because student participation does not actually have the power to influence decisions. Student representation in university bodies does not function fully as guided by university autonomy, in the case of Colombia the autonomy established by Law 30 is limited to the financial character and not political and democratic (Archila, 2012). State or official universities will receive annual contributions from the state budget and regional entities, which always mean a constant increase in weight based on the income and expenditure budget in force since 1993 (Archila, 2012). It is evident, therefore, that society, through a political constitution, recognizes the autonomy of universities, demanding that the budget that the State must allocate does not have conditions that come from the public power, nor from its decree (Archila, 2012). In other words, the Congress of the Republic, much less the National Government, does not have the power to impose conditions that violate the University’s autonomy, that is, that affect the fundamental core of the University’s guiding principles, subordinated to the budgetary allocation, and the State is constitutionally obliged to achieve the objectives and goals that measure aspects of a situation marked by a certain political item (Archila, 2012).

Colombian students to study at public universities must pay an enrollment fee, which varies according to the social stratum of each student. The exemption from these tuition fees was one

of the main agendas of the student movement in the pandemic, with the ZERO REGISTRATION campaign, which was victorious (interview, K. Iglesias, ACEU, January 11, 2022).

Who Represents or Seeks to Represent Students?

The history of organization of the student movement is permeated by the existing political setbacks in the country. The reality of armed conflict and state terrorism has historically weakened the structuring of Colombian social movements, with the student movement in the same way. Currently, there are representative student organizations, but there is no national entity that has a unit (interview, K. Iglesias, ACEU, January 11, 2022).

The student movement is a complex actor, and for a long time (1920–80) this sector was unable to build long-term student organizations. Organizations fragmented and dissolved. There is no single entity of federal representation in Colombia; this factor is a reflection of the context of democratic fragility and political instabilities that the country faces; these weaknesses disrupt the student movement (interview, K. Iglesias, ACEU, January 11, 2022).

The structural fragility in the formation of the student movement made this political force adapt itself into a unit of action. The Colombian student movement even had some organizations, but in the 1980s there was a political crisis and the movement fell apart. In the early 1990s, there was practically no student movement. In 1992, a call to students took place in Barranquilla with the aim of building a space for debate on the challenges of the student movement in the face of neoliberalism. In 1994 ANDES was created. In 1995, ANEU was called, which at that time was not an organization but a meeting place. The idea was to build unity in the student movement, with its different political forces, such as Camilismo (Camilo Torres) linked to liberation theology, anarchists, environmentalists, communists, and others (interview, K. Iglesias, ACEU, January 11, 2022).

During the period of Andrés Pastranas' government (1998–2002), Plan Colombia was created (and approved by the US Congress). This strategy intensified the military logic and boosted extermination in the Colombian conflict. In addition to the intensification of the conflict, the government also represented a deepening of neoliberalism and economic crisis. At that time, the student movement promoted dialogues in the face of crises and debates about the struggles for peace.

In 1998, the Congress of Cartagena took place, the first national congress of students, and on May 20, 1998, an organization was created: Associação Colombiana de Estudiantes Universitarios (ACEU). This organization was founded by Maoist communist sectors and for three to four years the different political forces developed discussions. However, ruptures began to emerge that unfolded in establishing new organizations. In 2005, the Federation of University Students (FEU) emerged as an expression of the rupture of political forces (interview, K. Iglesias, ACEU, January 11, 2022). The biggest challenge for the Colombian student movement, in terms of organizational structure, has been to achieve national unity. As outlets for these ruptures, the movement created a logic and unity of action, while not achieving unity as an organization. Thus, the CNEU—National Coordination of University Students was born, with the aim of coordinating the unity of action of the different sectors of the Colombian student movement (interview, K. Iglesias, ACEU, January 11, 2022).

During the governments of Álvaro Uribe (2002–10), the president continued the Plan Colombia and kept a militarized approach to the conflict. Social movements were also targeted by his government—many leaders of the student movement were persecuted, arrested, and even murdered as a result of the political ambiance that was established. Thus, from 2007 to 2011 the student movement was dormant. In 2011, with the victory of President Juan Manuel Santos (2011–18), social movements were able to return to their activities more safely, as the government’s position was to support the construction of the Final Peace Agreement. This period became known as peace dialogues, when the social movements were organized around the theme of peace. The Colombian student movement was an important actor in this period of Colombian history. They were part of the Patriotic March, a social and political movement that acted as an umbrella for social movements to defend peace and social justice. At that time, the student movement had a significant role in the organization of the political opposition (interview, K. Iglesias, ACEU, January 11, 2022).

In 2011, the National Emergency Meeting, convened by the initiative of student organizations, debated mechanisms to create a firm political opposition. It is important to highlight that with the absence of a unitary national entity, the student movement formulated other mobilization strategies. There exists no national entity with a direct organizational structure in each university. Currently, each student movement fraction operates in universities independently, each with their separate organizational entities and mobilization processes. The main mobilization tool is the Student Assemblies, which act as a direct political mobilization in student spaces (interview, K. Iglesias, ACEU, January 11, 2022). As suggested by K. Iglesias, “Student Assemblies have been the central methodology for mobilizing student struggles, they bring an organicity and breadth to the mobilizations. All students are invited to participate in this space, which promotes debates and discussions on the actions to be taken. Finally, decisions are made by voting. This is the form of direct democracy of the Colombian student mobilization” (interview, K. Iglesias, ACEU, January 11, 2022).

Main National Student Associations within the Colombian Student Movement

The Colombian student movement does not have a single national entity of representation. In its complex context of ruptures and formation of new entities, it is possible to highlight at least three main active national student associations. Their main differences are ideological and reflect the country’s political reality. Their social agendas are politically similar, but divided according to their partisan and ideological proximity.

Asociación Colombia de Estudiantes Universitarios (ACEU)

According to the organization’s official statute, ACEU is a nonprofit legal entity. It presents itself as a union organization of university students and technical and technological institutions. They defend direct, combative, feminist and anti-patriarchal, autonomous, diverse democracy. The

organization presents itself as being democratic, pluralistic, humanistic, and academic, nonprofit and with a common identity, which works for its affiliates and the entire community. It is open to all university students who voluntarily desire and lubricate its principles, objectives, and platform (ACEU Official Statute, 2019).

The Colombian Association of University Students, ACEU, emerged in 1998 at the First Constitutive Congress held at the University of Cartagena in May 1998. It is important to note that this constitution was preceded by a process of strong student dynamics and mobilization, which began with ANEU (National Assembly of University Students) in 1992 (interview, K. Iglesias, ACEU, January 11, 2022). This space was the first step in the confluence of national and local organizational experiences that decided to form an organization of a broad and democratic nature that took as a reference the defense of education as a fundamental right (interview, K. Iglesias, ACEU, January 11, 2022). This congress was the first to organize various sectors of Colombian society from local and national groups by the university. In the political field, it brought together different references of political organization, such as the liberal youth belonging to the Colombian liberal party, the Communist Youth, and other different democratic and youth organizations that have important opinions within the Colombian university. Furthermore, it presented a political agenda which included The Defense of Public Education as a fundamental human right that must be guaranteed by the State, National Sovereignty, a Negotiated Political Solution to the Conflict, Student Welfare, Academic Quality and a University committed to the national reality, with a critical awareness of itself and the nation (interview, K. Iglesias, ACEU, January 11, 2022). These political issues are reflected in the current statutes of ACEU which reaffirms the organization's principles and commitment to "take a stand on national problems," respect for "diversity as recognition of the different dynamics of the student body"; "feminism and the anti-patriarchal struggle as a perspective of a non-sexist and inclusive education"; "criticism and self-criticism as a constant and permanent evaluation"; "autonomy and self-construction detached from external guidelines of any kind"; "solidarity with the struggles and demands of the social and popular sectors"; "internationalism and anti-imperialism"; "respect for people regardless of race, sex, gender, sexual orientation, class, religion, abilities; diversity and political orientation"; "consensus as the main decision-making mechanism"; and "defense of women and sexual diversity in favor of the integral construction of a new country" (ACEU Official Statute, 2019).

According to its official statute, ACEU's assets consist of (1) all the furniture and buildings acquired, which were acquired and contributed by its members, and the financial income obtained from them; (2) all goods and services that you receive as donations, contributions, contributions, the legacies of a natural or legal person, national or international and the income obtained from them; and (3) the solidary contributions of the members and those who receive them, natural or legal persons, national or international (ACEU Official Statute, 2019).

The Colombian Association of University Students has three national bodies of direction, execution, and control: (1) The National Congress of University Students (CNEU); (2) The National Council of Students (JNE); and (3) The National Executive Committee (CEN). The CNEU is ACEU's highest political guidance body. It is composed of a delegation from each university that obeys the national, regional, and local dynamics of the Association and other associations of the student movement in the different HEIs. The CNEU is held periodically every 4 years and extraordinarily when the National Council deems it necessary (ACEU Official Statute, 2019).

Federación de Estudiantes Universitarios(FEU)

The Federation of University Students of Colombia defends the transformation of higher education in the country, seeking to increase access to higher education. The federation acts as a school of thought within the universities, being informative to reflect on the duty of society.

We are the Colombian Association of University Students and we have fought for 23 years to defend critical, creative, transformative, anti-patriarchal and diverse education. Historical and organizational structure of FEU Colombia: FEU claims and defends the rights and ideals of the Colombian student body and is committed to the struggle to conquer them. FEU works and fights for a Higher Education that trains free men and women, fully funded by the State, Autonomous, Democratic with academic freedom, with academic excellence, generator of scientific knowledge understood as a right and not as a service, according to a project of Sovereign Nation with Social Justice. FEU is committed to the struggle for a better Colombia, in which the ethnic, cultural and religious diversity that constitutes and enriches our country is recognized. The construction of a New Nation requires an Education and a Student Organization according to the historical moment in which it is constituted.

(FEU Colombia Statute, 2019)

According to the FEU Colombia statute, the entity is defined as a trade union organization, with a federative structure and dynamics. Its political agenda shows commitment to fight for the rights of Colombian students who are dedicated to promoting the unity of the Colombian student movement. They defend a new political reality for Colombia with social justice, freedom, and sovereignty (FEU Colombia Statute, 2019).

Its operational structure is composed of a national committee with representatives responsible one per region, north, northwest, east, southeast, south, and center. There are also other delegates and secretariats for various operations, including communication, education training, gender equality, and general organization. The structure of La FEU Colombia is organized as follows: (1) National Congress; (2) National Assembly of Delegates; (3) National Committee of Delegates; and (4) Territorial Coordination (FEU Colombia Statute, 2017).

The entity's budget and assets, according to Article 7 of the statute, are made up of contributions from public or private, legal or natural entities that, by way of donation, deliver any movable or immovable property or some type of monetary contribution to FEU Colombia. There are also contributions from FEU Colombia members, funding activities, and the CORPO FEU society, and there is a legally constituted CORPO FEU corporation (FEU Colombia Statute, 2017).

The main concrete political action defended by the movement is the Higher Education Law 30 (1992) that seeks to change Articles 86 and 87 on public universities. Since 1994, the higher education remained unchanged, FEU supports the Bill that proposes a real investment in the implementation of permanence aid, scholarships, and policies to improve welfare conditions for students. Currently there are discount credits and scholarships, but these policies are insufficient in a scenario of economic crisis for youth, because even with these discounts the reality is that students cannot finish

paying the government student credit. This difficulty generates indebtedness of Colombian youth. The expectation is that the project to transform Higher Education Law 30 will be debated in the national congress in 2022 (interview, Allison Morales Silva, FEU, March, 23, 2022).

FEU has a broad understanding of the Colombian reality, and in its specific education policies it seeks to deconstruct the structures that lead to the non-democratization of access to education for Colombian youth (interview, Allison Morales Silva, FEU, March, 23, 2022). In this way, they also defend, in addition to financial feasibility policies, policies for admission, permanence, and integral monitoring, so that the university is responsible for building conditions for youth in universities. Currently, for admission to the university there is a national test called Instituto Colombiano para la Evaluación de la Educación (ICFES). However, there is autonomy in each university whether or not to join this test. There is also a system of conditions of acceptance that work as quotas for minorities to access higher education: Afro-Colombians, indigenous people, armed conflict, and sportspeople; however, each university has the autonomy to adhere or not to this national regulation (interview, Allison Morales Silva, FEU, March, 23, 2022).

Asociación Colombiana de Representantes Estudiantiles (ACREES)

ACREES calls itself the Colombian Association of Student Representatives of all universities in Colombia, regardless of their political orientation or their beliefs. It is conceived as an independent organization bringing together people from the right of political spectrum and the progressive left, but they all have a basic agreement in defending education as a fundamental right. Politically, the organization is not related to any specific political party. It defends education in general (interview, Castaño, ACREES, March, 23, 2022).

They do not consider themselves a political movement; there are political individuals who group together in ACREES, but as an entity they seek a more institutional character of bringing together representatives of approximately fifty universities, public and private. They are an association of student representatives, which may have party political affiliations but there is space for independent representatives also. Its political agenda is in the institutional mobilization of representatives in their faculties' governing councils, but also in national bills such as the discussion of the reform of Higher Education Law 30 (interview, Castaño, ACREES, March, 23, 2022).

In its social networks, the movement stands out in the fight for the demand of the National Government of Ivan Duque to fully finance the free zero enrollment in all public Higher Education Institutions in the country.

In a letter that we promoted, more than one hundred opinion leaders among artists, journalists, congressmen, mayors, governors, deputies, councilors, and union and social leaders from all over the country showed their support for the petition that various sectors have been demanding from the National Government of @IvanDuque to fully finance the free education #Zero Enrollment in all public Higher Education Institutions in the country. #DukeEnrollmentZero

According to the entity's statute, ACREES's principles are "amplitude and plurality: understood as the right of all representations; that students participate in ACREES without distinction of race, gender, religious creed, or political ideology; defense of internal democracy and the right to dissent: understood as a democratic environment that guarantees the right to elect and be elected to internal positions in ACREES and to disagree or show differences within the organization in relation to any of its decisions; flexibility: understood as the characteristic that allows to discuss, evaluate, and develop the different activities, within the framework of a civil, democratic, and diversified organization; promotion of the democratic rights of the student body understood as the function that ACREES has to defend democratic debate, guarantees of participation and disciplinary, and academic guarantees of higher education students in all HEIs in the country and independence" (ACREES Statute, 2019). Furthermore, ACREES "must not conceive of any interference in the political, religious, ideological and any other spheres that threatens its independence and autonomy as a union, as well as against the Government" (ACREES Statute, 2019).

Its assets are made up of voluntary contributions from associated student representations equivalent to a legal minimum daily wage in force for each semester; extraordinary contributions made up of contributions and donations from its members or individuals in cash or in kind, who cannot decide or give an opinion on any decision of the organization and institutional funding of higher education institutions (ACREES Statute, 2019). The organizational structure of ACREES is formed by National Congress, regional congress. National Executive Committee, Regional Executive Committee and presidency (ACREES Statute, 2019).

It is important to highlight that ACREES presents itself as an institutional organization for the defense of education as a fundamental right, thus distancing itself from the broader political debates. It did not participate in the dialogue tables of the Peace Process and is not part of the Historic Pact. There are members of its organization that support and participate in this process, but as entities they are restricted to the topic of education. Interestingly, ACREES was an active actor in the 2018 and 2019 student demonstrations, including participating in the national stoppage committee. This is explained by the fact that they believe in the need to take to the streets to defend education policies, such as *Matricula zero*, a campaign mobilized by different student movements (interview, Castaño, ACREES, March, 23, 2022). They also advocate peaceful nonviolent demonstrations (interview, Castaño, ACREES, March, 23, 2022). This entity strongly criticizes the disintegration of the Colombian student movement that does not act as a unit, which results in a representativeness problem. According to Castaño (interview, Castaño, ACREES, March, 23, 2022), "this is why ACREES seeks the right to represent student entities, to unify through institutional representation."

Student Movement Victories

In 2017 and 2018, the crises in Colombian universities, the budget deficit, and the large debt left by the Colombian State deepened. Deans of different universities presented a deficit of 12 million to the superior councils. After mobilizations and political pressure and a national strike that lasted two months, the representatives of the student movement reached a historic agreement and the Colombian State committed to increase the budget for education and transfer 4.5 million pesos to cover the deficit

of 12 million. This victory was the result of the mobilization, pressure, and surveillance capacity of the Colombian student movement (interview, K. Iglesias, ACEU, January 11, 2022).

The national strike promoted in 2018 by the education sector was the warm-up for the great social uprising, of a broad character, promoted by social movements and Colombian society. In 2019, all sectors, which were already engaged and mobilized—student movements, peasants, teachers, workers—came together in a single agenda: to stop the advances of neoliberalism and promote peace (interview, K. Iglesias, ACEU, January 11, 2022). The zero enrollment was a victory for the student movement in which the national government paid the tuition fee for undergraduate students in strata 1, 2, and 3 in public institutions of higher education in the country. Here we say who benefits and if it is really a convenient measure (Unal, 2021).

One of its main victories in recent years was the result of a joint victory at the national level in the recognition of universities as victims of the armed conflict. Many student leaders were criminalized for their political actions, many students were political prisoners. In this way, the recognition of the universities as an actor victim of the armed conflict made these students start to be legally interpreted as political prisoners and, finally, this mobilization managed to achieve the freedom of these young people (interview, K. Iglesias, ACEU, January 11, 2022). Currently, the main allies of the coalition of social movements and progressive political forces include the peasant and rural sector, including the Patriotic March that strengthened the process of popular unity of Colombian social movements (interview, Allison Morales Silva, FEU, March, 23, 2022).

Student Movement's Involvement in the Peace Process

To understand the political and social reality of Colombian students, it is necessary to address the most important factor: the violence of the armed conflict. The peace agreement signed in 2016 by Juan Manuel Santos and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) aims to end a conflict that has lasted more than fifty-eight years. Currently, there are signs that the government is not complying with the peace agreements, which often undermine the political and democratic stability of the country. The implementation of the agreed policy is at risk from its signature in 2016 until today.

Sectors of society, including student movements, denounced the lack of legal instruments as an obstacle to the realization and progress of the agreement. In addition to the amnesty of the arrests of former guerrillas, there are more serious allegations of political persecution of farmers and social leaders. The years following the signing of the agreement are critical to ensuring a successful end to the armed conflict. Today, Colombia runs the risk of dissipating the country's political efforts and the social movements that have accumulated in the peace process. Several social movements warn of the need to end the conflict so that thematic agendas, such as education, can advance in the country.

Peace Process and the Role of the Student Movement as an Articulator

The Peace Process is the most important political event in the last decades of Colombian history. The Process as a whole is divided into three stages: dialogue, signature, and post-agreement. The stage of the peace dialogues was the moment when society and social movements debated the

issue of armed conflict and formulated proposals for the Final Peace Agreement. A prominent movement at this stage was the Patriotic March, a political and social movement that acted as an umbrella for social movements around the theme of peace.

Of the student movement, only FEU is involved in the foundation and remains linked to the Patriotic March. There is evidence that the FEU was the initiator of the patriotic march. Since its creation, in addition to the specific requirements of its department, it has also acted as a student movement, with strong links to Colombian social issues, dedicated to the defense of human rights and peace. In this way, the student movement develops a strong connection to the context of the armed conflict and defends a proposal for dialogue addressing this context. Federations have a role of social mobilization that goes beyond union structures and universities (Hurtado, 2018).

The first political expression of the student movement was at CONAP in 2007, where the idea of a mobilization for the 200th anniversary of Colombia's request for independence was born. From 2007 to 2010, there were sporadic student mobilizations, filled with macro-structured criticisms, directly related to peace issues and human rights violations. In 2009, the FEU took a critical stance in the context of the armed conflict, supporting a strategy of humanitarian exchange, which means exchanging State prisoners for prisoners of insurgent forces (Hurtado, 2018).

By understanding the need to articulate the main social needs and social movements in Colombia, FEU acts as a leader in this activity and demands the establishment of coordination of social movements. He called on society to hold a march at the Universidad Nacional, which would represent the social reality of Colombia. Over the course of two days, approximately 35,000 people participated in the Colombian Society's activities, program discussions, and proposals. On the third day, they made a big march to strengthen the movement. Hence the name Patriotic March emerged in the movement to defend the articulation and expression of various social movements—a broad force to create another policy (Hurtado, 2018).

Between 2010 and 2013, the student movement guided its agenda through the National Student Wide Table. The movement was going through a period of retreat from its achievements and, in this way, it mobilized the integration of the student movement with other sectoral agendas. In this way, the movement became one of the main actors in the social struggle in Colombia. MANE was an important space for the articulation of the student movement, which was integrated between 2010 and 2013.

MANE resisted and defeated reform proposals through massive demonstrations, advocating collective proposals to implement democratic education for Colombians (Flowers, 2018). In the spaces of debate and political articulation promoted by MESA, the idea of the permanent dynamics of the coordination of social movements emerges. At that moment, they defined the objective of creating something permanent, an open path, but they still did not have the boundaries of their main objectives and organizational structure (Flowers, 2018).

The FEU student movement is constantly related to the FARC, as an actor of guerrilla influence in the student movement. However, the FEU identifies that the FARC has accumulated political capital that can be positive when added to other sectors. They do not identify themselves as members or assume an institutional relationship with the FARC, but identify it as a strategic actor in the peace dialogue proposal, to which the movement is dedicated.

The FEU defends being an autonomous student movement, which has a social critique of the Colombian context; one of its main proposals in recent years is the end of the armed conflict; in this way, relating to the FARC becomes an action of political articulation for the purpose of the

social movement (Huerta, 2018). Both organizations had the same objective, the peace dialogue; in this way, they were constantly related; it was a strategic debate to achieve success in their political proposals. The Colombian State and the national media judged the student movement as part of the FARC; many members of the movement were arrested on the charge of guerrilla participation; however, there was no correlation and none of them was convicted (Huerta, 2018).

Despite the existence of different student entities, the thematic agenda addressed by all of the Colombian student sector focuses on the defense of education, pressing against the commodification of education in the country. Student struggles seek to contain neoliberal reforms in education.

These reforms aim to direct higher education toward the private student credit structure and weaken public funding for education. In recent years, the national government has adopted a strategy of implementing the neoliberal model in stages, based on technical criteria, economic criteria, and meritocracy. Without participating in the student movement, he worked on a project against the social agenda of the student sector. In this context, students are increasingly mobilized and stressed, and politically organized. The patriotic marches had many influences on these demands, and the student movement played a decisive role in the construction of parliamentarians (Flowers, 2017).

Currently, the student movement and the peasant movement are the strongest and most consolidated movements in Colombia and occupy an important place in their mobilization. However, this process also faces several stages in which the structure of political demand changes. To understand the content of the student movement at Columbia, it is necessary to briefly identify the four periods of the movement. During the period of the National Front (1958–74), Colombia was governed by two conservative and liberal parties in a political pact that aimed to maintain the country's democratic posture. At the time, the student movement was legalized by the state because its agenda was aligned with the ruling party. Between 1960 and 1990, the Colombian student movement became politicized and radicalized under the influence of communist theory. It distanced itself from political parties and their agendas. During this period, the student movement became an actor heavily attacked by state and paramilitary forces; there were murders of students and universities were closed or militarized. In the twenty-first century, more precisely in 2005, the student movement became an organized movement with a union structure and identified its main objectives: university autonomy, state funding, democracy and transformation of teaching models. Since 2005, the student movement has developed ideologically. Their claims went beyond the basic demands of the students, and they were widely critical of Colombia's political formation. It is structured beyond the definition of a union and engages in a broad mobilization of social influence. Criticism focused on the restrictions imposed by neoliberal policy on social issues, including education and other issues. They defend proposals for peace and dialogue as a way of mediating armed conflicts (Hurtado, 2018).

Uprising of Colombian Youth 2019–21

Since 1977 there has not been a national strike in Colombia; 2019 was the year of transformation of that fact. After the call of social movements for a general strike on November 21, an agenda

of demands took a large part of the population to the streets. The main demands were against labor reform, against pension reform, against financial exploitation, against privatization, against corruption, against tax reform, for a decent minimum wage, and for compliance with the Peace Accords with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and human rights. The demonstrations were large and popular, they took place in a festive manner, and the cases of vandalism do not delegitimize them. November 21st was just the first day of the others that took place in the last month. Great acts with pots and pans showed the strength and breadth of the Colombian popular uprising. They were not just disjointed and isolated demonstrations, but true popular uprisings, massive and with thematic diversities (Oliveira, 2019).

However, in 2019, state terrorism did not just oppress populations in the region of armed conflict, but all actors who took a stand against the state. The demonstrations were marked by strong and disproportionate violence by the Mobile Anti-Disturbance Squad (Esmad) against the population that demonstrated (Oliveira, 2019).

On November 26, the death of eighteen-year-old Dilan Cruz, a student who was hit in the head by an Esmad projectile during a peaceful march, was confirmed. Dilan became a symbol of resistance to state violence and his death intensified the demonstrations (Oliveira, 2019). The Washington Office of Latin American Affairs (Wola), a group of academics and activists, is demanding that Esmad be replaced or reformed, according to human rights guidelines, respecting peaceful protests with the minimum use of force. The national strike and protests were peaceful, but despite the November 20 declaration signed by thirty-four US groups and a long list of academics advocating that the Colombian government respect the right to protest, the Duque government responded with repression. As a result, hundreds were arbitrarily detained, many injured and property destroyed. Following Dylan Cruz's death on November 23 from injuries inflicted by ESMAD (Riot Police), US groups issued a second statement calling on the US Department of State and Congress to "put a moratorium on sales of crowd control weapons for Colombia until ESMAD was replaced by a new force or underwent a complete overhaul to build a dramatically different and more respectful culture, respecting the culture and doctrine based on de-escalation, respect for peaceful protest and minimal use of force" (Wola, 2020).

Students were massively present in the 2019 protests; universities were important spaces for political organization and mobilization; universities in the southwest and north, the so-called universities on the coast, were more repressed because there is a complex reality and with the presence of massacres with social sectors such as indigenous movements. The murder of the young Dylan was the mark of the stop and the excessive use of force, and ESMAD was exorcized the use of force by the Colombian State and the violations of human rights. In these clashes, ESMAD did not respect the protocol for the use of nonlethal weapons and promoted systematic murders in some parts of the country; many students were hit in the eyes (interview, Allison Morales Silva, FEU, March, 23, 2022).

Violence against students in Colombia is nothing new; in fact more than 600 university students have been murdered in Colombia in the last 50 years, according to the Truth Commission (Infobae, 2022). Universities have been in the midst of the wave of violence against students over the past five decades. According to Commissioner Saúl Franco, the acts of victimization against students, professors, and workers at the country's public universities identified classrooms as spaces of war. The Truth Commission also compiled more than 250 testimonies from Colombians, who had to abandon their political lives to avoid being killed, disappeared, or tortured (Infobae, 2022).

In 2019, the Colombian student movement was directly related to the organizations of nationwide demonstrations. The guidelines raised were broad but aligned with the demands of the education and youth defense sector. The organization and strengthening of social movements made it possible for Colombians to express their demands in a democratic and peaceful manner. The social movements acted together with the objective of stopping the neoliberal advances; the movement of the movements legitimized the popular experience. In this way, today the movements cannot be considered only as identity guidelines, as they are mobilized and organized around a broad and common proposal.

FEU's participation in the 2019 and 2021 demonstrations were extremely important; the movement added to the other mobilizations and was present on the streets. In 2019, the demonstrations were mostly students; in 2021 they were broader and all sectors took to the streets—not just students, but also workers, teachers, families, and others. In 2019, the mobilizations achieved a victory on the subject of education, winning the budget to cover the budget deficit accumulated by the universities; this increase in funding is related to and is only guaranteed during the government of President Ivan Duque (interview, Allison Morales Silva, FEU, March, 23, 2022).

In 2021, Colombia experienced a new popular uprising, even greater than in 2019. With the accumulation of problems due to the Covid-19 pandemic crisis, the population took to the streets massively to ask for structural changes. Once again, the student movement was an important organizer and mobilizer of the demonstrations. Thus, on April 28, the national strike broke out with demonstrations in several cities in Colombia against the advance of the neoliberal project of the Duque government. It is worth remembering that since 2019, Colombian movements have re-meant the act of taking to the streets and even with many confrontations and violence, Colombians return to exercise their right to protest (Oliveira, 2021). There were more than forty days of a series of protests against the tax reform project proposed by President Iván Duque. The response to the demonstrations was orchestrated actions of state terrorism. After the demonstrations, the Colombian government abandoned the tax project.

The Historic Pact

The Historic Pact is a proposal that builds a broad progressive alliance that supports the political transformation of Colombia's future, thus founding a new country based on peace, social and environmental justice and democracy. Currently, the Colombian student movement is one of the actors in the construction of Colombia's political future, as it is part of the Historical Pact along with other social and political movements.

On March 13, 2022, the Historic Pact won a significant victory for progressive forces in Colombia, parliamentary elections took place, and the Historic Pact held an internal consultation to choose the name to run for president. Gustavo Petro won the consultation with more than 80 percent of the votes (4,446,970), followed by Francia Márquez with 757,000 votes (15 percent) (Brasil de Fato, 2022).

The result of the legislative elections and the name of Gustavo Petro as a candidate of the historic pact bring Colombia closer to the victory of the left. But this victory cannot be seen

as a simple and quick product; in fact, it was built by many struggles of social and political movements in Colombia in recent decades. It is possible to say that Colombia has never had a left-wing government in its entire history, so the result of the last elections means a real change for Colombian society.

The 2022 scenario is a reflection of all this accumulation of both social movements, including the student movement and leftist parties that restructured themselves voluntarily or not within this oxygenation process and that has a great possibility of the left winning but as many decades of persecution.

The Historic Pact is built in the face of the urgency of transforming the Colombian reality; it acts as a progressive coalition of political parties, organizations, and left-wing movements from the popular countryside (indigenous peoples, Afro-descendants, peasants, women, feminists, LGBTIQ+ activists, environmentalists, urban dwellers, youth, etc.). There is also the participation of some Christian and political sectors that participated in the governments of Juan Manuel Santos and Álvaro Uribe Vélez.

The Colombian student movement is an extremely active political actor in recent constructions in the country; the movement was also present in the Historic Pact, a formulation that mobilizes political forces and social movements in the name of building a viable progressive candidate. In its statements, the FEU states that it does not see candidate Gustavo Petro as the savior, but as a democratic and progressive transformation. They point out that this would be a transitional government that would seek to debate important issues to end Colombia's historically powerful oligarchies (interview, Allison Morales Silva, FEU, March, 23, 2022).

On June 20, 2022, O Pacto Histórico was victorious in the presidential election and Gustavo Petro was elected president of Colombia, the first leftist in the country's history. The Historic Pact candidate won with 50.44 percent, around 11,280,000 votes, against right-wing businessman Rodolfo Hernández, who got 47.31 percent (The Diary, 2022).

Final Considerations/Conclusion

The Colombian student movement is a historic actor with a strong capacity for political mobilization in the country. However, due to the history of violence and political persecution of social movements in Colombia, the student movement has a structural weakness and does not achieve national unity. Nor does it have relevant institutional political activities in university councils, as Colombian university autonomy is not full, but limited to the transfer of state budgets to institutions. All these weaknesses of the Colombian student movement can be related to the political ruptures pressured by the national State's persecution of social movements.

Making a brief analysis of the Colombian student movements, it is possible to verify that the organizational structures and their platforms are fragile due to lack of unity. There is no single entity that can represent the variety of political and ideological formulations existing in Colombian reality. Compared to the other entities analyzed above, ACREES seeks to distance itself from the political and ideological currents existing in other student entities, declaring the need for institutional representations focused on education. However, the FUN is going through an internal crisis of organization and mobilization around the issue of feminism and the anti-patriarchal struggle.

However, as a mobilizing political force, the student movement is one of the most prominent forces in recent popular uprisings in Latin America. The student assemblies cited by various leaders of social movements do not have an institutional relationship or are legitimized by the universities. In reality, these spaces and activities occur in more organic ways and are mobilized by real political interactions, as a noninstitutional territorial policy. An autonomous organization of students faces the challenges of Colombian liberal democracy.

Even in the face of numerous attacks and weaknesses, it is possible to believe that where there is great economic inequality, social conflicts, and violence, fertile ground is created for a massive and popular revolt. The recent history of Latin America shows us that these experiences are positive for democratic structures and that important leaders have emerged from them for the transformation of the region. We must also remember that Colombian social movements have the political accumulation to resist yet another onslaught of neoliberalism and will be strong actors in Latin America's political resistance. The active participation of the main student movements in the Peace Process, in popular uprisings, and in the Historical Pact demonstrates that the current entities do not act only on their specific agendas in education, but participate in the political dispute of the proposed country to be built in the coming years.

Finally, it is important to highlight that the advancement of democratic mechanisms is fundamental for the strengthening of the Colombian student movement. For this, he was historically persecuted and criminalized in the context of the Colombian armed conflict. In addition to the involvement of students in national social movements, especially in the peace process, students are also political actors within universities.

References

- ACEU, Bogotá (2019). Asociación Colombiana de Estudiantes Universitarios. Estatutos. <http://aceutolima.blogspot.com/p/estatutos.html>
- ACRESS, Bogotá. Asociación Colombiana de Representantes Estudiantiles de la Educación Superior. Estatutos ACRESS Colombia. <https://pt.scribd.com/document/471842705/ESTATUTOS-ACREES-COLOMBIA-pdf>
- Archila, M. (2012). El movimiento estudiantil en Colombia. *Revista del observatorio social de América Latina* (31): 71–103.
- FEU, Bogotá (2019). Federación de Estudiantes Universitarios. Official Statute of the entity FEU. <file:///C:/Users/Amanda/Downloads/ESTATUTOS-FEU-COLOMBIA-2017-2019.pdf>
- Flores, D., Martín, A., Rubiu, S. and Puello-Socarás, J. (2017). Power(s) in process(es) and dynamic (re) constituent movement(s) in Colombia. First Edition. Political and Social Sciences. InstitutoUnidad de Investigaciones Jurídico Sociales Gerardo Molina.
- Herrera, M.C. Polifonías discordantes en las expresiones del movimiento estudiantil Contrapunteos entre memoria, institucionalidad y violencia política Discordantes polifonias nas expressões do movimento estudantil Contrapontos entre memória, institucionalidade e violência política. https://www.academia.edu/15204107/Polifon%C3%ADas_discordantes_en_las_expresiones_del_movimiento_estudiantil_Contrapunteos_entre_memoria_institucionalidad_y_violencia_pol%C3%ADtica
- INDEPAZ (2022). Cifras durante el gobierno de Iván Duque—Balance de la violencia en cifras por observatorio de DDHH, conflictividades y paz, 2 de agosto de 2022. <https://indepaz.org.co/cifras-durante-el-gobierno-de-ivan-duque-balance-de-la-violencia-en-cifras/>

- Infobae (2022). More than 600 university students have been murdered in Colombia in the last 50 years: Truth Commission. <https://www.infobae.com/america/colombia/2021/09/03/mas-de-600-universitarios-han-sido-asesinados-en-colombia-en-los-ultimos-50-anos-truth-commission/>
- Ley 30, de 28 de diciembre de 1992 (1992). Por la cual se organiza el servicio público de la Educación Superior. http://www.oas.org/juridico/spanish/mesicic2_col_ley_30_sp.pdf
- Lobo Silva, M.M. and Chagas, R.S. (2013). Colômbia: movimentos pela paz.
- Mello, M. (2022, 23 de março). Pacto Histórico confirma chapa presidencial com Gustavo Petro e Francia Márquez na Colômbia. Brasil de Fato | São Paulo (SP). <https://www.brasildefato.com.br/2022/03/23/pacto-historico-confirma-chapa-presidencial-com-gustavo-petro-e-francia-marquez-na-colombia>
- Oliva, A. (2022). Gustavo Petro logra una victoria histórica de la izquierda en Colombia: “Hoy es día de fiesta para el pueblo” 20 de junio de 2022. https://www.eldiario.es/internacional/izquierdista-gustavo-petro-gana-elecciones-presidenciales-colombia_1_9099056.html
- Oliveira, A. (2019). After Duque’s Neoliberal Package, Colombians Convene General Strike. *Opera Mundi*. São Paulo. <https://operamundi.uol.com.br/politica-e-economia/61661/apos-pacote-neoliberal-de-duque-colombianos-convocam-greve-geral>
- Oliveira, A. Movimentos sociais na democracia colombiana (2010-2016): Marcha Patriótica um movimento político ou social?. Dissertação de Mestrado, São Paulo 2018. <https://teses.usp.br/teses/disponiveis/84/84131/tde-16042019-133650/pt-br.php>
- Panizza, Francisco. La marea rosa. *Análise de Conjuntura OPISA*, Rio de Janeiro. n.08, 2006.
- Prieto, P.L. (2011). Reflexiones sobre la propuesta de reforma a la ley 30 de 1992: ¿ fortalecimiento o debilitamiento de la autonomía universitaria? *Pensamiento Jurídico* (31): 43–84.
- Sanahuja, J. Del “regionalismo abierto” al “regionalismo post-liberal”. *Crisis y cambio en la integración regional en América Latina. Anuário de La integración regional de América Latina y el gran Caribe*, n.07, 2008.
- Silva, ACSR (2011). The national front and the limits to democracy in Colombia (1958–74).
- Lamb, C. (2015). Plan Colombia: securitization of drug trafficking by the United States of America. *Global Conjunction* 4(2).
- Unal (2022). Matrícula cero: ¿en qué consiste y a quiénes beneficia? <https://unperiodico.unal.edu.co/pages/detail/matricula-cero-en-que-consiste-y-a-quienes-beneficia/>
- Wola (2020). Colombia update: Protests, Bojayá, and security for social leaders. <https://www.wola.org/2020/01/colombian-protests-bojaya-security-for-social-leaders/>

The New Governance at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras, the Restoration of Student Representation, and the Challenges Facing the Neo-Interventionism of the State in Higher Education

Moises David Cáceres

Introduction

From the origin of the university in Honduras in 1847, through the first university reform of 1882 (Valenzuela, 1976, p. 161), until the first half of the twentieth century with the university reforms in 1957 and the Organic Law of 2004 which consolidate the existing model, the student body was relegated to a subordinate level, and without participation in the governance of universities in Honduras. This was due to the installation of the bureaucratic model of university governance through which the university was exceedingly centralized and subjected to direct control of the national government through the Ministry of Public Education (Honduras, 1881, p. 60).

The roots of student organizing into representative associations can be found in the first decade of the twentieth century. This is when the first student associations of Law, Civil Engineering, and Medicine were organized (Joya, Santos and Fletes, 1979, p. 3). As discussed by Joya, Santos and Fletes (1979, p. 3), the mid-twenties student generations influenced by the “Grito de Córdoba” gave origin to a temporary student organization structure that in 1931 officially installed the Federation of University Students of Honduras (FEUH). This generation of students intended to promote university reform, but they did not succeed because of the sociopolitical conditions of the Honduran state. Mainly due to how the government concessions would have affected the interests of banana companies since the proposed bill the students presented to the National Congress, in its article 27, stated that 30 percent of the income generated by the state from national rivers concessions used for watering banana plantations would go to the university budget (Mayorquin, 2017, p. 160).

At the end of the Second World War, in Central America, anti-dictatorship feelings rose prompted by the international climate; the popular urban sectors, mainly artisans and workers, mobilized against the “banana dictatorships” (Chávez, 2018, p. 201). Students in many cases

became the vanguards and the first student rebellion happened in El Salvador on April 19, 1944, with the “Huelga de Brazos caídos” (Chávez, 2018, p. 201). The student protests started also in Guatemala, and in the other countries a series of outbreaks of protests followed. These protests gave strength to the student movements in Central America and emergence of the so-called Central American student spring (1944–58). A characteristic for this period was the resurgence of student movements that were previously suppressed by the dictatorships in the context of the banana enclaves, a period where American-based banana companies settled in the northern coasts of Latin America and, through corruption, acquired large extents of land and promoted authoritarian governments. The student movements joined forces with trade unions and farmers, and consolidated a political agenda focused on overthrowing the dictatorial governments. The new social movements that formed consisted of platforms made up of students, workers, and farmers, i.e., as classic social movements. The fights against dictatorships also harbored anti-imperialist, unionist, and Central American fraternalism traits. With the overthrow of some dictatorships, student movements returned to the agenda of university reform—an agenda which focused on achieving institutional autonomy, establishing student participation in governance, and having a vote in choosing university authorities (Cáceres, 2021).

This is how university autonomy from the government was achieved in El Salvador in 1944 (Salazar, 2011, p. 102), in Guatemala in 1944 (Avila, 1994, p. 21), Panama in 1946 (Paredes, 2008, p. 48), Costa Rica in 1948 (Carrillo, 2014, p. 11), and in Nicaragua in 1958 (Galeano, 1990, p. 107). In Honduras, with this second reform process, university autonomy was achieved in 1957 (Idiáquez, 1999, p. 111) and a collegial type of governance model was established that lasted forty-seven years. In this model of collegiate university governance, academic staff and students jointly directed the university, elected authorities, and determined higher education policy. Representation in governing bodies was made up of 50 percent student representation, 25 percent academic staff representation, and 25 percent representation of nonteaching representatives from national professional associations. (Article 1, Legislative Bill 52 from June 28, 1958).

Since the 1980s, throughout the world, national education systems underwent many reforms known as the new educational orthodoxy characterized as the Global Education Reform Movement (GERM; Sahlberg, 2011, p. 143), which later impacted universities worldwide through the Bologna Process (Cañas and Arias, 2009, p. 48), and in Latin America through the Tuning project (European Commission, ALFA Program, 2007, p. 23). In Latin America the Tuning project led to reforms in governance bodies which eliminated the collegial type of governance, limited student participation, and excluded students from authority selection processes. In addition to this, the project allowed market-oriented policies to permeate higher education institutions, causing the introduction of university admissions test, conditional university budgets based on performance, and consequently the commodification of university services.

This chapter addresses the third university reform in Honduras, focusing specifically on the characteristics of the university governance model as newly installed in 2004, of student political agency and the role of FEUH, and the struggle for the democratization of university government. The chapter is based on the research project on university governance at the National Autonomous University of Honduras (UNAH) (Cáceres 2021) drawing on content analysis of a documentary base that includes laws, planning documents, minutes of various government bodies, agreements of the university reform process and the University Magazine, as well as five interviews with former university authorities and with current student leaders.

Legal Precedents to the Organic Law of 2004

With the reform of the Organic Law of the UNAH of 1958, the University ceased to depend on the Ministry of Education of Honduras and gained its autonomy. Between 1942 and 1969, several schools of higher education were created, including the Pan-American Agricultural School, the National School of Agriculture, the Francisco Morazán Higher School of Teachers, and the National School of Forest Sciences, which would later become universities.

In 1978, under Legislative Decree No. 577, the Law of Private Universities was created with the purpose of recognizing Honduran legal entities' ability to found private universities under the idea that they would help the Honduran State to improve the coverage of higher education and offer academic degrees not covered by the UNAH.

Then, in the National Constituent Assembly of January 11, 1982, the Constitution of the Republic of Honduras established in Article 160 the privilege and constitutional mandate to the UNAH to enjoy the exclusivity of organizing, directing, and developing higher and professional education, as well as to shape their participation in the transformation of Honduran society. In other words, the UNAH is in charge of higher education in Honduras.

Given that there were already state higher education schools and several private universities, the UNAH, under the management of Rector Jorge Omar Casco, approved the Higher Education Law within the National Congress, through Legislative Decree No. 142-89 of September 14, 1989. With this, they established the legal framework for the system and gave rise to the first instance of governance of the higher education system in Honduras; that is, the Higher Education Council, which, through its organizational structure, opens up for the participation of other state universities, but also private ones, in the decision-making arena—presided over and supervised by the UNAH due to its constitutional mandate.

Also, the UNAH, in the same way, to give coherence and full integration to the entire national educational system, according to Article 159 of the Constitution, established the National Council of Education CNE, which in Article 37 of the same regulations specifies its organizational structure and the actors that make it up, and in paragraph 38 defines the powers given to the council. The constitutional mandate calls for the UNAH and the Ministry of Public Education, without undermining their respective competencies, to coherently integrate the national education system.

Legal Framework for Student Representation at UNAH

Organic Law of the UNAH 1957

In Honduras, in the decade of the 1950s, the highest point of worker-farmer-student unity was articulated in the big “banana strike” in 1954, the conquest of University Autonomy in 1957, and the enactment of the first Labor Code in 1959. These historic

deeds were embodied in the student federation's ("Federación de Estudiantes Universitarios—FEUH) logo. It includes the slogan "FOR THE WORKER-FARMER-STUDENT UNITY". The design is composed of an oval, embedded inside the map of Honduras, with three figures representing the classic social movements, a student in the middle, on the left a farmer with his machete, and on the right, a worker with his hammer.

Idiáquez (1999) records how student protests unfolded for almost four months in 1956 when the FEUH, accompanied by high school students, called a rally in international solidarity for the murder of several Guatemalan students of the University of San Carlos (USAC) by the dictatorship of Carlos Castillo Armas. As the strike progressed, demands were added, such as the resignation of the university, rector Dr. Ernesto Argueta, the resignation of the Minister of Education, and finally resulted in the overthrow of Julio Lozano Diaz, president of Honduras, who was executed in a military coup in October. Ernesto Argueta, the resignation of the Minister of Education, finally led to the overthrow of Julio Lozano Diaz, president of Honduras. The latter was executed in a military coup on October 21, after he attempted to remain in power with dictatorial pretensions. This student protest was not to demand perks, privileges, or facilities to pass courses. It was a student movement to demand the autonomy of the university, the fall of the de facto government, and the restructuring of the country on a just and democratic basis (Idiáquez, 1999, p. 88). This student movement led to the creation of the Organic Law of the UNAH (1957), with which university shared governance and university autonomy were achieved (Idiáquez, 1999). Seven months later, through Legislative Decree No. 52 of June 28, 1958, the student movement won parity representation in the university governing bodies, meaning in the Full Senate, the University Council, and the Board of Directors of the Faculty. In essence, the parity representation was made up of 50 percent student representation, 25 percent academic staff representation, and 25 percent representation of nonteaching representatives from national professional associations (see Figure 22.1). With the provision of shared governance and parity representation, the academic staff and student bodies elected the university authorities, such as the rector, deans, and directors of the regional campuses.

PARITY REPRESENTATION

■ Students ■ Academic Staff ■ National Professional Associations

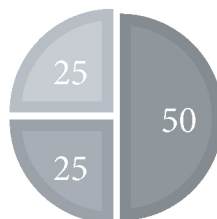


Figure 22.1 Parity representation in university shared governance after the Legislative Decree No. 52, 1958.

Organic Law of the UNAH 2004

The university reform process that was initiated by UNAH's Dean Ana Belén Castillo, and supported by the University Council, produced a draft bill in 2003 that was sent to the National Congress in October of that year. However, the Executive and Legislative branches of government, through the National Education Council where students were not represented, directed a process of neo-interventionism toward the entire educational system, but especially toward the UNAH (Silva, 2002, p. 65). Neo-interventionism refers to how the national government promoted the participation of the Honduran Council of Private Enterprise (COHEP) and the National Forum of Convergence (FONAC) in the reform process, representing private companies and civil society respectively (National Council of Education, 2003, p. 8). The involvement of these actors enabled the presence and participation of business networks in education policymaking (Jarquín, 2021, p. 222). COHEP promoted a focus on the production of human capital, new public management, admission tests, and a new evaluative and labor culture as part of this reform. This reform caused a rupture in university autonomy and the form of collegial governance and election of university authorities used for forty-seven years.

With this new law, the parity representation of academic staff, students, and professional staff in the university governance was eliminated, thus taking away from the academic staff and student body the capacity they had to elect university authorities. Instead, a new governing body was created called “Junta de Dirección Universitaria—JDU” (board of directors), which was given the power to nominate authorities without involvement from academic staff or students. The JDU is made up of seven members selected by the University Council based on the requirements established in the Organic Law of the UNAH; these individuals are supposed to be academics but are not required to be linked to the university in any way (Organic Law, 2004). This was to diminish the political weight of student representatives and the representatives of the academic staff in the university politics within the context of shared university governance. This was especially the case in the University Council which became the main body of university government. In contrast with parity representation, the representation in the University Council was divided among students with 33 percent, academic staff with 33 percent, elected authorities with 33 percent, and 1 percent to civil society represented by FONAC (see Figure 22.2).

With this last university reform, a model of stakeholder governance of the interested parties and external stakeholders was installed. Along with the government, several actors, notably COHEP and FONAC, intervened in the reform of the university law and paved the way for a mechanism to influence university policies and operations from the outside (Government of Honduras, 2004). FONAC, which is a technical-administrative body independent from the government, integrated by several civil society organizations, was created on November 4, 1994, by Legislative Decree 155-94. It influenced the 2004 reform with the Proposal of the Honduran Society for the Transformation of National Education, specifically, a section of fourteen proposals that are directed to the higher education system and the UNAH. FONAC was granted 1 percent participation in the UNAH University Council.

With this new structure, student participation was reduced in the university's main governance body, and a new cluster of bureaucratic university authorities, above students and academic staff, was created. Additionally, students lost all influence on the selection processes for university authorities since this was transferred to the newly created board of director (JDU).

REPRESENTATION

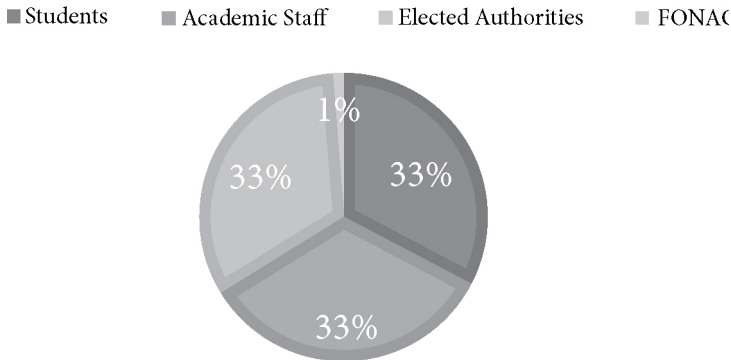


Figure 22.2 Representation at the University Council, according to the Organic Law of the UNAH 2004 (Organic Law, 2004).

Organizational Characteristics of the Student Representative Associations

Students from UNAH were organized under a national federation called the “Federación de Estudiantes Universitarios de Honduras—FEUH”; FEUH was the main representative organ of the student movement. At its beginnings, the electoral dispute for the executive committee of the FEUH was carried out through transitory electoral parties which were organized by students only around the electoral process and stopped functioning after election day (1931–59). However, starting from 1960, there was an emergence of permanent university student organizations called “Frentes estudiantiles” (student fronts) (1960–2004). Throughout the existence of the FEUH, there were several constituent processes led by the student associations, especially to settle power conflicts between the three student fronts (Frente de Reforma Universitaria (FRU), Frente Unido Universitario Democrático (FUUD), and the Fuerza Universitaria Revolucionaria (FUR)). The student electoral process to elect student representatives was governed by an electoral regulation that was elaborated by the same student fronts who claimed the exclusive representation of the entire university community (UNAH 1993). This dynamic worked until 2004 when the last university reform process took place. From 2004, the student body went into a state of inactivity due to the inability of the student movement to organize themselves after the dissolution of the FEUH, and, on the other hand, due to the failure of the Transition Commission to comply with the mandate of Article 61 of the Organic Law of the UNAH.

The Transition Commission is created to ensure the comprehensive institutional reform of the UNAH, the organization of the new university structure, the installation of the new university government, and, in general, the prompt and correct application of this law (National Congress, 2004).

Eighteen years passed without student representation until April 6, 2022, when student elections were held. Three student proposals that sought to democratize the university government (in 2011, 2012, and 2014) were rejected by the university regime that governed the university between 2009 and 2017. At that time, the university leadership together with the Executive Branch and the National Congress promoted Legislative Decrees N°83-2012 and N°46-2013 with which they sought to avoid student elections, and give the university authorities the ability to directly appoint student representatives in the University Council, “de dedo.”

Currently, the student body is organized into three representative bodies of autonomous self-government. Students have representatives within their study programs through discipline-specific student associations, such as the Student Association of Sociology, Medicine, or Law. At a second level, students also elect representatives to the Faculty or Regional Center their study program belongs to. Lastly, at the national level, students elect their representatives to the national federation (FEUH), which is led by an elected executive committee made up of fifteen students. These student bodies are, as of right now, not financed in any way by the University, have no offices, no personal and irregular legal status. The new representatives are, as of 2022, in talks to recover the financing that was given to the FEUH before the university reform of 2004.

In the current electoral regulations, the dispute for the power of student representation is forged through standardized lists for all elected positions; the electoral process is governed by rules that were agreed upon by the student actors, then approved by the University Council, and ultimately by the National Congress of the Republic. The rules determine the guidelines and forms for standardization. Still, the big difference with the time of the student fronts (1960–2004) is that now the representation structures are integrated by all the student groups that participate in the elections through an electoral quotient.

Student Representation in the Government of the UNAH

In the current law, the principle of university shared governance was established as a tripartite model with students, academic staff, and government representatives, and in the case of the Career Technical Committee, representatives of the guilds are included. The main university shared governance bodies are stipulated to be three—The University Council, which is the main governing body responsible for generating the university’s policies and strategies (UNAH, Organic Law, 2004); Academic Unit’s Board of Directors, which exist at each Faculty and Regional Center, responsible for the financial and academic regulation, and management, of each academic unit (in UNAH from 2007); and Career Technical Committees, which exist at every study program at the UNAH, responsible for the management of the study-program and guide the academic activities at that level (in UNAH from 2008). Students, academic staff, and elected authorities are entitled by law to participation, in varying degrees, to all of these bodies. Even though the law reformed in 2004 contemplates the Boards of Directors of the Academic Units (ten Faculties and eight Regional University Campuses) and the Technical Committees of Careers which are around 114 at the national level, until 2022, these have not been organized.

The deans and study program coordinators have directed these academic structures without the participation of students or academic staff. This has generated several violations of student and academic staff rights, as well as the market for illegal appointments of teachers, among others.

Between 2008 and 2017, several protests occurred for the democratization of the university governance in direct confrontation against the university regime, which obstructed student organization and all attempts to carry out student elections. The protests caused the cancellation of two academic terms and prosecution of more than a hundred students who to this day suffer sentencing processes and alternative measures of imprisonment; some have taken advantage of an amnesty promoted by the new national government (Criterio, 2022).

In 2022, student representatives were elected to the University Council. However, they continue to fight for the election processes or selection of students to the Boards of Directors of the eighteen Academic Units and the Technical Committees of Careers.

Conclusion

Students and academic staff have not fully recovered the collegial power to appoint university authorities and determine educational policy in university governance in Honduras. According to Misael Flores, alternate secretary of the National Electoral Board, “this can only be done through a university reform pursued through the installation of a University Student Constituent Assembly to create a new university law, the structure of a new inclusive university government and an updated academic regime” (interview, Flores, 2022). At the same time, the student associations, the organizational base of the entire student community, have to be strengthened through the democratic culture and citizen participation through assembly mechanisms, consultations, debates, and congresses, among others. According to Madeley Bustillo, president of the Student Association of the Psychology Career, “[d]espite the new electoral process, it is still a challenge to increase citizen participation in the university student community since only 39.11% of the total population went to the polls (81,000 students enrolled in the first academic period 2022). That is an indicator that more than half of the student body is absent from their social responsibility as a member of the university community, both at the polls and in student assemblies” (interview, Bustillo, 2022).

The current electoral regulations in Article 128 in UNAH from 2019 stipulate the mandate in which the FEUH must install a University Student Congress as the “highest governing body of the student self-government of the UNAH,” which will aim to develop and approve the new statutes of the FEUH, and standardize the laws and regulations of the associations of each academic unit. It is expected for this congress to also promote the organization of the almost eighteen associations that did not participate in the electoral process.

Finally, from this analysis, and to improve the governance in student bodies, the students of UNAH should consider the creation of a permanent student congress or student senate, where the representatives of all study programs nationwide have direct and equal participation. Through this congress they will have the ability to give guidelines to the student representatives they have at the different bodies of co-government and university self-government.

References

- Ávila, A.C. (1994). *La autonomía universitaria como legado de la revolución del 20 de octubre de 1944*. USAC, Archivo Hemerográfico.
- Bustillo, M. (June 8, 2022). *Entrevista 02 (M. Cáceres, Entrevistador)*. Tegucigalpa, Honduras.
- Brunner, J. J. (May–August 2011). University governance: typology, dynamics and trends [Gobernanza universitaria: tipología, dinámicas y tendencias]. *Revista de Educación*(Mayo-Agosto 355).
- Caceres, M.D. (2021). *La Reforma a la Gobernanza Universitaria en la UNAH 2004-2008 [Tesis de licenciatura Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras]*. Tegucigalpa: s.n.
- Cañas, J.A. and Arias, A.P. (2009). The Bologna process: Towards creating the Common European Higher Education Area [El proceso de Bolonia: hacia la creación del Espacio Común Europeo de Educación Superior]. *Reencuentro* (54).
- Carrillo, L.B. (2014). *University Autonomy in the Political Constitution*. Colección Lucem Aspicio, Universidad de Costa Rica. Costa Rica.
- Chávez, A.E. (2018). Estudio y Lucha: memorias del movimiento estudiantil universitario salvadoreño en el contexto neoliberal de posguerra. *Cuadernos de Intercambio sobre Centroamérica y el Caribe* 15(2).
- Comisión Europea, Programa ALFA (2007). *Tuning América Latina: reflexiones y perspectivas de la Educación Superior en América Latina*. Bilbao: Publicaciones de la Universidad de Deusto.
- Flores, M. (June 7, 2022). *Entrevista 01 (M. Cáceres, Entrevistador)*. Tegucigalpa, Honduras.
- Galeano, M.T. (Enero–Junio 1990). Algunas notas sobre el movimiento estudiantil nicaraguense en la primera etapa del siglo XX. *Revista de Historia* 1(1).
- Government of Honduras (February 2, 2004). International Monetary Fund. <https://www.imf.org/External/NP/LOI/2004/hnd/01/index.htm>
- Honduras, R.D. (1881). *Código de Instrucción Pública*. Tegucigalpa, Honduras: Tipografía Nacional.
- Idiáquez, J.A. (1999). *Historia de la UNAH en su época autónoma*. Tegucigalpa: Editorial Universitaria.
- Jarquín, M. (2021). *La pedagogía del capital: empresarios, nueva derecha y reforma educativa en México*. Mexico: Edicionesakal.
- Mayorquin, M. (July-December 2017). *Reform Process of the Central University of the Republic of Honduras in 1931* [Proceso de Reforma de la Universidad Central de la República de Honduras en 1931], In M. E. UNAH (ed.), *Memorias*. julio-diciembre. Volumen I. <https://mhsc.unah.edu.hn/dmsdocument/6098-la-ii-reforma-universitaria-en-los-anos-30-pdf>
- National Congress [Congreso Nacional] (2004). *Organic Law of the UNAH [Ley Orgánica de la UNAH]*. Tegucigalpa: La Gaceta.
- National Council of Education [Consejo Nacional de Educación] (May 20, 2003). *Extraordinary Session [Sesión Extraordinaria]*. s.l.: s.n.
- Joya, Olga, Santos, Héctor and Fletes, Ramón (1979). *Notes on the history of the Federation of University Students of Honduras (FEUH) [Apuntes sobre la historia de la Federación de Estudiantes Universitarios de Honduras (FEUH)]*. Bachelor Thesis, Tegucigalpa: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras.
- Paredes, G.G.d. (January–April 2008). In defense of university autonomy [En defensa de la autonomía universitaria]. *Universidades* Enero-Abril 1(36): 47–54.
- Sahlberg, P. (2011). *Finnish Lessons: What Can the World Learn from Educational Change in Finland?* New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University.
- Salazar, A.A. (2011). *Struggles for University Autonomy in El Salvador: The 1950 University Elections* [Luchas por la autonomía universitaria en El Salvador: las elecciones universitarias del año 1950]. La Universidad.
- Silva, A.A. (Mayo–Agosto 2002). State noninterventionism in higher education in Latin America [neointervencionismo estatal en la educación superior en América Latina]. *Sociológica*, Mayo-Agosto 17(49).
- Valenzuela, J.R. (1976). *Historia de la Universidad*. Tegucigalpa: Editorial Universitaria.

Student Representation in Higher Education in Jamaica: The Case of the Mona Guild Council at The University of the West Indies, Mona

Christina Williams

Introduction

This chapter seeks to assess student representation at the founding campus of the premiere University in the English-speaking Caribbean—University of the West Indies, Mona located in Kingston, Jamaica. The University was established in 1948 and, with its population of 20,000 students distributed across seven faculties, currently ranks among the top 4 percent of universities worldwide, the top 2 percent in Latin America and the Caribbean, and in the top 1 percent of the Golden Age University Rankings. As required by the 1980 Education Act, whereby a student representative must be on the school board of each public educational institution, the UWI Mona Guild Council acts as the University’s fulfillment of that mandate. The Guild Council is a forty-five-member student body which comprises an executive, and faculty and halls of residence representatives. However, since its inception in 1951, this body has proven to be more than just a student leadership body as its membership and advocacy have proven instrumental in national and regional development.

There has been limited scholarly research on the working of student representation in Jamaica. Literature on the Guild and student representation in Jamaica in general is rare, save for a few newspaper articles. Therefore, this chapter provides needed insights into the Guild’s legal framework, organizational structures, some of its landmark work in more recent times, and also an ode to some of its former members. The findings in this chapter are based on content analysis of the legal provisions and statutory documents of the University and the Guild.

The chapter first presents the historical background to the University and the Guild. Next, the legal and statutory framework for student representation is presented. The third section addresses the organizational characteristics of the Guild. This section is followed by a presentation of the provisions for student involvement in governance of the university.

The History of the University and of the Guild

The University

In order to understand the role and impact of the University of the West Indies, Mona, Guild Council, its context which is grounded in its parent institution of The University of the West Indies, Mona must be understood. The UWI Mona located in Kingston Jamaica is the founding campus of the University West Indies, which boasts four other sites, namely Cave Hill in Barbados, St. Augustine in Trinidad and Tobago, Five Islands in Antigua and Barbuda, and the Open Campus, which has centers in sixteen Caribbean islands. The UWI, though a regional university, is considered a public education system as it is funded by sixteen regional governments that are described as contributing nations—Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, and Turks and Caicos Islands.

As a result each University campus has its own local management bodies and actors, which is headed by a Campus Principal, while there is a regional University management system, which is headed by the University's Chancellor who presides over University Council—the highest authority body in the University system, followed by the Vice Chancellor who is the principal academic and administrative officer of the University.¹

The Mona Campus was established in October 1948 in a location steeped in history as the campus was once home to sugar work yards for the Mona (to the south) and Papine (to the north) sugar estates. Later in the 1920s, due to the water control rights, these lands were purchased by the Kingston water authorities and leased to primarily East Indian farmers for the rearing and supply of livestock and vegetables. Subsequently, 252 acres of the south-eastern part of the land was used as the Gibraltar Camp, and upon evacuation of most of the refugees, the site was used by various types of military authorities during the Second World War (1944–7). At the end of December 1947, these buildings used during the occupation were retrofitted to house the first version of the University, the University College of the West Indies (UCWI), which accepted its first students in October 1948—twenty-three men and ten women.²

The UCWI is a testament to the transition of former British Colonies—their struggle for self-identity and advancement of country and people as the University was established in response to the 1945 Irvine Committee findings which was a part of the larger Asquith Commission tasked with investigating requests for higher education. At the time there were only two other higher education institutions in the region, the Codrington College in Barbados and the Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture in Trinidad and Tobago.³ Consequently, the Commission recommended the establishment of one regional university with a Royal Charter, apprenticed to an established institution that would grant the degrees on its behalf in order to facilitate academic credibility. The institution would be focused on medicine in the beginning with the intent of broader academic offerings at a later date. Consequently, the UCWI only offered medicine to its first set of students and had the University of London as its parent institution (Lumpkin, 1955).

The University achieved degree granting status in 1965, which is also Jamaica's Independence year and currently boasts the largest student population of the region with approximately 20,000

students in its undergraduate, masters, and doctoral programs in Humanities and Education, Institute of Gender Studies & Development Studies, Science and Technology, Engineering, Law, Medical Sciences, Social Sciences, and Sports. It is currently ranked among the top 4 percent of universities worldwide, the top 2 percent in Latin America and the Caribbean, the top 1 percent of the Golden Age University Rankings and the number 1 University in the Caribbean.⁴ However, long before these rankings, the UCWI and later UWI was the leading academic institution in the creation and promulgation of Caribbean centered thought and expression. It was therefore no surprise that many social movements began or were bolstered through support of UWI staff/students.

During the 1950s, Jamaica underwent a period of pivotal movements that initiated a number of critical modern developments. There was an explosion of self-awareness and the corresponding craving for self-identity possibly spurred on by the promise of Independence by the British, the initiation of developmentalism in response to the findings of the Moyne Commission, the growing recognition and success of local music and athletes on the global stage coupled with the emergence of the Rastafari and folk arts movement, and scholarly and artistic work that challenged the past and demanded more for the future. The University had also solidified its Social Sciences department, which began to engender even more national and regional narratives and identity. Arguably these could be factors that helped in the University establishing the Guild of Undergraduates, which provided the students with identity as a group and also the ability to represent themselves officially to University administration.

The University's Guild Council

In 1951, the University introduced the Guild of Undergraduates, which was branded as the official student representation body of the University. It was later renamed as the Guild of Students to reflect the change in policy whereby both undergraduate students and graduate students had full membership. Currently, all fully registered students are members of the Guild.

The Guild Council is the consortium of elected and appointed members from the Guild of Students who represent the student body. The Guild Council to date is not only a participant in but also one of the better curators of University and regional history through their celebrated publications such as the *The Pelican* from the 1950s, a newsletter titled *Scope* and the *Taylor Hall's Rising Star* from the 1960s, and the *Campus Beat* of the 1990s into the 2000s.⁵ They detail not only campus life but also students' participation in and commentary on happenings of the nation and region. Some of these will be referred to later in the chapter.

Legal and Statutory Framework for Student Representation and Participation

Through the Education Act of 1980, student representation is nationally recognized and mandated in Jamaica as the Act stipulates that "every public education institution shall have a students' council, which shall consist of elected representatives of students with at least one staff advisor, elected by students" (The Education Act, 1980, Article 32). The Act also outlines that

“through the student councils at the secondary and tertiary levels the student shall have the right to democratically elect their representatives; have representation on the board of the institution; meet with the principal, and staff or both, on any matter affecting the students’ interest” (The Education Act, 1980). This is the primary and most powerful legal instrument that legitimizes student representation in Jamaica and due to its binding nature protects student representation and activism from the dangers associated with unpredictable political/administrative will.

As the University of the West Indies, Mona is a publicly funded tertiary institution, the Act’s stipulation cited above is applicable to it and therefore existence of the UWI Mona Guild Council fulfills the requirement of the UWI, Mona campus to have a students’ council. However, it should be noted that the UWI Mona Guild Council has been in existence prior to the introduction of the Education Act (1980) and the student representation mandate, having been established in 1951. In fact, the Guild Council predates even the most senior tertiary student body in Jamaica, the Jamaica Union of Tertiary Students (JUTS).

The JUTS was established in 1972. It is currently the umbrella body for all student-led organizations within publicly funded universities and colleges institutions.⁶ However, the JUTS has been defunct a number of times since its establishment while the Guild has remained active since its inception. This maintained visibility and activeness could be a factor as to why the Guild is arguably considered an even more powerful and popular source of student power despite the JUTS’ access to government on account of their affiliation with the Ministry of Youth & Education. Nonetheless, some of the more notable Presidents of the Guild have gone on to lead the JUTS post their tenure such as Jovaughn Neil (2010–11) in 2012 and most recently Christina Williams (2019–20) in 2021.

Moreover, since the Guild’s inception predated the Education Act, its legitimacy was only possible on account of University policy. The Guild Council’s constitution describes the establishment process as an act in “in pursuance of Ordinance No.1 of the University’s Charter” (UWI Mona Guild Constitution, 2018). The Ordinance of the University recognized the Guild Council as the official “means of communication between the students and the University” (UWI Mona Guild Constitution, 2018).

Additionally, Statute 38 (2) of the University’s Charter was used to establish the Guild of Students as the official association of students of the University of the West Indies, Mona (UWI Mona Guild Constitution, 2018). Next to the Education Act, other policies such as the Revised National Youth Policy (2017–30) engender youth and by reference student participation in decision-making processes. It achieves this through identifying “youth participation” as one of its five goals with the intent to maximize youth participation in national and political decision-making. Furthermore, it submits that achievement of the country’s Vision 2030 Development Plan is only possible through the meaningful involvement of young people (UWI Mona Guild Constitution, 2018).

Furthermore, through its Chapter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms (2011), Jamaica has also protected the rights of all citizens to freedom of thought and the expression thereof both as an individual or through peaceful assembly and association. Therefore, these provisions through application also provide protection for student activism and representation and help in creating legal standing for the UWI Mona Guild Council as a student-led organization.⁷

The Guild Council also has authority to create its own internal laws and regulations from which it may derive additional power and facilitate its administration. However, “no rule shall be

effective until it has been approved by the Council on the recommendation of the Senate” (UWI Mona Guild Constitution, 2018).

Organizational Characteristics of the UWI Mona Guild Council

Membership of the Guild of Students & Fees

All registered students pursuing a course of study approved by the Senate are considered as full members of the Guild of Students. These members pay “an annual sum approved from time to time by the University Finance and General Purposes Committee after consultation with the Guild Council” (UWI Mona Guild Constitution, 2018).

These fees are termed as “Guild Fees” and are a small percentage of the miscellaneous fees that students pay to the University at the beginning of each academic year. These fees are then allocated to the Guild by the University’s administration for them to manage their mandate for the year.

This allocation is usually distributed by the Guild Finance Committee among the portfolios of the Guild Council based on their project and budget presentations at the annual Guild Retreat that happens between June and July before school begins in September. The Guild’s constitution only permits an increase of the fees once every three years or more (UWI Mona Guild Constitution, 2018).

The ability of the UWI Mona Guild Council to collect Guild Fees and manage its own finances with guidance from the Guild Manager is one of its unique features that helps to cement it as arguably the leading student movement in Jamaica. In accordance to Jamaica Union of Tertiary Students former President Everton Rattray in a 2019 presentation, the majority of tertiary student unions in Jamaica are not funded by their respective administrations and where funded, they are limited in how they may manage funds, for example: some have to request a disbursement every time they want to execute an initiative and there is potential of a denial (Rattray, 2019). The UWI Mona Guild Council, however, receives its allotment or “draw down” from the University at periodic points during the academic year and has the ability to fund whatever initiative they wish provided that it is deemed legal by their Constitution. This provides them with the opportunity to have a great impact on both the University and external community as they are able to consistently fund a large number of internal initiatives and external outreach.

Membership of the Guild Council and Elections

As per the membership of the Guild Council, only elected or appointed members of the Guild of Students may serve on the Guild Council. These members are deemed eligible for elections or appointment based on the criteria determined by the Guild prior to the period of elections. Criteria usually involve an established standard for academic, financial, and character standing.

Candidates for elections usually require nomination by two persons who may also have to fit a similar yet less stringent requirement as that of the candidate. Subsequently, the candidate must be uncontested or win the contested election by a simple majority.⁸

The Guild elections have, to an extent, a similar culture and procedures as that of the Jamaican national elections. This is not the case on other campuses. For instance, despite proposals over the years, the UWI Mona Guild is only one of two UWI campuses not to employ some form of no-confidence vote in their elections. Interestingly, the other University of the West Indies' campus that excludes the no-confidence vote, the Open Campus, has had a number of Presidents from Jamaica.

There is intense campaigning leading up to the elections, pre-Covid campaigning involved door-to-door visits at halls of residences, physical appeals to students on school grounds, visibility at events and the use of branded paraphernalia both in person and online. As a result, most candidates appoint official campaign managers and campaign teams. In response, similar to national elections, the Guild has had to determine a maximum amount for campaign financing, select an external Returning Officer from the University's administration, and employ the Electoral Office of Jamaica, which is the official electoral authority for national elections to conduct the voting process.

Moreover, similar to the structure of political parties associated with national elections, halls of residences have a strong power base during elections. They are known for actively sending out "slates" of candidates for numerous different roles on the Guild as well as curating entire strategic movements to support them. Consequently, some halls have developed a reputation for dominating the Guild each year.

However, during Covid-19 with school fully online and the closure of halls, there appeared to be a reduction in their power brokerage during elections. In 2020, a commuting student was able to win against two candidates who were both traditionally residents, which had not happened for some time now. Moreover, more emphasis became placed on online campaigning techniques and the effective use of the "call center."⁹

Guild elections have also proven to be an integral part of national politics acting as a feeder for the political parties with the best and the brightest. Despite it being discouraged by electoral code of conducts, the two major political parties have openly supported candidates over the years and there are usually one from each party vying for the presidency. Multiple politicians within the Jamaican parliament are former Guild Councilors, including the current Prime Minister, The Most Honorable Andrew Holness and the most long-standing Prime Minister, P.J. Patterson. However, both Patterson and Holness unsuccessfully vied for the post of Guild President. The first female President, Angela King, later went on to become Assistant UN Secretary General in 1997.

However, there are a few executive roles on the Guild Council, whereby the constitution mandates must be selected through an appointment process. Appointed members must also fit a set criterion usually on academic, financial and character standing as well as a submitted resume, portfolio, or other proof of ability documents that will be used for shortlisting. The shortlisted candidates will appear before a panel of the newly elected Guild executives from the recently concluded elections for an interview and the selected applicants will round out the cohort as the full executive.

Portfolios, Property, and Funding

There are forty-five members in total in the Guild Council. The executive is led by the Guild President, two Vice Presidents, Guild Secretary, and Treasurer, a post for external affairs, one for entertainment and culture, another for sports-related activities, a Guild Librarian, a Postgraduate Representative, and the Chairperson of the UWI Mona Western Jamaica Campus (WJC).

The representative of the WJC Campus represents approximately 1,000 students on the satellite campus located on the western side of the island in Montego Bay, St. James. The financial autonomy associated with the Guild of the main campus in Kingston extends to the WJC arm, as they receive their own allotment directly from the University's administration to their operations. The Chairperson also has a Campus Council that is almost an exact replica of the Mona Council. However, they are not considered as an extension of the Council but rather a subcommittee of one of the executive members.

The hall cohort comprises each chair and deputy hall chair for each of the ten halls of residence while the Commuting Student Representative along with each of the seven faculties and the Institute of Gender & Development Studies representees round off the representative cohort.

In 2019, the representatives of the Engineering and Sports faculties and the Institute of Gender & Development Studies were added as full members of the Guild Council. This adoption reflected not only the recognition of the University's newly minted faculties but changing priorities in the aim of national/regional sustainable development.

Each member of the Executive has the right to establish subcommittees based on their portfolio responsibilities. These subcommittees are usually pre-defined in the Constitution but ad hoc committees may be developed based on priorities of specific administrations. Presidents, however, have been observed to appoint official advisors/task forces rather than committees. Nonetheless, considering that all members have some form of committee, the Guild Council and its affiliates tend to make up a huge operation of almost a thousand members if not more.

The various Guild Council cohorts plan and execute a myriad of internal and external initiatives. Some of the most long-standing ones include "Buss Gass," the school wide feeding program, "Fresh Cash," a grants-giving initiative, the Army of Good Back to School and Hope Projects, which provide assistance with school supplies and free tutoring for children in neighboring communities, respectively. Some of the prevailing entertainment events include "Integration Thursdays" where current legendary local artists performed decades ago in their efforts to become mainstream, and the UWI Mona Carnival that emerged since 1954 and is still ongoing, boasting thousands of patrons per year and was selected as a part of the Government of Jamaica's 2020 endorsed calendar of events.¹⁰

The Guild Council is also a key student development partner of the University, as it plans and executes the bulk of student activities, such as the University's student orientation period, the yearlong inter-hall sports competitions, and general coordination and funding of all active clubs and regional student associations. It also hosts a number of student development initiatives to include seminars and competitions.

Consequently, due to the number of initiatives, the Guild Council exerts a lot of energy in fundraising at all levels. To date, the Council boasts sponsorship from the largest telecom providers, alcohol & beverage suppliers, food manufacturers & distributors, and financial

companies. Aside from the multi-million-dollar budget already achieved through Guild Fees, millions more are pumped into the Guild initiatives whether through cash or kind (UWI Mona Guild Council Financial Records 2018–2020).

As a result, the Guild Council has emerged as an ecosystem vital to the development of the cultural and creative sector of the region—providing employment opportunities for upcoming and established practitioners as well as practical experience for those with interest.

The Guild also has its own property—the Student Union, which is a multipurpose complex that offers rental spaces for business and hosting of events and the Council’s offices and conference space. It also houses a food bank and student development hub where students with emerging businesses may use a co-working space free of charge. There is also a gym that is run daily by student workers. Finally, the Guild owns two apartments that house the President and Cultural and Entertainment Affairs Chair free of cost for the entirety of their tenure.

This incentivization of Guild Councilors also sets the Mona Council apart from other local counterparts that either does not provide incentives at all or limits it to the President. The Guild provides each member with a subvention based on their grade in the semesterly evaluations, which may be used for tuition or residence fees. Due to the provision of free housing the President and CEAC are not compensated but the President, who by custom cannot supplement income through employment, receives a monthly stipend for food. They also receive a degree waiver for any UGC funded program.¹¹ Hall Chairs also receive free housing on account of hall administration policies while deputies generally have half of the fee subsidized. All members who participate in the Guild Retreat and/or stay on during the summer months to participate in the school year’s participation also receive free housing for that period.

Due to the multifaceted nature of the Guild’s operations, the University provides them with an office and staff—a Guild Manager who provides overall guidance to the Guild and day-to-day management of Guild property and two secretaries who assist with administrative matters of the Guild.

Gender Dynamics of the Guild

Similar to the electoral process, the Guild Council also mirrors the gender dynamics within politics in Jamaica whereby positions are dominated by men, particularly those of most senior authority. Despite being established since 1951, the Council has only had eleven female presidents to date.¹² This disparity in female leadership also extends to particular portfolios that are male dominated evidenced by the first female cultural and entertainment affairs chairperson being elected in 2019 in a by-election.¹³ There is also a co-ed hall that has never been represented by a female chair since its hosting of female residents in 1965. However, in recent times, female representation in the role of President has increased twofold, with women being elected in 2016, 2017, 2019, 2021, and 2022. Moreover, aside from 2017, all the successful candidates competed in a race with men. This may arguably be a reflection of society and the further mainstreaming of women in politics as Jamaica is also experiencing a surge in female electoral candidates and representatives in Parliament.¹⁴

Student Representation in the Governance of UWI Mona and Its Decision-Making Bodies

Each member of the Guild Council serves on specific local University governance bodies following the Guild Constitution and/or University guidelines. However, some positions rely on the President's appointment. This presence of the Guild at all levels of the University's administration helps in cementing its power as the premiere student body. The faculty representatives sit on their respective faculty boards and altogether sit on the Academic Board. The President also sits on the Academic Board if desired but is the only one allowed as student representative on the highest decision-making body of the campus, the Finance & General Purposes Committee. These bodies together have the most authority in the University as their ratified decisions determine the overarching policies of the University such as fees per year and rules guiding the delivery of academic programs. The Postgraduate Representative sits on the local and regional Board of Graduate Studies while the hall of residences and commuting student representatives must be included in decision-making managed by administrators—Student Services & Development Managers. There are also specialized bodies such as campus security and examination irregularities or ad hoc bodies such as the Covid management committee which the President tends to appoint members for or alternates to themselves.

There are also a number of set meetings per year that the Guild must engage in that act as crucial decision-making organs of the University though not established as governance bodies per se. One such meeting is the negotiations of hall fees. The incoming and outgoing hall representatives and outgoing Guild Presidents meet with the Office of Student Services & Development to negotiate fees per year.¹⁵

The Mona Guild Council also has a seat on the intercampus Guild Council, which is the official consortium of the regional University system's five student Guilds. There are three regional meetings hosted by a separate campus each time where the host President acts as chair. These meetings are used for reporting, knowledge sharing, and shaping of the council's regional mandate in preparation for negotiations at University regional meetings. At the regional level, the intercampus Guild Council, represented by each campus President, sits on bodies such as the Board of Undergraduate Studies, University Council, and selects individual Presidents for specialized or ad hoc regional committees.

The Guild is also further legitimized through its appointment to Government boards/task forces.¹⁶ This sometimes creates contention with the national tertiary student union who may not have been selected to represent despite their senior rank or is joined by the local Guild Council on the board.

The Guild and Its Advocacy

It would be impossible to outline all the advocacy efforts of the UWI Mona Guild Council, which has permeated not only the University space but national and regional movements. The Guild rioted alongside academics and the poor in support of the GOJ banned revolutionary, Walter

Rodney during the Rodney riots of 1968,¹⁷ marched to Jamaica House in 1999 to meet with the Prime Minister on the matter of an increase in petrol tax due which was a factor in the Government's subsequent 50 percent roll-back in the increase (UWI Joins Protest, 1999) and another march to Parliament in 2010 to successfully lobby for a rescinding of the Government proposal to cut the subvention for students (Neil, 2022).

This advocacy has not always been welcomed by authorities. For example, there was tear gassing of Guild executives in 2004 by the police for blocking the University gates in protest of unfair policies (Reid, 2004), and there was the expulsion of the 2012 Guild President and suspension of others due to allegations that they were associated with the student protests that led to the interruption of ongoing exams (The Gleaner, 2012). Nonetheless, in fulfillment of its obligation to "always be a voice of advocacy and reason on behalf of the Guild of Students" (UWI Mona Guild Constitution, 2018), each administration has had its fair share of accomplishments tackling issues of financing, security, student welfare, and development each year. The first Guild to experience the pandemic remains memorable for its successful 99.9 percent reduction in deregistration (The Gleaner, 2020), revision of the 70+-year-old health policy that currently facilitates island-wide health insurance for students (The Gleaner, 2020), and numerous fees and academic concessions that were mirrored by other institutions. They also provided transportation and subsistence support for students when students could not leave the University for months due to national lockdowns and closure of airports. The Guild has also been integral in championing students and youth concerns through other platforms such as their consistent contributions to the national union of tertiary students in leadership roles or even helping to formulate the Caribbean Regional Youth Council (Neil, 22).

Conclusion

The ongoing legacy of the University of the West Indies and its Guild of Students has been an integral part of the story of Jamaica and the Caribbean. Through its advocacy and initiatives, the Guild Council has legitimized itself beyond its origins of University and national policy. Moreover, as the student leadership movement advances, the Council with its structure rooted in university wide representation, autonomous management, incentivized student leadership, and strong funding support may act as a blueprint for other Universities worldwide.

Notes

- 1 <https://www.uwi.edu/principal-officers.php>
- 2 <https://www.mona.uwi.edu/uwimona-history>
- 3 <https://www.mona.uwi.edu/uwimona-history>
- 4 <https://www.mona.uwi.edu/>
- 5 <https://uwi.edu/timeline/>
- 6 <https://www.youthjamaica.com/content/jamaica-union-tertiary-students-juts>
- 7 In accordance with the Guild Constitution the Guild Council tenure lasts from June 1st to May 31st. Based on the Guild Constitution, the UWI Mona Guild Council Executive ought to be elected by

March 31st of each year. However in 2020 due to the pandemic and the late resumption of school, the elections were held on May 27, 2020. This resulted in the Guild Council of 2019–2020 led by Christina Williams, becoming the longest serving administration demitting office on July 3rd instead of May 31st.

8 Ibid.

9 The call center refers to the use of a large group of campaign team members to call students and remind them to vote for their candidate. The legality of the practice remains unresolved as it is believed that students' information is oftentimes sourced unethical means.

10 Aside from the Band Launch, the first event in the series, the Carnival had to be cancelled due to the onset of the pandemic. For more information see <https://www.jamaicaobserver.com/teenage/uwi-kickstarts-2020-carnival-season-with-epic-band-launch> <https://www.mona.uwi.edu/marcom/newsroom/entry/7776>

11 UGC funded refers to all programs subsidized by the regional governments. President may access the waiver up till 3 years after demitting office.

12 <https://uwimuseum.wordpress.com/2019/03/22/women-at-the-top/> <https://jamaica-gleaner.com/article/news/20220330/easy-does-it-omolora-wilson-declared-11th-female-president-uwi-guild>

13 <https://www.jamaicaobserver.com/teenage/uwi-kickstarts-2020-carnival-season-with-epic-band-launch/>

14 For the first time in Jamaican history, women now hold 28.5% of the seats in parliament: <https://www.caribbeannationalweekly.com/caribbean-breaking-news-featured/women-surge-historic-number-of-women-elected-to-jamaicas-parliament/>

15 Due to the delays in elections because of the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, the 2019/20 Guild had to negotiate fees.

16 For example the Government Covid 19 Management Taskforce: <https://jis.gov.jm/education-ministry-to-set-up-e-covid-management-task-force/>

17 <https://www.mona.uwi.edu/history/chru/confrontations-uwi-student-protests-and-rodney-disturbance-1968>

References

- Government of Jamaica (2011). Chapter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms. [https://www.japarliament.gov.jm/attachments/341_The%20Charter%20of%20Fundamental%20Rights%20and%20Freedoms%20\(Constitutional%20Amendment\)%20Act,%202011.pdf](https://www.japarliament.gov.jm/attachments/341_The%20Charter%20of%20Fundamental%20Rights%20and%20Freedoms%20(Constitutional%20Amendment)%20Act,%202011.pdf)
- Government of Jamaica (2017). Revised National Youth Policy, (2017–30). [https://www.youthjamaica.com/sites/default/files/Revised%20National%20Youth%20Policy%20Jamaica%20-%20Oct.%202017%20\(1\).pdf](https://www.youthjamaica.com/sites/default/files/Revised%20National%20Youth%20Policy%20Jamaica%20-%20Oct.%202017%20(1).pdf)
- Government of Jamaica (1980). The Education Act. <http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/31427/65558/F-938959188/JAM31427.pdf>
- Interview with Former Guild President Jovaughn Neil 2010–2011. Conducted August 2022.
- Lumpkin, Margaret (1955). Education in the British West Indies. https://books.google.com.jm/books?hl=en&lr=&id=JVBGAQAAMAAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA1&dq=related:m96fblv2so8J:scholar.google.com/&ots=h0bhcOHaj3&sig=pML5O1sCGG0efLQti-wWve-JTJM&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false
- Rattray, Everton (2019). Presentation at the National Student Leaders Installation Ceremony on November 22, 2019. Kingston: Jamaica Union of Tertiary Students.
- Reid, Tyrone. (2004). Guild President Damion Crawford: Misunderstood or misrepresented? *Gleaner*. <http://old.jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20041010/lead/lead5.html>
- The Gleaner (2012). Protesting students mar UWI exams. *The Gleaner*. <https://jamaica-gleaner.com/power/36900>

- The Gleaner (2020). Deregistration fears plunge at UWI. *The Gleaner*. <https://jamaica-gleaner.com/article/lead-stories/20200118/deregistration-fears-plunge-uwi>
- The Gleaner (2020). UWI students get increased access to healthcare. *The Gleaner*. <https://jamaica-gleaner.com/article/lead-stories/20200627/uwi-students-get-increased-access-healthcare>
- The University of the West Indies Mona, Guild Council (2018–2022). Internal Financial Records.
- The University of the West Indies Mona, Guild of Students (2018). The University of the West Indies Guild Constitution (Revised Edition).
- UWI Joins Protest (1999). Campus Beat Mar-May Issue. UWI Mona Library.

College Student Activism in the United States

Jerusha Conner, Rachel Stannard, and Angela Upright

From mass school shootings to severe weather events that destroy homes and communities, in the United States, Gen Z has come of age amidst regular reminders that adult political leaders lack the will to take action to protect them and safeguard their futures. As a result, Gen Z leaders have taken it upon themselves to demand change, while indicting adults for their generational betrayal. Through dramatic direct actions, social media campaigns, and electoral strategies, they have worked to educate and mobilize a large cadre of young people to hold elected officials to account (Conner, Lotesta, Wang and Kawashima-Ginsberg, 2021).

It is not surprising that youth whose formative years were marked by the historic March for our Lives movement of 2018, the global school climate strikes of 2019, and the 2020 racial justice uprising across the United States would bring this same organizing ethic with them to college, where they often train their critique on the institution, especially when it disappoints them or forsakes its purported commitments.

In the United States, students can enroll in either private or public institutions, and though public universities typically charge in-state residents lower tuition rates than their private counterparts, tuitions for out-of-state residents can be exorbitant. Indeed, during the 2021–2 school year, the average cost to attend a public college in the United States was \$10,388 a year for an in-state resident and \$22,698 for an out-of-state resident, while the average cost for a private college was \$38,185 (Powell, Kerr and Wood, 2021). Given these costs, a growing number of US college students take out federal loans and work while studying (Klemenčič and Park, 2018). Rising tuition costs and ballooning student debt, the result of neoliberal policies over the last forty years that have increasingly cut government funding for higher education, are key grievances for many student activists in the United States, just as they are in other parts of the world (Davis, Mustaffa, King and Jama, 2020); however, student activists in the United States are also concerned with other ways in which their institutions reproduce inequality or perpetuate the marginalization of certain students. Given how much they invest financially, emotionally, and physically to attend college, they are keen to feel the institution appropriately values and supports them and their friends.

The term institutional betrayal has been used by scholars to describe “feelings of treason that occur when an institution fails to prevent or respond appropriately to wrongdoings” (Linder and Myers, 2018, p. 1). These feelings arise when students perceive a mismatch between the school’s espoused values and their lived reality on its campus. For example, when students with a particular identity feel that the institution neither welcomes nor respects them, they may feel

betrayed by the institution's marketed promise of a safe home in which they would thrive. An institution's failure to respond satisfactorily to instances of racism, homophobia, transphobia, or sexual assault can engender feelings of institutional betrayal (Smith and Freyd, 2013, 2014). As institutions of higher education work to diversify their student bodies, but do so without changing their underlying structures and cultures, the work of exposing institutional shortcomings and formulating agendas for change is often left to students. In this way, institutional betrayal, just like its corollary generational betrayal, can serve as a key catalyst for student activism. Promoting racial equity, gender equity, and LGBTQ+ students' rights and ending gender-based violence on campus are top issues for US-based student activists (Conner, 2020). In addition, contemporary student activists in the United States are concerned by their institutions' treatment of staff, particularly low-wage, nonunionized workers, such as custodial and food service staff members as well as graduate students, many of whom work as teaching assistants or research assistants in order to offset tuition costs (Klemenčič, 2020). In recent years, graduate student unions in both public and private universities have become particularly engaged in activism, leading strikes and rallies to demand higher wages and benefits (Chang and Xu, 2021).

Student activism in the United States has a long and storied history, stretching back to the "Bad Butter Rebellion" at Harvard College in 1766, when students protested the quality of food they were served (Moore, 1976), but the 1960s are often framed as the "high water mark" of student activism (Rhoads, 1998). During the 1960s, students became central players in the Civil Rights movement, staging lunch counter sit-ins, organizing through the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, and participating in Freedom Summer voter registration efforts in the South (McAdam, 1990). On the west coast, students at UC Berkeley initiated the Free Speech Movement to fight for students' rights on campus in 1964 (Lipset and Woolin, 1965), and across the country, students led mass protests against the Vietnam War in the latter part of the decade (Altbach and Lipset, 1969). Some scholars have suggested that student activism in the United States has come in waves every thirty or so years, subsiding for a time only to crest again (Rhoads, 1989).

The latest wave of student activism, which first emerged post-2008 (Milkman, 2017) and began surging in the United States in 2015, has been accompanied by the rise of a broader sociopolitical climate in which activism has become not just more normative, but more trendy. When Elaine Welteroth took the helm at *Teen Vogue* in 2016, for instance, she retooled the magazine to focus less on makeup and dating woes and more on youth activism and intersectionality (Bauknecht, 2017). From Billie Eilish and Taylor Swift to Megan Rapino and Naomi Osaka, pop stars and professional athletes are increasingly using their platforms to advocate for social justice. Popular American TV shows, such as Free Form's *Good Trouble* and CBS's *The Activist*, celebrate the work of activists. For many American youth growing up during the #MeToo movement, the Black Lives Matter movement, and the mass protests that accompanied the election and subsequent executive orders of Donald Trump, activism no longer carries a stigma. Instead, even when associated with adversarial postures and contentious politics, it has become a generational hallmark and a valued indicator of civic engagement and leadership (Klemenčič, 2020).

Building on seminal work by Milkman (2017), who analyzed the embrace of student activism by American millennials, this chapter reviews the rise of student activism among Gen Z college students in the United States. It considers who the newest student activists to emerge on the scene are, why and how they become activists, what they do as activists, and how their institutions

respond to their activism. It concludes with a set of recommendations for higher education professionals.

Who Are American College Student Activists?

Generation Z is defined as those born between 1997 and 2012. The oldest members of Gen Z to have attended college would not have graduated until 2018. This would place them as freshman or sophomores (first- or second-year college students) during the pivotal fall of 2015, when protests at the University of Missouri ignited demonstrations for racial justice at hundreds of other campuses across the country (Johnston, 2015).

Most studies of US college student activists since 2015 have focused on students with particular identities (e.g., Muslim students [Ahmadi, Sanchez and Cole, 2019]; Black student-athletes [Ferguson and Davis, 2019]; undocumented students [Chen and Rhoads, 2016, Mendes and Chang, 2019]; and transgender students [Goldberg, Smith and Beemyn, 2020]); however, three book-length studies with national samples of student activists have been published since the latest wave of student activism began. Collectively, these studies offer some insight into the various identities college student activists hold. Linder et al. (2020) interviewed twenty-five students from four different regions in the United States (as well as one who attended college in Canada) who were “engaged in identity-based activism or resistance, were 18 years old or older, and were current undergraduate or graduate students” during the 2016–17 school year. Their sample consisted predominantly of straight (56 percent), cis-gender female (68 percent) students of color (56 percent) from middle-class backgrounds (60 percent).

Conner (2020) enlisted a sample of 237 self-identifying student activists attending four-year residential colleges and universities in forty-seven states and DC during the fall of 2016. The sample was largely white (66 percent), queer (54 percent), and female identifying (67 percent), with roughly one-third identifying as poor or low-income, another third identifying as middle class, and the final third identifying as upper middle class or upper class. She found that the vast majority of these self-identifying student activists were social justice-oriented leftists or progressives; she argues they are distinguished from prior generations of student activists by their concerted efforts to link current campaigns to past struggles, their intersectional perspective and critical consciousness, and their rejection of neoliberal models of higher education.

Binder and Kidder (2022) conducted interviews with seventy-seven politically engaged college students from four different campuses in the fall of 2017 and spring of 2018. All participants were active in campus-based political organizations, such as College Democrats, College Republicans, Young Americans for Freedom, and Black Students Associations. The sample included slightly more progressive than conservative students. The researchers found that the conservative students in their sample were less diverse on the whole than the progressive students, with 66 percent of the conservative students compared to 45 percent of the progressive students hailing from elite backgrounds, 89 percent compared to 74 percent identifying as white, and 60 percent compared to 40 percent identifying as men.

More recent data from the 2021 American Civil Liberties Union summer institute for youth activists shows that the college students drawn to this opportunity were predominantly cis-

gender (84 percent), female-identifying (72 percent), able-bodied (90 percent), and queer (61 percent). Fifty-one percent of the 636 respondents identified as white. Echoing findings from other studies (Conner, 2020, Conner, Greytak and Evich, 2023, Fine, Torre, Frost and Cabana, 2018), survey data from these participants show that most (94 percent) are multi-issue (not single-issue) activists, with 74 percent actively involved in four or more distinct issue areas. The most common issue areas in which these activists worked were racial justice, women's rights, and LGBTQ+ rights, followed by environmental or climate justice. As Brooks (2017) has noted and other researchers have affirmed with US samples (e.g., Conner, 2020), today's student activists do not focus exclusively on educational issues or institutional practices and policies; instead, most engage with broader societal issues.

In short, although there is some variety in the class backgrounds and sexualities of participants across research projects, most national studies of contemporary college student activism in the United States tend to attract white, cis-gender female progressives.

How Do Students Become Activists?

The literature on youth political socialization has suggested the college years can be an important time for political identity development (Arnett, 2000, Maniss, 2017). While it has long been argued that the college environment can lead students to adopt more progressive values and beliefs, more recent work finds that contemporary US college students tend to retain the views they bring with them to higher education and, if anything, become more polarized (Mayhew et al., 2016). Peers, professors, and clubs can all play a role in helping students assume identities as activists in college; however, many students are entering higher education with these identities already well formed (Conner, 2020).

Previous research has revealed the varied pathways youth take when entering activist spaces (Fisher, 2012). Although activism is understood as a matter of survival for some youth (Stewart and Williams, 2019), most research suggests that US students traverse one of three routes toward activism: following a family tradition; experiencing a slow turn toward activism, which involves experimentation and fits and starts (Conner, 2020); and responding to a sudden call to action. Although Conner (2020) found that only one-third of her sample of 237 self-identifying student activists could identify a key moment that galvanized them to take action, it is clear that national shocks to the conscience, like the Parkland Florida massacre in 2018 and the murder of George Floyd in 2020, have propelled many members of Gen Z to engage in activism.

The institutional context can also exert an influence on students' adoption of activist identities (Baker and Blissett, 2018, Barnhardt, 2015, Logan, Lightfoot and Contreras, 2017). Binder and Wood (2013), for example, suggest that large public institutions are more likely to foster a provocative style of conservative student activism than small private institutions, which tend to give rise to a more "civilized discourse" style of activism.

Youth can become engaged in activism because of their interest in the issue, referred to as issue-based activism, for example, on matters such as climate change or gun control, or because of the way their identities are implicated in these matters, referred to as identity-based activism. If a Black student were to join the Black Lives Matter movement or a trans-youth were to

become a member of The Global Action for Trans* Equality (GATE), this dimension of their identity is salient to their involvement in these activist groups. These forms of activism are not exclusive and can intersect as reasons for youths' entrance into activism (Quaye, Linder, Stewart and Satterwhite, 2022). Identity-based activism, particularly on college campuses in the United States, is utilized by marginalized students as a means of holding their institutions accountable for oppressive structures and policies (Linder et al., 2019), as well as inaction and the poor handling of various incidents.

Linder et al. (2020) found four primary motivations for students to engage in identity-based activism: identity (it's who I am); community (it's what I care about); anger (it's what I'm reacting to), and local and national events (it's where I am). Consonant with these findings, data from 636 youth participating in the 2021 ACLU youth advocacy institute suggest that the most common influences propelling youth to activism after their values (75 percent) are works they have read (including online posts, 53 percent), other activists (48 percent), and personal experiences of oppression (46 percent). Family, friends, and school or classroom experiences are less frequently cited influences; however, though those who do reference them tend to rate them as highly impactful (Conner, Greytak and Evich, 2023).

What Do Student Activists Do?

According to Logan, Lightfoot and Contreras (2017), student activists define their activism along a spectrum that ranges from "existence as resistance" to "activism consumes life." In between these two poles are three other forms of activism students may embrace: social media activism, educational activism, and front-line activism. Of course, front-line activism does not preclude social media activism; indeed, many youth rely on digital organizing to mobilize peers and resources for direct actions (Conner, Lotesta, Wang and Kawashima-Ginsberg, 2021); however, some activists do limit their engagement to the Twitterverse, much to the consternation of other activists (Conner, 2020). In addition to organizing protests, marches, and demonstrations (the most common forms of student activist activity), student activists report spending considerable time organizing activities designed to educate their peers, including workshops, panels, and discussions (Conner, 2020). The work of activists not just to plan and execute campaigns, but to build community is also time consuming and significant. This work includes inward-facing efforts, such as the practice of collective care and prefiguration (or attempts to model the kind of society they wish to create; Curnow, 2022, Nielsen, 2017), as well as outward-facing efforts, such as coalition building.

On their campuses, US student activists tend to work within one of three main structures: established campus clubs or organizations; external national organizations with a berth on campus; and momentum-based organizing efforts that are parlayed into informal organizations. Below, we offer examples of each.

Established clubs or student organizations have an officially recognized presence on campus (Klemenčič, 2020). They often receive small budgets through Student Life Offices and have elected executive boards as well as faculty or staff sponsors or advisors. In Conner's (2020) study of self-identifying student activists, 90 percent reported having joined a campus club related

to their activism on campus. Activist-oriented clubs typical on most US campuses include the Black Student Union, Gay-Straight Alliance or LGBTQ club, environmental club, and feminist collectives.

Weber (2016) recounts how a student group at Smith College, Queers and Allies (Q&A), staged a two-year pressure campaign that eventually led the Board of Trustees to adopt a policy admitting transgender women. The campaign involved petitions, meetings with administrators, protests and rallies, social media postings, soliciting a pledge from alumni to withhold donations until the group's demands were met, open-mic events, and coalition work with other organizations on campus, including "the Concerned Students of Color Committee, Smith Disability Alliance, Students for Justice in Palestine, and Peer Sexuality Educators" (p. 35). Such coalitions not only help to build power through numbers, but also reflect the intersectional commitments of student activists to "push for rights and recognition on behalf of multiple marginalized constituencies, including those facing multiple forms of oppression" (p. 36). Q&A's multi-pronged, ultimately successful campaign illustrates the effectiveness of club-based student activism.

In addition to the panoply of officially recognized clubs that have become a staple of campus life in the United States, chapters or affiliates of external organizations have also begun to assert a presence on campus. Examples of such organizations include Students Demand Action, the Sunrise Movement, the National Rifle Association-University, and the Roosevelt Institute Network. Binder and Kidder (2022) argue that organizations on the right are particularly adept at bringing students into a conservative activist ecosystem, where they gain access to professional opportunities as well as funding streams to bring controversial speakers to campus.

Known for its "professor watchlist" and rock-concert-like tours, TurningPoint USA (TPUSA) "chapters host a wide range of events on campus including debates and discussion forums, campus speakers, activist training seminars, film screenings, grassroots activism campaigns, free speech events, and voter registration drives" (TPUSA, 2022). The organization provides grants, model charters, and "activism kits" to students interested in starting a chapter. With more than 1,400 chapters at colleges and high schools across the United States, TPUSA has quickly become one of the most well-known and well-financed of the external conservative student organizations, growing from \$4.3 million in revenues in 2016 to \$39.8 million in 2020 (Stone, 2021). By contrast, the Sunrise Movement, a climate justice organization dedicated to building support for the Green New Deal, was founded in 2017 with a budget of \$50,000 and has grown to a budget of \$15 million in 2020 and 2021, less than half that of TPUSA.

The final structure through which student activists work is the spontaneous protest, often organized over social media channels in response to a campus event, which then gives rise to informal and sometimes short-lived organizations. Concerned Student 1950 at the University of Missouri (Ervin, 2019, Ferguson and Davis, 2019) and NotAgainSU at Syracuse University (Conner, 2022) stand as prominent examples of groups of students who organized to demand change.

Another example of the spontaneous protest that coalesces as a student group comes from Haverford College. In the fall of 2020, in the wake of what students saw as an insensitive and patronizing email from their college president, discouraging them from protesting the police-involved killing of a young Black man in Philadelphia, Haverford students, led by BIPOC women, launched a strike, boycotting all classes and campus jobs until their fourteen demands were met.

These demands ranged from recognizing indigenous people's rights and establishing election day as a paid holiday for all staff, to campus policing reform, accountability for problematic professors, and the hiring of a new Chief Diversity Officer. They were articulated in an open letter to the community, published in the campus newspaper, by a group of students identifying themselves as Black Students Refusing Further Inaction (BSRFI). After a two-week strike, which was supported by many faculty and alumni as well as students at neighboring Bryn Mawr College, many of their demands (which had grown to sixty-four) were fully or partially met, including securing dedicated resources of \$75k for antibias training for faculty and another \$75k to renovate the Black cultural center and develop a Latinx center. The progress made toward realizing each demand, reframed as "antiracism/racial equity commitments," can be tracked on the Haverford College website, <https://www.haverford.edu/antiracism-dei-commitments/report>. Notably, students from BSRFI explained that they had to teach campus administrators and staff how to build a transparent spreadsheet and reporting structure to indicate the timeline, the responsible parties, and the status of each demand (Samuels and Taylor, personal communication, September 20, 2021).

Whether through established clubs, external organizations with a campus presence, or momentum-based grassroots organizing, student activists contribute significant labor to their campuses (Linder, Quaye, Lange, Evans and Stewart, 2020), drawing on a wide and ever-expanding repertoire of strategies.

How Do Colleges and Universities Respond to Student Activism?

As Cho (2018) observes, there is a wealth of student activism research focused on the tactics and strategies of US college students, but comparatively little on how colleges and universities respond to these tactics and strategies. Cho (2018) introduced a framework for researchers to examine institutional responses toward student activists, focused on two initial questions. The first is to what extent the institution buffers or bridges students' demands; that is, to what extent it maintains the status quo or transforms its inner-workings to address student critique. The second question is how, if at all, institutions share power and decision-making with students. Cho then identifies four ways to categorize these responses: schisming, appeasement, co-option, and partnership. Schisming involves stifling the activists' efforts, through indifference, minimization, or criminalization of students. Appeasement entails appearing to engage with students, while buffering their demands. When universities engage in co-option, they "use students' knowledge and action, [but] refuse to allow students to have power, a seat at the table, or authorship come time for implementation and recognition" (Cho, 2018, p. 87). Finally, partnership involves shared leadership with students and student agency in designing and implementing responses to the problems they have exposed.

Consistent with the schisming and appeasement responses, Linder et al. (2020) found that the student activists in their study believed that educators and administrators tended to placate or wait out, gaslight, and critique student activists in order to avoid creating real change and protect

the institution, program, or department. Hoffman and Mitchell (2016) similarly illustrated how schisming occurs as an institution responds to student activists' equity concerns by "recenter[ing] majority culture, plac[ing] systemic problems back on minoritized students, and creat[ing] a discursive context wherein action to address activist concerns is stifled" (p. 277). Reflecting both schisming and co-option, in their study of the labor of student activists of color to create a multicultural center at their majority-minority university, Lerma, Hamilton and Nielsen (2020) found that student activists who identify a racial problem on campus and work to address it must first put up with leadership intransigence and pushback, before their ideas are finally appropriated (and diluted) by administration. Chatelain (2020), too, argues that co-option of minoritized students' labor on college campuses is commonplace, as administrators take credit for the ideas of Black student protestors, effectively turning "black students into another type of contingent labor force on campus. They shoulder an undue burden to identify and rectify the racism of the academy" (p. 7).

While examples of schisming, co-option, and appeasement abound, partnership responses are rare and, as Cho (2018) acknowledges, perhaps idealistic due to entrenched power imbalances between administrators and students; however, some examples of partnerships with student activists exist (Fernandez et al., 2018; Mahler-Rogers, 2017). For example, Gibson and Cook-Sather (2020) explain how pedagogical partnership programs inside higher education institutions "enable students and faculty to engage and fight structural inequalities both inside and outside the academy" (p. 24). A feature story on the Emory University website, entitled "Student Activism, an Emory Tradition," recounts how "the university partnered with student leaders to address each [of the 13] demand[s]" that Black students had issued to the administration in the fall of 2015 (Hill and Brown, 2021); it is possible that the student activists involved may contest this characterization of a partnership; however, with this article, the institution seems to signal that it values student activism, seeing it as an important form of leadership. There are also cases of institutions acceding to student demands without partnering with them to implement the changes students demanded (Conner, 2022, Ferguson and Davis, 2019, Weber, 2016).

In American higher education, another important element of institutional responses to student activism is how claims about the values of intellectual diversity and free speech on campus are leveraged. Although progressive student activists value free speech and express interest in engaging in genuine intellectual debate (Conner, 2020), they are often framed as intolerant of conservative viewpoints by their counterparts and others who wish to undermine funding and support for higher education. Binder and Kidder (2022) explain how conservative student activists draw from a playbook, goading progressive student activists (and sometimes faculty) into denouncing, shouting down, or attempting to "stifle" the "free speech" of (inflammatory) conservative speakers, thereby fueling claims about higher education's liberal bias and hostility toward conservative perspectives. Institutions, anxious to gird themselves against such critiques in order to maintain funding streams, find themselves caught between competing demands to safeguard "free speech" and civil discourse on campus on the one hand, and to protect minoritized students from the attacks to their inherent dignity, worth, and belonging on campus that occur when certain people speak freely, on the other hand. These tensions, entwined with the politics of respectability, can shape how institutions respond to activists on both the right and left (Stokes and Davis, 2022, Thomas, 2019).

Conclusion

Youth activists are acutely aware of their positionality in the various societal and institutional structures in which they are enmeshed. They also understand how their activist actions are perceived by the adults within those structures. In K-12 settings, youth activists often feel they are viewed by educators and administrators as rabble-rousers or troublemakers (Hoffman and Mitchell, 2016), while their peers in student government or with other leadership positions are distinguished as respectable and valued agents of change (Harrison and Mather, 2017). Linder (2019) recommends seeing activism as a form of leadership. In making these concepts mutually inclusive, educators and administrators can support minoritized student activists who are often engaging in identity-based activism.

In further rejecting the stereotype of activists as “rebels” and acknowledging their lack of political and economic power, many youth-led social movements strategically utilize adult allies within their organizational structures (Gordon, 2008; Valladares et al., 2021). However, with those partnerships comes the challenge of combating adultism, defined as “the oppression experienced by ... young people at the hands of adults and adult-produced/adult-tailored systems” (LeFrançois, 2014, p. 47). Some of these disagreements stem from the different interpretations of what youth view as activist efforts compared to how adults traditionally define activism, as well as how the varying generations communicate with their peers and one another. Youth define a supportive, effective adult ally as someone who listens, learns, and knows when and when not to “do” (Lio and Literat, 2020). In decentering themselves, adult allies are able to facilitate and support the voices of youth activists who are being most affected by injustice.

An irony in higher education is that although staff and faculty are tasked with educating and creating spaces for students to succeed in their academic endeavors, there are few examples of institutions that foster and require rich ongoing education of faculty and staff. The reality in many institutions, especially where student activism is prominent, is that students are assuming responsibility for educating staff and faculty. As seen through the example at Haverford College, student activists felt like they were teaching the campus community about the racism they experienced on campus, how current policies and practices harm minoritized students, faculty, and staff on campus, and how to utilize various software to track progress in response to student demands. Mindful of this example, we propose the following multi-level recommendations for higher education administrators to more proactively meet student needs.

A recommendation at the individual level is to enhance both the visibility of university administrators at campus-wide events and their ongoing communication with student leaders. While Cho’s (2018) Institutional Response Framework focuses on how administrators react to student activism, we believe the concept of partnership can serve as a proactive practice that bridges students and administration. Mahler-Rogers (2017) found that administrators who had positive relationships with students prior to incidents of protest reported having a more proactive and productive response to activism than their counterparts. Students directly went to those administrators for support throughout the campus protests and maintained an open dialogue with them. These findings emphasize the need for relationship building, and for students to have direct access to communicating with upper-level administrators.

A recommendation at the institutional level is requiring ongoing education on positionality, power, and privilege for all faculty, staff, and higher-level administrators, including the President’s Cabinet

and Board of Trustees. This professional development is essential to avoid placing minoritized students in the position of constantly having to educate others on the identities they hold and the ways in which institutional norms may impact them differently. Accountability for this requirement could be including an intentional question in annual job performance reviews around reflecting on the workshops and trainings attended, and how equity and inclusion show up in their work.

A recommendation at the national level is for colleges to partner with national organizations focused on equity and inclusion to connect student activists at different universities. Networking has been happening at the student level, mostly through the use of social media to express solidarity for student activist demonstrations on other campuses (Reynolds and Mayweather, 2017). Especially at predominantly white colleges, minoritized students may feel isolated, not seeing representation of the identities they hold in the student body, faculty, or staff. While these feelings of isolation speak to the need for equity-based recruitment processes, in the meantime, a tangible solution would be increasing accessibility for students to connect with others who are passionate about similar issues and providing means for students to build power with one another, whether they attend the same university or not.

In its simplest formulation, politics is about vying for power. In educational institutions, power is typically concentrated at the top, among administrators. As a result, these decision-makers are often positioned as the antagonists of student activists, who organize to assert their claims on institutional spaces, resources, and priorities. The tension between students and administrators, old as the university itself (Boren, 2001), characterizes much progress in higher education, but neither is inevitable. Institutional change is ultimately a matter of decision-making: which decisions come up for consideration and by whom, how those decisions are informed, and how they are then implemented are all decisions made (or forced) by people in the institution using their power. It is tempting to imagine a universe in which students (including those who are the most marginalized on campus), faculty, and administrators make these decisions collaboratively, but in the absence of such authentic shared governance, progressive student activists remain essential to the creation of more just and inclusive higher education institutions, which effectively serve to advance the common good and the broader aims of US democratic society; colleges and universities would do well to nurture their robust engagement.

Acknowledgments

All authors contributed to the conceptualization, analysis, and writing of this chapter. Jerusha Conner provided supervision and led the review and editing.

The authors extend their gratitude to editor Klemenčič for her thoughtful feedback on an earlier draft of this chapter.

References

- Ahmadi, S., Sanchez, M. and Cole, D. (2019). Protecting Muslim students' speech and expression and resisting islamophobia. In Morgan, D.L. and C.H.F. Davis III (eds.), *Student activism, politics, and campus climate in higher education* (pp. 97–111). New York, NY; Milton Park, Abingdon: Routledge.

- Altbach, P.G. and Lipset, S.M. (eds.) (1969). *Students in Revolt*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.
- Arnett, J. (2000). Emerging adulthood. *American Psychologist* 55(5): 469–80. DOI: 10.1037//0003-066X.55.5.469
- Baker, D.J. and Blissett, R.S. (2018). Beyond the incident: Institutional predictors of student collective action. *The Journal of Higher Education* 89(2): 184–207. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.2017.1368815>
- Barnhardt, C.L. (2015). Campus educational contexts and civic participation: Organizational links to collective action. *The Journal of Higher Education* 86(1): 38–70. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.2015.11777356>.
- Bauknecht, S. (Nov. 9, 2017). Style meets social activism in refreshed Teen Vogue. *Pittsburgh Post Gazette*. <http://www.post-gazette.com/life/fashion/2017/07/09/Style-meets-social-activism-in-refreshed-Teen-Vogue-magazine/stories/201707090028>
- Binder, A. and Kidder, J. (2022). *The channels of student activism*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Binder, A. and Wood, K. (2013). *Becoming Right: How Campuses Shape Young Conservatives*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Blissett, R.S.L., Baker, D.J. and Fields, B.C. (2020). When students speak out: Understanding the motivations for “I, Too, Am” mobilization. *Teachers College Record* 122(3): 1–15.
- Boren, M. (2001). *Student Resistance: A History of the Unruly Subject*. New York, NY; Milton Park, Abingdon: Routledge.
- Brooks, R. (2017). Student politics and protest: An introduction. In Brooks, R. (ed.), *Student Politics and Protest* (pp. 1–11). Milton Park, Abingdon; New York, NY: Routledge.
- Chatelain, M. (March 15, 2020). How colleges co-opt black-student protests. *Chronicle of Higher Education* 66(25).
- Chang, C.J. and Xu, M. (April 12, 2021). “Our success or failure is tied together”: Grad student union activism picks up in Biden era. *The Harvard Crimson*, <https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2021/4/12/grad-union-solidarity/>
- Chen, A.C.R. and Rhoads, R.A. (2016). Undocumented student allies and transformative resistance: An ethnographic case study. *The Review of Higher Education* 39(4): 515–42. <https://doi:10.1353/rhe.2016.0033>
- Cho, K. (2018). The perception of progress: Conceptualizing institutional response to student protests and activism. *Thought and Action* 34(1): 81–95.
- Conner, J. (2022). Social movements & college student activism. In Tierney, R., Rizvi, F. and Ercikan, K. (eds.), *International Encyclopedia of Education: Diversity, Democracy, and Social Justice in Education* (pp. 8069). Elsevier.
- Conner, J., Lotesta, J. and Stannard, R. (2022). Intersectional politicization: A facet of youth activists sociopolitical development. *Journal of Community Psychology* <https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.22941>
- Conner, J., Greytak, E. and Evich, C. (2023). The motivation of Gen Z activists. Paper presented at the Society for Personality and Social Psychology convention, Atlanta.
- Conner, J. (2020). *The New Student Activists: The Rise of Neoactivism on College and University Campuses*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Conner, J., Lotesta, J., Wang, T. and Kawashima-Ginsberg, K. (2021). *The Role of Electoral Engagement in Youth Social Movements. Study I of Protests, Politics, and Power: Exploring the Connections between Youth Voting and Youth Movements*. Medford, MA: CIRCLE, Tufts University. https://circle.tufts.edu/sites/default/files/2021-09/Youth_Movements_Qual.pdf
- Curnow, J. Radical shifts: Prefiguring activist politicization through legitimate peripheral participation (2022). *Peabody Journal of Education* 96(5). <https://doi.org/10.1080/0161956X.2022.2125757>
- Davis III, C.H.F., Mustaffa, J.B., King, K. and Jama, A. (2020). *Legislation, Policy, and the Black Student Debt Crisis*. Washington, DC: National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.
- Ervin, S. (2019). A resistance journey in higher education. In Dache, A., Quaye, S.J., Linder, C. and K.M. McGuire (eds.), *Rise up! Activism as Education* (pp. 33–48). East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press.
- Ferguson, T.L. and C.H.F. Davis III (2019). Labor, resources, and interest convergence in the organized resistance of Black male student-athletes. In Morgan, D.L. and Davis, C. H. F. III (eds.), *Student*

- Activism, Politics, and Campus Climate in Higher Education* (pp. 77–96). New York, NY; Milton Park, Abingdon: Routledge.
- Fernandez, J.S., Gaston, J.Y., Nguyen, M., Rovaris, J., Robinson, R.L. and Aguila, D.N. (2018). Documenting sociopolitical development via participatory action research with women of color student activists in the neoliberal university. *Journal of Social and Political Psychology* 6(2): 591–607. DOI: 10.5964/jsp.6i2.900
- Fine, M., Torre, M.E., Frost, D.M. and Cabana, A.L. (2018). Queer solidarities: New activism erupting at the intersection of structural precarity and radical misrecognition. *Journal of Social and Political Psychology* 6(2): 608–30. <https://doi.org/10.5964/jsp.6i2.905>
- Fisher, D. (2012). Youth political participation: Bridging activism and electoral politics. *Annual Review of Sociology* 38(1): 119–37.
- Gibson, S. and Cook-Sather, A. (2020). Politicized compassion and pedagogical partnership: A discourse and practice for social justice in the inclusive academy. *International Journal for Students as Partners* 4(1): 16–33. <https://doi.org/10.15173/ijasp.v4i1.3996>
- Goldberg, A.E., Smith, J.Z. and Beemyn, G. (2020). Trans activism and advocacy among transgender students in higher education: A mixed methods study. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education* 13(1): 66–84. <https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000125>
- Gordon, H.R. (2008). Gendered paths to teenage political participation: Parental power, civic mobility, and youth activism. *Gender & Society* 22(1): 31–55.
- Harrison, L.M. and Mather, D.C. (2017). Making meaning of student activism. *Mid-Western Educational Researcher* 29(2): 117–35.
- Hill, A. and Brown, J.B. (May 25, 2021). *Student Activism, an Emory Tradition*. <https://news.emory.edu/features/2021/05/student-activism/index.html>
- Hoffman, G.D. and Mitchell, T.D. (2016). Making diversity “everyone’s business”: A discourse analysis of institutional responses to student activism for equity and inclusion. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education* 9(3): 277–89. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000037>
- Johnston, A. (2015). A map of American student activism 2014–15. *Student Activism Blog*, <https://studentactivism.net/2014/12/02/a-map-of-american-student-activism-2014-15/>
- Klemenčič, M. (2020). Student activism and organizations. In David, M. and Amey, M.J. (eds.), *The Sage Encyclopedia of Higher Education* (pp. 1407–11). London, UK; Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Klemenčič, M. and Park, B.Y. (2018). Student politics: Between representation and activism. In Cantwell, B., Coates, H. and King, R. (eds.), *Handbook on the Politics of Higher Education* (pp. 468–86). Cheltenham, UK; Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar.
- LeFrançois, B.A. (2014). Adulthood. In Teo, T. (ed.), *Encyclopedia of critical psychology* (pp. 47–9). New York, NY: Springer.
- Lerma, V., Hamilton, L. and Nielsen, K. (2020). Racialized equity labor, university appropriation and student resistance. *Social Problems* 67(2): 286–303. <https://doi.org/10.1093/socpro/spz011>
- Linder, C. (2019). Strategies for supporting student activists as leaders. *New Directions for Student Leadership* 2019 2019 (161): 89–96.
- Linder, C. and Myers, J. (2018). Institutional betrayal as a motivator for campus sexual assault activism. *NASPA Journal about Women in Higher Education* 11(1): 1–16. DOI: 10.1080/19407882.2017.1385489
- Linder, C., Quayle, S., Lange, A., Evans, M.E. and Stewart, T.J. (2020). *Identity-Based Student Activism: Power and Oppression on College Campuses*. New York: Routledge.
- Linder, C., Quayle, S., Lange, A., Roberts, R., Lacy, M. and Okello, W. (2019). “A student should have the privilege of just being a student”: Student activism as labor. *The Review of Higher Education* 42(5): 37–62. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/rhe.2019.0044>
- Liou, A. and Literat, I. (2020). We need you to listen to us: Youth activist perspectives on intergenerational dynamics and adult solidarity in youth movements. *International Journal of Communication* 14: 4662–82. 1932–8036/20200005.
- Lipset, S.M. and Wolin, S. (eds.) (1965). *The Berkeley Student Revolt: Facts and Interpretations*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books.

- Logan, G., Lightfoot, B. and Contreras, A. (2017). Black and Brown millennial activism on a PWI campus in the era of Trump. *The Journal of Negro Education* 86(3): 252–68. 10.7709/jnegroeducation.86.3.0252
- Mahler-Rogers, D. (2017). Higher education administrators' response to student activism and protests. *Higher Education Politics & Economics* 3(2). <https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/aphe/vol3/iss2/1>
- Maniss, S. (2017). *College Student Development*. New York, NY: Springer.
- Mayhew, M. (2016). *How College Affects Students, vol 3. 21st Century Evidence That Higher Education Works*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- McAdam, D. (1990). *Freedom Summer*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Mendes, J. and Chang, A. (2019). Undocumented and afraid: Expanding definitions of student activism. In Morgan, D.L. and C.H.F. Davis III (eds.), *Student Activism, Politics, and Campus Climate in Higher Education* (pp. 60–76). New York, NY; Milton Park, Abingdon: Routledge.
- Milkman, R. (2017). A new political generation: Millennials and the post-2008 wave of protest. *American Sociological Review* 82(1): 1–31.
- Miller, M.T. and Tolliver III, D.V. (2017). *Student Activism as a Vehicle for Change on College Campuses: Emerging Research and Opportunities*. Hershey, PA: IGI Global.
- Moore, K.M. (1976). Freedom and constraint in eighteenth-century Harvard. *The Journal of Higher Education* 47(6): 649–59.
- Nielsen, G. (2017). Student politics and the value(s) of public welfare. In Brooks, R. (ed.), *Student Politics and Protest* (pp. 81–95). Milton Park, Abingdon; New York, NY: Routledge.
- Powell, G., Kerr, E. and Wood, S. (Sept. 13, 2021). See the average college tuition in 2021–2022. *U.S. News and World Report*, <https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/paying-for-college/articles/paying-for-college-infographic>
- Quaye, S.J., Linder, C., Stewart, T.J. and Satterwhite, E.M. (2022). A review of scholarship on college student activism from 2000 to 2020. In Perna, L.W. (ed.), *Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research* (Vol. 37, pp. 81–131). Cham, Switzerland: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-76660-3_5
- Rhoads, R.A. (1998). *Freedom's Web: Student Activism in an Age of Cultural Diversity*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Reynolds, R. and Mayweather, D. (2017). Recounting racism, resistance, and repression: Examining the experiences and hashtag activism of college students with critical race theory and counternarratives. *The Journal of Negro Education* 86(3): 283–304. DOI: 10.7709/jnegroeducation.86.3.0283.
- Smith, C.P. and Freyd, J.J. (2013). Dangerous safe havens: Institutional betrayal exacerbates sexual trauma. *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 26(1): 119–24.
- Smith, C.P. and Freyd, J.J. (2014). Institutional betrayal. *American Psychologist* 69(6): 575–87.
- Stewart, T.J. and Williams, B.M. (2019). Nuanced activism: The matrix of resistance. In Dache, A., Quaye, S.J., Linder, C. and McGuire, K. (eds.), *Rise Up!: Activism as Education* (pp. 201–23). East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press.
- Stokes and Davis, C.H.F., III (2022). In defense of dignitary safety: A phenomenological study of student resistance to hate speech on campus. *Peabody Journal of Education* <https://doi.org/10.1080/0161956X.2022.2125760>
- Stone, P. (October 23, 2021). Money and misinformation: How Turning Point USA became a formidable Trump force. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/oct/23/turning-point-rightwing-youth-group-critics-tactics>
- Thomas, N. (2019). Activism, free speech, and power. In Morgan, D.L. and Davis, C.H.F, III (eds.), *Student Activism Politics, and Campus Climate in Higher Education* (pp. 21–39). New York: Routledge.
- TPUSA (2022). College program. <https://www.tpusa.com/college> (Retrieved June 12, 2022)
- Valladares, S., Valladares, M.R., Garcia, M., Baca, K., Kirshner, B., Terriquez, V., Sanchez, J. and Kroehle, K. (2021). *2020 Field Scan*. Brooklyn: Funders Collaborative on Youth Organizing.
- Weber, S. (2016). “Womanhood does not reside in documentation”: Queer and feminist student activism for transgender women’s inclusion at women’s colleges. *Journal of Lesbian Studies* 20(1): 29–45. DOI: 10.1080/10894160.2015.1076238

Part E

Student Politics and Representation in
Europe and in Russia

Student Representation at the Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB): The Case of the Bureau des Etudiant.e.s Administrateur.trices

Hélène Mariaud

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the local union of Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB), named Bureau des Etudiant.e.s Administrateur.trices (BEA)—meaning Office of Student Administrators. ULB is the biggest university in the Belgian capital, with more than 30,000 students and campuses in two cities, Brussels and Charleroi. It was first established in 1834 in Brussels as the “Free University of Belgium” with a strong will to place itself against other already-existing universities, the only ones funded by the Belgian state at the time, which were catholic.^{1, 2} Students soon started gathering and creating clubs and organizations, the oldest one dating back to 1836 (Sirjacobs, 2001), progressively changing from being solidarity-oriented to one that defends the interests and rights of students.

Over the years, local student organizations appeared (Balcaen, 1995). The 1960s marked an important turn, when these associations gathered and a national one emerged (Sirjacobs, 2001). More responsibilities within the university were attributed to student representatives at ULB (Sirjacobs, 2001). The same time period also saw, in the aftermath of 1968, students being officially part of the main decision-making bodies (Sirjacobs, 2001), as this was a demand from part of the student movement of the time (Morder, 2018). The Belgian context in this decade led to the repartition of some federal competences such as culture and education, toward newly created “communities,” a form of local governance mainly based on languages. One of the events leading to this political reform of the country is the Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve crisis that brought the separation of both universities—KU Leuven and Université Catholique de Louvain-la-Neuve (Courtois, 2011, Sirjacobs, 2001, p. 626). Since then, higher education has been managed by two separate Ministries, one for Flanders and one for the French-speaking community. National student organizations then had to act separately as well, especially at the political level, as two different higher education systems emerged (FEF, 2022).

Since then, the students from ULB gained increasingly more voice within the university governance. This was also reinforced by the creation of a more stable organization representing the students at the French-speaking Community level: FEF. The unification of local unions into

a national representative association—without them having less independent power locally—led to the increase of student representation in various instances and even to the legal recognition of this involvement (FEF, 2022).

The literature focused on student politics and activism in Belgium generally and in the French-speaking community is very rare. Most publications mentioning a Belgian student movement tackle the Leuven crisis that took place at the end of the 1960s (Morder, 2018). Very few focus on analyzing the following decades and the contemporary period. Information is however available on local and national student union websites and internal student union publications, but they remain partisan. Legal documents, such as the 2012 decree about student participation, and organizations and higher education statuses and ruling documents are among the key primary sources available. There are no academic analyses focusing solely on these.

This chapter offers an unprecedented analysis of the contemporary student representation in French-speaking Belgium, with a specific focus on the characteristics of BEA, its ways of working, and its involvement in the different instances of the University. It draws on the content analysis of the existing primary sources, including the legal and regulatory documents of the French-speaking Community, the university and union statuses, and internal documents of BEA complemented with an interview of a current student leader.

The chapter proceeds with a description of the legal framework for student representation at local and national levels. Next, it focuses on the characteristics of the local union and the way it functions. Lastly, the involvement of students within the university's structures and decision-making bodies will be presented.

Legal and Statutory Framework for Student Representation and Participation

Higher education is not regulated at the national (federal) level, rather at the so-called “Community” level.³ Therefore, ULB falls under the legislative framework of the French-speaking Community of Belgium as well as under the responsibility of its Higher Education Ministry. The first legislative framework to take into account to better understand how student representation works in this part of the country is consequently the general decree ruling Higher Education (Decree Organizing Higher Education, 2014). This decree sets the basis of the organization of the whole higher education system. However, it also includes some references of student representation, mainly by mentioning students' representatives (i.e., being included in some instances), local student unions, and by referring to another decree focused solely on this matter.

The aforementioned decree on student representation, whose latest version was voted and published in 2012 (Decree on Student Participation, 2012), is the main legal document ruling student representation in the French-speaking community of Belgium. This legal document is the result of many years of student activism, especially by local student representatives and the national union of students. It not only legally recognizes student participation in decision-making processes at local and national levels but also recognizes national unions under certain criteria and establishes “official” local unions, enabling these two types of organizations to, among other things, obtain public funding.

At the community level, the decree establishes the criteria for recognition of so-called “national” student organizations. As of 2020, only one organization does fit the criteria FEF FEF (Thieffry, 2019). Hence, the system of national representation corresponds to neo-corporatist model (Klemenčič, 2012). Organizations fitting the defined criteria are the only ones allowed to participate in the decision-making processes at the Community level, to sit and vote in a large number of Commissions relating to the higher education system.

At the local level, the decree sets the establishment of one local union or student council (*conseil étudiant*) per higher education institution. This local union has specific criteria for representativity (i.e., on how to organize elections, which quorum needs to be reached, etc.). It also is the only body allowed to represent the students within the HEI decision-making bodies. Every student is immediately considered a member of the local union of upon registration to the HEI. There is no mention of other types of local student organizations. They can, of course, exist, and even defend political positions but are not directly integrated in the governance of higher education institutions. Therefore, some minimal student representation at HEI-level is guaranteed by the legal framework. HEIs can also decide to include student unions and representatives in more ways, whether in their legal documents or informally.

This is the case at ULB. The statutes of the university (ULB, 2014) detail the composition of each commission, including the students’ seats in them and what criteria the student representatives need to fulfill in order to obtain this right (e.g., being part of the local union is one of the main criteria). Therefore, students are included in every decision making-body at the university, filling on average 22.5 percent of the seats (Student Leader, personal communication, June 17, 2022, ULB, 2014). Student representatives are for instance present in the Administrative Board, responsible for all crucial decisions in the management of the university and all faculty meeting.

Organizational Characteristics of BEA, ULB’s Local Student Council

Legal Status

All local unions are established by law. However, their legal status depends on the decisions made by each of them. BEA is the local union set by law and has, as required, its own rules of procedures setting its day-to-day actions. It is an entity part of ULB, but acts independently. The union also created its own non-for-profit organization in order to manage its funding. This nonprofit is named *Gestion des moyens financiers de la délégation étudiante au conseil d’administration de l’Université Libre de Bruxelles—Financement du BEA* [Management of the funds of the student delegation to the Administrative Board of ULB—BEA Funding], therefore clearly stating through its name its sole purpose. The rest of the student council’s missions and rules are set by its Rules of Procedure (BEA, 2021), a document whose existence is required by law (Decree on Student Participation, 2012), but for which each union is relatively free of establishing the content, for instance, when it comes to political activities and activism.

Membership

All students are directly represented by the local union upon registration to the university. Membership to the union itself is defined by the Articles 13, 14, and 15 of the rules of procedure (BEA, 2021). Members are both elected students and students who participate in some specific commissions and activities. Two types of members are identified: the effective members and the external co-opted members. The effective members are elected or co-opted by elected representatives. External co-opted members are not considered representatives, as they did not run in the election or were elected by the representatives, but can participate in working groups and internal thematic commissions.

The amount of effective members is limited to seventy-two (six per faculty) with a minimum of twelve (one per faculty). In the case of a lack of candidates or lack of elected candidates, students can be co-opted and therefore become full (effective) members of the union, with the same rights as elected students. No more than six students per faculty can be part of the union. External co-opted members are students who, upon decision by the effective members, are allowed to participate in some specific commissions, working groups, and/or activities of the union.

Funding

The biggest part of BEA's funding is determined by law (Decree on Student Participation, 2012). The funding comes from the French-speaking community and is first received by ULB. The university must, however, transfer it to the student council's bank account—at ULB this is done in two transfers per year. A specific convention between the union and ULB has been set in order to deal with this matter (Convention between ULB and BEA, 2021). The funding was set in 2012 by law (Decree on Student Participation, 2012) as 2.5 euros per student registered at the university.⁴ It is indexed every year. Therefore, students do not pay a direct fee; the funding comes from the government and transits through budget of the university.

BEA manages their own funding. A specific nonprofit organization was created for this sole purpose. However, through the legal framework and the convention linking the union to ULB, the local union only has limited choice on how to spend the received subventions (Student Leader, personal communication, June 17, 2022). The allocation of the budget needs to fall under the missions outlined in the 2012 decree in order to be acceptable. The missions refer to, for instance, representing and informing the student body and can therefore be understood quite broadly giving the local union some lenience. Controls are regularly undertaken by officials from the French-speaking community, just as they are for the management of the university's funding.

The convention also sets regular meetings between both parties outside of the legal obligations and also requires the local union to share their accounting documents with the university, which is not a legal obligation (Convention between BEA and ULB, 2021). This is due to the fact that in the former nonprofit management the funding of BEA had to be liquidated due to wrong management of funds (Convention between BEA and ULB, 2021). ULB commits to supporting BEA in the training of its administrators. The university also allocates, outside of the legal framework, extra funding to the union for the communication and the work about the student

elections (Election Rules Art. 27, 2021). In principle, the union is also free to raise funding outside of this legal framework and to reallocate quite freely any gain generated from activities, remaining within the legal limits of a nonprofit organization.

Elections

The rules for the elections are set by a specific separate document for election. These election rules are voted every year, first by BEA internally then validated by the plenary assembly of ULB. This document is also a legal obligation and sets the modalities for electing the members of the union: who can be candidate, the procedure to run as candidate. These rules also stem, for most, from the 2012 Decree on Student Participation—almost only the division between faculties and the amount of members are specific to ULB. To be valid, 20 percent of registered students per faculty and overall need to have voted. If this quorum isn't reached, then a second turn is required with a quorum of 15 percent, in the faculty lacking participation (Election Rules, 2021; Decree on Student Participation, 2012).

Governance

With its seventy-two elected or co-opted members, BEA has set strict governance rules, which are also set in the Rules of Procedure (Rules of Procedure, 2021). A separate document sets the procedure for elections (Election Rules, 2021). Among the seventy-two members, two are designated through internal consensus to be coordinators of the local union. For these positions as well as for others (Rules of Procedure, 2021), gender, field of study, and experience have to be balanced and inclusivity has to be kept in mind. The two coordinators are also part of the executive committee of the union, who plays the most political and active day-to-day role. It has fifteen members and each of them has a specific role assigned (academic affairs, social affairs, international relations, etc.) (Rules of Procedure, 2021). The EC meets every week during the academic year, whereas the General Assembly, which included all seventy-two members and represents the legislative power, meets every month to take more general decisions on the orientation of the actions of the union. No member is paid, but the involved students can get reimbursed for some of their expenses (transport, meals during activities, material, etc.).

Office and Staff

Each local union must have space given freely by the university for the accomplishment of their mission (Decree on Student Participation Art. 22, 2012). Therefore, BEA has office space on the Solbosch campus of ULB, where meetings and other activities take place. ULB, as required by law, also offers some of its human resources to the local union. These employees, while still receiving instructions from the local union, are still ultimately under the authority of the university according to the convention between ULB and BEA.

Activities and Services

As mentioned before, part of the activities are defined by the missions attributed to local unions. Therefore, BEA has a duty to inform and support the students as well as, as this will be tackled in the next part, representing their voice within the HEI's instances. However, in its Rules of Procedure, BEA also states that the union will undertake campaign and political (but non-partisan, nonaffiliated to a specific political party) actions and campaigns in the interests of the students. The student leader interviewed mentioned that over the past two years two of the most important topics on which the union acted were climate change and gender-based violence on campuses (Student Leader, personal communication, June 17, 2022). In these cases, BEA doesn't hesitate to create partnership with on-campus organizations (usually thematic, such as feminist or anti-racist student associations based on the campus), as well as civil-society nonprofit organizations. As of 2021, BEA withdrew its membership from FEF, the national union for French-speaking students, for political reasons (Baus, 2021). Moreover, BEA has a counseling mission toward the students. There are designated elected students and employees who help and support students on specific issues, especially legal ones.

Student Representation in the Governance of ULB and Its Decision-Making Bodies

At University and Faculty Levels

The university's values, missions, governing structures, and their composition are defined by its statutes. All governing structures are, at ULB, considered internal. The main governing structures as described in the aforementioned document will be briefly described in the following paragraphs, each time mentioning as well the involvement of students within them.

The Plenary Assembly (*Assemblée Plénière*), which is the highest governing body that, among other missions, decides on the members of most other decisive commissions and has the final approval on key documents for the university every year. This Assembly counts about fifty members including ten students (University Statutes, 2014).

The mission of the Administrative Board (*Conseil d'Administration*) encompasses the day-to-day management of the university, its budget and the strategic planning in relation to the administrative side. On about twenty permanent members, four are students from the local union. The Administrative Board also has its own Executive Committee which prepares important points and works on more urgent issues. This committee has two seats for students out of seven members.

On the same principle, the next structure is the Academic Board (*Conseil Académique*), working mainly on educational, pedagogical, and academic matters. This Board also has a specific Committee leading it, with the same composition as the Administrative Board and the Administrative Board's Executive Committee (University Statutes, 2014).

In addition to seats at the University level, students are also represented within each of the twelve faculties, and within each faculty in every department. This allows for extended actions

for the local union and allows it to spread and defend the student's voice quite broadly. It is therefore possible to notice that there is generally a will at the University to include students as much as possible, even if the 2012 Decree obliges the HEIs to include student representatives to a certain extent. ULB goes a step further. This is not only noticeable in the statutes and other legal documents, but also in informal but set initiatives. For instance, representatives of the local union, usually its coordinators, meet with the Vice-rector in charge of student affairs very regularly,⁵ which allows for good communication between the student representatives and the administration. The same process also takes place at faculty level, where representatives informally meet with the Deans on a regular basis in order to tackle current affairs and urgent matters. In general, communication with the administration is perceived as not problematic (interview with Student Leader, 2022), even when disagreements take place.

Other Ways of Action

Nevertheless, when required, the local union will not hesitate to use other means of actions to achieve its goals and defend students in the best perceived way possible, as its social media channels can show. As mentioned before, BEA has a history of creating links with other student organizations from ULB, such as thematic organizations (feminist, anti-racist, topic-related groups and circles, etc.) or political organizations (even partisan ones) when justified (Student Leader, personal communication, 2022). This variety of ways of action can also be noticed through the social media channels of the local union (BEA, 2022). In the event of the representation not working well enough, BEA will therefore use these partnerships and its experience in field activism to defend its point.

Conclusion

This chapter addressed student representation in French-speaking Belgium focusing on the local student union of ULB, BEA. To better understand and explain its way of working, the general context and historic of student participation and representation in Belgium were presented, as well as the general legal framework for the matter.

Through this analysis, it is easily noticed that student representation in the French-speaking community of Belgium has a very strict legal framework which can at the same time be an opportunity and a burden. Indeed, the legal framework, such as the 2012 Decree on Student Participation, set specific and precise criteria for student representation within HEIs and allow for funding and protection for elected student representatives, who cannot suffer any damage because of their involvement. However, the legal framework, which also translates to the HEI's statutes, as the ones from ULB showed, does not set anything about other types of student associations that may exist on campus or nationally, when they also make up the activist student landscape in Belgium. Moreover, the management skills that working with public funding and the audit that goes with it require could be hard to achieve for students, especially depending on the degree they are studying and the handover from the previous teams.

Nevertheless, when it comes to the specific case of ULB, it is possible to say that the University, continuing its tradition, has a will to involve students even to a further extent than what is required by law. BEA is a local union that therefore has a great amount of space within decision-making instances and has access to informal spaces to further its work. The chapter addressed the internal governance of the union as well, showing the complex situations that the legal framework can create for local organizations, that work both in representation (within bodies of the University) and in on-field activism.

Notes

- 1 This information can be found directly on ULB's website: <https://www.ulb.be/fr/l-ulb-en-bref/origines-et-evolution-de-l-ulb>
- 2 ULB created an online platform (in French) gathering documents and archive on the history of the university, which can be browsed for more information. Digithèque ULB: <https://digitheque.ulb.ac.be/fr/digitheque-histoire-de-lulb/index.html>
- 3 In Belgium, Communities represent a specific level of power mainly based on competences linked to culture and the use of a certain language (Flemish, French or German). They were first established in the 1970s Communities rule in the matter, among others, of higher education.
- 4 ULB has around 36,000 students.
- 5 Usually once every two weeks during the academic year.

References

- Balcaen, P. (1995). *Mouvements étudiants*. Brussels: Editions Labor.
- Baus, M. (2021). La FEF, quittée par l'ULB, ouvre le débat sans tabou. *La Libre*, <https://www.lalibre.be/belgique/enseignement/2021/11/04/la-fef-quittee-par-lulb-ouvre-le-debat-sans-tabou-NCT65QND4RBSTBQSZIUVDX2XZU/> (accessed July 25, 2022).
- Belgium (2012). Parlement de la Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles. *Décret relatif à la participation et la représentation étudiante dans l'enseignement supérieur*, December 21, 2012 [Decree on Student Participation].
- Belgium (2014). Parlement de la Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles. *Décret définissant le paysage de l'enseignement supérieur et l'organisation académique des études*, November 7th, 2013 [Decree Organizing Higher Education].
- Bureau des Etudiant.e.s Administrateur.trices (2021). *Règlement d'ordre intérieur* [Rules of Procedure].
- Bureau des Etudiant.e.s Administrateur.trices [@BEA.ULB] (2022). Facebook page for BEA. <https://www.facebook.com/BEA.ULB/> (accessed June 22, 2022).
- Bureau des Etudiant.e.s Administrateur.trices (2021). *Règlement électoral* [Election rules] <https://www.ulb.be/fr/elections/reglement-electoral-du-conseil-des-etudiants> (accessed June 15, 2022).
- Courtois, L. (2011). Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve, aller simple: la crise des origines. *Mémoires de Wallonie. Les rues de Louvain-la-Neuve racontent ...*, 25–32. https://dial.uclouvain.be/pr/boreal/object/boreal%3A130577/datastream/PDF_01/view (accessed July 10, 2022).
- Fédération des Etudiant.e.s Francophones (2022). *Historique*, <https://fef.be/historique/> (accessed July 10, 2022).
- Financement du BEA ASBL (2021). *Statutes of the non-profit Financement du BEA* Interview with student leader from BEA.

- Klemenčič, M. (2012). Student representation in Western Europe: Introduction to the special issue. *European Journal of HE*, 2 (1): 2–19.
- Morder, R. (2018). Transformations des mondes et mouvements étudiants. *Matériaux pour l'histoire de notre temps*, 127–8, 10–15. <https://doi.org/10.3917/mate.127.0010> (accessed June 22, 2022).
- Sirjacobs, I. (2001). L'étudiant, ce « jeune travailleur intellectuel ». *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire*, 619–28. <https://doi.org/10.3406/rbph.2001.4536> (accessed June 25, 2022).
- Thieffry, M. (March 14th, 2019). L'UNECOF met fin à ses activités et laisse la FEF seule. *Le Soir*, <https://www.lesoir.be/212276/article/2019-03-14/lunecof-met-fin-ses-activites-de-syndicat-etudiant-et-laisse-la-fef-seule> (accessed July 23, 2022).
- Université Libre de Bruxelles (2022). Digithèque de l'ULB, <https://digitheque.ulb.ac.be/fr/digitheque-histoire-de-lulb/index.html> (accessed July 24, 2022).
- Université Libre de Bruxelles (2022). *Origines et évolution de l'ULB*, <https://www.ulb.be/fr/l-ulb-en-bref/origines-et-evolution-de-l-ulb> (accessed June 25, 2022).
- Université Libre de Bruxelles (February 20, 2014). *Statuts Organiques de l'ULB*.
- Université Libre de Bruxelles; Bureau des Etudiant.e.s Administrateur.trices (2021). *Convention entre l'ULB et le BEA [Convention between ULB and BEA]*.

Student Representation in the Czech Republic after 1989: The Unbearable Lightness of Student Influence?

Martin Hammerbauer, Damir Solak, Diana Hodulíková, and Lukáš Lang

Introduction

The situation of student representation in the Czech Republic is directly tied to the events of November 17, 1989, also known as the Velvet Revolution. Massive, nonviolent protests organized by students in Prague helped to topple the local communist regime and implement democracy in the country. And just as the faces of the Revolution became prominent politicians later, students as a social class turned from the oppressed to heroes of the new order (Frydlewicz, 2019).

As the country was being re-built on new foundations, Czech students were in a peculiar situation. Suddenly, they had an unprecedented credit not only in the eyes of their fellow citizens, but of the whole world. To paraphrase Milan Kundera, they found themselves with the unbearable lightness of student influence, enjoying the status earned during the 1989 protests, but without having a totalitarian regime to defy. This chapter aims to explore the student representation in the Czech Republic after the Velvet Revolution, its development and structures that affect student involvement on national as well as local (institutional) level.

Inevitably, student representation is affected by the characteristics of the higher education system in the country. The original defining feature of the Czech system is probably the long tradition of public higher education, which was emphasized during the communist times and prohibited private higher education institutions from emerging. As a result, public universities benefit from these extra years of existence in terms of quality as well as reputation among the general public. They are also attended by the 272,400 of the *c.* 300,000 (90.7 percent) Czech students active in higher education (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, 2021). Since the Revolution, several private institutions of varying quality were founded, but they still account only for approximately 9 percent of total students. The second defining aspect is that all study programs in public universities conducted in Czech language are tuition-free by law (Higher Education Act, 2017). The law enables public institutions to charge fees for programs in other than Czech language, but their share of the total number of students is relatively negligible. These two facts combined then outline the conditions that Czech students are living in—strong public institutions usually with a long history and the access to tuition-free programs enjoyed by the vast majority of them.

A closer look at the HEIs reveals another specific feature, arguably unique only to the Czech and Slovak environment. On a local level, student representation is performed by directly elected student senators in academic senates, which are the bodies of academic self-governance. The senates do not hold authority over all issues (some are delegated, for example, to scientific councils); however, they do have important powers such as the authority to propose the appointment of candidates for deans and rectors. In the Czech system, the senates have a mandatory share of student representatives set by the law to a range between one-third and one-half of total seats. This student-friendly ratio leads to a different kind of election and negotiation dynamics than in other countries and contributes to the notable power of student representation on a local level. The senates also elect delegates to the single national student representation body, the Student Chamber of the Council of Higher Education Institutions (SK RVŠ). SK RVŠ is recognized by law, but as the name suggests, it operates under the Council of Higher Education Institutions (RVŠ) which is mostly occupied by senior academics.

This chapter first guides the reader through historical and legislative milestones. Secondly, it takes a look at the organizational structures of Czech student representation, first on a local and then a national level, including several crucial topics for where it played (or still plays) a significant role for Czech students. Last but not least, the chapter weighs in the pros and cons of the current state of affairs to assess whether Czechs really live in a state of unbearable lightness of student influence.

History

When introducing the situation in the Czech Republic, it is necessary to highlight the local origin of the International Students' Day, which is celebrated on November 17 throughout the world. The first milestone of the presence of students' power can be traced back to 1939, with a sequence of events against the Nazi regime that ended up in the closure of higher education in the Czech Republic. One of the first protests of 1939, reminiscent of the founding of Czechoslovakia, ended up with the death of Charles University student Jan Opletal. Moreover, the rally on November 17, 1939, resulted in the arrest of more than thousand students, members of academia, the execution of the student leaders, and deportation of more than 1,200 students to concentration camps (Radio Prague International, 2022). The situation of 1939 ended with the closure of all higher education institutions until the end of the Second World War in 1945.

The second milestone for students took place in 1948, when communist students supported the Communist Party to take control over the higher education sector. As a result of their involvement in the so-called Action Committees, the administration of universities resigned and professors and students who opposed the Party ended up persecuted. This moment of culmination of student power was also nicknamed as "studentocracy" (Pabian, Hündlová and Provázková, 2011). Nevertheless, as the power of the Communistic regime grew, student power decreased, and over time, students' effort became dedicated to transforming the regime itself. A key role in the student opposition played the traditional spring festival "Májáles" and student associations, which criticized the totalitarian regime. The discontent peaked on January 16, 1968, when student Jan Palach burned himself alive as a protest toward the Soviet occupation (Šára, 2022). During

the years 1968–89, also known as the *Normalisation*, the administration of the higher education sector was under the control of the Communist Party, suppressing student representation as a voice of dissent.

The last milestone in developing students' power was the year 1989 and the fall of socialism during the Velvet Revolution. The student protest in the autumn of 1989 played a vital role in transforming the governing system of Czechoslovakia into a democracy. Therefore, they gained a prominent societal role after the revolution.

This was reflected in the first Higher Education Act from 1990, which gave students a generous portion of at least a third, but no more than a half of all seats in all academic senates at both faculty and university level (Higher Education Act, 1990). Academic senates of universities and their faculties are the most influential internal administrative bodies, as they represented the democratic elective body of the system and students presented a counterpower to rectors, deans, and other academics. The Act also declared academic senates as the electors for both deans and rectors, and made them approve the university's budget and other essential documents. Such an important student role was quite unprecedented and demonstrated the status they obtained in the regime change. The Act also established that teachers and students are elected as the members of senates by academia in periodic elections every three years. Overall, the main theme of this newly created system was a massive amount of independence of universities from the governance of the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports.

What's more, the same law also recognized the brand new Council of Higher Education Institutions (RVŠ) as a representative body of universities toward the Ministry. This assembly gathered representatives of Czech universities, but it did not have a designated place for students initially. Members of academic sectors were aware that having such a body without student representatives was not sufficient and tried to find a way to involve them in the following period. On November 5, 1992, changes were made to the Statute of RVŠ following this recognition that formally established the Student Chamber of the Council of Higher Education Institution consisting of student delegates. At the time, student delegates were not formally recognized as members of the senior body RVŠ and that came only later in 1996.

This framework of student representation is still in use, although a lack of interest in participation on the side of students is often noted (Pabian, Hündlová and Provázková, 2011). As it emerged before the division of Czechoslovakia in 1993, many similarities can be found also with the current Slovak environment. In any case, academic senates remain the official democratic representation at the local level and SK RVŠ at the national level even today. Throughout the years, it was used by students to lobby, comment, and protest regarding many educational, political, and social topics, and recently to support academic democracy in places such as in Hong Kong or Belarus.

Local Representation—Academic Senates

Academic senates are the main bodies of university administration and also the only ones elected through direct elections. They are established on both faculties level and university one. They are mandatory in public and state universities, in contrast to private universities, where it

is not obligatory to establish an academic senate and therefore its role is just an advisory one. Members of the senate are elected from the students and academic employees (employees who participate in science or teaching in the university). This implies that non-academic employees such as secretaries or administrators are not members of the senate in the Czech Republic. Universities can be also divided not just to faculties but to “institutes” as well, which don’t have their own academic senate and their members can be only elected into the all-university academic senate.

Academic senate of the university, also known as the big senate, has at least eleven members and the academic senate of a faculty (“small senate”) has at least nine members with term capped at three years maximum. The number of students in senates is at least one-third of the members and one-half of the whole plenum at most. This rate differs not just between the universities, but also between the faculties. There are 177 senates in the Czech Republic and the usual number of student senators is at its lower limit at the majority of universities. There are few exceptions which established the maximum number of students in the senates, such as the academic senate of University in Hradec Králové, senate of Faculty of Law at Masaryk University, and eight small senates at Charles University (Studentská komora Rady vysokých škol, 2021). There is also one senate in Czech Republic with a variable number of students within the legal boundaries of one-third and one-half of the total number. An academic senate is usually split into two chambers, one for academic employees and one for students. If the institution established the student chamber, elected representatives meet within its framework; otherwise they meet with other student senators informally.

Elections into the senate are direct and secret using a plurality voting system. Students are running as single candidates, but it can happen that some present their programs as a shared one with the aim to cooperate later. Universities have autonomy in the organization of the elections and can decide how the elections will be organized. For example, some use a system of transferable vote, where the student elected into the small senate also joins the big senate. However, in most universities, elections into faculty and university senates are separate. That means that the member of a small senate doesn’t have to be a member of the big one, and vice versa. Nevertheless, it is quite common that the student is a member of both senates.

Senates are usually also divided by other criteria, such as by the delegates’ home faculties. This division can be also found on faculty levels, where senators can have designated spots by their study programs, degree or in case of academic employees, based on their department. That brings one of the bigger questions in the Czech higher education, which is who elects which senators. In some universities, students only vote for student senators and the same applies for academic employees. At other institutions all members of the academic community vote for both students and employees. Voter turnout differs between universities, ranging from only a small percentage of the community to tens of percent elsewhere. Some universities are introducing electronic voting to try to attract more people to vote in elections and ease the administration.

In the forefront of the senate is the Chair, who is usually a member of the employee chamber (it sometimes even stated in the local Rules of procedure) and exceptions are rare. The competence of the academic senate usually contains several areas, such as approving the budget, admission criteria, or rules for internal governance. These rules alter a variety of areas such as study regulations, employment relations, quality assurance, or qualification processes to become a docent or professor.

Another area of competence is connected to the personnel policy. They propose the appointment or repeal of the university rector to the President of Czech Republic. The Senate also appoints or repeals members of the Scientific Board, Council for Inner evaluation or Disciplinary committee and comments on the nomination of Vice-Rectors. The faculty senate has similar competences, but these apply only to the faculty level. The Senate also plays the role of the overseeing body at the university or faculty. Due to the minority of student representatives in the senate, some senates also adopted processes to make students more equal in the voting, e.g., that no resolution can be approved without a majority from one or both chambers.

Students are also delegated to the Internal Evaluation Board, which every university with institutional accreditation—the right to approve their study programs on their own—has to form with this authority. At least one of them must be a student, but that usually means that there is exactly one, leading to a major imbalance between academics and students. Another body is the Disciplinary Committee which deals with disciplinary offenses such as plagiarism and has to have at least half of its members from the ranks of students. One student representative also sits at the Review Panel, an advisory body for cases of possible annulments of state, rigorous or doctoral exams or thesis defense.

Additionally, students can be members of certain advisory bodies, such as committees on dormitories or catering, when it is provided by associated facilities. Other common bodies in Czech universities include the Board of Trustees, Scientific Board (where students are not represented), Artistic Board, or, at non-university higher education institutions, Academic Board. Private universities have no legal obligation to include student members and the organizational form of student representation on the faculty and university level therefore depends on the approach of the institution.

National Representation—Student Chamber of the Council of Higher Education Institutions (SK RVŠ)

According to the Higher Education Act of 1998, which replaced the 1990 version, there are two representations of Higher Education institutions in the Czech Republic—the Council of Higher Education Institutions (RVŠ) and the Czech Rectors Conference (ČKR) (Higher Education Act, 2017). Neither is a separate legal entity; RVŠ operates as a part of the Charles University in Prague and ČKR as a part of the Masaryk University in Brno. While ČKR brings together the executive power, universities' rectors, RVŠ is a meeting point for all parts of the Higher Education community. The Student Chamber of the Council of Higher Education Institutions (SK RVŠ) operates as one of its bodies, and therefore is not fully autonomous (Rada vysokých škol, 2018).

A university that decided to become a member of the RVŠ can use its academic senate to delegate one representative to the Assembly and the Board of RVŠ, another representative to the Assembly and one representative to the Student Chamber (SK RVŠ) together with his substitute. Moreover, faculty senates can delegate one member per faculty to the Assembly as well. At RVŠ, there is also an informal, consultative body called Forum of Academic Senate Chairs focused on knowledge sharing regarding the work of academic senates.

Although universities are allowed to send students even to other RVŠ bodies than just the SK RVŠ, this does not usually happen in practice. All delegates in SK RVŠ, respectively their

substitutes, are automatically members of the RVŠ Assembly. Moreover, five representatives (SK RVŠ Chair, two vice-chairs, and another two delegates) are members of the Board of RVŠ, which is the executive body of RVŠ. At the same time, the SK RVŠ Chair is also one of the six vice-chairs of RVŠ (Rada vysokých škol, 2018). Nevertheless, the election of the SK RVŠ leadership, consisting of the chair and two vice-chairs, has to be formally confirmed by the Board of RVŠ, adding another step to the process.

At the moment, there are delegates of all public, state, and several private higher education institutions in SK RVŠ. Unlike the RVŠ Assembly, every institution has exactly one vote in SK RVŠ, no matter the number of students. Universities usually send more experienced students in latter stages of their studies as their representatives, which lead to overrepresentation of doctoral students in SK RVŠ in comparison to a sample of regular students. This corresponds to the situation in academic senates, where students tend to elect their more experienced colleagues. At universities, members of SK RVŠ are not selected directly by all enrolled students, but indirectly by the whole academic senate. Some of them respect nominations by the student chamber of the academic senate, but it is not a rule. In order to ensure autonomy of student delegates, it is vital to consider a change to selecting them only via student senators' votes. Another topic for the future is to consider the size and number of votes of individual delegations, as they do not reflect the size of delegates' universities.

SK RVŠ operates within RVŠ, but acts and manages its funds separately. There is one authority it possesses together with RVŠ as well as ČKR, which is related to the National Accreditation Bureau for Higher Education (NAÚ). Both representations nominate ten out of fifteen members of the NAÚ Board, with the single student member picked by RVŠ. As there is only one student, the imbalance in local Councils for Internal Evaluation is mirrored here at the national level. That also applies to all lower evaluation committees. Pointing out this imbalance and the need for systematic work with the evaluators is one of the continuing goals of the national student representation.

Both RVŠ and ČKR can also propose people for the list of evaluators, discuss them, and raise concerns regarding these nominees. Representatives of SK RVŠ, RVŠ, and ČKR are habitually present in many advisory bodies to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, such as the Representative Committee for Breakdown of Budget of Public HEIs, Council for Erasmus + Programmes and European Solidarity Corps. In other areas, the role of the representations is mostly consultative, e.g., in commenting on higher education legislation or rules for funding science.

Nevertheless, SK RVŠ deals with a wide range of topics from its own initiative, such as university self-governance, training for academic senators, attempts to reform doctoral studies, or social dimension of education. SK RVŠ also aims for keeping the public study programs in Czech tuition free, and protested about planned fees several times in the past (Studentská komora Rady vysokých škol, 2002). Another example is the active role of the Student's chamber of HEIs in the matter of the threat to politicize the independent public institution of Czech Television in 2021 (Hodulíková and Solak, 2021). The international aspect is important as well, as SK RVŠ is a member of the European Students' Union, EURODOC, and the V4+ Alliance. The autonomy of SK RVŠ is limited in making agreements with student professional organizations and entering into international student organizations, which require a prior agreement of the RVŠ Board.

SK RVŠ's income consists of contributions of individual universities, each sending approx. 400 EUR per each delegate in RVŠ or SK RVŠ yearly. SK RVŠ then pays around 5 percent of

this amount to the Agency of RVŠ for administrative support of the whole RVŠ. SK RVŠ has its administrative office as well, with expenses on organization of meetings, training for student representatives or travel costs related to international activities.

Analysis of Advantages and Challenges to Student Representation in the Czech Republic

At the local level, the strong presence of students in academic senates is an undeniable advantage of the Czech system in the European context. Despite the fact that student senators usually create the minority of the senate members, the strength of their mandate cannot be underestimated. Student chambers can cooperate better among themselves even outside of meetings and vote in a more unified way than senators of academic staff. Senior academics accept more controversial decisions of the senate with difficulties and often put the blame on students in such cases, such as in the selection of Dean of the Faculty of Law at Masaryk University (Křepelka, 2022).

However, there is a weak spot in the absence of widely operating local student unions. Student chambers of academic senates dedicate most of their time to the senate agenda and, contrary to other countries, do not provide, for example, any advisory or consultative services for students (legal, psychological) or even foster student life. This role of student unions is fulfilled informally by various local student clubs, such as student newspaper iList at Prague University of Economics and Business, event-focused MUNIE at Masaryk University or Trimed, which unite students from Charles University's Third Faculty of Medicine. Moreover, there is no unified remuneration system, and student senators thus often perform their roles without any compensation. Criticism can also be directed at the absence of nonacademic staff in academic senates, which is relatively rare in the European context. Although the implications of academic senate's decisions affect these employees as well, such as through an approved budget or accepted internal regulations, they cannot affect them in any way.

Taking into account the dominant role of academic senates, it is necessary to point out that the newly elected representatives in senates and other bodies do not receive any structured training or education. For instance, senators decide about setting rules in a wide range of topics and budgets up to units of billions of CZK, but they are not offered any training by universities that would lead to deepening of their knowledge of the higher education system. They can only receive such training from SK RVŠ, from other legal entities for a fee, or arrange one themselves among student chambers of academic senates.

As for SK RVŠ, in order for it to fulfill the real role of student representation, it would be vital to foster its autonomy from RVŠ. This can be arranged by a change of organizational documents of RVŠ, such as removal of confirmation of SK RVŠ's elected leadership and making delegates in SK RVŠ elected purely by student members of academic senates. In any case, one of the issues is that these documents can hardly be changed by students themselves, because they are included in the Statute of RVŠ, which can be changed only by a majority of votes at the RVŠ assembly with more than a half of members being present. This requires cooperation with a large number of senior academics and would likely be a lengthy process.

A practical problem stemming from this situation is the issue of remuneration for work in SK RVŠ, as the Statute says that the membership in RVŠ bodies is honorary and unpaid (Rada vysokých škol, 2018). This often leads to a situation where delegates need to combine their studies, tasks in SK RVŠ, and another job solely to make a living. The current model therefore favors students that are financially set (e.g., thanks to their parents) or at least receive scholarships for doctoral studies. Many others can be dissuaded by the aforementioned combination of three activities from running for positions in SK RVŠ, and the already small group of potential leaders becomes even smaller. However, taking into account the need to involve senior academics again, a potential change may not be so easy.

Nevertheless, the current setting has its benefits as well. As a part of RVŠ, SK RVŠ has a guaranteed stable and regular source of funding. Even the need for cooperation with RVŠ can have its perks, as it leads to a regular contact between students and senior academics. Moreover, it contributes to form policies not only for students, but for the whole academia, which gives it more weight in negotiation. It can also make public actors more accessible, as student representatives can reach out to the whole RVŠ to support their stance.

SK RVŠ is composed of delegates of universities and only tens of people out of the c. 300,000 students get to be its members. Because of that, it can be seen as a distant and unknown body among ordinary students, who in many cases are only aware of the presence of academic senates and their local student senators. This can be partially explained by the fact that the academic senates act on matters that directly affect the local environment and have substantial power on top of that, while SK RVŠ deals with matters at the national level where it has relatively less power in comparison. Moreover, decisions at senates often result in immediate or clearly dated changes, which is not always the case in the national lobbyist setting, where the feedback loop is longer and less clear (and SK RVŠ is not even the decision-making body). In the end, SK RVŠ needs to continuously work on spreading awareness about its existence.

To sum up, the framework set in the early 1990s created an interesting combination of a very bottom-heavy structure of student representation in the Czech Republic. On the one hand, students are able to have a strong presence at universities which is backed by national legislation. On the other hand, ordinary Czech students might not realize that this space is not a given thing and that they should appreciate it and utilize it. Also, certain activities (supporting services, student life) that formed over time in countries with more gradual development than the Czech Republic are left to student clubs outside of student representation. At the national level things are set in a way so that students do have the doors open for lobbying, but they are bound to cooperate with (and sometimes rely on) senior academics for better or worse. In the end, students at the local level might feel the unbearable lightness of student influence, while at the national level the system can be seen as satisfactory and constraining at the same time.

References

- Frydlewicz, J. (2019). *TVÁŘE REVOLUCE: Vůdci studentů tehdy a dnes*. E15. <https://www.e15.cz/promeny-v-case/tvare-revoluce-vudci-studentu-tehdy-a-dnes-1364197> (accessed July 29, 2022).
Higher Education Act, Act No. 172/1990 (1990). <https://www.zakonyprolidi.cz/cs/1990-172>

- Higher Education Act, Act No. 111/1998 (2017). <https://www.msmt.cz/areas-of-work/tertiary-education/the-higher-education-act?lang=2>
- Hodulíková, D. and Solak, S. (2021). SK RVŠ statement on the elections of new members of the Council of the Czech television. European Students Union [online]. Europe [cit. 2022-04-24]. <https://www.esu-online.org/?news=sk-rvs-statement-on-the-elections-of-new-members-of-the-council-of-the-czech-tv> (accessed April 20, 2022).
- Křepelka, F. (2022). *Otevřený dopis Filipa Křepelky: Práva mají neschopnou děkanku a můžou za to studenti*. Lemur – studentský zpravodajský portál Masarykovy univerzity. [online] <https://www.lemurmu.cz/otevreny-dopis-filipa-krepelky-prava-maji-neschopnou-dekanku-a-muzou-za-to-studenti/> (accessed April 8, 2022).
- Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (2021). *Studenti podle vysoké školy/ fakulty* [Dataset]. <https://dsia.msmt.cz/vystupy/f2/f21.xlsx>
- Pabian, P., Hündlová, L. and Provázková, K. (2011). The Czech Republic between studentocracy, academic oligarchy and managerialism: Are students powerful or powerless?. *Tertiary Education and Management* 17: 191–203. 10.1080/13583883.2011.588721
- Rada vysokých škol (2018). *Statut Rady vysokých škol*. http://www.radavs.cz/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Statut_RVS_platny_od_17052018.pdf.
- Radio Prague International (2022). *SAMETOVÁ REVOLUCE*. [online] <https://archiv.radio.cz/cz/static/listopad-1989/jan-opletal> (accessed April 20, 2022).
- Šára, F. (2022). *Živá pochodeň měla probudit společnost. Od sebeupálení Jana Palacha uplynulo 53 let*. Novinky.cz. <https://www.novinky.cz/historie/clanek/ziva-pochoden-mela-probudit-spolecnost-od-sebeupaleni-jana-palacha-uplynulo-51-let-40310056> (accessed April 24, 2022).
- Studentská komora Rady vysokých škol (2002). *Školné*. https://www.skrvs.cz/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/020419_SKRVS_PD_skolne.pdf
- Studentská komora Rady vysokých škol (2022). *Historie SK RVŠ*. [online] <http://www.skrvs.cz/o-sk-rvs/historie-sk-rvs/#tab-v-crum-2> (accessed April 15, 2022).
- Studentská Komora Rady Vysokých Škol (SK RVŠ) (2021). *Tabulka velikosti akademických senátů veřejných a státních VŠ a jejich fakult s uvedením síly studentského hlasu a délky funkčního období* [Dataset]. <https://www.skrvs.cz/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/P%C5%99ehled-akademick%C3%BDch-sen%C3%A1t%C5%AF.xlsx>.

Student Politics in Contemporary Estonia: Predominance of Representation over Activism

Allan Aksiim, Kristel Jakobson-Pallo, Karl Lembit Laane, Kristin Pintson, and Helo Liis Soodla

Introduction

In this chapter, we examine the mode of political action of student representatives in contemporary Estonia in the last five years. Specifically, our research question is whether student representatives in Estonia are more likely to engage through public protests (i.e., activism) or policy work (i.e., representation) in higher education. We empirically explore the general observation that the Estonian student body and its official democratic representative structures of student councils (local) and Federation of Estonian Student Unions [*Eesti Üliõpilaskondade Liit, EÜL*] (national) engage mostly in cooperative approaches with higher education authorities. In addition, we offer some (historical) background information about student representation in Estonia.

The chapter has four main sections. First, we describe the history of student representation until the re-establishment of an independent and democratic Estonia in the 1990s. Student politics on a national level is described in the second section. Student representation at the institutional level is presented in the third section. Here we utilize data collected through LOC-SIHEG-Estonia (2022) survey with local-level student representatives. Academic literature on student politics in independent Estonia is meager. Hence, our chapter offers an original depiction of this topic using data collected through interviews with student representatives and other higher education stakeholders, content analysis of relevant legislation, and data collected with the LOC-SIHEG-Estonia survey (2022). Student representation in higher education is regulated through several legislative documents. We have reviewed the 1995 University Act, the Higher Education Act that replaced it in 2019, and individual University Acts that currently supplement the Higher Education Act. In some form, all of them currently or have stipulated previously the involvement of student representatives in the highest academic decision-making body (currently university senate). The list of legal acts is provided in Appendix 2.

Expert interviews were conducted to assess the subjectively perceived impact of student politics and to confirm or disprove our observation. Participants were recruited using purposive sampling. We approached employees and previous ministers of the Ministry of Education and Research and chairpersons from current and previous Boards of EÜL who all have been involved with student representation or student politics. Altogether, nine semi-structured interviews were

administered. The acquired data was reviewed via recordings of interviews. All participants provided written consent to participate.

The LOC-SIHEG survey was used to analyze local student representatives' understanding of student politics in Estonia. Additionally, survey results informed a historical overview and current trends of the student movement at local level. Respondents included board members of nine local student unions, representing nine out of eighteen higher education institutions in Estonia. Regardless of adequate coverage of local-level student unions, overall, the small sample size precluded us from running inferential analyses; however, descriptive statistics are presented throughout the chapter.

All authors have been or are currently involved in student politics as Board members of their local institutions' student unions or at EÜL. No authors were actively involved in the national-level processes described in this chapter, and thus, this impact assessment carries no direct evaluation of their work. All authors strive to be unprejudiced in their assessment.

Student Organizations and Representation in Estonia up until the 1990s

The history of student organizations in Estonia can be traced back to the late nineteenth century when the first fraternities, sororities, and student societies were founded. Two years after the Estonian Republic was established in 1918, a meeting was held among students in 1920 at the University of Tartu—the only university in the country at the time. As a result, the first student council was established (Kikkas and Laidla, 2020). In 1936, the Tallinn Technical Institute was founded as another higher education institution in Estonia, which also formed a student council. Although there was already-existing cooperation between the students of the two mentioned higher education institutions, such cooperation was limited due to the authoritarian regime at the time (there was a military coup against the democratic government in 1934). Furthermore, neither student council was autonomous¹; the state mandated the higher education institutions to supervise the student councils (Kikkas and Laidla, 2020, Laar and Hiio, 2018). During the interwar period, student councils issued public statements and conducted a variety of activities, including a student kitchen, communal house, and student paper (Kikkas and Laidla, 2020, TalTech, 2020).

During the Soviet (1940–1 and 1944–91) and Nazi-German occupation (1941–4), democratic and representative student councils were banned, as were the prewar student organizations (Kikkas and Laidla, 2020). In the postwar period, when Estonia was a part of the USSR, the student body became more active again in the 1960s. This is when Khrushchev's rise to power in the USSR led to “de-stalinization,” i.e., less repressive conditions for political organizing. There were even public student protests against the governing regime in Tartu in 1968 (Kikkas and Laidla, 2020).

In those times, many politically oriented students joined the communist youth organization [*komsomol*] and, for some time, the Tartu University *komsomol* became saturated with “anti-system” views (Lauristin, Hion and Visnap, 2016). However, progress was halted by Brezhnev's rise to power as the head of the Soviet Union in 1964 followed by a period of stricter control and

stagnation Grassroots student activism revitalized in the late 1980s under the more open policies of Glasnost and Perestroika. Several previously banned student organizations were re-established. Notably, a student representative was given a seat on the University of Tartu' academic council. In the late 1980s, several youth and student activists led or joined the democratization movements in Estonia. Many of these students became politicians during the end of the Soviet occupation and in the re-established Estonian Republic. Among other politicians in the independent and democratic Estonia were former students that were active in the 1960s (Lauristin, Hion and Visnap, 2016).

These disparate but parallel social developments, including the re-establishment of democratic student councils, culminated with the establishment of EÜL—an organization to unite local student unions—in 1991 (Kasenõmm and Seliste, 2012). This establishment followed the establishment of the Republic of Estonia in the same year. After a period of activism in legally ambiguous conditions (the pre-Second World War mandatory membership in the student body was declared illegal by a court decision), the Universities Act of 1995 gave student councils firmer legal footing, paving the way to more structured and well-managed student representation (Kasenõmm and Seliste, 2012).

Student Politics and Representation on the National Level

EÜL's Membership

EÜL's main distinction from many other national student unions in Europe and from many other Estonian NGOs is in its larger reliance on entrepreneurial funds.

According to the current legislation, all students are automatically members of the student body of their higher education institution. From the moment of enrollment they have the right to elect student representatives among students (Higher Education Act, 2020). This means all higher education institutions have one Student Council² that represents the students of that institution. The internal structure, forms of voting, and use of funds are decided internally and autonomously. The exact funding amounts or the ways for electing student representatives are not specified. The law only states vaguely, "Funds for the activities of the assemblies and for the attainment of their purposes are allocated in the budget of the Higher Education Institutions [HEIs]" (Higher Education Act, 2020).

There is only one national student organization that represents students in Estonia. Since the founding of the EÜL in 1991, there have been no competing organizations trying to replace it or perform the representative role on the national level (Former Chairperson of EÜL, personal communication, January 20, 2022).

According to EÜL's statutes, all student unions at higher education institutions that observe legal requirements, be they in universities or institutions of applied sciences, may become members of EÜL. An application must be submitted to the Board of EÜL and after that the general meeting decides if the Union becomes a member or not (Statutes of EÜL, 2020).

EÜL is regularly consulted in the drafting of most higher education legislation and occasionally also science and research legislation (Ministry Officials, personal communication,

January 31 and February 7, 2022). The Higher Education Act also stipulates that the quality of higher education shall be periodically checked by the Higher Education Quality Agency (Higher Education Act, 2020). The Higher Education Quality Agency has an assessment council, which has *at least one student member* (Higher Education Act, 2020). Additionally, the Supervisory Board of the quality agency comprises “[s]takeholders ... including students” (Statutes of the Education and Youth Board, 2021). Currently, students are represented there by the chairperson of EÜL (EKKA, 2022).

The system of student representation at the national level in Estonia can be considered neo-corporatist (Klemenčič, 2012, Knill and Tosun, 2012). The monopoly of student advocacy is in the hands of EÜL, which is composed of the student unions, although there have been a few occasions when the student unions of bigger universities have tried to side-track EÜL. For example, during the higher education reform in 2011–13, three larger student unions had direct talks with the ministry and sent them their own vision for student support systems although the minister at the time downplayed the importance and impact of this action (Raudsepp, Kütt and Müür, 2012, Former chairperson of EÜL and Minister of Education and Research, personal communication, February 3, 2022). During the same period, the youth wing of the Social Democratic Party was also publicly active on the topic of the rights of students, but their activity in this was neither long-lasting nor transcended other higher education topics (Former EÜL board member, personal communication, February 7, 2022). Also, according to recent EÜL board members, University of Tartu Student Union also sent information requests to different ministries when they felt EÜL was not acting with sufficient haste (interviews with former board members, February 3 and February 7, 2022). Outside of these examples, EÜL acts as a unitary body and represents students in national-level higher education politics. The inclusion of students in national decision-making is sufficiently institutionalized so that EÜL, not the individual student unions, remains the intermediary of student interests in legislative processes and policymaking in both the government and the parliament (Ministry Officials & former and current board members, personal communication, January 20, 26, 27, 31, and February 3 and 7, 2022). This shows that EÜL is considered the legitimate voice of the students by the state.

This situation is supported by the aforementioned Section 18 of the Higher Education Act stating that every higher education institution must have an established student council and that they have a right (not a responsibility) to unite under a national association. Since this has been done currently by fourteen student unions out of the eighteen higher education institutions, representing about 96 percent of all the students of Estonia, EÜL can be considered to have grassroots legitimacy in addition to official state recognition (EÜL, 2022, Haridussilm, 2021). The list of members of EÜL can be viewed in Appendix 2.

EÜL’s Organizational Capacity

The organizational capacity can be understood through its people: EÜL has (since 2015) two paid board members, two paid staff members in public policy, and the council (unpaid) with a general meeting whose membership is composed of member union representatives. At times, EÜL’s nonpublic policy staff is also engaged in smaller tasks in policy work, although generally there

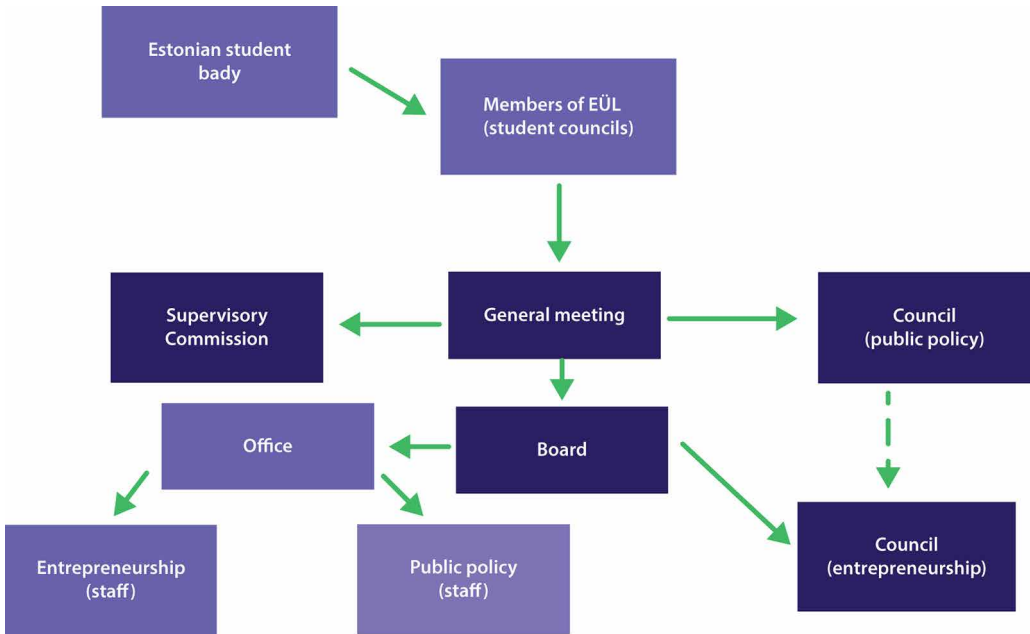


Figure 27.1 Structure of EÜL (spring 2022). The purple graph boxes are for elected bodies and lighter blue boxes indicate either EÜL members (student body through student councils) or unelected staff of EÜL.

is a clear division of labor between the two lines of staff according to the current chairperson of EÜL (Chairperson of EÜL, personal communication, January 27, 2022). The structure of EÜL is visualized in Figure 27.1.

As mentioned earlier, EÜL has a distinct funding model. EÜL is the Exclusive Representative ISIC-card license holder in Estonia. It provides the ground for EÜL to be more dynamic and independent from the government, which also provides annually a certain, although smaller grant. Income from entrepreneurship (ISIC-card) forms about 80 percent of EÜL’s total income (Äreregister, 2021). This is also the backbone of its financial autonomy. EÜL’s member unions do not pay membership fees and currently do not receive any direct financial contributions from EÜL either.

EÜL’s External Relationships

EÜL cooperates with the Ministry of Education and Research, Estonian National Youth Council, Estonian School Students Councils’ Union, Tartu University Faculty Association & Tallinn University Trade Union, and at times specific with parliament members or other higher education professionals as required as was brought up in expert interviews with former and current members of EÜL board (Former and current members of EÜL board, personal communication, January 20 and January 27, 2022).

Most interactions with the state are taking place through semi-formal arrangements. First, EÜL attends bi-annual meetings with the ministry's Area of Higher Education. That is a meeting that usually enables EÜL to dive deep into the details of the higher education policies and the changes needed to be carried out (Current EÜL board member, personal communication, January 27, 2022). Second, EÜL often meets with the Minister of Education and Research should there be a topic of discussion in need of further elaboration. According to the current chairperson of EÜL, "there has been a strategic move away from protests and towards lobbying because in Estonia this approach has proven to be more effective for receiving results" (Current chairperson of EÜL, personal communication, January 27, 2022). Third, EÜL is also a member of the ministry's youth council, which is an advisory body to the Ministry of Youth Issues. However, in the meetings of the council there are a lot of other representatives from the youth field organizations around the table. EÜL's representatives noticed that currently bringing up topics specific and of utmost importance to higher education students is rather difficult. Although the impact and benefits of the council have changed in time, EÜL still attends and supports partners as well as brings up higher education perspectives.

Main Political Issues

One of the main topics in Estonia's student politics was the higher education reform initiated and enacted between 2011 and 2013 (Kõrgharidus, 2021, Vain, Liedemann, Tammiste, Saaremägi and Matsulevitš, 2019). One of the reasons for reform was a projected decreasing student population, which necessitated a change in higher education funding. This can be seen in Figure 27.2. Since then, on paper, higher education in Estonia is free of tuition costs if you study full time. However, this simplification fails to sufficiently account for the reform's adverse effects: in 2021, study allowance and loan systems in Estonia have not fulfilled the goal of reducing student employment and drop-out rate (Haugas, 2020, Vain, Liedemann, Tammiste, Saaremägi and Matsulevitš, 2019).

Major political action in the past five years has mostly centered around the need for increased higher education funding. It is of note that in 2022 there began a larger discussion of the Estonian higher education system in the Estonian parliament (Current chairperson of EÜL, personal communication, January 27, 2022). Also a number of media pieces have been written regarding higher education underfunding and possible reform ideas according to recent board members of EÜL (Riigikogu, 2021; Current board members of EÜL, personal communication, January 20 and January 27, 2022). As part of the usual work process EÜL has been involved in the task forces for the creation of a new Higher Education Act that came to force in 2019 and various working groups related to the creation of strategies for academic learning and science according to board members of EÜL involved at those periods.

EÜL was also active with the topic of mitigating and fighting sexual harassment in HEIs. EÜL took an active role in analyzing the situation in HEIs with a report it commissioned, and published along with specific recommendations (Järv, Metsar, Martma, Raudkivi and Velvet, 2020). The process is still ongoing according to the current chairperson of EÜL (Current EÜL

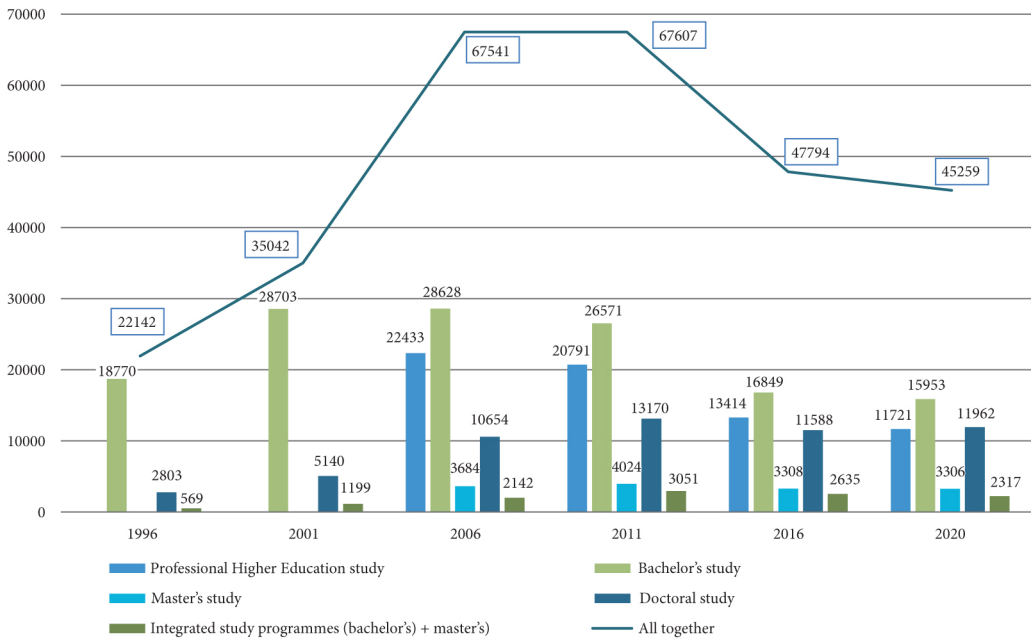


Figure 27.2 Visualization of number of students in Estonia (Statistics of Estonia, 2022).³

chairperson, personal communication, January 27, 2022). Another issue that EÜL has taken lead on is rights and accommodations for students with disabilities.

Student Politics and Representation within Higher Education Institutions in Estonia

The official State legislation requires that students make up at least 20 percent of the highest academic decision-making bodies of HEIs (Higher Education Act, 2020; Estonian Academy of Arts Act, 2019; Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre Act, 2019; Estonian University of Life Sciences Act, 2019; Tallinn University Act, 2019; Tallinn University of Technology Act, 2014; University of Tartu Act, 1995). Regardless of the common legal basis, the internal structure and organization of student representation within institutions can vary since Estonian universities are highly autonomous. According to the European University Association, they rank first in the category of “staffing” and “academic” and fifth overall in “organizational” autonomy (European University Association, 2021).

In order to describe the student representatives’ perception of their activities, the LOC-SIHEG-Estonia (2022) survey answers were analyzed. Representatives of nine student councils, all members of EÜL, responded to the questionnaire. Three of the respondents were student representatives of institutions of professional applied higher education; only one student council representative of a privately funded higher education institution responded.

Management and Financing of Local Student Unions

Most (five respondents) local student councils operate as subdivisions or structural units of their respective higher education institution, two are non-profit organizations, and two report not being registered as a legal entity. This division is reflected in the financing of the councils: all councils receive financial support from their HEIs and five respondents report receiving additional nonfinancial support (e.g., six respondents' office spaces have been provided by the university for free). However, several councils have diversified their streams of income, with two councils benefiting from project-based funding, two receiving government support, and two raising additional funds by either collecting membership fees or managing a business unit with the union. Regardless, most councils (seven) do not have a separate bank account. In general, the budget of the student unions corresponds to the number of students in the HEI. Student councils of HEIs with more than 5,000 students have budgets between 180,000 and 370,000 euros a year. Student councils of HEIs with 500–5,000 students have budgets ranging between 5,000 and 65,000 euros, with financing increasing, proportional to the number of students. Two councils report having no fixed budget.

All but one council have an office space and six of the respondent councils report employing paid staff. The representatives of the three smallest student bodies among Estonian higher education institutions either receive stipends, are only partly compensated for their work, or volunteer at the student councils, while representatives of the three largest universities have labor contracts with the university. In most councils, employees have taken up their positions by varied means—some have been elected as Board members by other student representatives, some have been hired via a recruitment process by the Board. Only one student council takes diversity into account upon electing leaders.

Autonomy and Dependence on Higher Education Institutions

Eight of the nine respondents report their student councils' activities being dependent on the funding of the higher education institution they are affiliated with (one student council does not have funding according to their response). That being said, all nine councils perceive themselves as autonomous in deciding their internal structure and all but one find their political and professional agenda to be agreed upon independent of the institution. For example, the activities of the student councils of Tallinn University, the University of Tartu, and Tallinn University of Technology are mainly determined by council statutes and strategic plans separate from those of their HEIs. Furthermore, such legislation explicitly highlights autonomous governance as apparent in the following passage that is duplicated in all the statutes:

The Student Body of [HEI] is an institution which exercises the right of the [HEI] students to self-government—to decide on and manage independently, pursuant to law and legislation issued on the basis thereof, issues of student life based on the interests, needs, rights and obligations of students.

(Statutes of the Student Body of the Tallinn University of Technology, 2018, Statutes of the Student Union of Tallinn University, 2015, Statutes of the University of Tartu Student Body, 2019)⁴

Only one student council highlighted ties to a labor union, while others deny having close affiliations with labor unions and political parties.

Local Student Councils' Activities and Strategies for Implementing Change

Student involvement in decision-making is commonly regulated in the higher education institution statutes (seven) and takes place mandatorily (excluding two HEIs, where inclusion is voluntary or students have no chance on impacting decisions). Respondents agree on the most common method of persuasion—all local representatives work toward their objectives by means of being represented in different higher education institution decision-making bodies. Four respondents report students making up 20 percent of the decision-making bodies (three survey participants did not respond).

While seven local councils have representatives in different decision-making bodies where they can vote on all topics, one council reports only being invited to listen in on the meetings and one reports not being a part of a decision-making body and not attending meetings. However, it is likely that respondents interpreted “decision-making bodies” differently or that the reference changed across questions (e.g., it appears contradictory that student experts both have and do not have the right to vote—this depends on the decision-making body, rather than the higher education institution). To generalize, students are involved in quality-related and student-related committees, yet in some cases are not eligible to vote on certain topics.

Among higher education institution management, student representatives most often come into contact with members of the Rector's Office (five), especially the Rector (three) and Vice Rector for Academic Affairs (four), and the Office of Academic Affairs (three). Close contact is illustrated by eight of the nine respondents meeting with HEI management at least once a semester and one student council having unofficial needs-based meetings.

In comparison, more confrontational policymaking strategies, such as protests, have received little attention among the Estonian student representatives—all respondents reported either having organized no protests in the previous five years or not knowing of any such events.⁵ Interestingly, three of the responding councils rated the claim that the only way to impact policies and laws is to protest in the streets as false, while four found it to be likely true ($M = 2.67$).

Upon listing the main challenges tackled in 2021, a variety of activities were underscored. Addressing Covid-related obstacles was the most common response (four); however, student councils also reported having focused on organizing events (three), students' mental health (three), quality of studies and study infrastructure (two), and the physical learning environment (two). Three additional recurring themes emerged. Firstly, the smaller student unions concentrated on creating students opportunities for social integration. Secondly, nearly half (four) of the respondents reported working on improving the internal climate and structure of their council (e.g., by amending communication with subdivisions, developing council strategies, onboarding new representatives, updating legislative documents, re-organizing the office space, and creating a historical overview of council). Finally, three larger universities' student councils (University of Tartu, Tallinn University, University of Life Sciences) describe having dedicated themselves to addressing university-wide and societal issues, such as student drop-out rates, higher education

funding in Estonia, promotion of student-democracy, and the inclusion of international students. According to experts interviewed, one reason for this could be the larger councils' larger budget allowing for more diverse activities.

The Impact of Local Student Activism

Local-level student representatives perceive their ability to impact state-level higher education policies as relatively low, with three respondents reporting no or little impact and four moderate impact ($M = 2.56$). However, students are considered as an important pressure group, out of whom changes in policies would be impossible ($M = 3.56$).

Most respondents report having an influence on the decision-making processes within their higher education institutions, with four local councils report having a large or very large impact and the rest reporting a small or moderate impact ($M = 3.33$). Such results are explained by student representatives having a trusting relationship with management ($M = 2.89$, max value 3) and not perceiving a power imbalance between themselves and the administrative bodies (five respondents disagreed with the statement claiming that management took an authoritative stance, while two agreed and two remained neutral). While the relationship between student councils and HEIs is perceived to be cooperative, councils' strategic plans reveal occasional conflicts of priorities:

UTSU [The University of Tartu Student Union] is not always an equal cooperation partner for the University of Tartu. The university's staff and management doesn't see student representatives (and students as a whole) as equal cooperation partners. The factor at work here is that the university and the student representatives sometimes have conflicting priorities, which is why partial mistrust is inevitable. Whether we can improve the students' well-being or not depends on good cooperation.

(University of Tartu Student Union Strategic Plan, 2021)

Regardless, six of the nine respondents report the impact of student representatives within higher education institutions having increased over the past five years (one found it had stayed the same and two were unsure about changes in impact). Although representatives noted that most students do not stay in the student activist position for long enough to assess changes in influence, some found that their higher education institutions had given them more autonomy and reported having felt more heard and included than previously.

Conclusion

EÜL was established in 1991 to unite local student unions. Currently there are eighteen higher education institutions in Estonia and fourteen of them are members of EÜL. Local student unions bring their opinions and statements to EÜL's general meeting where EÜL's position is shaped

and confirmed. EÜL is trusted at the national level and by the student unions as well. Most local unions have an influence on the decision-making processes within their higher education institutions and they have a trusting relationship with HEI's management.

In this chapter, we specifically investigated the mode of political action of student representatives in contemporary Estonia. Our findings point to a predominantly cooperative approach: both of EÜL on national level and local student unions within the higher education institutions. In other words, student representatives in contemporary times work more within and with institutions than protests in the street.

Together with analysis of literature, interviews with experts, and results from LOC-SIHEG survey, we have made seven main statements: (1) most student unions have a great collaboration with management and the relationship is perceived trustworthy by the local unions; (2) the impact of student representatives influencing decisions is seen rather in the HEI's level, not so much on the national level; (3) student unions are rather independent in their work and activities, but not in funding; (4) the more students in HEI, the more money the student union has; (5) the main activities are divided into two: (a) events and extracurricular social activities and (b) quality of education and learning environment; (6) student unions themselves do not know so well what is going on in their HEI-s; and (7) decisions are influenced by participating in decision-making bodies, not so much through protests.

The respondents for the LOC-SIHEG survey confirmed that the main way for students in influencing HEI's decisions is participating in decision-making bodies. Student representation works well and students believe that they are already considered as partners and a powerful force. As such there is no need to organize protests. We also examined the major policy turning points and the accompanying public protests, most of them remain in the year 2013 (higher education reform 2011–13) or even earlier. In our interviews with former chairpersons of EÜL, it was confirmed that there has been a change and currently almost all impact is achieved through lobby work and collaboration with institutions.

References

- EKKA (2022). Quality assessment council. <https://ekka.edu.ee/en/quality-assessment-council> (accessed March 3, 2022).
- Estonian e-Business Register (Äriregister), <https://ariregister.rik.ee/eng> (accessed March 3, 2022).
- EÜL (2022). Liikmed. <https://eyl.ee/liikmed> (accessed March 3 2022).
- European Higher Education Area. Estonia. <http://www.ehea.info/page-estonia> (accessed January 16, 2022).
- European University Association (2021). Estonia. <https://www.university-autonomy.eu/countries/estonia> (accessed December 29, 2021).
- Haridus-Ja Teadusministeerium (2022). Kõrgharidus. <https://www.hm.ee/et/tegevused/korgharidus> (accessed March 3, 2022).
- Haridussilm education statistics portal, Üliõpilased, <https://www.haridussilm.ee/ee/tasemeharidus/haridusliigid/korgharidus/uliopilased> (accessed March 3, 2022).
- Haugas, S. (2020). *EUROSTUDENT VII: Eesti analüüs*. Tallinn: Poliitikauuringute Keskus Praxis. https://www.hm.ee/sites/default/files/eurostudent_eesti_analuus_29.04.2020.pdf (accessed March 3, 2022).
- Järv, E., Metsar, K.M., Martma, L., Raudkivi, M. and Velmet, A. (2020). Sooline ja seksuaalne ahistamine kõrghariduses. <https://eyl.ee/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Sooline-ja-seksuaalne-ahistamine-korghariduses.pdf> (accessed February 2, 2022).

- Kasenõmm, K. and Seliste, T. (2012). *Üliõpilaste ühine jõud: 20 aastat Eesti Üliõpilaskondade Liitu*. Tallinn: Eesti Üliõpilaskondade Liit.
- Kikkas, T. and Laidla, J. (2020). *Sada aastat üliõpilasesindust Tartu Ülikoolis*. Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli Kirjastus.
- Klemenčič, M. (2012). Student representation in Western Europe: introduction to the special issue. *European Journal of Higher Education* 2(1): 11–12, DOI: 10.1080/21568235.2012.695058.
- Klemenčič, M., (2014). Student power in a global perspective and contemporary trends in student organising. *Studies in HE* 39(3): 396–411.
- Knill, C. and Tosun, J. (2012). *Public Policy: A New Introduction*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Kõrgharidusreform ja töäjõuvajadused. Riigikontroll. <https://www.riigikontroll.ee/Suhtedavalikkusega/Pressiteated/tabid/168/ItemId/1179/amid/557/language/en-US/Default.aspx> (accessed February 2, 2022).
- Laar, M. and Hiio, T. (2018). *Eesti riigi 100 aastat: I osa Maapäevast Otto Tiefi valitsuseni*. Tallinn, Estonia: Post Factum.
- Lauristin, M., Hion, E. and Visnap, M. (2016). *Marjustini sajand*. Tallinn: Hea Lugu.
- Lehtsaar, T. and Rutiku, S. (2006). *Õppekavaarendus kõrgkoolis*. Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli Kirjastus.
- Raudsepp, E., Kütt, K., Müür, J. and Järvela, G. (2012). Õppetootuste kontseptsioon: TÜ, TTÜ ja EMÜ Üliõpilaskondade ettepanekud.
- Riigikogu (2021). The Riigikogu discussed the role, quality and bases for funding of higher education. <https://www.riigikogu.ee/en/press-releases/the-riigikogu-discussed-the-role-quality-and-bases-for-funding-of-higher-education> (accessed March 17, 2022).
- Statistics of Estonia (2022). Kõrgharidus. https://andmed.stat.ee/en/stat/sotsiaalelu__haridus__kergharidus/HT275 (accessed March 3, 2022).
- Statutes of the Education and Youth Board (19.01.2021). Riigi Teataja. <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/ee/519012021001/> (accessed January 3, 2022).
- Statutes of EÜL (21.11.2020). Eesti Üliõpilaskondade Liit. https://eyl.ee/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/EULi_pohikiri_21.11.2020.pdf (accessed February 2, 2022).
- Statutes of the Student Body of the Tallinn University of Technology (2018). https://haldus.taltech.ee/sites/default/files/2021-03/uliõpilaskonna%20põhikiri%20EN.pdf?_ga=2.264917960.633388009.1645195970-1938218184.1642334062 (accessed February 15, 2022).
- Statutes of the Student Union of Tallinn University (2015). https://drive.google.com/file/d/1H26FDneT8rY_nLOHLPAAfdoy61c206yp/view (accessed February 15, 2022).
- Statutes of the University of Tartu Student Body (2019). <https://tyye.ut.ee/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Statutes-of-the-University-of-Tartu-Student-Body.pdf> (accessed February 15, 2022).
- TalTech (2020). Taltech student body celebrated 100th anniversary. <https://taltech.ee/en/news/taltech-student-body-celebrated-100th-anniversary> (accessed January 3, 2022).
- University of Tartu Student Union Strategic Plan (2021). https://tyye.ut.ee/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/utsu_strategicplan_ENG.pdf (accessed February 15, 2022).
- Vain, M., Liedemann, E., Tammiste, G., Saaremägi, R. and Matsulevitš, Lauri (2019). *Kõrgharidusreform ja töäjõuvajadused*. Tallinn, Estonia: Riigikontroll.

Appendices

Appendix 1

EÜL is a member of:

- European Students' Union
- ISIC Association
- Network of Estonian Nonprofit Organizations

Members of EÜL:

- University of Tartu
- Estonian Academy of Arts
- Estonian Aviation Academy
- Estonian University of Life Sciences
- Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre
- Estonian Military Academy
- Pallas University of Applied Sciences
- Estonian Academy of Security Sciences
- TTK University of Applied Sciences
- Tallinn Health Care College
- Tallinn University of Technology
- Tallinn University
- Tartu Health Care College
- Estonian Business School

Appendix 2

Date	In Estonian	In English
Entry into force 18.02.1995, repealed 01.09.2019	Ülikooliseadus	Universities Act
Entry into force 01.09.2019, last amended version in force from 01.08.2020	Kõrgharidusseadus	Higher Education Act
Entry into force 21.03.1995, last amended version in force from 01.01.2020	Tartu Ülikooli seadus	University of Tartu Act
Entry into force 01.09.2014, last amended version in force from 20.02.2019	Tallinna Tehnikaülikooli seadus	Tallinn University of Technology
Entry into force 01.09.2019, last amended version in force from 01.12.2021	Eesti Maaülikooli seadus	Estonian University of Life Sciences Act
Entry into force 01.09.2019 (no amendments)	Eesti Muusika- ja Teatriakadeemia seadus	Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre Act
Entry into force 01.09.2019 (no amendments)	Eesti Kunstiakadeemia seadus	Estonian Academy of Arts Act
Entry into force 01.09.2019 (no amendments)	Tallinna Ülikooli seadus	Tallinn University Act

Notes

- 1 Tartu University's autonomy was curtailed in 1936 by a presidential decree, and Tallinn Technical Institute, which was reorganized to Tallinn Technical University in 1938, came to being already in the new authoritarian political climate and legal structure. The autonomy of the Student Bodies was further curtailed by the Universities Act of 1937 (Kikkas and Laidla, 2020, Laar and Hiio, 2018).
- 2 In practice, some student councils officially translate their names into English as "student unions" but there is mostly no qualitative difference between "unions" or "councils" (Former EÜL board members, personal communication, January 20 and January 27, 2022).
- 3 From the Soviet occupation, Estonia inherited a higher education system that had a different logic than the later bachelor/master/PhD that is common in the Western world. Since re-independence in 1991 to the 1995 Universities Act, a transitional period existed with some students enrolled under the old system and some under the new, which makes direct numerical comparisons in this specific time period difficult (Rutiku and Lehtsaar 2006, pp. 62–3).
- 4 Different translation in the Tallinn University student council Statutes: "The university students form a Student Union which exercises students' right to self-government, and decides and organises the issues of student life independently following the interests, needs, rights and obligations of students."
- 5 The Estonian registry of public events noted in the Estonian Police and Border Guard database has info on one student protest on the fall of 2019 by the University of Tartu Student Union and two by EÜL (fall of 2020 and winter of 2021, respectively), however, the database only covers events since 01.08.2019.

Which Model for Student Representation in France?

Quentin Genelot

Introduction

French student representation has a long history marked by the creation of UNEF, National Union of Students of France, in 1907. While the organization remained the only student organization for several years, it experienced internal divisions beginning in the late 1950s, which led to the gradual construction of a competitive field of student organizations. The competition between student organizations is an important characteristic of French student representation, as it frames their actions and their relations with public authorities. The other particularity is that their status is rather ambiguous. Indeed, they are often called “student syndicates,” both by the media and by themselves, but in reality they have a legal status of nonprofit association. Robi Morder explained that the reference to trade unionism is made by student organizations according to “their positioning in the competitive space to distinguish themselves from movements with the same function, and according to their representation of the more or less attractive character of the name!” (Morder, 2009). That is why I use the term “student organization,” as all organized forms which have the ambition to bring into existence a social group with a vocation to be represented (Morder, 2009). Finally, they are framed by the status of representative student association. Created by the Jospin law of 1989, this status recognizes the criterion of representativeness of student associations according to their electoral results in National Council of Higher Education and Research (CNESER) and National Centre for University and School Works (CNOUS). This criterion of representativeness is central to consider when studying the French system. It gives them the right to a financial allocation and establishes their legitimacy to intervene as student representatives with public actors. However, it is not the same logic as professional unions, which can negotiate collective agreements; there are no specific rights associated with this status beyond a symbolic recognition.

Then, scholarly work on student representation in France is relatively scarce compared to the long history of student movements. Some works were published before 1968, such as the book of Bourdieu and Passeron on student identity (Bourdieu, Passeron, 1964), but it was the events of May 1968 that sparked the interest of researchers in this area. Scholars in this period (70–80s) were especially interested in the power of mobilization of students in their movements (Abboud, 1970, Burgelin, 1968) and their history (Monchablon, 1983). Work on students’ political

engagement was developed with the creation of GERME, a study and research group on student movements, in 1995. They shed light on the history of student organizations (Fischer, 2000; Legois, Morder and Monchablon, 2007) and offered in their academic newspaper first analyses on student engagement and representation (Morder, 1998; Morder, 2010/2011). The creation of the Observatory of Student Life in 1989 by the Jospin Law allowed the development of several studies about the conditions of study, life, and work of students, through their surveys and reports (Morder et al, 2009; Thoury, 2016). The 2000s have seen a diversification of contributions, from the socialization of students in student organizations (Michon, 2006) to their citizenship and participation in university life (Le Bart, Merle, 1997; Legois, Marchal and Morder, 2020). However, while work on student engagement has been developed, there is still a gap in scholarly contributions that focus specifically on student organizations or on the contribution of students to higher education policies in France, even though international literature has made advances (Jungblut and Weber, 2015; Klemenčič, 2012; Vespa et al, 2024).

My research aims to address the question of student representation in France, and to analyze the capacity of French student organizations to influence student policies in a context of strong competition among them and rapid transformations in the higher education landscape. In this chapter, I'm presenting the system of student representation and intermediation in France and the organizations that claim to represent students by mobilizing the theory presented by Klemenčič in 2012. In order to distinguish student organizations, Klemenčič identifies on the basis of Schmitter and Streeck's work (1999) two logics that affect the "organizational characteristics of student associations." On the one hand, student organizations are based on the aggregation of interests, values, and identities to define their characteristics (logic of membership). On the other hand, they "tend to adapt" according to their relationship with the public authorities "to better perform their representative function" (logic of influence) (Klemenčič, 2012, p. 7). She is also studying the national systems of student interest representation and intermediation by using two classic analyses: the neo-corporatist and the pluralist model. In a neo-corporatist system, the number of student organizations is limited; they are in a monopoly situation where they decide with the state on policies in a formalized way. In contrast, in a pluralist model, there are many organizations competing with each other, and they are external pressure groups for the state.

Thus, the guiding question for this chapter is: how do French student organizations position themselves and act in their mission to represent students? This question implies looking first at the historical construction of the current model of student representation and representative student organizations. Secondly, I will look at the inherent characteristics of the French system, in terms of both the organizational characteristics of the organizations and the system of student intermediation and representation of interests. This chapter is part of a larger PhD research project. It draws on fifteen interviews with students involved in almost all the representative organizations, members of professional trade unions or from higher education administration. It mobilizes three field observations during national events for UNEF and Federation of General Student Associations (FAGE), with an observation of local UNEF activists. In addition, I conducted content analysis of several internal framework documents and monitored the representation activities of student organizations.

Part 1: The Establishment of the Student Representation System

The first part aims to present the transformations of the student representation system in France, which implies describing both evolutions within student organizations and different stages of the implementation of the legal system of student representation. This allows us to identify the balance of power between the student organizations involved and to understand how they carry out their mission of student representation.

From the Creation of UNEF to the Fragmentation of the Field of Student Organizations (1907–83)

Initially, UNEF was created to bring together the general assemblies, which are local groupings of students. It was formed beforehand to encourage the spirit of association between students and to organize activities (Monchablon, 2007). In its early days, UNEF had the role to present student's demands to public authorities, to help student associations and act to improve the material condition of students (Legois, Morder and Monchablon, 2007). After the First World War, the situation of students was difficult, so the general assemblies created the first works "*œuvres*," with accommodation and restaurant services for students. In 1936, CSO, Higher Committed for Social Works for Students, was created to coordinate local initiatives and organize help for students (Hochard, 2007). UNEF not only had co-decision power but managed all the aid with the government in a shared governance system. This system survived during the Second World War. UNEF did not collaborate with the Vichy regime but did not take sides either at any time and continued its activities (Fischer, 2000). This behavior was strongly criticized at the liberation, and some members of UNEF were working on a text to define a trade union orientation "*orientation syndicale*" for the organization. This work led in 1946 to a declaration of student rights and duties: the "Grenoble Charter," which is the founding text for student organizations. The charter defines the student as a "young intellectual worker" with a social role to play. The first divisions in UNEF happened after that, between those who defended a political and trade union orientation and those who promoted apolitism. The Algerian War created the first split and the end of unity. Indeed, UNEF's stance against the Algerian War and for Algerian independence led to the departure of those defending an apolitical line (Fischer, 2000). They created in 1961 the FNEF, National Federation of Students of France, with the purpose of competing with UNEF.

The strong stance taken by UNEF during the Algerian War was poorly received by the government, which set about reducing its influence in the early 1960s including cutting its financial subsidies (Fischer, 2000). The FNEF was also unable to compete with UNEF. The student organizations were in difficulty, and the events of May 1968 took root in a context of anti-imperialism and strong protest led by far-left groups. The movement was launched because of the arrest of a student during a mobilization against the Vietnam War. Demonstrations spread rapidly throughout the country, particularly due to police repression, even though the reasons for the mobilization's generation are diverse (Fischer, 2000). They lasted until the end of the month,

and the dissolution of the National Assembly with the victory of the Gaullists in the legislative elections allowed a return to normal (Gobille, 2008). The events of May 1968 highlighted a problem that had already been present for several years: the massification of the number of students, which poses major logistical and financial difficulties. A first attempt at reform took place in 1963 with the Fouchet reform, which puts university studies in two successive cycles but did not question the functioning of higher education structures (Fischer, 2000). After 1968, a profound reform had to be made, which led to the adoption of the Faure law in December of the same year. A new student organization was created during the drafting of the law: the “*Union Nationale Inter-universitaire*” (UNI). UNI identifies with the right, opposing left, and far-left student organizations and modes of demonstration such as blocking universities. It was created by teachers who mobilized against the Faure law,² but they were unable to prevent its adoption.

The aim of the law was to give more autonomy to the universities and allow them to reorganize themselves. Faculties were abolished and replaced by teaching and research units (UER). Universities acquired a new legal status, were administered by a president elected in central councils, and acquired financial autonomy to manage the funds allocated to them by the Ministry.³ With that, the law broke an important tradition. Indeed, universities had been abolished in 1793 with the removal of guilds after the French Revolution. Faculties were restored by Napoleon in 1806, but without the universities that housed them. A centralized management appeared, and the deans of the faculties and the government directly managed the affairs of education. Despite their re-establishment in 1896, the universities remained administrative units without much power, especially as they were under direct state control through the rectors (Musselin, 2017). The Faure law thus marks the beginning of the modern higher education system. The law also establishes official student representation by elected students with a deliberative voice throughout the creation of university councils at local level and at the national system with the creation of CNESER. This is an important change because before the law there was no legal framework for student representation. The Capitant decree of 1945 planned the presence of students in faculty councils, but UNEF, strongly opposed to the proposition, succeeded in keeping its monopoly (Morder, 2010–11). CNESER is a body attached to the Ministry of Higher Education, which gives advisory opinions on its reform projects. It brings together elected representatives of employees and students, as well as appointed representatives of universities. As of today, student representatives in CNESER are elected by local student representatives.

With the establishment of a national student representative body, student organizations got the opportunity to exert political influence inside universities, which they could not do before. The stance to take regarding these elections was particularly debated within UNEF. As mentioned earlier, its situation was difficult because of the government, but also because it was very divided internally. UNEF was reduced to “*an addition of competing political factions which rejected the most convinced activists*”⁴ (Fischer, 2000). After May 1968, there were two opposing visions for the organization between those who wanted to continue the trade union work and those who wanted to transform UNEF into an *organization de masse* (a sort of social-movement like organization who wants to lead the students to revolution). At the beginning of 1971, the socialist students resigned and left the organization while they were at the head of it. The two factions then continued to oppose each other, and in 1971 two Congresses were held simultaneously, which led to the creation of two UNEF: “UNEF-Unité syndicale” and “UNEF-renouveau” (Fischer, 2000). The main point of divergence between the two UNEFs was participation in the elections. The

former decided to boycott local and national elections while UNEF-Renouveau presented lists (Morder, 2021a).

The results of the 1971 elections showed a fragmented student representation with a multitude of organizations. UNEF-Renouveau, which decided to participate in the elections, had a large majority in the CNESER with seven out of sixteen seats and 40.60 percent of the votes in 1971.⁵ It was the leading student organization in terms of electoral results until 1983. UNEF-US initially refused to participate in the elections, but in 1981 it merged with the MARC, which brought together socialist students and became UNEF-ID (Legois, Morder and Monchablon, 2007). The newly formed organization decided to participate and overtook UNEF-Renouveau in the 1983 CNESER elections. In the face of these trade union lists, various forms of associative lists were presented, but failed to compete with them. FNEF after 1968 tried to widen its audience. It was made up of national federations but also conservative groups which promoted an opposition against left-student organizations, which has resulted in difficult political positioning. The defeat in the 1971 CNESER elections against another list carried by national federations led to the end of the organization (Lichet, 2010). National federations tried to regroup in a new form, without much success. UNI remained present and had between one and three seats over the period (from 1971 to 1983). The 1983 elections were the last before the arrival of the Jospin law, which changed the model of student representation. Student elections were also introduced in the National Centre for University and School Works (CNOUS) and their regional declination (CROUS), which were created in 1955 to replace the old system of management by CSO.

The introduction of national student elections marks the fragmentation of the field of student organizations in a post-1968 context. If at the end of the Algerian War UNEF could claim to represent half of the students, thanks to the memberships in its general assemblies (Morder, 2021a), the situation after May 1968 was not the same at all. Thus, if May 1968 was an essential event for the advancement of the student cause, its legacy also contributed to the division of student organizations. It gave a whole generation of activists' revolutionary ambitions, which called into question the trade union model of UNEF that had been affirmed after the Second World War. The introduction of national student elections provides a means of formally measuring the divisions between different visions of student representation. However, the divisions have already existed for several decades, in both UNEF and FNEF.

A Legal System for Recognizing the Representativeness of Student Organizations (1983–2022)

The 1980s were marked by several laws seeking to supplement the Faure Law, which was deemed incomplete. Indeed, the legitimacy of councils in universities was still poorly recognized because strategic decisions were taken by teachers in the teaching and research units (Musselin, 2001). A first law was introduced in 1984, the Savary law, which modifies the status of universities and their internal organization. In 1986, with the arrival of the right-wing government, Minister Alain Savary presented a new project. It repealed the Faure and Savary and gave universities greater autonomy, which would allow them to determine their own tuition fees (within a national range) and conditions to access education. The student mobilization against the bill was strong because

they feared that the law would allow the implementation of selection (Fischer, 2000). The killing of a student, beaten to death by the police during a student protest, led to the withdrawal of the bill on December 8, 1986. However, the number of students increased. That is why in 1989 the new left-wing government adopted a new law that changed the way resources were allocated to universities, which gives them new responsibilities (Musselin, 2001).

The 1989 law is also significant because it introduced a representativeness criterion for student organizations at national level, in reference to the older system of professional unions.⁶ This criterion echoes the “multipolarity of student representation” (Morder, 2010) of the 1970s and 1980s, and uses the results of the national elections in CNOUS and CNESER to determine which organization is considered representative of the students. They must have at least one elected representative on one of the councils. But unlike the employee unions, for whom the establishment of representativeness was supported by collective negotiating power, student organizations only have financial rewards. These sums are given by the ministry to finance the formation of elected representatives by the organizations. The introduction of the representativeness criterion also allowed the creation of FAGE. Before 1989, several local federations bringing together student associations at city level had been created. The national federations failed to create a model to compete with UNEF, and their various attempts after FNEF failed. The student associations did not find themselves in this corporatist and top-down model promoted by national federations (Lichet, 2010). Local federations were obligated to join together to have a national impact and be recognized as representative. At first, this alliance was electoral, but it led to the creation of FAGE in December 1989 (Lichet, 2010). At the start, national federations were part of the project, but they did not have a deliberative voice. They obtained it following a statutory amendment a few years later (Lichet, 2010).

In 1989, after the law, new elections were organized to designate eleven student representatives in CNESER. The election was still indirect, but members of the central councils of local universities⁷ could vote. In the 1990s, student representation was stabilized, with five main organizations having consistent results throughout the election. FAGE and UNI have constant results (between two and three seats for FAGE in CNESER, between one and two seats for UNI⁸), even if in 1994 some national federations decided to create another organization against FAGE, PDE, which claimed to be nonpolitical, but which had only one seat at CNESER. The two UNEFs continued to coexist in the 1990s, even though UNEF-ID became more important where it remained the leading representative organization in France (Legois et al., 2020). However, the two UNEF leaderships came closer together in the mid-1990s. They mobilized together against the CIP, a professional integration contract proposed by the government, which they succeeded in withdrawing. In 1998, UNEF-ID gained territory and won five seats on the CNESER, while UNEF-SE had only one: its small number of members did not allow it to compete (Porte, 2007). In 2000, the two UNEFs decided to submit a joint list for the CNESER elections and won five seats. The June 2001 Congress ratified the merger of the two UNEFs. However, the decision was not shared by the whole UNEF-SE, especially by its leadership. Twelve “general assemblies” left UNEF in 2001 to create FSE, the student union federation. *Solidaires* was also created in 1999 as a result of criticism of trade union activity in the student environment (Legois, Morder and Monchablon, 2007). Both organizations recognized themselves in a trade union approach close to the extreme left. Thus, the end of the 1990s saw a diversification of student organizations, particularly with the structuring of an associative movement that differed from the trade union

approach, which has long been dominant. In the 2000s, there were no big changes in the balance of power, but it is possible to distinguish three periods:

- Between 2000 and 2010: UNEF remained the leading student organization in France with at least nine seats out of nineteen in both councils (CNESER and CNOUS). It is followed by FAGE, which is gaining in legitimacy but is not yet able to compete with UNEF. Other student organizations (UNI, PDE, C^é) share the seats.
- From 2012 onward to 2017: In 2012, CNESER elections were cancelled after an administrative appeal by UNEF, which started to lose territory in 2013. This is the period during which FAGE strengthened considerably to become the leading student organization in 2017.
- In 2019, FAGE is hegemonic in CNOUS and CNESER (with eleven seats out of nineteen in total), UNEF is in decline, and a new organization is created in 2019: Alternative, which recovers its role as the third student organization.¹⁰ It will overtake UNEF in terms of the number of votes in CNESER in 2021. In the 2022 CNOUS elections, FAGE lost two seats (three), which is almost equal to UNEF (two) and Alternative (two): the balance of power seems to be in movement.

The creation of Alternative is the result of the meeting of several local independent left unions, which do not recognize themselves in UNEF or FAGE. In general, there is much criticism of the first two student organizations, mainly for their political action and operation. For example, they are criticized for their participation in the negotiations and their support for certain reforms, while mobilizations were organized against them (in 2007 for the LRU law for UNEF, in 2018 for the ORE law for FAGE). Both organizations are considered too bureaucratic, Paris-centered and far from the interest of students.¹¹ Already in 2018, eighty-six members of UNEF, part of the communist trend but also of the majority trend, decided to leave the organization to re-found the FSE¹² (a far-left organization from the early 2000s that had merged with Solidaires in 2013). A first attempt had been made to create a list competing with both organizations with “Parole Étudiante” in 2017, which brought together members of Solidaires, local far-left unions and former PDE federations. But the list had difficulties in defining a real trade union orientation and failed in this objective.¹³ In 2019, a new list was filed: Alternative, which brought together several independent local unions and FSE and Solidaires. It obtained two seats in CNESER. In 2021, Alternative became a real student organization, administered by its local unions, and filed a new list called the Union with FSE and Solidaires. It is still difficult to assess the durability of this organization, but its creation shows that the legitimacy of UNEF and FAGE can be questioned by some students.

Truly Representative Student Organizations?

Criticism of the student organization also focuses on the questioning of their legitimacy. Indeed, if the study of national election polls is essential to trace the power balance between student organizations, it is not sufficient to understand their relationship with students. Student elections are not very popular among students, and the participation rates are particularly low. There is no official publication of the results of student elections to university central councils at national level, but several research studies show that it rarely exceeds 15 percent and that it is declining (Haute, 2020). For CROUS elections, it is even lower as it has been below 10 percent since

the early 2010s (Haute, 2020). The system for appointing representative student organizations is criticized. In a 2012 report commissioned by the Ministry of Higher Education, the authors denounce an election method that “demonstrates its flaws at every election” by speaking of CNESER elections (Déroche and Roussel, 2012). According to Le Mazier, Testi and Vila (2014) student elections are a “partial legitimisation route”: student organizations are representative not because they have the support of students for their actions, but because they have sufficient electoral resources to win against other lists. The strong electoral competition led organizations to develop structured repertoires of electoral action by submitting lists in territories where they are not present or by mobilizing activists from all over the country to interfere in university elections at the local level (Mazier, Testi and Vila, 2014). Thus, student organizations are legally recognized as representative, but they do not legitimize their representativeness to students. Students do not participate much and are often unaware of student organizations: this is “failed delegation” (Mazier, Testi and Vila, 2014).

Here we find the distinction made between legal and sociological representativeness, which is relevant for professional unions (Giraud, Yon and Bérout, 2018). For Michel Offerlé, legal representativeness carries a “*risk of delegitimation which, assured of perpetuating itself, no longer has any interest or capacity to demonstrate its social representativeness*”¹⁴ (Offerlé, 1998). While this remains to be demonstrated for student organizations, the establishment of official legal representation with the 1989 representativeness criterion has certainly had important consequences. Indeed, it intensifies electoral competition between organizations with elections with high stakes at each renewal of the national and local councils. The more organizations have elected representatives in the universities, the better their results in the national elections. It is then necessary to be represented in as many territories as possible, even if the elected representatives do not do the work afterward. So, this is a priority that needs to be addressed continuously because the mandates of national and local student representatives are two years. In addition, the particularities of student engagement must be considered. The student condition is inherently temporary, and their identity has always been fragmented (Morder et al., 2009). Students are poorly integrated into universities, and their behavior is constructed within an individualistic and following the disciplines-logic (Le Bart, Merle, 1997). Although student associations play an integrating role, “the transition from integration to the form of collective student identity(ies) requires a voluntary construction”¹⁵ (Morder et al., 2009). Finally, the competitiveness of universities brings with it increasingly complex issues that require specific skills. As a result, student organizations and their volunteers find themselves in a situation of constant pressure, which makes it difficult to represent students. On the student side, it is difficult to understand what is at stake in the elections and the role that elected representatives can play in the councils. As a result, the gap between organizations and students is bound to increase.

Part 2: A Hybrid System of Representation and Intermediation of Interests

The study of the history of student representation in France has shown the difficulties encountered by student organizations in representing students. A single organization cannot claim to represent the entire student population, which makes the French model distinctive in comparison to other

countries. The next step is to look in more detail at what makes them different, in order to understand the role of the student organizations in the French system. This involves studying first their organizational characteristics, and then the system of student interest intermediation and representation, such as their interactions with public authorities and other higher education actors. The elements of Klemenčič's typology will be taken up in an attempt to position the French model of student intermediation and student representation.

What Distinguishes Student Organizations: A Study of Their Organizational Characteristics

As mentioned in the introduction, for Klemenčič (2012) it is the articulation of the logics of membership and influence that determines the organizational characteristics of student organizations. These two logics allow her to identify two sorts of national organizations: "interest groups" and "student movement" (or "civil society organizations"), with different criteria (organizational structure, internal resource, political agenda, etc.). In 2015, Jungblut and Weber demonstrated the existence of hybrid forms of student unions that differ from the 2012 typology. In their chapter, Vespa, Sguazzini, and Pratisoli (2024) propose a new typology to "classify student collective actors." The characteristics of student organizations would not tend toward one extreme or the other (between interest group and student movement) as the ideal-types model suggests but would be positioned on a continuum of median positions in which the two poles would be extremes (Vespa et al., 2024). What can the French example contribute to this theoretical debate?

First, it is necessary to identify the organizational characteristics of French student organizations. For organizational structure, student organizations have very different models. UNEF has always been made up of student general assemblies, which represent the student members of the organization at university or city level. Each of them elects a board, with a president, a general secretary, and a treasurer elected every two years. The general assemblies together form UNEF and meet at a Congress to appoint a national board. For FAGE, it groups together federations of student associations: each local student association can be affiliated to a local federation (which groups associations from all disciplines in a city or a university) and a national federation (which groups associations from all disciplines). PDE had a similar function as FAGE, but only with national federations who work together independently today. UNI operates with a system of local sections that stand for election and disseminate the UNI's positions at national level. Finally, Alternative gathers independent local unions. It is possible to distinguish between organizations that have local variations (UNEF, UNI) and organizations that bring together other associations with a unique identity (FAGE, Alternative). However, if UNEF has local branches dependent on the national leadership, it has a very structured way of regulating opposition: it is the system of "trends." These are political currents that carry different positions and actions in the organization to represent the students. UNEF defines itself as the "common house of left-wing students": "trends" are therefore a way to regulate differences between them. There are four "trends" in 2022:

- National majority tendency (TMN): it leads the organization with about 70 percent of general assemblies.¹⁶ It defends the "two-legged" logic of trade unionism, which combines

the “work of representation and negotiation” with higher education actors and the “mobilisation on the streets.”¹⁷

- Unity and action tendency (UA): it is part of a class struggle logic that wants to defend precarious student workers. It rejects the trend system.
- Reformist tendency for a democratic and ecological alternative (TRADE): this is the most “right-wing” tendency of the union (as defined by UNEF militants), defending a logic of participation and negotiation in university bodies in a pragmatic way.
- Collective action and student struggle tendency (TACLE): it is a revolutionary tendency, in the sense that it defends mobilization as the only way to overthrow the system, with means of action such as demonstrations or occupation of university buildings.

Another way of differentiating student organizations internally is to look at their democratic organization and the weight that their constituent associations play in the organization’s work. For this purpose, I chose to revisit a typology used by the organizations themselves, which distinguishes three models: the “top-down” model, the “participative” model, and the “bottom-up” model. These models define the level of autonomy the executive committee has once elected to take a position and implement its actions. UNEF has a top-down model, in the sense that the executive committee decides on positions and activities to take for the local general assemblies. It is elected by a Congress every two years, after the definition of the trends of the general assemblies. At each Congress, each tendency presents a policy text to be voted on in each local assembly. Their members are invited to vote for the text that corresponds most to them. The trend with the most popular text is designated as the official trend of the union. The distribution of the members of the executive committee is done according to the results of the Congress, i.e., it can be composed by members from different “trends.” From the moment the Congress is over, the national board has the right to determine the policy of the organization. The other democratic times are intended to coordinate the actions or to organize “trends” debates. Opposing “trends” of TMN may have different actions but follow the line of the organization. In FAGE, the model is called “participatory” by the organization, which means that the elected board of a federation is accountable to its members associations but is not strictly constrained by them to act. There is also the bottom-up model, defended mainly by the health student federations, which implies that they cannot defend positions if those are not validated by their associations.¹⁸ The distinction between the two models remains blurred, and the semantic distinction made within FAGE serves mainly to express mutual criticism. The executive committees of FAGE and its federations are elected by a general assembly, which brings together all the student associations or federations. They are then generally administered by a board of directors composed of the same members (only the voting rules change for FAGE). The newly elected boards produce a “general policy” *politique générale* each year, which defines objectives, means, and indicators for all the actions they wish to carry out. UNI has a top-down model: local sections follow the action of the executive committee, although more information should be collected on their internal documents. For Alternative, the organization was built with the aim of putting local organizations at the center of the project. This is why “*all decisions involving national representation are validated by local structures*”¹⁹ in a bottom-up model (although the evolution of the organization should be carefully monitored).

For internal resources, they are very dependent on the system of recognition of representativeness set up by the Jospin law. Indeed, the sums given per elected representative

Table 28.1 Main characteristics of French student organizations

	UNEF	FAGE	UNI	Independents	Alternative
Organizational and democratic structure	Top-down model, "trends"	Participative model, local and national federations	Top-down model, local sections	Bottom-up model, national federations	Bottom-up model, independent unions
Internal resources	Secure administrative funding, professionalized administration	Secure administrative funding, professionalized administration	No information	No organization	Fluctuating administrative funding, model in construction
Political agenda	Transversal	Transversal	Transversal	Sectorial	Transversal
Mode of action	"Two-legged" logic: representation and mobilization (for TMN)	"Two-legged" logic: representation and associative projects	Lobbying and representation	Representation and services	Representation, mobilization, and associative projects

Source: Realized by me.

are important: 51,590€ by elected students on CNESER, for a total subsidy of 1,135,000€ in 2012 (Déroche and Roussel, 2012). Student organizations therefore must manage large sums of money when they become representative, which requires an administrative structure. However, the level of professionalization is not the same according to the organizations. UNEF and FAGE are historically strong, and therefore have important infrastructures (a team of several employees, permanent indemnified members, internal respace in Paris). Things are different for the other organizations, as they are less representative or more recent. However, it would be necessary to study in detail the methods of financing student organizations in order to refine the analysis. Despite their different levels of professionalization, student organizations share a transversal political agenda that addresses student issues, higher education, and broader political issues. UNEF, FAGE, and Alternative define themselves as “youth organizations” and belong to national groups that advocate on these issues.

The same transversality is found in their repertoires of action, even if their approaches are different. For UNEF they depend on the trends, as seen above. FAGE defends the same idea of a “two-legged” approach, but in a different sense from UNEF. It combines associative projects with representation with higher education actors. If Alternative is defined by a trade union approach, it differs from UNEF because it promotes a trade unionism of services by developing associative projects. It defines itself as a trade union and associative union. UNEF and Alternative do not exclude the use of demonstrations and blockades when they disagree with the state’s action in order to build a balance of power. FAGE also organizes mobilizations, but their objective is more to make their demands known publicly. In general, the organization of actions to make demands requires specific resources that extreme left-wing groups possess. Thus, the analysis of these characteristics shows that French student organizations cannot really be categorized as interest groups or social movement organizations. What structures their actions are above all their values and their vision of student representation, which leads to the vision of Vespa, Sguazzini, and Pratisoli (2024), that the characteristics of organizations can be identified with a hybrid type, with those of both poles.

A Hybrid System of Student Intermediation and Representation

The final point in understanding student representation and organizations in France is to look at the national system of student interest intermediation and representation. To do this, it is first necessary to understand how public policies for higher education are constructed. Although France has had a long tradition of centralized management of higher education, universities took on an essential role in the 2000s when they became competitive. With the LRU law of 2007, their financial autonomy was recognized. This was accompanied by the resurgence of the system of calls for projects to finance part of their activities. It encourages them to group together in various forms in order to carry weight. The Fioraso law, for example, created in 2013 three models of grouping for “establishments,” to which universities must be attached: merger, association, or integration into a “community of institutions” (COMUE). From 2018, they can create “experimental institutions” (EPE) with universities, schools, or research organizations as “component institutions” (Ordonnance, 2018). The role of the Ministry of Higher Education changed in this context. It constructs the broad national policies that will then apply to universities

and sets the legal framework, but the universities have real power of interpretation and decision. The Ministry sets the framework but no longer decides the strategic choices to be made.²⁰

Understanding the nature of the system of student intermediation involves identifying the different formal and informal “arenas” in which students can act to influence decisions, both at national and local levels. The first is CNESER, where the student representatives sit. It is a consultative body attached to the Ministry of Higher Education. It has one plenary session per year, and regular restricted sessions with fewer members. It is consulted on draft laws, orders and decrees on higher education, and plays a role in accrediting university education or institutional projects (such as mergers or EPEs). Electoral results help to gain legitimacy in CNESER as organizations’ voices are more likely to be heard. However, they need to have significant resources to influence decisions. They build alliances with professional unions, present amendments, or produce expert documents upstream. Prior negotiations can take place on amendments, in exchange of a positive vote on a text.²¹ However, the usefulness of CNESER is questioned by student organizations, and a lot is at stake in more or less informal discussions. Generally, consultations are organized well in advance of CNESER by the Minister’s office and/or the higher education administration. This whole period, which is more or less formalized, allows the organizations to present their positions, to put forward their expertise and even to obtain progress. It is therefore lobbying work that requires significant resources.

Once the bill has passed through CNESER (when it is the government that proposes it), it must go through Parliament. Student organizations therefore have new levers with proposals of amendments to parliamentarians. Sometimes this work is done to put an issue on the agenda. I studied the case of the federation of maieutic students, which successfully obtained a bill for their profession. With the help of FAGE, they contacted all the MPs who had already taken a position on their profession to make them aware of their cause.²² This example illustrates the role of national federations within FAGE, which have their own political agenda and repertoires of action. Student organizations also mobilize at the time of the finance bill or social security bill to increase the credits allocated to higher education and social aid.²³ The representativeness of student organizations is therefore a considerable asset for obtaining interviews and being considered by parliamentarians. Representative student organizations are actors that can be associated with the work of the National Assembly and the Senate by being heard in the framework of commissions of enquiry or information missions. They must then put forward their expertise and report on the situation of students in the field. It also allows them to integrate certain councils on subjects broader than higher education, such as youth or health. For example, FAGE and UNEF have an elected representative on the Economic, Social and Environmental Council (CESE), the “third chamber” with the National Assembly and Senate which represents civil society and issues opinions. Elected members are nominated by student organizations and continue their work of representing students and lobbying.

At the local level, power relations are being reconfigured. Universities are governed by central councils, which include the board of governors (CA), the education and university life commission (CFVU), and the research commission (CR). Student representatives are legally required on each of these boards. Universities are further divided into UFRs (which replaced the UERs of the Faure law in 1989), which group together several disciplines and where the presence of students is foreseen. There are many student representatives in these councils, but many decisions are co-constructed in advance within the framework of working groups or commissions (Musselin,

2001) in which the student-elected representatives must invest themselves in order to influence decisions. The profile of these students is also different: they are less experienced or on the contrary have a lot of experience but combine their commitment as elected representatives with other responsibilities. It is not uncommon to have a student who combines a national post with one or two local elected posts. Nevertheless, their numbers allow student representatives to have an impact, for the election of the university president for example, where their votes are in high demand. Finally, some student representatives have more important positions in the university: these are the *vice-présidents étudiants*. Their status differs greatly from one university to another, but they have the power to implement policies at university level, particularly on student life issues. They are either directly integrated into the governance of the university, and therefore participate in strategic meetings, or at least have privileged access. Their election is an essential issue for local student organizations as it gives them important resources (access to information, possibility to put forward projects or positions).

Thus, formalized spaces for student representation exist, but they are not exclusive to students, which imply a power struggle with other actors with positions that may be opposed. Until recently, there were some remnants of shared governance. UNEF managed the student health insurance system for a very long time, but in 2018 students became part of the general system, leading to its abolition. Within FAGE, the Strasbourg students' federation owned and managed a university restaurant that they created in 1927, but CROUS (the public institution that manages student aid, housing, and catering at regional level) took over its management in 2015. The State's takeover of the management of these missions is symptomatic of a new form of governance. The presence of students is provided for by law, but there are no arrangements for their direct involvement in decision-making. It is up to student organizations to mobilize the resources necessary to gain expertise, build links with other higher education actors, and construct a strategy to make themselves heard. It doesn't mean that student organizations have no actions outside of direct dialogue with the institution. They develop projects at both national and local levels in terms of animating student life or organizing solidarity. FAGE, for example, has set up "AGORAés," student solidarity grocery stores, which are managed by its federations. These are structures intended for precarious students to enable them to buy food and hygiene products at a reduced price. This is not a shared governance system but a successful form of associative project that meets a need that the state fails to satisfy. Alternative forms of protest exist to force the state to act, with blockades, demonstrations, and campaigns. For each of these actions, the organizations work with partners, whether they are employees' unions for lobbying or protest or other student organizations (such as ESU at European level) and youth organizations.

In the light of all this, it seems difficult to qualify the student intermediation and representation system. UNEF has been a dominant student organization, electorally, politically, and in the media, where it has a high profile among the public opinion. However, it is competing with FAGE, which has managed to structure a competing association model. Its pragmatic and reformist approach opens important negotiation opportunities. But the appearance of Alternative clearly shows that the position of student organizations is precarious and can be redefined in the event of poor electoral results. The French example is the manifestation of a shift that has taken place, between an installed neo-corporatist model that has gradually taken on the characteristics of the pluralist model. It fluctuates between neo-corporatism and pluralism, with strong competition but dominant student organizations. There are many reasons for this, but the

legislation of student representative activity by state is an essential element. By constraining the mode of recognition of representativeness with the system of national elections, it places organizations in a situation where they must constantly reaffirm their legal representativeness, despite their sociological representativeness. By creating councils where student representation is required, it establishes places of legitimate representation, which makes it easier to deviate from shared governance. This legitimizes the continuum view proclaimed by Vespa et al. (2024) and implies taking into account the temporal and historical context for analyzing student representation.

Conclusion

The study of the history of student representation in France shows that it has a long history and a particular heritage. The work of UNEF and its investment for students have led to the setup of many of the services it was responsible for including management of solidarity and student mutual insurance system. But the unity of its action has not prevented it from always being crossed by different currents. First, between an associative vision and a trade union vision, which led to the first split in 1961, and then in 1971 between different visions of trade unionism. For Lichet, what happened in the student environment prefigured “the forms of relations between parties,” with the “principle of cohabitation” or “plural left,” which only appeared “from the 1980s” in France (Lichet, 2010). The origin of such divisions should be studied in more detail and in a comparative manner in the light of the political culture of state-society relations in France. What is certain is that from the events of May 1968 onward, higher education and student unionism underwent strong legislative and organizational changes, as described in this chapter (introduction of legal representativeness, electoral professionalization of student organizations, empowerment of universities, gradual end of co-management, multiplication of bodies).

Compared to the typology presented by Klemenčič in 2012 and reviewed by Vespa et al. (2024), the French example illustrates the evolutions that can take place over the decades in the continuum of median positions between two poles for each category (neo-corporatism vs. pluralism, interest group vs. social-movement organization, formalized system of intermediation vs. informal). However, the logics of membership and influence remain relevant to describe the French situation. Indeed, values and identity structure the internal functioning of student organizations, but the logic of influence forces them to adapt their actions in the framework of their lobbying. Another element that could be highlighted for the French case is the influence of competition between organizations, which creates opportunities but also limits their actions. At the time of ORE law, FAGE negotiated with CFDT on the project and ended up supporting it, whereas UNEF opposed it from the start and tried to create a social movement, without success. When dealing with students and other actors, organizations have an interest in differentiating themselves from other student organizations, which breaks the unity of the student movement.

Finally, these developments do not mean that organizations in France are weaker than before. The difficulties of representing students have always been present, and there has been no “golden age” of student unionism as Morder (2021b) shows. Student unionism is also being reconfigured

in terms of engagement practices. Claire Thoury demonstrates in her PhD: student commitments are changing with society. They want to be “more pragmatic and intense,” they do not “aspire to a sudden and radical upheaval of the social order” but “aspire to changes in a progressive way and by taking into account individualities²⁴” (Thoury, 2017). This does not mean that commitments are distant: “commitment is characterised by an intense involvement but whose intensity is concentrated on a specific time of life²⁵.” New repertoires of action are developing, both at the electoral level and in relation to militant training or demonstrations, or even for the development of projects aimed at students (during Covid, for example, numerous structured projects for food aid to students appeared). It remains to be seen whether student organizations as they exist today in France will retain their form. In any case, developments regarding student representation will need to be studied carefully in the years to come.

Notes

- 1 Translated from French by the author. Original quote: “Leur positionnement dans l’espace concurrentiel, pour se distinguer de mouvements ayant la même fonction, et selon la représentation qu’ils se font du caractère plus ou moins attractif de la dénomination,” in Morder, R. (2009), p. 50.
- 2 The organization has a particular system, with a president who is no longer a student. Jacques Rougeot, the founder, was president until 2009. The operational part is managed by a delegate general, who is a student.
- 3 Loi n°68–978 du 12 novembre 1968 d’orientation de l’enseignement supérieur, art.3, 11, 12, 25. (JO 13 novembre 1968).
- 4 Translated from French by the author. Original quote: “une addition de fractions politiques concurrentes [...] qui rebutait les militants les plus convaincus.”
- 5 All the results came from: Legois, Marchal and Morder, 2020.
- 6 The law of 1950 defines the representativeness of trade union organizations based on some criteria that condition their ability to participate in collective agreements.
- 7 Since 1984 and Savary law, there have been three councils in universities: the board of directors *conseil d’administration* (CA), the Council for Studies and University Life (CEVU), and the Scientific Council (CR).
- 8 All the results came from: Legois, Marchal and Morder (2020).
- 9 The *student confederation* “Cé” was a student organization active between 2004 and 2013. It is a split from UNEF, which is close to CFTD, a reformist professional union.
- 10 At the time I write this, in 2022. We will have to wait a few years to see if its role as a third organization stabilizes.
- 11 These criticisms were collected at the time of my observations. They are made both between organizations and internally.
- 12 Pech, Marie-Estelle. « Démission collective de 86 membres de l’UNEF ». Le Figaro Etudiant, 2019.
- 13 Citation: Interview 4, Member of the Parole Etudiante list, 2022.
- 14 Translated from French by the author. Original quote: “*risque de délégitimation pour des organisations qui, assurées de se perpétuer, n’ont plus d’intérêt ou de capacité à démontrer leur représentativité sociale.*”
- 15 Translated from French by the author. Original quote: “*Le passage de l’intégration à la formation d’identité(s) collective(s) étudiante(s) requiert une construction volontaire.*” p. 20.
- 16 The figure is an estimate based on recovered field data.
- 17 The expression is very present in TMN discourse, particularly during the Congress, and structures the organization’s action.

- 18 These distinctions do not appear on official documents and are gathered from observation of the organization.
- 19 *L'Alternative, Union syndicale et associative* <https://www.alternative-esr.org/lalternative/> (accessed 20/07/22). Translated from French by the author. Original quote: toutes les décisions engageant la représentation nationale sont validées par les structures locales.
- 20 Citation: Interview 1, Head of department in higher education and research administration, 2022.
- 21 Citation: Interview 2, National officer of an employees' union, 2022.
- 22 Citation: Interview 3, President of the National Association of Midwifery Students, 2022.
- 23 An update on the strategy to be adopted for the future social security bill was given during FAGE national event in which I participated.
- 24 Translated by the author. Original quote: Les étudiants, dont les engagements] se veulent pragmatiques mais intenses [...] Ils aspirent [...] au changement mais sont convaincus que ces changements ne peuvent se faire que progressivement, si chacun fait sa part, et sans nier les individualités," p. 456.
- 25 Translated by the author. Original quote: "l'engagement se caractérise par une implication intense mais dont l'intensité se concentre sur un temps bien précis de la vie," p. 456.

References

- Abboud, N. (1970). Les étudiants comme force de rupture dans la société française (1960–1970). *L'Homme et la société* 16(1): 111–24. <https://doi.org/10.3406/homso.1970.1281>
- Article L.811-3 du Code de l'Éducation. Version en vigueur depuis le 12 juillet 2014.
- Bourdieu, P. and Passeron, J.C. (1964). *Les Héritiers, Les étudiants et la culture*. Les éditions de Minuit.
- Burgelin, O. (1968). La naissance du « pouvoir étudiant ». *Communications* 12(1): 17–37. <https://doi.org/10.3406/comm.1968.1169>
- Déroche, J. and Roussel, I. (2012). *Les élections des représentants des étudiants au Conseil national de l'enseignement supérieur et de la recherche* (No. 2012–120; p. 58). Inspection générale de l'administration de l'éducation nationale et de la recherche. https://cache.media.enseignementsup-recherche.gouv.fr/file/2012/42/4/2012-120_CNESER_231424.pdf
- Fischer, D. (2000). *L'Histoire des étudiants en France, de 1945 à nos jours*. Paris: Flammarion.
- Giraud, B., Yon, K. and Bérout, S. (2018). *Sociologie politique du syndicalisme*. Malakoff: Armand Colin.
- Gobille, B. (2008). L'événement Mai 68. Pour une sociohistoire du temps court. *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, 63e année 63(2): 321–49. <https://www.cairn.info/revue-2008-2-page-321.htm>
- Haute, T. (2020). Étudier les comportements électoraux des étudiants aux élections universitaires en France: un « vote de filière » ?. In Legois, J.P., Marchal, M. and Morder, R. (eds.), *Démocratie et citoyennetés étudiantes depuis 1968* (pp. 83–93). Paris: Syllepse.
- Hochard, C. (2007). Les œuvres universitaires: du Comité supérieur des œuvres au Centre national des œuvres universitaires et scolaires. In Legois, J.P., Monchablon, A. and Morder, R. (eds.), *Cents ans de mouvements étudiants* (pp. 243–52). Paris: Syllepse.
- Jungblut, J. and Weber, R. (2015). We are the one, but we're not the same—Explaining the emergence of hybrid national student unions. In Klemenčič, M., Bergan, S. and Primožič, R. (eds.), *Student Engagement in Europe: Society, Higher Education and Student Governance*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing.
- Klemenčič, M. (2012). Student representation in Western Europe: Introduction to the special issue. *European Journal of Higher Education* 2(1): 2–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21568235.2012.695058>
- L'Alternative, Union syndicale et associative. (07-20-2022). <https://www.alternative-esr.org/lalternative/>
- Le Bart, C. and Merle, P. (1997). *La citoyenneté étudiante: Intégration, participation, mobilisation* (1re éd). Paris: Presses universitaires de France.
- Legois, J.P., Marchal, M. and Morder, R. (2020). *Démocratie et citoyennetés étudiantes depuis 1968* (Syllepse). Paris: Syllepse.

- Legois, J.P., Morder, R. and Monchablon, A. (2007). *Cent ans de mouvements étudiants* (No. 121; Syllepse). Paris: Syllepse.
- Lichet, T. (2010). *Mouvement associatif étudiant et transformations des modes d'engagements collectifs* [Sociologie et anthropologie]. Université Lyon 2.
- Loi n°68-978 du 12 novembre 1968 d'orientation de l'enseignement supérieur, art.3. 11(12): 25. (JO November 13, 1968).
- Mazier, J.L., Testi, J. and Vila, R. (2014). Les voies multiples de la représentation en situation de délégation ratée: Agir au nom des étudiants. In Mazeaud, A. (ed.), *Pratiques de la représentation politique* (pp. 213–27). Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes. <https://doi.org/10.4000/books.pur.72701>
- Michon, S. (2006). *Études et politique: Les effets de la carrière étudiante sur la socialisation politique* [Sociologie, Université Marc Bloch - Strasbourg II]. <https://tel.archives-ouvertes.fr/tel-00331271/document>
- Monchablon, A. (1983). *L'histoire de l'UNEF*. Paris: PUF.
- Monchablon, A. (2007). La fondation de l'Unef en 1907. *Matériaux pour l'histoire de notre temps*, N° 86(2): 5. <https://doi.org/10.3917/mate.086.0002>
- Morder, R. (January 9, 2021a). Il y a 50 ans, la scission de l'UNEF (1). Retrieved 07-20-22 from <http://www.germe-inform.fr/?p=4138>.
- Morder, R. (1998, March). Engagements étudiants. *Les Cahiers du Germe*, spécial 3.
- Morder, R. (2010–11). La représentativité étudiante à la lumière de la représentativité syndicale en France. *Les cahiers du GERME*, n°29.
- Morder, R. (2021b, March 27). Les miroirs feraient mieux de réfléchir un peu plus avant de renvoyer les images. *Médiapart*. Retrieved 07-21-2022 from <https://blogs.mediapart.fr/robi-morder/blog/270321/les-miroirs-feraient-mieux-de-reflechir-un-peu-plus-avant-de-renvoyer-les-images>
- Morder, R. and Côme, T. (2009). *Etat des savoirs Les engagements des étudiants Formes collectives et organisées d'une identité étudiante* (p. 130). Observatoire de la vie étudiante. http://www.ove-national.education.fr/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/dc_45_rapportove150609.pdf
- Musselin, C. (2001). *La longue marche des universités françaises* (1re éd). Paris: Presses universitaires de France.
- Musselin, C. (2017). *La grande course des universités*. Paris: Sciences Po Les Presses.
- Offerlé, M. (1998). *Sociologie des groupes d'intérêt* (2e édition). Paris: Montchrestien.
- Ordonnance n° 2018–1131, 12 décembre 2018, relative à l'expérimentation de nouvelles formes de rapprochement, de regroupement ou de fusion des établissements d'enseignement supérieur et de recherche. Version en vigueur au 20 juillet 2022. ESR1829078R.
- Pech, M.E. (2019). Démission collective de 86 membres de l'UNEF. *Le Figaro*. Retrieved 07-21-2022 from https://etudiant.lefigaro.fr/article/demission-collective-de-86-membres-de-l-unef_fee0911a-7a4b-11e9-b976-f4e757549f1a/
- Porte, E. (2007). Au tournant du siècle (1986–2006), actualités des mouvements étudiants. In Legois, J.P., Monchablon, A. and Morder, R. (eds.), *Cent ans de mouvements étudiants*. Paris: Syllepse.
- Schmitter, P.C. and Streeck, W. (1999). The organization of business interest. Studying associative action of business in advanced industrial societies. Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies, Paper 99/1.
- Stuppia, P. (2020). *2006: Une victoire étudiante ? Le mouvement anti-CPE et ses tracts*. Paris: Éditions Syllepse.
- Thoury, C. (2016). *Engagements étudiants et sentiment d'intégration* (No. 33; OVE infos, p. 8). Observatoire de la vie étudiante. http://www.ove-national.education.fr/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/OVE_Infos_33_Engagements_etudiants.pdf
- Thoury, C. (2017). *L'engagement étudiant dans un monde d'individualisation: Construction identitaire et parcours politiques* [These de doctorat, Sorbonne Paris Cité]. <https://tel.archives-ouvertes.fr/tel-01719377/document>
- Vespa, M., Sguazzini, M. and Pratisoli, R. (2024). Student Politics: A proposal for a new typology to classify student collective actors. In Klemenčič, M. (ed.), *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Student Politics and Representation in Higher Education*. Chapter 30. London: Bloomsbury Publishers.

Strategies and Actions of Student Organizations for the Conquest of Representativeness: The Case of the French Student Elections

Quentin Genelot

Introduction

Student movements and organizations are a broad research subject. We now know more about their history (Cini, Della Porta and Guzmán Concha, 2021, Legois, Morder and Monchablon, 2007) and the ways in which they participate in higher education systems (Klemenčič, 2011, 2012), but some dimensions remain to be explored. The purpose of this chapter is to highlight the student elections, which are important for any representative student organization. Indeed, student participation in higher education systems is most often allowed only for student representatives democratically elected by their peers. However, these elections are not very popular among students and several studies show that participation rates are globally very low in most countries (Miles et al., 2012, Morder, 2010–11, Parejo & Llorente, 2012, Persson, 2003).

Some authors have studied student participation at the time of university elections in order to study their politicization (Parreira, 2019, Saha and Print, 2010), but also to identify explanatory factors for their (non-)participation (Kouba, 2018). The size of the institution, the electoral competition in place (Kouba, 2018), the field of study (Kunian, 2004), or the level of integration of students (Le Bart and Merle, 1997) have been identified as factors influencing variations in the participation in the vote. In this chapter, I extend this research by approaching it from the perspective of student organizations themselves. Student organizations put in place various actions and strategies to convince students to participate and vote for them. These actions are the main determinants of the vote of students, which is indeed also “a reflection (albeit partial) of the presence and mobilization capacity of student organizations!” (Haute, 2017).

This contribution is based on fieldwork conducted for the 2019 student central council elections at the University of Lille. The aim is to use this fieldwork made on student organizations to identify the main points that characterize their action, to learn more about how organizations organize for the election campaign, but also how students deal with elections. In terms of methods, the ethnographic observation realized took place before the submission of lists, with interviews with the leaders of the main student organizations involved in the vote. This initial contact was followed by several phases of indirect and participatory observation at several points during the

election period (recruitment of candidates, submission of lists, training of activists), including the day of the election, when the various campuses were covered. This was an opportunity to interview activists and students directly, but also to observe their campaigning methods, before analyzing the results after the election. The election period was therefore followed from start to finish, although the information collected varied from one organization to another. The contribution thus aims to provide some thoughts for future analysis of the electoral action of student organizations.

Context

In France, universities are structured around teaching and research units (UFR), which group together several study fields. This model was introduced with the Faure Law in 1968, which abolished the faculties and established the management of the university by a president elected by its board of directors (CA). Since 1984, the board of the university (CA) has been assisted by two other councils which deal with training, student life (CEVU, then CFVU), and research (CR). It deals with the financial part, defines the political orientations, and validates the decisions of the two other bodies. Each of these councils provides for democratic representation of members, including students. For CFVU elections, the ballots are divided according to the fields of study. The councils are renewed every four years, and it is on this occasion that the university president is elected by CA. Students are the only exception, as their representatives are renewed every two years, because the pace of study makes it difficult for students to serve four-year terms.

For a long time, universities did not have much power, but the various reforms of the late twentieth century and the 2000s have given universities more and more autonomy, both in their economic management and in the definition of their policies. Several successive laws have led universities to group together to form larger institutions to face international competition. The case of the University of Lille is indicative of these developments. At the time of our study in 2019 it was a recent institution, resulting from the merger of three former universities (Lille 1, Lille 2, and Lille 3) spread across the city in 2017 with an entry into force in early 2018. The elections studied are the central council elections on November 26, 2019, in which all students vote for renewal of their representatives in CA, CFVU, and CR.² Since January 1, 2022, the University of Lille is an experimental public establishment (EPE), which now includes schools in its governance. The functioning of student elections is thus no longer entirely the same as at the time of my study.

On the side of student representation, there are in France many organizations that are considered representative with its electoral system. With the 1989 law, student organizations are legally recognized as representatives based on the numbers of elected students in two national councils: CNOUS (National Centre for University and School Works) and CNESER (National Council for Higher Education and Research). Local elected students vote for their national representatives, so the most representative organizations are those with the best local electoral results. This is why local elections are as much a national issue as a local one. In 2019, there were five representative organizations: FAGE,³ UNEF,⁴ Alternative,⁵ ANEE,⁶ and UNI.⁷ However, this does not mean that the distribution of their seats is strictly respected in all universities.

Local Configuration

The case of the University of Lille is particularly revealing of possible changes in local representation. Indeed, the majority list in 2017 was InterAsso (IA), a list carried by an independent local federation, FAEL, which groups student associations by field of study. They define their actions as apolitical and develop projects for students. It is not attached to FAGE and recognizes itself in the independent approach of ANEE. FAGE has no elected representatives because it has not presented any lists and is globally not present on the territory. UNEF is the second most representative organization in the university, but it faces competition from Solidaires, a far-left union that is not nationally representative until its alliance with Alternative in 2019. In contrast, UNI has very little presence in Lille and only succeeds in achieving electoral results in a few sectors. Thus, the currents represented by local organizations are similar to those defended by national organizations, but with an implantation that may be opposite.

Student activists express these local particularities well. The University of Nanterre, for example, is considered a “red, revolutionary university, where the new anticapitalist party (NPA) is omnipresent,” “UNEF and Solidaires are very strong, unlike Panthéon Assas” (UNEF Lille representative, personal communication, November, 2019). The University of Strasbourg is the “stronghold of FAGE” where “UNEF gets beaten up every year,” while it’s the opposite at Evry. In Lille, “there aren’t really any universities that the orgas hold, on the contrary there are far too many,” even if “Lille is historically anti-FAGE” (UNEF Lille representative, personal communication, November, 2019). These differences show the presence of “local configurations” (Douillet and Lefebvre, 2017), that is, system of interacting actors producing a local form of governance in which a particular student representation can take place, which introduces variations in the representativeness of student organizations at university level. A detailed study would be necessary to identify the explanatory factors of these divergences, which can be multiple (demographic, historic, social, political), but it is important to make a clear distinction between national and local representation. While they are legitimized by electoral results, these local configurations also go further and refer to a student political history specific to each university. However, this implies to not falling into the “localist illusion” (Douillet, Faure and Négrier, 2015), considering local particularities without studying the national contexts in which they are embedded (Douillet and Lefebvre, 2017).

This relationship between the national and local levels can also be a source of tension when defining electoral strategies. FAGE, for example, does not have a major ideological divergence with IA, which led to the filing of several “mixed lists” in the past, both supported by FAGE and IA. The negotiations on the elections are mainly about the place of the candidates, depending on their affiliation and field of study. But in Lille, there always had been difficulties, with unrespected agreements, which led to an “embargo on FAEL elections due to personal affairs and oppositions between field federations” (FAGE representative, personal communication, October 2019). With the strengthening of its position as the leading student organization, FAGE ends this policy and presents in 2019 a list against IA at CA. The organization counts on its electoral strength to obtain elected students on board of directors, and then legitimize its associative action and structure a project on the territory in the years to come. The national logic took priority over a local logic that would like to keep a similar organization in place. On the contrary, the objective of IA is to keep its majority and to resist the arrival of FAGE on the territory. On the side of UNEF, the local

section seeks to improve its image, “in 2017 the section wasn’t great” recognized the president, so the goal is to show that “UNEF has been renewed” (UNEF Lille representative, personal communication, November, 2019). However, it remains sufficiently autonomous not to depend on the support of the national board for the determination of its strategy. Solidaires finally defend an ultra-local vision, without intervention of its national organization. The organization doesn’t want to be in the majority, but wants to build a counter-discourse and carry the individual cases of the students.

These logics also come into play in the financing of student elections, which have a cost. While for CROUS elections there are mechanisms in place to reimburse the campaigns of student organizations, this is not generally the case in universities. The printing of leaflets and posters is the main expense of the campaign. National organizations can pay for this, such as FAGE, which can print leaflets or posters, but this is not the case everywhere. Student organizations often must find solutions to compensate for the cost of elections, which is done through their other activities. Support from national organizations can therefore also be financial. Thus, the University of Lille is an interesting example of a “local configuration,” as it illustrates the differentiated positions that student organizations can adopt in the face of the election, between the affirmation of strong local identities and the importance of national strategies.

A Difficult List Building

The moment of list building is the essential step before the pre-campaign. It involves finding motivated students to become elected, but it is also where the electoral strategies come into play. Indeed, student organizations are not equal when faced with the vote, particularly because of the “rules of the game.” CFVU functions for student elections with a division by fields of study. For the University of Lille, there are four different sectors: DJEG (Law, Economics, Management), SHS (Humanities and Social Sciences), ST (Science and Technology), and DS (Health and STAPS⁸). This means that students in law can only vote for student organizations that have presented a list in the DJEG sector. This leads to imbalances between the organizations because the study fields are not all equal. For Olivier Galland, some were “more integrative” than others (1994) or had teachings that allowed “the activation of political and militant dispositions” (Michon, 2006). Depending on the size of the student body, the study degree or the vitality of student associations, the level of integration of students varies (Merle and Le Bart, 1997), therefore their understanding of the university environment. All of these elements mean that the discourse of student organizations is more or less receptive depending on the field of study. For example, UNEF’s union discourse will be much better received in the humanities and social sciences than in health studies, where corporations are very present and where there is no politicization through the studies. This has an impact on the presence of organizations, so their ability to recruit activists and on their electoral results. Tristan Haute has for example shown the existence of “electoral bastions,” defined as a “*specific distribution of votes that is strongly sector-specific and does not allow for any exceptions*”⁹ (Haute, 2017).

While some study fields may be more inclusive than others, this does not mean that students develop a particular interest in electing their representatives. Lack of knowledge about the value

of student elections leads to disinterest, which prevents students from being recruited directly to the lists. This is not a lack of disengagement or a sign of students' depoliticization (Morder, 2020), but rather the observation of the "non-legitimacy of the university as a place to exercise one's commitment" (Côme and Morder, 2009). The capacity to submit lists is therefore determined by the organization's capacity to find students ready to advocate and run as a candidate in the election. Where students' unions recruit on their base of activists directly, FAGE and IA can go through their associations to find members. They then have a higher population base to recruit from, but the students in these associations are less aware of student elections and activism in general. For IA, there is a real difficulty in legitimizing the electoral action: many of the engaged students I met, who are nevertheless on the lists, have difficulty in identifying the issues of elections but also the role of elected student representative even if they are part of IA. But in general, finding students ready to be involved is difficult for every organization. One hypothesis is that involvement as a student representative is not the most valued in the collective imagination of activists (negotiating in councils for a student union activist, or defending political positions for an associative one). Elective commitment is also poorly promoted and recognized by the university itself, despite the implementation of recent measures that do not seem to have any particular impact, or even lead to a later abandonment of trade union involvement (Stuppia and Haute, 2021).

But student organizations cannot afford not to submit a list, as this is an essential step in recognizing their representativeness at both local and national level. So they develop particular electoral techniques to recruit. They anticipate the number of elected members they could make, and then focus on the profiles to be recruited according to that, between "eligible" and "non-eligible" candidates. In a way, they are looking for "electoral leaders," and the rest of the elected representatives are less invested profiles. This is particularly present at IA, which will develop elaborate recruitment processes to select these leaders, while the non-eligible hardly know the function of the councils. Some of them admitted that they were here to "fill the gaps" (observation, November, 2019). If organizations cannot find students in their network, they can go directly to students on campus and present the issues in a more or less direct way. Some activists even talk about more insidious techniques of petitioning students to collect signatures and then registering them without their consent (FAGE representative, personal communication, November, 2019). This illustrates the importance of the electoral ballots: there is no question of not being able to register a list. This leads to a dichotomy between experienced profiles, "leaders" who master the electoral game and other elected representatives who are not well qualified or even interested. But in case of good results or simply difficulties in recruiting, the second profiles can be elected, which makes the representation activity difficult. Another consequence is the significant centralization of responsibilities, which was found in all organizations. The list building sequence, which includes selecting people, managing the application process, placing people on the list, is in the hands of a few people. In reality, the process of failed delegation highlighted by Mazier, Vila et Testi (2014), which expresses the difficulty of student organizations to make students aware of their action and create a direct representation link with them, can be found within student organizations; particularly for associative structures which have a federalist functioning which, while it allows them to be very well established, creates more distance with the activists.

Rationalization of the Electoral Process

Once the lists are ready, all the documents (certificate of candidacy, proof of support, etc.) are submitted to the university's legal service. An electoral commission is then held to determine the validity of the candidacies. It is the same commission that will declare the results at the end of the elections. This is a key period because once the lists have been submitted there is often no possibility of changing them. The student organizations compete with each other to try to have certain lists annulled if they contain irregularities. After the validation of the lists, the electoral campaign can start, the date of which is defined by an order published by the university. It is authorized from October 24 in Lille, but for all the organizations the campaign starts much later. The pre-election campaign has a particular meaning here, since unlike other elections, organizations can campaign on the day of the election, which is the decisive moment for the voters' choice. So, the issues of pre-campaigning are different. The pre-electoral campaign has the particular role that its aim is not so much to convince the student to vote for the list as to make itself known and set up actions that can be reminded to the student on the day of the election. But this is not necessarily enough, because if students can know the organizations it is still difficult to reach them, so it also revolves around re-legitimizing the vote. However, it did not appear to be a central stage in the elections, and their duration seems to be getting shorter (Stuppia and Haute, 2021). At the University of Lille, it was disrupted by events that I will discuss below but was not very intense. The main element in this period is therefore not the strength of the pre-campaign, but the important professionalization in the preparation of the election.

One of the most telling examples is the period of training of activists by the organizations. They are organized the day before the election and have two objectives: to train the activist and to finalize the electoral strategy. I will discuss here mainly about the training of the IA and FAGE lists, which I was able to observe in Lille. The training brings together all the activists who are going to be out on the campus the next day. It is mainly done on the method for approaching students, giving keys to convincing them on the election day. Students are not very well informed about the elections and are not interested in them, but above all they are subject to the high concentration of the electoral game. All the activists of all the organizations approach the students in the same places on the same day, which results in a permanent solicitation. The solution found by IA is to rationalize their approach as much as possible. Activists should divide their intervention into three phases of ten seconds each (presentation of the elections, presentation of the list, presentation of the voting modalities). It should not exceed 2 minutes in total. There is a real effort to rationalize all the steps of the leafleting, taking into account the verbal language, but also the nonverbal and body language (observation, November, 2019). The idea is to be able to use these elements directly to capture attention and transmit the message.

Other techniques are used, such as the "voluntary consensual petition" or "solidarity devices" (Mazier, Testi and Vila, 2014). Solidarity mechanisms are particularly used by FAGE for these elections, as it has little local presence, but also used by UNEF or UNI. It consists of calling on activists from other cities, already experienced, and counting on their ability to get students to vote in order to win. For FAGE, they are members of the national federation or its executive committee that are mobilized throughout the year to help local federations (or FAGE directly) to win elections (but with other responsibilities in parallel). All the activists then receive a roadbook that

summarizes all the information on the location of the ballot boxes, the arguments to be mobilized to convince students or to counter the other organizations, and also the objectives to be reached in terms of votes (observation, November, 2019). For the “DDS” (solidarity devices, as FAGE calls them), the document is often their only source of information before the election. Finally, there is a strong hierarchy among the activists. They are distributed according to the strategy determined by the electoral leaders, depending on the location of the ballot boxes and the forces present. Each ballot box has a leader who manages the activists, gives instructions, and reports problems. Electoral leaders also adapt the strategy as the day progresses: each person has a role to play.¹⁰ Thus, faced with the difficulty of reaching students, organizations are professionalizing their approach, their arguments, to optimize results. But this contributes to increasing the distance with students, as well as distorting the role of elections. The most representative organization will not so much be the one that has gained the most support from students but rather the one that has chosen the most effective strategy to win. *“The representativeness of the union is then based on expertise, rather than on the fragile relationship with those who are represented”* (Mazier, Testi and Vila, 2014).

Differentiated Repertoires of Action?

If student elections reward the organization with the best electoral techniques, does this mean that all organizations tend to standardize their campaigning to maximize their results? While the processes of rationalizing recruitment and campaigning are common to student organizations, they differ in their repertoires of action. Repertoires of collective action for student organizations are a *“set of achievements, modalities of action in the service of strategies of regrouping, identification, external and internal visibility of student groups”* (Morder, 2003). They imply that each action is anchored in a specific context, and according to the identity and values of the organization that mobilizes it. Their use makes sense when trying to compare organizations. Indeed, if we take programs of student organizations, they are similar to each other in terms of the values they defend (except UNI, which is particular). They defend an improvement in the living conditions of students, want measures to fight against precariousness, and share common values (fight against discrimination, ecological transition). However, they differ completely in the way they achieve these objectives, and the example of the pre-campaign shows it.

In pre-campaign, student precariousness was at the center of the debates, with the attempted self-immolation by fire of a student living in a CROUS residence in Lyon. It was a political act to denounce student precariousness, which took place in November 2019, a few weeks before the election. The reactions of student organizations were unanimous in denouncing the problem of student precariousness, but these manifestations are quite different. Solidaires, for example, had chosen to organize local actions, with demonstrations, blockages, general assemblies or “free university catering” operations. They also mobilized against a conference given by the former French president François Hollande, which is considered as responsible for the student’s precarity situation. Their intervention led to outbursts and the cancellation of the conference. The event has taken on a national dimension. Faced with these actions, UNEF has a different posture: they were present during the mobilizations and in the general assemblies, but for the conference “doesn’t

think it was the best strategy,” even if they “respect the indignation of the activists [...] it must be possible to discuss with the institutions in question” (UNEF Lille representative, personal communication, November 2019). Instead, UNEF advocates its campaigns against transport prices, which include grassroots actions that result in work with public decision-makers. IA, on the other hand, did not get involved in these mobilizations, keeping a distance from politics and valued the presence of these associations on the ground. UNI denounced the mobilizations, while FAGE was not present on the ground before the vote but reacted nationally to the news.

The student organizations are thus differentiated by a different relationship to political action and radicalism, which is also reflected in the arguments put forward at the time of the elections. IA strongly emphasizes in its arguments its local presence and the day-to-day action of its associations, but without politicizing the issues at stake. “*We are InterAsso list, asyndicate and apolitical,*” “*we propose to put more recycling cutlery in university restaurants,*” “*we are against the raise of registration fees*” (observation, November, 2019). FAGE promotes the argument of its “novelty” on the territory, while defending the associative activity of its federations in other cities, notably with its social and solidarity grocery shops to reduce precariousness. Although its positions are more assertive, its political activity is not the most present in their discourse. On the contrary, UNEF and Solidaires value their local activism, both in campaigns for UNEF and in the defense of individual students and local actions for Solidaires. However, they differ in their relationship to the institution: Solidaires’ main objective is to spread a common political awareness among students and then create a balance of power through mobilization, whereas UNEF aims to do this within the institution itself (Observation, day of election, November 2019). However, their discourses are held in a precise context, that of the election, which implies a more detailed study of their internal functioning to understand the reality of their repertoires of action.

Analysis of the Results

What are the consequences of all these events on the results of the elections? (see Table 29.1 for results) FAGE in CA successfully won the seat of EMF (which did not run for the elections and was part of the UNEF support list), with nearly 700 votes (against 500 for EMF in 2017, 100 less than UNEF). The other organizations are maintaining their results. In CFVU, InterAsso declined in the benefit of Solidaires, which gained the two seats that InterAsso lost. In ST, this is due to the drop in participation (350 votes in 2019 vs. 550 votes in 2017), as well as a rise of Solidaires, which leads UNEF by 10 votes. In DJEG, Solidaires gained 100 votes compared to 2017, which puts it third in the student force, behind UNEF by ten votes. Finally, the LSHS CFVU was even closer between the organizations: one vote separates UNEF and Solidaires (426 against 427 for IA), which allows InterAsso to obtain a second seat. UNEF does not have a significant delay either, since they still get 400 votes, but in 2017 Solidaires only got 150, which is a significant drop.¹¹

The distribution of seats is based on the electoral quotient rule. It is obtained by dividing the total number of votes cast by the number of seats to be filled. Each list will obtain as many seats as its score contains this electoral quotient. If the application of this rule does not allow all the seats to be distributed, the “highest remainder” method is applied. The remaining votes

Table 29.1 Student elections results at University of Lille, 2019

	IA	UNEF	FAGE	Solidaires	UNI
CA	3 (=)	1 (=)	1 (+1)	1 (=)	0 (=)
CFVU DJEG	1 (-1)	1 (=)		1 (+1)	1 (=)
CFVU SHS	2 (=)	1 (=)		1 (=)	0 (=)
CFVU ST	2 (-1)	1 (=)		1 (+1)	0 (=)
CFVU DS	4 (=)	X		X	0 (=)
CFVU TOTAL	9 (-2)	3 (=)		3 (+2)	1 (+1)

are counted, and the list with the highest score wins a seat. The differences in votes will then be decisive for the organizations and will influence the distribution of seats.

These results show the strength of the local establishment, which allows the associative lists in particular to recover a lot of votes by using the achievements of the associations on campus. The overwhelming majority of AIs in health, with more than 1000 votes while the second list has only forty-three, confirms Tristan Haute’s idea of an “electoral bastion” (Haute, 2017). But also FAGE, which collects half of its votes in STAPS thanks to the local association. This presence serves as a marker for the students, who identify the list and, if they think that the association is active, can then go and vote to show their support. The argument of student organizations also tends to legitimize their actions as a primary electoral argument (“we are the association that sets this up”), regardless of if this is really linked to the election. The parallel also exists with the student trade unions, which have a better presence in SHS, but the competition is strong, which leads to less significant results than IA in health, for example. The results’ analysis also shows the importance of electoral mobilization on the day of the election, and the interest of electoral strategies. IUTs are interesting ballot boxes: the student organizations are not established, and have more or less equal results, with no real trend. FAGE, which is running for the first time, makes results equivalent to the other lists present on the campus, which shows that the presence of experienced activists on the day of the election can be enough. In general, local presence is not everything and experienced activists can make a difference.

The other interesting fact is the decline of InterAsso in favor of Solidaires. The hypothesis here is that this is a direct consequence of the politicization of the issues in these elections. Indeed, faced with the important events, focusing on the fight against student precariousness, IA didn’t really adapt their discourse, while Solidaires have been very visible. However, this is not enough to avoid IA having a majority, especially as the overall participation rate has not increased compared to 2017. It remains below 9 percent (8.56 percent for the CA and 7.42 percent for CFVU). Participation varies a lot according to the fields of study. In the “science and technology” CFVU’ sector, participation is only 3.85 percent, compared with 11.44 percent in the “health” sector (which also includes STAPS). The presence of highly mobilized associations, such as in health studies or STAPS, may justify the differences in participation between the different courses. Except for health studies, there is no other “electoral stronghold,” and on the

contrary a great disparity of votes between student organizations in CFVU DJEG and SHS. Thus, two main variables influence student participation and voting: the presence of established local organizations and the “electoral strength” of the organizations involved (number of mobilizable activists, experience of activists, electoral strategy). This explains the success of strategies such as FAGE, which can afford to send activists only on the day of the election and still obtain results. Student elections appear less as a means of justifying legitimacy to all students, but above all as a means of evaluating the level of establishment of each organization on the campuses.

Conclusion

The example of the student elections at the University of Lille is instructive in several aspects. It reveals a complex student representation, with a reconfiguration of national power relations at the local level between student organizations. Universities must therefore be considered as “local configurations” of student representation, which implies taking into account both local and national issues. Student elections are essential for local organizations as they are the legitimate way of recognizing their representativeness, even if students do not vote much. Other legitimate spaces for student representation can be created outside of the electoral game, notably within student general assemblies, but the example remains rare and, above all, none of them allow for the recognition of the institution. Especially since the resources conferred by strong electoral results are important: they allow students to be considered by the presidential teams, to make their voices heard in the councils, to integrate certain commissions or even to obtain a student position in the governance. In this context, they are essential for any organization wishing to change things without entering into direct confrontation with the institution.

This criterion also allows us to differentiate between student organizations, which, beyond their associative or trade union identity, adapt their actions to “better perform their representation function” (Klemenčič, 2012). Here we find the role of the two logics of “membership” and “influence,” which play a role in defining the repertoires of action of student organizations. Thus, where *Solidaires* engage in strong demonstration actions as at the time of François Hollande’s conference, *UNEF* is more moderate although it participates in mobilizations because it hopes to obtain victories through negotiations. The associative approach implies being integrated into the university, because the associative projects make up the student life of the institution and are most often financed by the university. There is then a different positioning in front of the vote, but this can only be verified by studying the details and the discourse of the militants. Moreover, the stakes are also national with the system of recognition of student representation. This leads to the setting up of national strategies of establishment on the territories, following the example of what FAGE has achieved in Lille. In such conditions, it is logical that student organizations professionalize their electoral techniques, both in terms of recruitment and campaigning, but such professionalization reinforces the distance from students. Therefore, the interest of student elections is not so much to create a direct link with the students represented, but rather to prove the existence of a legitimacy and a presence on the territory, which is essential to continue to militate afterwards.

Finally, the situation at the University of Lille has changed significantly since 2019. FAGE has continued to grow on the territory, allowing the creation of a new competing associative federation, Gallilée, resulting from a split of FAEL. The 2021 elections have shown an important fragmentation between student organizations. The presence of FAGE led to the fall of InterAsso, which lost its monopoly and moved into third place. UNEF obtained most of the seats with about 30 percent of the votes, seconded by Solidaires with a little less than 20 percent. This example tends to confirm the idea that student elections are mostly about the electoral strategies of organizations, and less about student support for their proposals and voter turnout. Voting procedures have also changed significantly with the Covid-19 health crisis. The majority of universities have switched to proxy vote for practical and political reasons (easier to organize, less staff required). This has an impact on turnout, as student organizations can no longer take students directly to the ballot box at the time of the election, which was one of the main ways they could get them to vote. This would benefit from more detailed analysis, but it seems that even with the physical return of students in universities, proxy voting is becoming more common.

Notes

- 1 Translated from French by the author. Original quote: “un reflet (certes partiel) de l’implantation et de la capacité de mobilisation des organisations étudiantes.”
- 2 The elected representatives in the research commission are doctoral students, we will not discuss it in the chapter.
- 3 FAGE, “Fédération des Associations Générales Étudiantes,” is a student association created in 1989 by local federations which group student associations. It has a huge majority in 2019, with six out of eleven seats at CNESER and five out of eight seats at CNOUS.
- 4 UNEF, “Union Nationale des Étudiants de France” is the first student organization in France, created in 1907. UNEF knows a lot of subdivisions, but it is a “student syndicate,” which wants to group “all left-wing” students. It was the first representative organization since the start of 2000s, but lost its place in 2017 in favor of FAGE. UNEF has two seats at CNESER in 2019 (four in 2017), and three at CNOUS.
- 5 Alternative is a new list presented in 2019, that is composed of several far-left student unions. It won two seats in the 2019 elections at CNESER.
- 6 ANEE (Association Nationale des Élus Étudiants) was an independent associative list created by national student federations previously members of PDE (Promotion et Défense des Étudiants), which was standby in 2018. It has one seat at CNESER, and zero at CNOUS in 2019.
- 7 Created in 1968 during the adoption of Faure law, UNI (Union Nationale Inter-Universitaire) is a right-wing organization who fight against “student syndicate.” It has one seat at CNESER, and 0 at CNOUS in 2019.
- 8 Bachelor’s degree in the Science and Technique of Physical and Sports Activities.
- 9 Translated from French by the author. Original quote: “une répartition spécifique des voix fortement liée à la filière et qui ne souffre d’aucune exception.”
- 10 All these elements were collected during several periods of participant observation and by studying the campaign documents available.
- 11 All results are available in the Annex.

References

- Cini, L., Della Porta, D. and Guzmán Concha, C. (2021). *Student Movements in Late Neoliberalism: Dynamics of Contention and Their Consequences*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Douillet, A.C., Faure, A. and Négrier, E. (2015). Chapitre 13/Trois regards sur les politiques publiques vues du local. In *Une French touch dans l'analyse des politiques publiques?* (pp. 319–48). Paris: Presses de Sciences Po. <https://doi.org/10.3917/scpo.bouss.2015.01.0319>
- Douillet, A.C. and Lefebvre, R. (2017). *Sociologie politique du pouvoir local*. Paris. Armand Colin. <https://doi.org/10.3917/arco.douil.2017.01>
- Haute, T. (March 19, 2017). *Élections étudiantes: Le cas lillois à la loupe* » *germe-inform*. <http://www.germe-inform.fr/?p=2884>
- Haute, T. (2020a). Étudier les comportements électoraux des étudiants aux élections universitaires en France: un « vote de filière » ?. In Legois, J.P., Marchal, M. and Morder, R. (eds.), *Démocratie et citoyennetés étudiantes depuis 1968* (pp. 83–93). Paris: Syllepse.
- Haute, T. (December 18, 2020b). *Voter ou non aux élections étudiantes: Intérêts et limites d'une enquête par questionnaire localisée* » *germe-inform*. <http://www.germe-inform.fr/?p=4102>
- Klemenčič, M. (2011). The public role of higher education and student participation in higher education governance. In *Higher Education and Society in Changing Times: Looking Back and Looking Forward* (Centre for Higher Education Research and Information). The Open University.
- Klemenčič, M. (2012). Student representation in Western Europe: Introduction to the special issue. *European Journal of Higher Education* 2(1): 2–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21568235.2012.695058>
- Kouba, K. (2018). Determinants of student participation in higher education governance: The case of student turnout in academic senate elections in Czechia. *Higher Education* 76(1): 67–84. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-017-0194-1>
- Kunian, F. (2004). *Etude sur la participation des étudiants aux élections universitaires*. Association Civisme et Démocratie (CIDEM). <https://www.vie-publique.fr/sites/default/files/rapport/pdf/044000126.pdf>
- Le Bart, C. and Merle, P. (1997). *La citoyenneté étudiante: Intégration, participation, mobilisation* (1re éd). Paris: Presses universitaires de France.
- Legois, J.P., Morder, R. and Monchablon, A. (2007). *Cent ans de mouvements étudiants* (No. 121; Syllepse). Paris: Syllepse.
- Mazier, J.L., Testi, J. and Vila, R. (2014). Les voies multiples de la représentation en situation de délégation ratée: Agir au nom des étudiants. In Mazeaud, A. (ed.), *Pratiques de la représentation politique* (pp. 213–27). Paris: Presses universitaires de Rennes. <https://doi.org/10.4000/books.pur.72701>
- Michon, S. (2006). *Études et politique: Les effets de la carrière étudiante sur la socialisation politique* [Sociologie, Université Marc Bloch - Strasbourg II]. <https://tel.archives-ouvertes.fr/tel-00331271/document>
- Miller, M., Nadler, D. and Miles, J. (2012). Are you voting today? Student participation in self-government elections. *Eastern Educational Journal* 41: 3–15.
- Morder, R. (2010–11). La représentativité étudiante à la lumière de la représentativité syndicale en France. *Les cahiers du GERME*, n°29: 37–43.
- Morder, R. (2020). Etudiants en élections: les stratégies des acteurs. In Legois, J.P., Marchal, M. and Morder, R. (eds.), *Démocratie et citoyennetés étudiantes depuis 1968* (pp. 53–79). Paris: Syllepse.
- Morder, R. and Côme, T. (2009). *Etat des savoirs Les engagements des étudiants Formes collectives et organisées d'une identité étudiante* (p. 130). Observatoire de la vie étudiante. http://www.ove-national.education.fr/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/dc_45_rapportove150609.pdf
- Parreira, C., Tavana, D.L. and Harb, C. (January 2, 2019). University Elections and Political Socialization in the Developing World. <https://doi.org/10.31235/osf.io/jtvp2>

- Parejo, J.L. and Lorente, J. (2012). From student associations to CEUNE: The development of student representation in Spain. *European Journal of Higher Education* 2(1): 78–94. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21568235.2012.691245>
- Persson, A. (March 14, 2003). Student participation in the governance of higher education in Europe. In *Steering Committee on Higher Education and Research (CD-ESR)*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.
- Saha, L.J. and Print, M. (2010). Student school elections and political engagement: A cradle of democracy?. *International Journal of Educational Research* 49(1): 22–32. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2010.05.004>
- Stuppia, P. and Haute, T. (2021). La « démocratie de l’abstention » à l’université: Constante historique ou nouvelle défiance envers la représentation étudiante ?. *Agora Débats/Jeunesses*, N° 88 (2): 7–25. <https://doi.org/10.3917/agora.088.0007>

Annex

Table 29.2 Conseil d’administration

	Total	BU PdeB (SHS)	FSJPS	FSJPS	Médecine	Cambrai
FSE & Solidaires	855	387	16	179	29	0
UNI	329	42	7	77	43	0
Bouge ton Campus (FAGE)	681	77	295	29	33	45
InterAsso	2583	177	9	241	1087	0
UNEF	788	265	1	174	35	0
Total exprimés					5236	
Nuls					150	
Votants					5386	
Taux de participation					8,56%	

	Siège quotient électoral	Sièges au plus fort reste	TOTAL
FSE & Solidaires	0	1	1
UNI	0	0	0
Bouge ton Campus (FAGE)	0	1	1
InterAsso	2	1	3
UNEF	0	1	1

Table 29.3 CFVU

	ST	DS	LSHS	DJEG	Votants	Total siège
FSE & Solidaires	76		426	272	774	3
UNI	47	172	69	161	449	1
UNEF	66		400	396	862	3
InterAsso	180	1684	427	291	2582	9
Exprimés	369	1856	1322	1120	4667	
Participation	3,85%	11,44%	6,83%	7,20%	7,42%	

Inspired by Student Politics in Italy: A Proposal for a New Typology to Classify Student Collective Actors

Matteo Vespa, Mattia Sguazzini, and Ruben Pratisoli

Introduction

Student politics has received relatively little attention from scholarly research, and among the one existing, very few have dealt with the theoretical part of conceptualization and classification. The main work on this matter was conducted by (Klemenčič, 2012), which applied to student unions the classification developed for the business interest associations by Schmitter and Streeck (1999). Klemenčič's typology, based on a dichotomy between student association as either social movement organization or interest groups, was partially revised by Jungblut and Weber (2015), which studied the German student union *freier zusammenschluss von studentInnenschaften* (fzs) as an example of student association moving from the "pure" social movement organization-type to a hybrid form, due to the conditioning of the external environment (in that case, the Bologna Process). Drawing upon the political science research on party systems, our proposal theorizes the existence of "student politics systems" whose agents are the student collective actors positioning themselves within different axes that pertain to their domains, structure, resources, mode of action, and relationships. The student collective actors and the interaction between their positionings on the different axes form the "student politics system," which in turn offers each of them a set of opportunities and constraints for their actions.

The chapter first presents Klemenčič's typology. After this introduction, we outline our proposal of typology. In the third part, our proposal of classification is then outlined. In the fourth part, the two typologies are compared. In the conclusion, proposals for further research and empirical testing are made.

Between Social Movement Organizations and Interest Groups: Revisiting the Typology of National-Level Student Associations by Klemenčič (2012)

The typology of national-level student associations by Klemenčič (2012) is based on: associations' organizational structures, political agenda ("the salient issues defended and types

of goals pursued”), mode of action (“ways and means to pursue their goals”), and exchange resources, and outputs of their action (Klemenčič, 2012). According to these parameters, Klemenčič (2012, p. 8) differentiates between two key types of national student associations: “as *interest groups* and as *student movement/civil society organizations*” based on the “the logic of membership” and the “logic of influence,” as two clusters of independent variables that are assumed to affect organizational characteristics of national student associations’ (see Table 30.1 below). This typology draws upon the work by Schmitter and Streeck (1999) on the business interest associations: the variables’ values Klemenčič associates to the student movement/civil society organizations are linked to what Schmitter and Streeck define as the “logic of membership,” where the agenda and the structure of the organization are based on the members’ preferences, while the variables’ values associated to the interest groups are linked to the “logic of influence,” where an organization adapts its structures and agenda to the policy-making environment in order to better influence it. Klemenčič’s variables are based on Schmitter and Streeck’s categorization of “domain” (of interest of the association), “structures” (of the organizational framework of the association), “resources” (available to the association and from what sources), and “outputs” (of the aforementioned dimensions into practice) (Schmitter and Streeck, 1999, p. 54).

Table 30.1 Klemenčič’s typology of national student associations (Klemenčič, 2012, p. 8)

National student associations		
Qualifying factors	Student associations as social movement organizations	Student associations as interest groups
Organizational structure	Network-like; loosely integrated; limited functional differentiation	Hierarchically ordered with strong centralized coordination; highly functionally differentiated
Internal resources	Fluctuating administrative funding; volunteers	Secure administrative funding; professionalized administration
Political agenda	Transversal: next to sectorial also broader political issues (solidarity, human rights, social justice, egalitarian values, democratization, anti-globalization)	Sectorial: focusing on organization, substance, and processes of education and student welfare issues
Mode of action	Non-institutionalized forms of claim-making: protests, boycotts, campaigns	Lobbying and political advocacy services
Outputs	Mobilization capacity, expertise and information	Representativeness (legitimization capacity), expertise and information, implementation capacity
Examples of national student associations	UDU Italy; UNEF France; Fage France; CREUP Spain	NSO Norway; NUS-UK; fzs Germany

Furthermore, Klemenčič (2012, pp. 11–12) also provides a typology for the analysis of the national systems of student representation, based on the detection of the number of representative student associations on national level and whom the State formally or informally recognizes as having the authority to represent student interests (see Table 30.2 below). Finally, Klemenčič (2012, p. 12) offers a typology of the national systems of student interest intermediation, which captures how representative student associations influence policymakers: through formal representational bodies or informally which are defined considering two conditions: agency (the “system of student representation”) and structure (“characteristics of public policy processes”) (see Table 30.3 below). Klemenčič’s three typologies provide for a categorization of the “complex, heterogeneous and often fluid social reality of national student representation” (Klemenčič, 2012, p. 9) recognizing that “the emergence and structure of systems of interest representation vary according to the underlying membership interest and the conditions of the processes of political influence” (Klemenčič, 2012, p. 7).

The main weakness in the national student associations typology is in the conception of “ideal types” (social movement organizations and interest groups), which the national student associations would tend toward, rather than a spectrum. Although such limitation is typical of ideal-typical representations, especially within the spectrum of positions for each individual characteristic, having two types of national student associations as the “extreme opposites” within the spectrum implies also that the different characteristics associated with the two types tend as much as possible to the extremes of each variable. However, it might not always be valid that those correlations exist, and it can have more explanatory power to understand the location, within each individual qualifying factor, of the individual actors analyzed, instead of

Table 30.2 Klemenčič’s typology of national systems of student representation (Klemenčič, 2012, p. 11)

National systems of student representation		
	Neo corporatist	Pluralist
Number of student intermediary organizations	Limited number of student intermediate associations (possibly functionally complementary or territorially differentiated)	Unspecified number of student intermediate associations; identical functions are performed by several in competition; domains of action are decided without regard to other associations; no associations can exercise hierarchical control over others
State—formally or informally—grants or monopoly of student interest intermediation	Yes. Often accompanied with secure administrative funding arrangements. Membership in student organizations (at institutional level) is typically automatic or compulsory	No. Administrative and funding arrangements can exist, but on a competitive basis. Membership in student organizations is typically voluntary.

Table 30.3 Klemenčič’s typology of national systems of student intermediation (Klemenčič, 2012, p. 12)

National systems of student intermediation		
	Formalized	Informal
Relational structures between national student associations and public authorities	<p>HE legislation stipulates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutionalized mechanisms of representation of students within a national HE Council or other decision making, permanent advisory or evaluating bodies relevant to HE and student affairs; • Rules governing consultation procedures or meetings with the Ministry responsible for HE 	<p>Informal, ad hoc or needs-based participation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal consultations and seminars; • Representation on non-permanent working groups or projects of the Ministry; • Informal contacts with Ministry officials; • Written or oral contact with members of Parliament and representation in National Councils; • Written or oral contact with agencies or committees in charge of student affairs, quality assurance, etc.
Role of student representatives in policy processes	Decisive co-actors	External pressure group, experts

the closeness to either of the ideal-typical models. The example of the British student union NUS UK, quoted in the article, is emblematic: it is categorized as an “interest group student association,” since it is “well-established, highly professionalized and financially strong” (Klemenčič, 2012, p. 15), but this has not led automatically to a sectorial political agenda and a mode of political action based only on lobbying and not also on non-institutionalized forms of claim-making—the organization had rather strong internal difficulties in finding a balance on “defining the scope of the political agenda of the organization and the mode of political action” (Klemenčič, 2012, p. 15).

As per the definition of the types of national student associations, critical points arise from what has already been expressed and further ones should be highlighted. One critical point concerns the absence of independent variables that can capture relationships with key actors in the “political process” (Stoppino, 2001). Specifically, we assume that student collective actors aim to exert pressure on political power. These actors are immersed within a social field in which also other actors exert pressure on political power; they are also part of a political arena endowed with political authority, within which they interface, both through institutional confrontation with the actors who hold political authority at a given moment, and through confrontation with actors

which compete in the “struggle for political power” (mainly, the parties), via external channels to those of governmental roles (without, however, excluding that the interlocutor may also hold a governmental role). Consequently, we trace in Klemenčič’s theoretical framework the absence of two qualifying factors: affiliation (or not) to political parties as a qualifying factor, integration (or not) with other stakeholders exercising “pressure on political power.” Political party affiliation, in fact, would place the actor in an intermediate position between that of the social movement organization and that of the interest group, tending to be a “student branch” of the party, with priority lobbying channels toward the reference party, variable modes of action according to the governmental role played by the political party of reference in a given historical period and an interdependence with the reference party for what regards administrative-financial stability. Relationships with non-youth stakeholders constitute evidence of integration within a broader social field than the one of reference of youth policy, within which to exploit phenomena of coordination of political pressure on common instances between actors of broader social fields (for example, on instances that pertain other components of higher education, e.g., teachers; on a broader perspective than higher education; on particular environmental or social instances or, even, on areas of general economic policy).

Furthermore, the dichotomy “informality” vs. “formality” of student intermediation is not directly linked to a particular system of student representation, nor is indicative of any real, effective influence on policies. The limitation of the systemic framework is linked to the presence of possible hybrid models. Unlike the intermediate positions, which are easily placed through simplifications of different kinds, the hybrid characterization can constitute a field from which further types and characteristics can be derived. The distinction between national systems of student representation can actually be ideally represented along a continuum between neo-corporatist and pluralist systems.¹ The distinction between national systems of student intermediation can present hybrid patterns between formalization and informality. For example, the presence of consultative bodies endowed with advisory power, but binding only on limited aspects, makes relations institutionalized, but student associations do not always turn out to be decisive actors, which, on the contrary, can be the case by entering into political processes through external pressure mechanisms. One solution may be to consider such a possible further hybrid categorization as a possible variable for further types and positionings within the categorization of national student associations. This is also what suggests the analysis by Jungblut and Weber (2015) on the German student union *freier zusammenschluss von studentInnenschaften*: starting from Klemenčič’s typologies, the authors argue that fzs evolved from a social movement organization to a hybrid between that and the interest groups, as a result of the external environmental pressures, which the authors identify in the Bologna Process-inspired “corporate-pluralist policy making,” which increased the demand of a professionalized, representative national student union.

Finally, Klemenčič (2012) presents the three dimensions of national student associations, national systems of student representation, and national systems of student intermediation as rather independent spheres, while in Klemenčič’s article itself there occur some correlations between the three spheres: it seems that the student associations with their characteristics define the type of student representation, which in turns sets the opportunities and the limits for the associations to act within the system, defining the type of student intermediation, which in turn seems to influence the qualifying factors of the student associations, and so on.

An Attempt to Identify Discontinuities in the Categories: the Descriptive Variables of the “Axes”

Based on the previous discussion, we propose to analyze the student collective actors through a political science point of view, adapting the literature on party systems to the reality of student actors. More specifically we draw inspiration from a variety of sources: first, from Sartori’s theory of the spatial competition of political parties (Sartori, 2005). Furthermore, from Manin’s recall of the transformation of the representative government from “parliamentarism,” based on the election of single notables, to “party democracy,” where the main actors were the mass parties, whose archetype were the socialist and social democratic parties (Manin, 2012, pp. 248–51, 268): from that we recall that organizational choices of one actor can influence the organizational choices of the other actors and in turn influence the party system. Finally, we draw upon the conception, used by Kriesi and Hutter (2019), that party systems are competitive spaces where change is provoked both by exogenous factors and by the agency of the political parties to make the most of these exogenous changes.

The proposed typology is characterized by several axes—which can be mapped inside the characterization by Schmitter and Streeck (1999) of domains, structure, resources, outputs—on which the different student collective actors at the national-level position themselves, therefore defining the traits of the different “student politics systems” in each period. These axes pertain to: relationship with political parties (affiliation vs. independence), relationship with non-youth stakeholders (integration vs. isolation), organizational structure (movement vs. organization), conception of representation at the national level (unitary vs. plural), mode of action (institutional representation vs. activism), and nature of the set of claims (corporatist vs. political).

The “axes” categorization assumes that there is not a dichotomy between each pair, rather a continuum of which the items of each pair are the opposite poles of each axis. It also assumes that, even if not always empirically achievable, it is theoretically possible to position all the student collective actors within the axes, therefore making comparisons between student collective actors of different periods available. In reality, the positioning of the different collective actors would not be fixed, but could change over time. It could also be the result of the interaction of the different student collective actors operating in the same period. A rather stable set of student actors with rather stable positions in the axes constitute a “student politics system”: the system also provides the sets of opportunities and constraints for the daily action of the actors. A student politics system can change when there is a change in the student collective actors and/or a general repositioning of the student collective actors within the axes. The reasons for such a change could be a change in the strength of one or more of the collective actors within the current system, which changes the set of opportunities and constraints, and/or external pressures coming from the “environment,” for example, the wider society (including the political structure), higher education reforms, or new requests and characteristics of the student body. This typology could be applied both to systems where only one student organization exists and to those where several of them are present: in the former case, the student politics system is resumed within the single organization, its positions, and methods of working²; in the latter, it applies to the positionings of the different actors and their relative strength (organizational, electoral, or legitimacy) toward each other.

The first axis pertains to the relationship with political parties: the two poles are “affiliation,” where the student collective actor is the student wing of a party, and “independence,” where

the student collective actor is completely independent (politically, as well as financially) from parties. The second axis pertains to the relationship with non-youth stakeholders, that is, civil society organizations that are not representing a constituency traditionally associated with the “youth”: the two poles are “integration,” where the student collective actor has a coordinated, structured, long-term collaboration with one or more stakeholders, and “isolation,” where the student collective actor never coordinates or collaborates with non-youth stakeholders. The third axis pertains to the organizational structure: the two poles are “movement,” where the student collective actor tends to have little to no organizational structure and not structured methods of designation of porte-paroles and/or leaders, and “organization,” where the student collective actor has clear hierarchies, statutes, internal positions, methods of working, and administrative staff. The fourth axis is the conception of the representation at the national level: the two poles are “unitary,” where the student collective actor believes there should be only one actor representing and taking action for all students, and “plural,” where the student collective actor believes that different associations should exist and no form of unitary structure or coordination at the national level should exist. The fifth axis pertains to the mode of action the student collective actors decide to take: the two poles are “institutional representation,” where all the activity of the student collective actor is carried out within the framework, the procedures, and the possibilities given by formalized, institutional forms of student involvement in the governance and policy-making; and “activism,” where the action is focused solely on non-institutionalized activities such as demonstrations or boycotts. The sixth axis pertains the nature of the set of claims: the two poles are “corporatist,” where the advocacy of the student collective actor pertains to immediate material claims without taking positions on wider political and social issues, and “political,” where the student collective actor takes a stance on societal issues without a specific focus on the material interests of the students. The mid-way position between these latter two poles will be defined here as “student syndicalism,” a literal translation of the French term *syndicat étudiant*, referring to a student collective actor that sees the student as a “young intellectual worker” (*Charte de Grenoble*, 1946, translation by the authors), and the student body as an autonomous social group, with specific material interests and with the right to express its political positions within the broader society and to forge alliances with other social groups, especially the workers movement and the trade unions.³ The founding document of this conception is the *Grenoble Charter*, approved by the National Congress of the French student union UNEF (*Union Nationale des Étudiants de France*) on April 25, 1946.

As expressed above, the categorization through axes implies that the two poles are the extremes of a continuum of median positions. However, the nature of these median positions differs between the axes. For the first four (relationship with political parties; relationship with non-youth stakeholders; organizational structure; conception of the representation at the national level), the median positions reflect the decrease of the presence of the characteristics of one pole and the concomitant increase of those of the other pole (Figure 30.1). For the latter two (mode of action; nature of the set of claims) it is possible to identify a “hybrid” type with the characteristics of both poles, while the intermediate positions between the hybrid and each pole see the decrease in presence of the characteristics of the other pole (Figure 30.2). As an example, “student syndicalism” is a hybrid type featuring the co-presence of both sectoral claims (typical of the corporatist pole) and of wider political claims (typical of the political pole). A visualization of it (where the distance of the lines indicating the characteristics of each pole from the axis mean

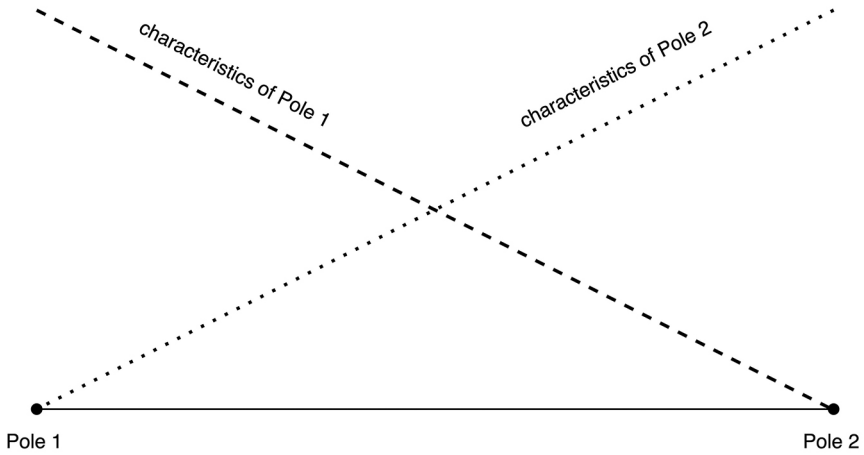


Figure 30.1 Graphical representation of the standard model (or alternative features).

Source: Prepared by the authors.

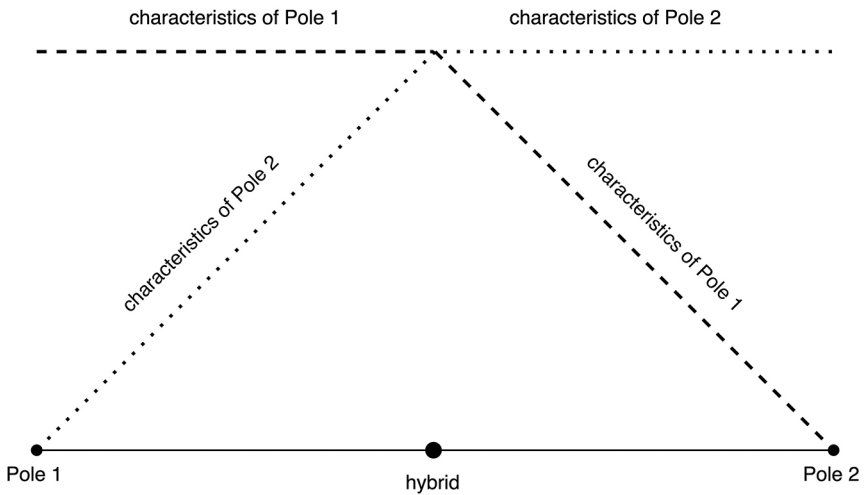


Figure 30.2 Graphical representation of the hybrid model.

Source: Prepared by the authors.

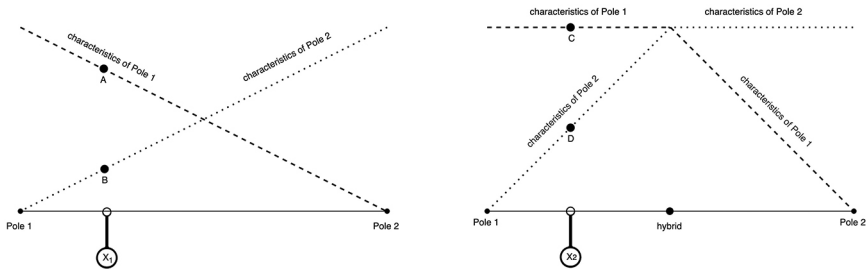


Figure 30.3 Examples of the two models.⁴

Source: Prepared by the authors.

the “intensity of presence” of those characteristics) can be found in the Figures 30.1, 30.2, and 30.3.

As Figure 30.3 shows, the positioning on the axis is a reduction to one-dimensionality of a bi-dimensional space where the y-axis represents the intensity of presence of the characteristics, the characteristics typical of each pole are represented by lines positioned within the space and the x-axis represents the points of projection, into that axis, of the mix of the intensity of presence of both characteristics for each parallel line of the y-axis. The “intensity of presence” of the y-axis has to be understood both in terms of quantity and in terms of “quality”: a position within the axis “mode of action” (i.e., the projection onto the x-axis of the values related to the y-axis given by the intersection of a parallel line to the y-axis with each line indicating the characteristics of each pole) where, for example, the characteristics of the “institutional representation” pole are bigger than those of the “activism” pole, the modes of action inspired by activism will be both less present and tailored to actions that would not jeopardize the possibility, by that student organization, of using the institutional modes of action. The limit of the theory is given by the democratic context, that is, it does not accommodate political violence, both from revolutionary groups and from corporatist organizations in autocratic regimes: probably that would need a new explanatory axis, which goes beyond the scope of this work—that is, we are analyzing organizations that would position themselves very close to the “pacifist” pole of a possible axis “degree of political violence.”

A Comparison between the Two Typologies

The proposed classification through axes builds on the precedent typologies by Klemenčič (2012) but corrects for its limitation of the static ideal types that the author recognizes but does not conceptualize. Using the axes makes it explicit what Klemenčič implicitly implied about her typology for the national student associations, which is the idea of a continuum between two poles for each category. The qualifying factors and the axes mostly overlap: instead of political agenda, the more neutral term “nature of the set of claims” was used to include also those

student associations that define themselves as “apolitical,” and in order to be able to use the term “political” for one of the poles of the axes.

For the internal organizational resources, we have not proposed a specific axis, rather those dimensions expressed in the qualifying factors could be included within the axis “organizational structure,” which is already a synthetic axis of different dimensions (some of which expressed within Klemenčič’s table). Similar case is the qualifying factor output, which we subsumed within the axis “mode of action.” For those instances, the two variables for each pair of Klemenčič’s qualifying factors overlap with the pole of our axis categorization: the only exception is the qualifying factor “political agenda,” where the variable “transversal” represents the middle point of our axis “nature of the set of claims,” corresponding to the position of the “student syndicalism.”

We added also three axes: the one on the relationship with political parties, in order to include in the analysis also the student wings of the parties, the one on the relationship with non-youth stakeholders, to include further dimensions of collaborations outside the direct “student” or “youth” politics, and the “conception of national representation” as a link between the individual student actors and the system of student representation, which derives from the interaction of the different student actors and their positioning within that axis. We also prefer to talk about “student (collective) actors” rather than student associations, in order also to include in the analysis the student movements that are not constituted in associations. Furthermore, we do not propose at this stage any correlations between positionings within the different axes into typologies, while Klemenčič’s proposal is based on the creation of the two ideal-types.

On the systemic level, apart from drawing a link between the individual actors and the systemic level, we do not propose any different categorization from Klemenčič’s neo corporatist and pluralist as two poles—we do underline however how the “student political systems” pertain to the more general positionings of the different actors along all the axes, and the neo corporatist vs. pluralist representation system is but one of these dimensions. Another of these dimensions is what Klemenčič calls “system of student intermediation,” that is, the recurring patterns of policy influencing, which derives from the positioning of the different actors within the axis “mode of action,” and which therefore depends on the incentives and obstacles of the student political system—we underline, however, that also activist modes of action should be considered part of this axis, and not only formalized or informal types of institutional representation.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we revised Klemenčič’s typology of national student associations: drawing from the political science theory as well as from other studies of student politics, we proposed the definition of “student politics” system, built upon the positioning of the student collective actors within axes pertaining to the domains, structures, resources, and outputs. We also identified the possibility of “hybrid” positions and we identified one of them with the term “student syndicalism” as a mid-way position between a purely corporatist or a purely political nature of the set of claims. A visualization can be found in Table 30.4.

Table 30.4 The “axes” typology

Name of the axis	Poles of the axis	Hybrid model possible?
relationship with political parties	affiliation/independence	no
relationship with non-youth stakeholders	integration/isolation	no
organizational structure	movement/organization	no
conception of the representation at the national level	unitary/plural	no
mode of action	institutional representation/ activism	yes
nature of the set of claims	corporatist/political	yes (student syndicalism)

Source: Prepared by the authors.

As further aspects to research, we identify the need of a stronger empirical testing of our proposal vis-a-vis the original one by Klemenčič, in order to find a case which can be categorized and explained by the former but not by the latter: the Italian case, with its complex history of student organizations and the influence of political parties in several societal domains (including student politics), can be a good testing ground for our proposal. On the theoretical side, more research should be done to include in the axes categorization also dimensions that would fit and explain student politics in non-democratic regimes. On the side of the student collective actors, our model was based on the national level: further research would be needed to demonstrate it can be applied to local and supranational student collective actors, as well as to inquiry the interrelations between the different student collective actors within a multi-level setting. It would also require further research on how to effectively investigate and incorporate the issue of the sources of funding within the explanatory model. Finally, this chapter proposes a revision only for one of the three dimensions studied by Klemenčič: further research needs to be done in order to study the characteristics of the student politics system, its opportunities, and its constraints toward the actors (part of which are analyzed by Klemenčič by the names of “national systems of student representation and intermediation”); the environmental factors that shape the systems, that is, the intervening variables (e.g. the territorial dimension); and why and how student politics systems change, with what consequences for the student collective actors.

Notes

- 1 An example of that is proposed by Klemenčič (2012): the German system “lies somewhere in-between the informal neo-corporatist and informal pluralist models. There exists only one representative student association on the federal level—fzs—which delegates representatives to the Bologna Follow-Up

- Group [...]. However, in federal negotiations on higher education policy student organizations of the major political parties also tend to be invited” (Klemenčič, 2012, p. 14).
- 2 This is visible in the account by Pinner (1964), where it is recalled that the French student union UNEF had two internal factions, called “tendencies,” that is, the “*majo*” or “*corporatiste*” and the “*mino*” or “*syndicaliste*,” in what he described as a “two-party system.” These two factions would have opposed views on issues such as whether UNEF should deal with youth and labor issues, as well as on the mode of action, on the position on international issues, and on “colonial” issues (Pinner, 1964, p. 181). Another example is provided by Jungblut and Weber (2015), which accounts on the clash within the German student union fzs between the more left-leaning local unions, which proposed to explicitly identify fzs as an ideological “left and emancipatory” organization, and the less ideological unions from bigger universities, which left the organization in 2008 (Jungblut and Weber, 2015, p. 277).
 - 3 The concept of student syndicalism (called “student trade-unionism”)—on the one hand as an attempt to represent all students opposed to more cohesive groups representing just a part of the students, on the other hand aiming to be involved in all the matters regarding youth and labor opposed to the “corporatist” tendency to limit to direct student concerns—has been studied by Pinner (1964), who traced its roots in the French organization UNEF and studied its expansion in the Belgian and Dutch contexts.
 - 4 On the left, a student collective actor occupies position x1 when its characteristics fit an A amount of Pole 1 characteristics and a B amount of Pole 2 characteristics. On the right, a student collective actor occupies the position x2 when it has all the characteristics of the Pole 1 (for an amount identifiable in the “value” of C) and has an amount of the characteristics of the Pole 2 of an amount identifiable in the “value” of D.

References

- Charte de Grenoble (1946). <http://www.germe-inform.fr/?p=1824>
- Jungblut, J. and Weber, R. (2015). We are one, but we’re not the same: Explaining the emergence of hybrid national student unions. In *Student engagement in Europe: Society, higher education and student governance* (pp. 269–81). Strasbourg: Council of Europe.
- Klemenčič, M. (2012). Student representation in Western Europe: Introduction to the special issue. *European Journal of Higher Education* 2(1): 2–19.
- Kriesi, H. and Hutter, S. (2019). Crises and the Transformation of the National Political Space in Europe. In *European Party Politics in Times of Crisis* (pp. 3–32). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Manin, B. (2012). *Principes du gouvernement représentatif*. Paris: Flammarion.
- Pinner, F.A. (1964). Student trade-unionism in France, Belgium and Holland: Anticipatory socialization and role-seeking. *Sociology of Education* 37(3): 177–99.
- Sartori, G. (2005). *Parties and Party Systems. A Framework for Analysis*. Oxford: ECPR Press.
- Schmitter, P.C. and Streeck, W. (1999). The organization of business interests: Studying the associative action of business in advanced industrial societies. *MPLfG Discussion Paper*, 99/1.
- Stoppino, M. (2001). *Potere e teoria politica* (3. ed. riveduta e accresciuta). Giuffrè.

Student Politics in Italy: Continuities and Discontinuities across Three Eras

Matteo Vespa, Mattia Sguazzini, and Ruben Pratissoli

Introduction

Contemporary student politics in Italy emerged after 1945, with the end of the fascist regime and the proclamation of the Republic. The contemporary representative student associations mapped and analyzed in the research are the collective student actors elected in the 2019–22 mandate within the CNSU. This delimitation defines the politically relevant actors in the national system of student politics by employing the criterion of representativeness in the institutional national representative body excluding movements of general or particular instances on the national level, which do not participate in student elections.

The study of student politics in Italy tests the classification proposed by Vespa, Sguazzini & Pratissoli (2024) as a revision of the typology presented by Klemenčič (2012). We argue that student politics in the Italian republican period can be explained through the positioning of student associations on a series of axes pertaining to their structure, goals, and methods of work, with a distribution of characteristics such that they cannot be mapped through a clear dichotomy between “student associations as social movements” and “student associations as interest groups.”

The chapter is structured in five parts. After the introduction, the second part consists of a historical literature review of student politics since 1945: we identify three eras of student politics and we contextualize the different student collective actors belonging to one of the four streams of student politics in Italy (the left, the apolitical and non-confessional, the Catholics, the right). The third part describes the current framework of national student politics, focusing on the analysis of the institutional framework and the actors involved. The findings show a pluralist national system of student representation, intertwined with a system of intermediation holding characteristics of both formalized (guarantees of representation in advisory bodies and observatories) and informal (institutional and informal associations’ advocacy strategies) ideal-types. The analysis uses the following sources and methodologies: content analysis of the legislation regarding HE and student representation in Italy; semi-structured interviews to Presidents of CNSU from the last three mandates of the 2010 decade (2013–16, 2016–19, 2019–22); semi-structured interviews to the two authors who wrote scientific articles about student representation in Italy from the 2000s onwards and to an expert of HE and student support policies; surveys, developed as a synthetic form of NAT-SIHEG and LOC-SIHEG

(plus semi-structured interviews for clarification of some answers), submitted to leaders of national associations elected to the CNSU, obtaining nine out of eleven responses; for Fenix Vento di Cambiamento—Atlante and Link, the content analysis of the official website in the years 2019–21 was done, integrated with a short interview for Fenix. In the fourth part, we analyze student representation on the local level, considering that the institutional context in which the main right concerns a 15 percent minimum quota in the universities' collegiate bodies (executive, academic, and QA) underpins a heterogeneous degree of involvement in universities' governance across the country. The analysis is based on responses to the LOC-SIHEG survey administered to student leaders involved in UDU (with a response rate of 32.3 percent—ten out of thirty-one local sections), one of the main national-level student associations in Italy and the only Italian association member of the European Students' Union, as well as from the data used for the second part. In the fifth part we compare the findings with our conceptual framework. In conclusion, we offer a brief research agenda for further inquiry.

All the authors are or have been student leaders for UDU. We strove to structure the research and present the results objectively, trying to indicate as accurately as possible, within the space available, the methodologies and sources employed.

The Three Eras of the Italian Republican Student Politics

We can divide the history of Italian student political systems into three eras (1945–68, 1968–94, 1994–present), through which four main political streams flow: the left, the apolitical and nondenominational, the Catholics, the right.

The First Era (1945–68)

With the end of the fascist regime in 1943, university student politics had to reinvent itself: three of the four streams (the left, the apolitical and non-confessional, the Catholics) started to organize at the national level (Quagliariello, 1998), with the right constituting itself in 1950 as FUAN (*Fronte Universitario d'Azione Nazionale*), organization with ties to the post-fascist party MSI (*Movimento Sociale Italiano*) (Quagliariello and Orsina, 2005). The questions on whether to have a single national association, many of them or only local ones, what kind of relationships to have with the parties, and the nature of the advocacy of these associations were present in the debate of the first post-fascist years (Torresi, 2018).

The left, guided by the communists, favored the creation of a unitary student union. The Catholics opposed a unitary structure, but, confronted with the reality of spontaneously emerging unitarian student councils in universities, favored the creation of a single, institutional, corporatist union coexisting with a pluralist set of political and cultural student associations. The apolitical and non-confessional stream was represented by the reemergence of the *goliardi*, whose local associations, dedicated to hedonism, parties, and cultural activities, were prevalent from the Italian

unity (1861) until the fascist period: they founded the FIG (*Federazione Italiana Goliardica*) in 1945, in defense of a “free” university space against “alien” political and confessional tendencies. The recognition of a specific identity for the *goliardi* was signaled by the transformation of FIG into UGI (Unione Goliardica Italiana, 1948)(Quagliariello, 1998). Their preference was to create a “technical body” strictly defending the material interests of the students.

The alliance of the Catholics and the *goliardi* against the communist proposal of a single, all-encompassing student union led to the establishment in 1948 of UNURI (Unione Nazionale Universitaria Rappresentativa Italiana): a unitary, independent, apolitical, non-confessional union for the technical defense of the material interests of students and guarantor of the pluralism of student associations (Torresi, 2018). UNURI had technical commissions at the national level (e.g., that for international representation) and it was linked to the local representative student councils (Quagliariello, 1995).

Despite the compromise between Catholics and *goliardi* was based on the slogan “*fuori i partiti dall’università*” (“keep the parties out of university”) (Torresi, 2018), the student associations, already formed along political cleavages, started to have ties with the political parties. FUAN was linked with MSI. Intesa coordinated the Catholics coming from FUCI (*Federazione Universitaria Cattolica Italiana*, founded in 1896 and survived legally during fascism, by focusing specifically on spiritual education, Torresi, 2018) and from other organizations, and its reference was the main government party, the Christian-democrat DC (*Democrazia Cristiana*). UGI had a dialogue with several parties: initially on the non-confessional center (e.g., the republicans PRI, Partito Repubblicano Italiano), and after 1956 more to the left, when the social-communist student organization CUDI (Centro Universitario Democratico Italiano) dissolved itself and entered in UGI. This, on the one hand, provoked the splinter of AGI (Associazione dei Goliardi Indipendenti), close to the liberal party PLI (Partito Liberale Italiano) and, on the other hand, made UGI the house of the three left parties, the communist PCI (Partito Comunista Italiano), and the two socialists PSI (Partito Socialista Italiano) and PSIUP (Partito Socialista Italiano di Unità Proletaria), with the hegemony of PSI (Quagliariello, 1995; Quagliariello and Orsina, 2005). UNURI was considered a student parliament, and (with the peculiarities of the university world) followed logics akin to the party-political ones, experimenting formulas later taken by the parties, like the stable alliance UGI—Intesa and the entering in UNURI executive committee of a communist member of UGI in 1964 (Quagliariello and Orsina, 2005).

Demands of independence from the political parties and of revendication of material interests of students, together with new preferences for direct democracy and movement-like structures, emerged in the early 1960s, due to the opening up of University to more students, toward what was called “mass university.” The institutional associations tried to adapt to this new reality, inspired by UNEF,¹ promoting demonstrations (UNURI, UGI, Intesa) against a proposed law by University Minister, Gui, reforming university, which was later dropped, as well as starting discussion of reform (UNURI) and of becoming the “single student syndicate” (UGI). The radical factions did not manage to reform their organizations (even if they sometimes took the leadership, as in Intesa), and when the “Student Movement” emerged in ‘68, these organizations were dismantled: UNURI was dissolved in 1968 and the others followed, with the exception of FUAN, whose position at the fringes within the previous student system allowed itself to adapt to the new “age of the movements” (Quagliariello and Orsina, 2005).

The Second Era (1968–94)

Despite this disintegration, the pillarization of the existing fronts (right, left, and Catholics, with the disintegration of the apolitical and non-confessional) remained intact, albeit with various nuances within them. From '68 the left factions of UGI came out weakened, while the youth of PCI entered into the "Student Movement." The leaders of the "Student Movement" tried to maintain national coordination in an organized form: however, the different internal tendencies, and the absence of references in the broader social and political spheres, led different factions to leave over the years, coming to a final conclusion of the experience at the dawn of the 1977 Movement. The latter acts as a definitive disruptive element of the links between student associations and parties within the left, which saw, however, various associations, more or less organized, on the territorial level that tried to converge in different national coordination structures (Guzzo, 2019), without success (Capelli, 2014). Furthermore, "between 1975 and 1979 young people in several major Italian cities entered the political scene as the protagonists of new forms of urban conflict" (Lumley, 1990): in this scenario also took place the student mobilizations against the "Malfatti Law," seen as aimed at restricting access to the mass university (Lumley, 1990). The 1977 protests were much more violent, with several deaths and many injuries, and characterized by clashes between different factions of the student movement itself (Lumley, 1990). Catholic associationism was strongly affected by the cultural impact of the '68 Movement (e.g., on divorce referendum in 1974 and the one abortion in 1981) (Capozzi, 2010; Moro and Torresi, 2014): in the aftermath of '68, FUCI continued to carry out its function of "spiritual education" within the universities, but its political impact on the student policy front progressively diminished (Pomante, 2015). On the contrary, between the late 1960s and early 1970s, the movement "Comunione e Liberazione" appeared and developed an increasing influence and characterization within academic circles, distinguishing itself from its origins within "Gioventù Studentesca" (the student branch of Catholic youth association "Azione Cattolica"). In the 1980s, this movement grew vigorously within academic and student circles, even though it did not implement a national coordination of the student groups and individuals present in individual universities (Abbruzzese, 1989). This organizational process took place only in the mid-90s (CLDS website, 2022), with the establishment of CLDS as a national organization (Genicot, 2012).

From '68 onward, despite several contrasts with some political positions of MSI and its youth wing, FUAN managed to carry on its existence during the '70s and '80s and up to the '90s, when it changed its name in *Azione Universitaria*, following the transformation of MSI into *Alleanza Nazionale* (Rao, 2007).

The proposal for a reform of university by the Minister Ruberti, whose aim was to establish a general university autonomy and the opening up of the institutions to private funds (Maltese, 2020), kindled in 1990 the new student movement *Pantera* ("Panther"): inspired by an episode of local news (a panther spotted wandering near Rome), it took the symbol of the Black Panthers. The movement linked the national opposition to the reform to local issues about the material interests of the students, and was based on the work of "faculty collectives" emerging in the previous years as places of discussion on university issues. The students of the '90 movement identified themselves as an autonomous social group with its specific interests and the need to self-organize, and not as part of broader movements, as in '68 and '77. The mobilization achieved to obtain many of the claims at the local level. At the national level, the lack of a national strategy

and of broader alliances against the Ruberti reform led this law to be approved and the movement to be defeated (Simeone, 2010).

The Third Era (1994–present)

From the failure of *Pantera* and the reorganization of the party system, in the early 1990s, new student organizations were formed: in 1994, *Unione degli Universitari* (UDU) was born, as a confederation of local, pre-existing student organizations, traceable to the socialist and communist political strand, as the first student union in Italy recognizing itself as a “student syndicate,” with partnership with the workers’ union CGIL (Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro); in 1995, *Coordinamento delle Liste per il Diritto allo Studio* (CLDS) was founded, as a confederation of local student associations, mainly related to “Comunione e Liberazione” (CL); in 1996 FUAN reconverted into *Azione Universitaria* (AU), within the right (subsequently, within the center-right, the association of “Studenti per le libertà” SpL was formed as the student wing of Berlusconi’s party “FI—Forza Italia,” then PdL “Popolo della Libertà”); on the apolitical and non-confessional stream, the birth of *Confederazione degli Studenti* (after 1994) should be noted, with a strong presence in some Universities in the South (Genicot, 2012).

The student associations born from 1994 onward carved out a space for dialogue with the Higher Education Ministry, with alternate outcomes: for instance, UDU’s influence over the funding schemes for scholarships (La Repubblica, 1995), or UDU’s struggle against the establishment of *numerus clausus* and subsequent demonstrations and legal battles against it (La Repubblica, 1999, 1999, 2000b; Repubblica.it, 2006)

The presence of various student associations and their pressure toward the government led to the creation of the CNSU (National Council of the University Students) in 1997, which became operational only in 2000 (La Repubblica, 2000a). In the same year, UDU entered the ESIB (European Student Information Bureau, later to become ESU—European Students’ Union) (European Students’ Union, 2012). This signals the emergence of Europe as a policy-making space in higher education, with the start of the Bologna Process in 1999 and the adaptive reforms of the Italian higher education system, especially with the “Berlinguer reforms” (1999–2004). With the coming to power, and subsequent reappointments, of the Berlusconi governments (2001–5, 2005–6, 2008–11), began a phase of complex institutional dialogue between representative institutions (especially CNSU) and student associations, on the one hand, and the government, on the other. In this period, relations with the associations close to the government parties were strongly favored (Expert 2, personal communication, March 16, 2022).

In 2008 the multi-year policy guidelines for the economy included severe cuts to the university, which were opposed by the students through the movement identified as “Onda” (also referred as “Onda Anomala”) (Repubblica.it, 2008). As a result of those cuts, in 2010, a reform of the university was proposed (the so-called “Legge Gelmini,” Law 240/2010), which saw a very strong institutional and street opposition from the students, who, however, collected a defeat (Piazza, 2014). After the 2008 mobilizations, the internal discussions within UDU led to two splits: the one that gave rise to “Link” in 2009 (Il Sindacato degli Studenti—old website, 2009) and the one that gave rise to “RUN—Rete Universitaria Nazionale” (linked to the center-

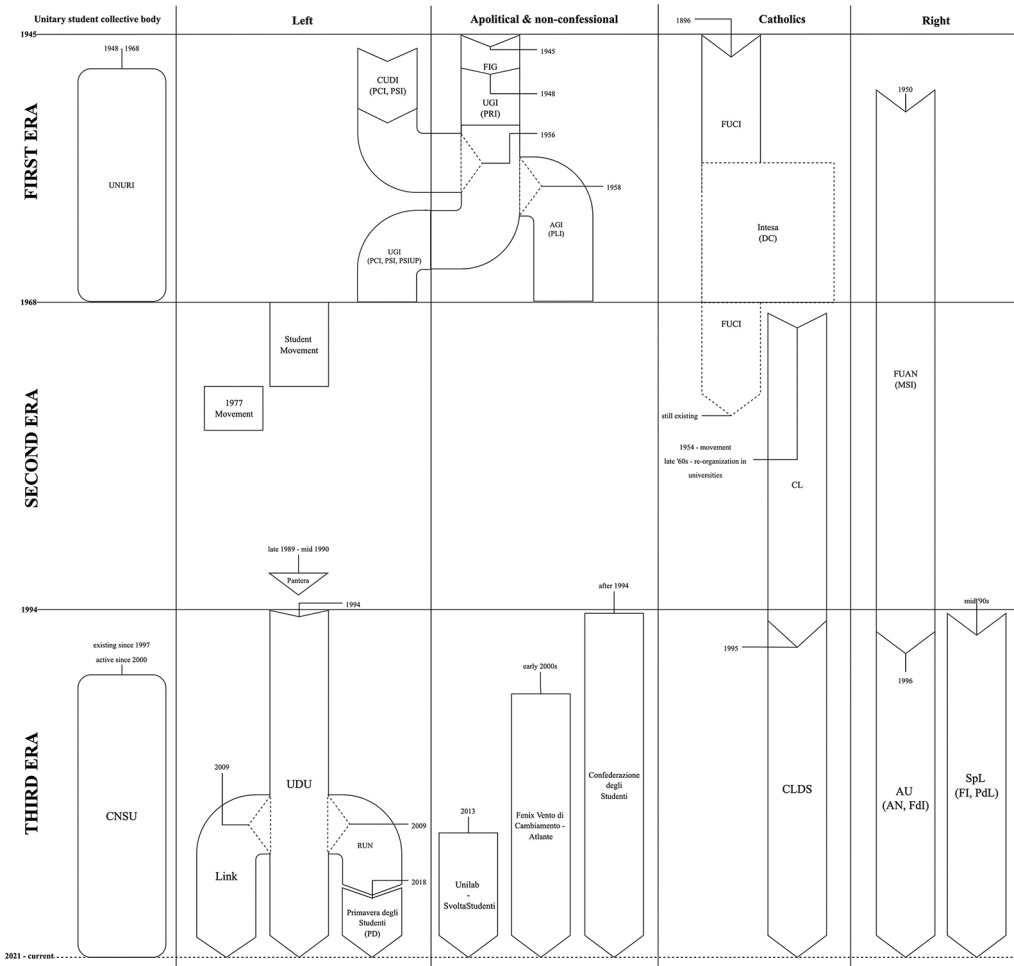


Figure 31.1 Overview of the student collective actors during the Italian republican period (in brackets their closeness to political parties).

Source: Prepared by the authors.

left PD—Partito Democratico and its youth wing) in 2010 (RUN, 2014). The latter association disappeared within a few years and was replaced by “Primavera degli Studenti” (PdS) in 2018 (Giovani Democratici, 2018). Furthermore, outside of these dynamics, in the beginning of the 2000s in Rome Fenix—Vento di Cambiamento (*Interview with Student Leader 10*, personal communication, March 18, 2022), and in 2013 in Lombardy Unilab—Svoltastudenti, were born as apolitical and non-confessional organizations (Unilab Svoltastudenti, 2022). An overview of the evolution of the collective actors along the four streams of student politics in Italy is provided in Figure 31.1.

The Current National Student Politics System

Within the Italian higher education system, there are three types of institutions: universities, AFAM, and ITS—either public or private. Universities, which are numerically the most important and politically most relevant ones (Fondazione Res, 2016, Viesti, 2018), are open to students from all types of high schools. AFAM are dedicated to Art, Music, and Choreutic studies and ITS are technical studies characterized by high commodification (Servizio Studi della Camera dei deputati, 2021).

Even if CNSU is the institutional representative body for university students, it issues resolutions also on AFAM and ITS topics. AFAM students are represented within the CNAM (Art.3 L.508/1999) together with all AFAM components (teachers, staff, etc.), apart from having different national bodies, composed only by students, linked to the different disciplines.

As stated in the Italian Constitution (Art.33) students' representation legislation is characterized by university autonomy in respect of the existence of certain bodies and to the state laws (Cassese, 1990, Foroni, 2011, Rosboch, 2013). At the national level, student representation is guaranteed in advisory bodies and observatories.

In 1997, CNSU was created (Art. 20, c.8, L.59/1997) as a consultative body of the Ministry responsible for university policies. It is composed of thirty members, elected every three years, directly by all the students which paid tuition fees and enrolled no later than the first year *fuori corso*²: twenty-eight bachelor and master students elected on four different territorial constituencies; one PhD student and one postgraduate specializing student, elected on single national constituencies. CNSU provides recommendations and proposals to the Minister (Art.1, c.1, D.P.R. 491/1997)³ on university's systemic reform, teaching, financing, QA, and student support policies (Foroni, 2011). Furthermore, CNSU “may address questions to the Minister regarding facts or events of national importance concerning teaching and student status, which are answered within sixty days” (Art.1, c.2, letter d), D.P.R. 491/1997). Once per mandate CNSU submits to the Minister “a report on the condition of students within the university system” (Art.1, c.2, letter c), D.P.R. 491/1997). From the period after the 2010 reform onward, CNSU tried to slightly expand its competences, formulating annual recommendations also on the state budget law. Furthermore, CNSU, within its components, nominates eight representatives in the *Consiglio Universitario Nazionale* (CUN⁴); three representatives in the *Associazione Nazionale per gli Organismi per il Diritto allo Studio Universitario* (ANDISU) (Statuto ANDISU, 2018), since 2015; three representatives in the national QA Agency ANVUR (*Agenzia nazionale di valutazione del sistema universitario e della ricerca*) Advisory Committee.

Within CUN, six out of the thirty components must be students⁵ appointed from CNSU among its own members (Art. 17, c.104, lett.b), L.127/1997; Art.1, c.1, lett. a) to f), L.18/2006).

L.766/1973 established the presence of student representation within the Opere Universitarie (bodies then in charge of implementing policies on student support policies), but in 1977 (D.P.R. 616/1977), the responsibility of the student support policies was transferred to the regions, without any mandatory provision of student representation. Only in 2015, a law establishing *ad hoc* regional bodies for student support policies, included the guarantees for student representation within them (Art.1, c.269, L.208/2015): their establishment, however, has exceptions and several regions have decided not to establish them. Even the observatories that include students are

not active: the *Consulta Nazionale per il diritto agli studi universitari* (Art.6, L.390/1991) has never been fully activated; it was substituted by the *Osservatorio Nazionale per il Diritto allo Studio* (L.240/2010, Art. 20, Leg.D.68/2012), formed late and convened few times, to the point of being—to date—irrelevant with respect to the institutional framework.

Finally, students are involved in QA processes: from 2006 onward, three student representatives nominated by CNSU and two by ESU (on the total composition of seventeen members) are included in the Advisory Committee⁶ of ANVUR (but they are not part of the governing body) (Art.11, c.2, D.P.R.76/2010). Students are also selected through a public call for applications as expert evaluators in external QA processes, such as on-site visits aimed at the periodic accreditation of universities.

Within this framework, several student associations work at a “national” level. Those that engage in student representation typically run in the elections for CNSU. However, many of the associations represented in CNSU do not have a national outreach: if we look at the last three CNSU elections of the 2010 decade (2013, 2016, 2019) only UDU, RUN-PdS, CLDS, Link, AU, and SpL candidate in all the four electoral districts (North-West, North-East, Centre, South), but only UDU and Link (since 2016) managed to elect at least one person in each of the districts (Ministero dell’Istruzione, dell’Università e della Ricerca, 2013, 2016, 2019). AU and SpL are particularly strong in the South district, where they ran separately in 2013 and 2019 managing to elect one person each, as well as in the Centre district, where their joint list managed to elect two candidates at each election (each district has seven seats). CLDS is particularly strong in the North-West district and weak in the South: as its national coordinator affirmed, Milan, which has expressed all the coordinators in the past years, coordinates with the other realities and supports the less structured realities in the Centre and in the South (Student Leader 3, personal communication, February 28, 2022). While Unilab—Svoltastudenti started to reach out of its founding territory in the North-West district by candidating also in the North-East and in the Centre in 2019, its electoral presence is strong only in its original region. Confederazione, on the other hand, candidates and elects only in the South district; Fenix candidates only in the Centre. The association with the relative majority has been UDU’s list (which included several times a joint list with RUN or PdS in many districts), while CLDS, AU-SpL, and Link usually take the second, third, and fourth positions.⁷

These associations are normally registered NGOs, others are informal associations or movements, and all of them have a low degree of professionalism: most of them do not have a national seat and work with completely voluntary staff, and none of them has employed staff. They do not receive national public funding, and some of them even do not have an independent bank account for the national association. There are varying degrees of centralization, but the tendency is to have a middle-to-low level of centralization, with a strong role of the local associations and the national executive being more of a figure steering the processes.

This pluralist system finds a common terrain in CNSU, for whose seats the associations compete with direct elections at the national level. The results lead to a complex system of coalition-building beyond the pre-electoral national alliances which resulted in joint lists at the ballot, visible at the moment of the election of CNSU President.

Since CNSU is a consultative body of the HE Ministry, the importance for the Ministers of the resolutions filed by the CNSU has always been dependent on the Minister’s individual interest in them. Most ministers were inclined to ignore them, thereby discrediting the work of the body.

Therefore, it has become common for the CNSU President to personally submit the resolutions to personnel of the Ministry, as well as to parliamentary committees and other stakeholders. A key problem is the very limited resources allocated to CNSU by the Ministry. Most CNSU representatives and student leaders complain about the large lack of funds available that makes the work difficult and has a negative impact on effectiveness.

The national panorama of student politics has an influence also on the functioning of the council, which indirectly depends on the legitimization given by the national organizations. For some associations, CNSU is a place where to give an institutional setting to campaigns and proposals; for others, it is the main *raison d'être* for the association at the national level. However, as the 2019-2022 current CNSU President recalled, the identity of the different associations is visible inside of CNSU, and “it does not live a life of its own, but it lives of what the associations put in it” (CNSU President 3, personal communication, February 24, 2022). In fact, even if all the associations in CNSU would like to see a stronger role of the body, no one is advocating for a unitary organization. As the President of Unilab—Svoltastudenti put it: “On the one hand, having a unitary organization on the model of the students’ union would be more effective; on the other hand, the plurality of visions would diminish, as the organizations that today are stronger would become even more hegemonic” (Student Leader 5, personal communication, March 16, 2022).

Outside of CNSU, all the associations have their own advocacy strategies: all of them engage with some sort of institutional lobbying, be it with government officials, MPs, or members of political parties, while the most common advocacy actions are information campaigns, with only a minority taking part in demonstrations and even fewer considering them as an equal counterpart to institutional representation. However, the general efficacy of the system is criticized by all the interviewees, student associations, and experts alike. No association expressed an increase in student power in the last five years, and while some student associations indicated that big student demonstrations happened in that period (dealing mainly with the pandemic), the experts did not recall any relevant student demonstrations, nor moments where HE student issues made the news in the public opinion. Furthermore, according to an expert, CNSU is the weakest of the HE national bodies (being the Rectors Conference CRUI the strongest), and it manages to obtain results on strictly student issues (e.g., on scholarships, international mobility), while on more structural issues (e.g., financing of HE) would be little effective (Expert 3, personal communication, February 22, 2022). The political divisions matter also at the national level: one expert recalls that in 2004, while she was conducting a research on UDU’s representatives in a European meeting, they lamented the ineffectiveness of CNSU as not being heard by the Minister of Higher Education, who had a direct link with CLDS representatives (Expert 2, personal communication, March 16, 2022).

The Local Level of Student Representation

Since 1995, by national law universities must ensure “the representation of students in an amount not less than 15 percent” in the collegiate bodies (Art.6, c.1, D.L.120/1995). Elective

representative students have to be guaranteed in all executive, academic, and QA bodies of HEIs (L.240/2010). In several universities directly or indirectly elected student councils exist as purely institutional, consultative bodies.

Within this legal framework, local student associations are typically associated into a national student association or network: it is the case of all of the associations competing in the CNSU elections. However, some groups operate only on the local level where they may also participate in local students' elections. There are groups that can be affiliated at the university or national levels, or have no affiliation whatsoever.

Membership in local student associations is voluntary and occurs without institutional intermediation. The legal status varies between registered associations (42.8 percent in LOC-SIHEG, 33.3 percent in national leaders' survey) at the *Agenzia delle Entrate* and unregistered ones, with a further presence (57.1 percent in LOC-SIHEG, 33.3 percent in national leaders' survey) of a registration within the register of university associations.

LOC-SIHEG data are referred to UDU's local sections. Regarding material resources, it shows that: funds mainly come from membership fees (88.9 percent) and project funding (55.5 percent), while fundraising events or donations from members are a limited phenomenon (both 11.1 percent); the budget varies greatly from zero to 25,000 euros, influenced by the availability of project funding and institutional calls; 90 percent say have no property; only 40 percent say they run an office. A large part of the executive roles is elected (90 percent) and carry out their duties voluntarily and free of charge in 70 percent of cases, while in the remaining 30 percent receive reimbursement of expenses. In addition, local sections do not formally prescribe diversity markers for the composition of their governing bodies, but 40 percent of them say they apply them informally. With respect to the political issues, associations followed the themes of scholarships, learning and teaching (70 percent), tuition fees (60 percent), students' accommodations (50 percent), free psychological support, free local public transportation, and management of the Covid-19 pandemic (30 percent); less than 30 percent mentioned also issues like gender equality, spaces in the university, inclusiveness, tutoring. The most common mode of political action is the hybrid mode of institutional representation and protest, campaigns, and contentious politics. With respect to links to political parties, 60 percent say they have no organizational relations, but some individuals do; 20 percent say they have none; the remaining 20 percent say they have contacts through institutional channels. On the contrary, 90 percent maintain that they have direct contact with workers' unions. The turnouts reported by local sections vary between 15 percent and 75 percent (all of them increasing, compared to previous run), distributed unevenly across the country: given the different modalities of data collection, it would be necessary to perform an in-depth electoral analysis to have consistent data.

The effectiveness of the student power varies across the different universities and regions, but tends to be stronger at the local/institutional than at the regional level (Expert 3, personal communication, February 22, 2022). The politicization of student politics affects also the effectiveness of the advocacy at the local level: according to an expert, when the President of a Region is politically distant from the strongest student associations of the Region, it is more closely scrutinized, while more leniency would be given if they are politically closer (Expert 1, personal communication, March 17, 2022).

Application of the “Student Politics System” and the “Axes” Frameworks to the Italian Case

For what regards individual student associations, Klemenčič (2012) proposes a classification that clusters the variables into the dichotomic typology “student associations as social movements vs. student associations as interest groups,” while Vespa, Sguazzini and Pratisoli (2022) propose a

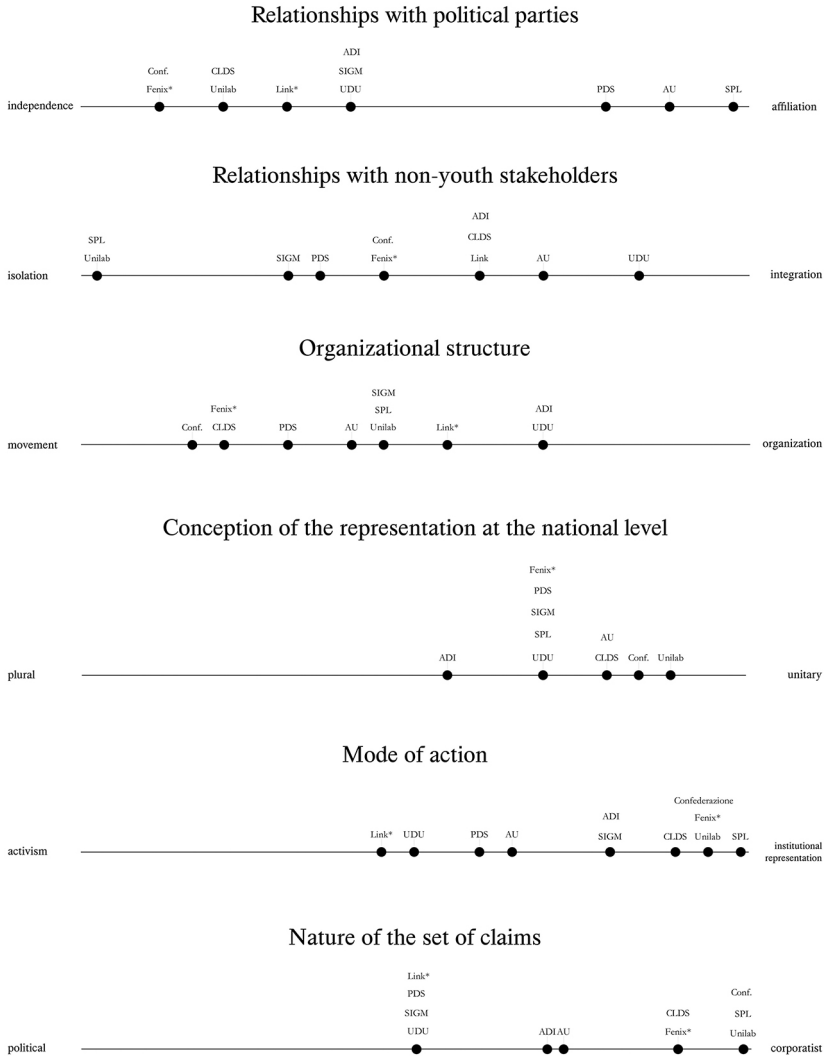


Figure 31.2 Axes classification⁸.

Source: Prepared by the authors.

conceptual framework where the values of the variables are based on a continuum (the “axes”) and where there are no pre-determined clustered correlation between values of different variables and ideal-types. The application of the framework to the Italian case is provided in Figure 31.2.

The axes “relationships with political parties” shows how three student associations are closely associated with political parties, tending to being their student wings, in a more or less formalized way: PdS (for PD), AU (for FdI). and SpL (for FI). The axis “relationships with non-youth stakeholders” shows that associations are distributed throughout the axis, with the most integrated being UDU and the most isolated being SpL and Unilab—Svoltastudenti; five of them (UDU, AU, Link, CLDS, ADI) are more or less integrated into different networks of civil society organizations, which share a similar culture. The axis “organizational structure” shows that student politics in Italy has a general low degree of organizational professionalism: most of the organizations tend toward the pole “movement,” while even those closer to the “organization” pole do not hold any properties, nor an employed staff, which is typical of other student organizations across Europe. The axis “conception of the representation at the national level” shows that all the organizations tend more toward the “unitary” pole: all of them would welcome a stronger CNSU (with varying degrees of intensity): the fact this consensus does not materialize might be found into other systemic constraints, for example, political divisions due to the four streams and the need for a governmental consent in order to obtain such a reform. The axis mode of action shows that institutional representation is the preferred tool by almost all the associations, with only UDU and Link giving at least an equal weight to the “activism” side. The axis “nature of the set of claims” shows three clusters: a “corporatist” cluster (Confederazione, SpL, Unilab—Svoltastudenti, CLDS, Fenix), a “student syndicate” cluster, where political and corporatist claims are equally weighted (Link, PdS, SIGM, UDU), an “intermediate” cluster between the two (ADI, AU).

The axes framework proves useful in capturing the existence of outliers of Klemenčič (2012) typology. Comparing Confederazione and UDU on the axes “nature of the set of claims” and “organizational structures” shows that the dichotomic approach is not applicable there: on the former axis, Confederazione is heavily positioned close to the corporatist pole (which Klemenčič, 2012 associates with interest groups) and UDU is positioned as a student syndicate, therefore tending more to the political pole (which Klemenčič (2012) associates with social movements); conversely, on the latter axis, Confederazione is heavily closer to the “movement” pole (which Klemenčič (2012) associates with social movements) and UDU to the “organization” pole (which Klemenčič, 2012 associates with interest groups). Finally, the addition of the axes “relationship with political parties” is fundamental to map the different degree of affiliation, both to analyze possible organizational patterns and to further study if this may create opportunities or obstacles. For what regards the “systemic level,” Klemenčič (2012) does not propose a correlation between the student actors and the systems of student representation and intermediation, while we argue that a “student politics system” is based on the reciprocal positionings of the student collective actors within the axes, with a feedback frame of opportunities and obstacles between the system and the actors, together with the institutional framework. Although the detailed mechanisms need to be further theorized, it is possible to detect the relationships in the rise and fall of the student politics system of the first era. The different “conceptions of the representation at the national level” and the relative strength of the student actors were the basis of the UNURI-based system;

its rigidity to change was one of the main obstacles to the reform of UNURI in the late '60s, which led to the collapse of that student politics system and the dissolution of almost all its associations.

Finally, the system of student intermediation of the third era resembles more a hybrid between “formalized” and “informal”: the percentage of student representation in the local HEI is established by law and the CNSU was established as an advisory body for the Ministry; at the same time, the different student associations have their own channels to exercise pressure on the policy-making, according to their different modes of action.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we identified three eras of the student political system in the history of student politics in the Italian republican period: the first “era” (1945–68), where a unitary, corporatist, institutional association (UNURI) coexisted with and was governed by a plurality of political, institutional, party-affiliated associations; the second era (1968–94), where almost all the previous organizations were dissolved and which was characterized by a plurality of independent, political student movements refusing any institutional national representation; and the third era (1994–present) where a plurality of student associations positioning themselves in several combinations within the axes have led the government to establish by law a completely institutional student parliament (CNSU). Furthermore, we identified four main political streams throughout those eras: the left, the apolitical and non-confessional, the Catholics, and the right.

We used Italy as a case study to test the “student politics system” and the “axes” frameworks proposed by Vespa, Sguazzini, and Pratisoli (2024) and found them suitable to describe the Italian student politics landscape. We found that today in Italy, the national system of student representation is pluralist, despite the system of intermediation holding characteristics of both formalized and informal ideal-types.

From this work further lines of research emerge. First of all, a systematic review of the student politics system exists only for the first era. Systematic reviews for the second and third eras would shed light on the characteristics of the actors and of the student politics system of those eras. Furthermore, two systemic phenomena could be further studied: the relations between higher education student politics and upper secondary school student movements, which seem to have been important in several occasions during the republican period (Capozzi, 2010, Galfré, 2019); the role of the university autonomy and the local level in shaping the national student politics, for instance, assessing whether the apolitical and non-confessional stream, which virtually disappeared at the national level during the second era, survived at the local level and was important for the birth of some of the current student associations included in that stream. Finally, it may be useful to plan a long-term survey analysis through the LOC-SIHEG, to be directly sent to single universities, to collect data directly from all of the existing associations on the local level (nationally affiliated or not), aimed at mapping local student politics and the different types of relationships with the different membership levels.

Notes

- 1 In particular, see *Claudio Petruccioli. Intervistato da Giovanni Cerchia a Roma il 7 ottobre 2003*, pp. 412–13; *Giuseppe Pupillo. Intervistato da Silvio Tullii a Roma il 5 agosto 2002*, p. 463; *Nuccio Fava. Intervistato da Andrea Guiso a Sermignano, frazione di Castiglione in Teverina (VT), il 18 luglio 2002*, p. 197 (Quagliariello and Orsina, 2005).
- 2 “Fuori corso” is defined as a student who has not completed its degree within the prescribed time.
- 3 The Decree does not clarify either the mandatory nature or the constraint of them.
- 4 CUN is an advisory elective body to the Ministry responsible for university and research policies, representing the whole university system (Art.1, L.18/2006). It “formulates opinions and proposals” regarding: general objectives of university planning; criteria for the distribution of the ordinary financing fund of the universities, “general criteria for the ordering of university studies,” “didactic regulations of the university,” “scientific-disciplinary sectors,” ministerial decrees on the structure and content of university qualifications (L.18/2006).
- 5 Students are part of CUN since its establishment (L.31/1979)
- 6 Advisory Committee provides advice to ANVUR regarding its policies, but does not have any power to provide mandatory or binding advice.
- 7 The 2019–2022 CNSU composition of seats was the following: UDU: 7; CLDS: 4; Link: 4; Confederazione—Unilab: 4; PdS: 3; AU: 3; SpL: 2; Fenix: 1; ADI: 1; SIGM: 1.
- 8 Detailed classification values are in Table 31.1 of the Appendix. The axes framework applied for the associations represented in 2019–2022 CNSU term. The methodology used for Link does not allow for positioning on the axis “Conception of the representation at the national level.” ADI represents PhD students, while SIGM postgraduate specializing students.

References

- Abbruzzese, S. (1989). Religion et modernité: Le cas de “Comunione e Liberazione.” *Social Compass* 36(1): 13–32. <https://doi.org/10.1177/003776889036001002>
- ANDISU, Statuto (2018). https://nuovosito.andisu.it/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/statuto_andisu_25-06-2018.pdf
- Capelli, F. (May 10, 2014). *Il movimento degli studenti e il Pci negli anni incandescenti della solidarietà nazionale e del terrorismo*. <http://casadellacultura.it/ferrucciocapelli/il-movimento-degli-studenti-e-il-pci-negli-anni-incandescenti-della-solidarieta-nazionale-e-del-terrorismo/>
- Capozzi, E. (2010). Luigi Giussani e lo spartiacque del Sessantotto: Da Gioventù studentesca a Comunione e liberazione. *Ventesimo Secolo* 9(22): 65–84.
- Cassese, S. (1990). Discussioni sull’ autonomia universitaria. *Il Foro Italiano*, 113, 205–209210.
- CLDS website. (2022). *Chi Siamo*. January 8, 2022. <https://www.clds.it/chi-siamo/>
- Democratici, Giovani. (May 2018). *Si è tenuta oggi a Bologna l’assemblea fondativa dell’associazione Primavera degli Studenti, la nuova organizzazione studentesca di riferimento dei Giovani Democratici*. Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/giovanidem/photos/2030827900282375>
- European Students’ Union (2012). *ESU turns 30! Fighting for student rights since 1982*. <https://www.esu-online.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/30th-Anniversary-Online.pdf>
- Fondazione Res and Viesti, G. (ed.). (2016). *Università in declino: un’indagine sugli atenei da Nord a Sud*. Roma: Donzelli Editore.
- Froni, M. (2011). Student Representation in Italy. *Tertiary Education and Management* 17(3): 205–18
- Galfré, M. (2019). *La scuola è il nostro Vietnam: Il ’68 e l’istruzione secondaria italiana*. Rome: (Prima edizione). Viella.

- Genicot, G. (2012). French and Italian national unions of students confronted with international policymaking on higher education. *European Journal of Higher Education* 2(1): 63–77. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21568235.2012.683700>
- Guzzo, D. (ed.) (2019). *Da “non garantiti” a precari: Il movimento del '77 e la crisi del lavoro nell'Italia post-fordista*. Milan: FrancoAngeli.
- Il Sindacato degli Studenti—old website. (October 12, 2009). Nasce LINK—Assemblea Studentesca. *Il Sindacato degli Studenti*. <https://sindacatostudenti.wordpress.com/2009/10/12/nasce-link-assemblea-studentesca/>
- Interview with CNSU President 3*. (February 24, 2022). [Personal communication].
- Interview with expert 1*. (March 17, 2022). [Personal communication].
- Interview with expert 2*. (March 16, 2022). [Personal communication].
- Interview with expert 3*. (February 22, 2022). [Personal communication].
- Interview with student leader 3*. (February 28, 2022). [Personal communication].
- Interview with student leader 5*. (March 16, 2022). [Personal communication].
- Interview with student leader 10*. (March 18, 2022). [Personal communication].
- Klemenčič, M. (2012). Student representation in Western Europe: Introduction to the special issue. *European Journal of Higher Education* 2(1): 2–19.
- Repubblica, La. (December 10, 1995). *La tassa tagliata colpo ai poveri*. Archivio—la Repubblica.it. <https://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/1995/12/10/la-tassa-tagliata-colpo-ai-poveri.html>
- Repubblica, La. (March 24, 1999). *Occupazioni studentesche in dieci atenei*. Archivio—la Repubblica.it. <https://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/1999/03/24/occupazioni-studentesche-in-dieci-atenei.html>
- Repubblica, La. (June 15, 2000a). *Università debutta il Parlamento degli studenti*. Archivio—la Repubblica.it. <https://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2000/06/15/universita-debutta-il-parlamento-degli-studenti.html>
- Repubblica, La. (October 27, 2000b). *Atenei, no alla sanatoria*. Archivio—la Repubblica.it. <https://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2000/10/27/atenei-no-alla-sanatoria.html>
- Rosboch, M. (2013). L'Autonomia universitaria fra passato e presente. *Rivista di Storia dell'Università di Torino* 2(1): 117–24. Retrieved from <https://www.ojs.unito.it/index.php/RSUT/article/view/411>.
- Lumley, R. (1990). *States of Emergency: Cultures of Revolt in Italy from 1968 to 1978*. London: Verso.
- Maltese, P. (2020). La Pantera e l'università neoliberale. *EPEKEINA. International Journal of Ontology. History and Critics* 12(2): 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.7408/epkn.1>
- Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e Della Ricerca (2013). *Elezioni per rinnovo CNSU 2013 (21–2 maggio 2013). Elenco degli studenti vincitori (indicati in grassetto)*. https://www.istruzione.it/archivio/alfresco/d/d/workspace/SpacesStore/62d9b6b8-6b50-4f1f-b7d9-f76476fea7ed/ELENCO%20STUDENTI_Elezioni_cnsu_2013.pdf
- Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e Della Ricerca (2016). *CNSU—Elezioni 2016 Risultati elettorali della componente di cui all'art.1, comma 1 lettera a) (studenti) dell'O.M. 100/2016*. <http://attiministeriali.miur.it/anno-2016/giugno/co-10062016-%281%29.aspx>
- Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e Della Ricerca (2019). *Risultati delle elezioni per il rinnovo del Consiglio Nazionale degli Studenti Universitari (C.n.s.u.)—2019*. <https://www.miur.gov.it/documents/20182/1338975/Comunicato+del+7+giugno+2019.pdf/42a35f9b-da26-c60c-3347-85c24d61edef?t=1559918596254>
- Moro, A.C. and Torresi, T. (2014). *Vivere nella storia: Scritti di impegno civile ed ecclesiale*. Ed. Rome: Studium.
- Piazza, G. (2014). Non solo studenti: Le ondate di protesta nelle scuole e nelle università. In Alteri, L., Raffini, L. and Bulli, G. (eds.), *La nuova politica: Mobilitazioni, movimenti e conflitti in Italia*. Naples: Edises.
- Pomante, L. (2015). *“Fiducia nell'uomo e nell'intelligenza umana”: La Federazione universitaria cattolica italiana (FUCI) dalle origini al '68* (Prima edizione). Macerata: Eum.

- Quagliariello, G. (1995). La formazione della classe politica repubblicana. Fonti e percorsi di ricerca. In Musei, L. and Grispiigni, M. (eds.), *Archivio delle Associazioni e rappresentanze studentesche universitarie (1945–1968)* (pp. 2–19). Manduria: Piero Lacaita Editore.
- Quagliariello, G. (1998). Parcours de formation de la classe politique italienne: Les étudiants dans la transition du fascisme à la démocratie. *Revue d'histoire Moderne et Contemporaine* 45(1): 196–226. <https://doi.org/10.3406/rhmc.1998.1907>
- Quagliariello, G. and Orsina, G. (eds.) (2005). *La crisi del sistema politico italiano e il Sessantotto*. Rubbettino. <http://digital.casalini.it/8849806930>
- Rao, N. (2007). *La fiamma e la celtica*. Milan: Sperling & Kupfer.
- Repubblica.it. (September 21, 2006). *Parma, l'Università ci ripensa "Da noi niente numero chiuso."* https://www.repubblica.it/2006/09/sezioni/scuola_e_universita/servizi/test-universit/-caso-parma/caso-parma.html?ref=search
- Repubblica.it. (October 24, 2008). *Berlusconi contro l'Onda: "Facinorosi" In tutta Italia lezioni in piazza*. Repubblica.It. <https://www.repubblica.it/2008/10/dirette/sezioni/cronaca/manifestazione/cronaca-24-ottobre/index.html>
- RUN (February 1, 2014). Rete Universitaria Nazionale. *RUN Blog*. <https://reteuniversitarianazionaleonline.wordpress.com/about/>
- Simeone, N. (2010). *Gli studenti della Pantera. Storia di un movimento rimosso*. Rome: Alegre.
- Torresi, T. (2018). Studenti in quanto tali? L'associazionismo universitario alla prova della democrazia. *Annali Di Storia Delle Università Italiane* 1: 117–40. <https://doi.org/10.17396/90140>
- Unilab Svoltastudenti. (2022). *Unilab Svoltastudenti: Chi siamo*. (February 22, 2022). <https://www.unilabsvoltastudenti.it/chi-siamo/>
- Vespa, M., Sguazzini, M. and Pratisolli, R. (2024). Inspired by student politics in Italy: A proposal for a new typology to classify student collective actors. In Klemenčič, M. (ed.), *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Student Representation and politics in Higher Education*. Chapter 30. London: Bloomsbury Publishers.
- Viesti, G. (2018). *La laurea negata: le politiche contro l'istruzione universitaria*. Bari: GLF Editori Laterza.

Appendix

Glossary of abbreviations

Student politics

AGI	Associazione dei Goliardi Indipendenti/Association of the Independent Goliards
ADI	Associazione Dottorandi e Dottori di Ricerca in Italia/Association of PhD students and research doctorates in Italy
AU	Azione Universitaria/University Action
AUS	Associazione Universitaria Studentesca/University Student Association
CLDS	Coordinamento delle Liste per il Diritto allo Studio/Coordination of the Lists for the Right to Study
CNSU	Consiglio Nazionale degli Studenti Universitari/National Council of the University Students

CUDI	Centro Universitario Democratico Italiano/Italian Democratic University Centre
ESIB	European Student Information Bureau
ESU	European Students' Union
FIG	Federazione Italiana Goliardica/Italian Goliardic Federation
FUAN	Fronte Universitario d'Azione Nazionale/University Front of National Action
FUCI	Federazione Universitaria Cattolica Italiana/Italian Catholic University Federation
GUF	Gruppi Universitari Fascisti/Fascist University Groups
PdS	Primavera degli Studenti/Spring of the Students
RUN	Rete Universitaria Nazionale/Italian University Network
SIGM	Segretariato Italiano Giovani Medici/Italian Young Physicians Secretariat
SpL	Studenti per le Libertà/Students for the Freedoms
UDU	Unione degli Universitari/Union of University Students
UGI	Unione Goliardica Italiana/Italian Goliardic Union
UNEF	Union nationale des étudiants de France/National Union of French Students
UNURI	Unione Nazionale Universitaria Rappresentativa Italiana/Italian National Representative University Union
USI	Unione degli Studenti Italiani/Union of the Italian Students

Political parties

AN	Alleanza Nazionale/National Alliance
DC	Democrazia Cristiana/Christian Democracy
FdI	Fratelli d'Italia/Brothers of Italy
FI	Forza Italia/Forward Italy
MSI	Movimento Sociale Italiano/Italian Social Movement
PCI	Partito Comunista Italiano/Italian Communist Party
PD	Partito Democratico/Democratic Party
PdL	Popolo della Libertà/People of Freedom
PLI	Partito Liberale Italiano/Italian Liberal Party
PRI	Partito Repubblicano Italiano/Italian Republican Party
PSI	Partito Socialista Italiano/Italian Socialist Party
PSIUP	Partito Socialista Italiano di Unità Proletaria/Italian Socialist Party of Proletarian Unity

HE sectors denominations

AFAM Alta formazione artistica, musicale e coreutica/Higher education in art, music and dance

ITS Istituti Tecnici Superiori/Advanced Technical Institutes

HE National institutional bodies

ANDISU Associazione Nazionale per gli Organismi per il Diritto allo Studio Universitario/
National Association for the Right to University Study Agencies

ANVUR Agenzia nazionale di valutazione del sistema universitario e della ricerca/Italian
National Agency for the Evaluation of Universities and Research Institutes

CNAM Consiglio Nazionale per l'Alta Formazione Artistica e Musicale/National Council for
Higher Education in Art and Music

Consulta Nazionale per il diritto agli studi universitari/National Council for the Right
to University Studies

CRUI Conferenza dei Rettori delle Università Italiane/Conference of the Rectors of Italian
Universities

CUN Consiglio Universitario Nazionale/National University Council

Osservatorio Nazionale per il Diritto allo Studio/National Observatory for the Right
to Study

Local institutional bodies

NUV Nucleo di Valutazione/Evaluation Board

Student Representation as a Driver of Europeanization in Post-Communist Romanian Higher Education

Stefan-Marius Deaconu, Tamara Ciobanu, and Horia-Șerban Onița

Introduction

A direct link between Romania's social and political developments and the student movement can be made even from when the first universities occurred in the second half of the nineteenth century. From this point of view, the pre-war student movement resembled the elite in the first tiers of political power. On the other side, as universities rose after the Great Union in 1918 and the student population proliferated, different types of student representation embraced a nationalistic and anti-Semitic perspective during the interwar period. After the Second World War, as the communist seized power in Romania, the student movement became entirely state-driven. The first part of this chapter attempts to resume the most important highlights of student politics in Romania to contextualize the birth of the contemporary student movement after the Romanian Revolution in 1989.

The literature review of student representation in Romania can be characterized as necessitous. Therefore, the second part follows the emergence of the contemporary student movement in connection with the University Square Phenomenon. We outlined the newly emerged model of pluralist student representation starting from the models designed by Klemenčič (2012). This part focuses on the development of student representation during 1990, concentrating on the Romanian Students' League (LSR) and The Independent National Student Union (UNIS).

Furthermore, the third part evokes how student politics and representation on the national level after the 2000s augmented. Our focalization is on the National Alliance of Student Organisation in Romania (ANOSR), as it represents one of the major national unions of students with continuity in the last twenty years. Sequentially, we analyze the organizational structure of ANOSR as part of a pluralist model. We outline the internal resources and endeavor to understand the political agenda, mode of action, and outputs of student representation in Romania. Our line of reasoning conveys that student representation became a driver of the Europeanization of Higher Education.

Thirdly, we describe the formal student representation system adopted in mainly all universities. Students are predominantly part of all governing bodies within a university, usually through their representatives from local student unions. Our conclusions also use the results of a survey.

Although all the authors have been or are part of the ANOSR formal leadership, we are committed to objective research based on an adequate methodology and with a significant effort to introduce as many as possible relevant sources for our research goals.

Sociopolitical Developments in Romania—The History of Student Politics in Romania

The Maturity of the Pre-war Student Movement and the Emphasis on Nationalism

The first two Romanian universities emerged at the dawn of the United Principalities of Moldova and Walachia in Iasi (1860) and Bucharest (1864). Sadlak (1990) argues that the inauguration of the Romanian universities was “an important confirmation of the newly acquired statehood.” The first student organizations in Romania were created around the first universities, borrowing some features from their European peers. These pre-First World War student organizations had mainly academic objectives, publishing journals promoting the most progressive ideas of the epoque.

The primary forms of student representation gained momentum after the First World War, when Romania included far more historical provinces, such as Transylvania, Bessarabia, Banat, and Bukovina. As youth perceived the universities as an instrument to ascendant social mobility, the number of higher education institutions (HEIs) and students increased significantly: from 18.227 in 1921 to 31.227 in 1932 (Sادلak, 1990). Nevertheless, the economic development of the 1920s and 1930s was minor compared to other countries in the region. The more charitable perspectives on this area tend to ignore the characteristics of the student movements in the 1920s and 1930s.

Confronted with a period of social insecurities during their period while aspiring to “intellectual” status, many students become frustrated with their situation. The economic crisis of 1929–33 only added more pressure on them. Sdrobiş (2015) concludes that students perceived the state centralism as a mechanism of repression. At the same time, the central administration failed to integrate them into public affairs and offer them a position as civil servants. In the late 1920s, more than 40 percent of Romanian students were pursuing a Law degree at the University of Bucharest (2015). This situation led to student radicalization.

At the same time and interlinked with this context, three other major trends in the student organization developed: the affiliation of the student organizations to the political parties (in which the prominence of the far-right was gaining momentum year by year), the strong nationalism promoted within and by student organizations and the “unionization,” a process by which student movements borrowed feature of labor union organization, including the way of conveying social revendications. In this sense, the student movement also reached out to other organizations in Europe to seek cooperation and to improve their capacity.

The nationalistic line was also part of universities’ mission, which accomplished the objective of promoting the Romanian identity. New universities emerged in the recently gained regions such as in Cluj (Transylvania), Timișoara (Banat), Chernivtsi (Bukovina), or Chișinău (Bessarabia). Even though some forms of higher education institutions were already established in those cities,

the Romanian Government fundamentally changed professors to promote a nationalistic spirit (Năstasă-Matei, 2016).

Ethnic minorities were well represented in urban areas across those regions. In several faculties, Jewish students were significantly more enrolled in higher education institutions across the country than Romanians. However, from the 1930s the mainstream national student movement (led, in part, by the National Union of Orthodox Christian Students) actively suppressed the enrolment of Jews in HE in Romania.

Students during the Communist Regime

After 1944, Romania fell under Soviet occupation, which led to the emergence of the Romanian Workers' Party (RWP) in power. In December 1947, King Michael I abdicated as Romania became a socialist republic under the leadership of the communist party. One of the most critical higher education reforms was the adoption of a new Law for the educational reform no. 11/1968. The new policies consistently favored students with a "blue-collar" origin through various instruments.

Even in an extremely limited environment of public manifestations or personal beliefs, Romanian students' manifested solidarity with the Hungarian Revolution after October 23, 1956. Several demonstrations quickly evolved into student protests that called for reforms in the academic sector (e.g., increase in the scholarship and better conditions in the student dorms and cafeterias), the reincorporation of Bessarabia and Bukovina in Romania (provinces acquired by URSS) and destalinization of the society. Initially, the communist regime had a diplomatic approach and negotiated with the students. From October 30, 1956, the policy drastically shifted as student leaders were arrested, trialed, and imprisoned. The regime managed to crack down on students' revolt fiercely, with the active contribution of HEI management and the student branches of RWP. The most significant movements occurred in Timișoara, where thousands of students publicly expressed opposition to the communist regime (Granville, 2008, p. 199–203). After the purges, RWP acted quickly and, in 1957, established the Union of Romanian Students' Associations (UASR), which promptly gathered approximately 50.000 members (Tismăneanu, 2007, p. 333–40).

After the emergence of Nicolae Ceaușescu at the leadership of the newly rebranded Romanian Communist Party (RCP), the situation changed as the social and political criteria became less relevant though not entirely excluded for admission to higher education. New educational laws were passed in 1968 and 1978, representing a significant step toward expanding higher education. In 1973, UASR changed its structure and name, becoming the Union of the Romanian Communist Students' Associations (UASCR). As the number of students significantly rose, UASCR had more than 100.000 members in the 1970s and almost abutted 150.000 members as all students were automatically enrolled (Tismăneanu, 2007).

Besides several manifestations in Oradea (1972) and Iași (1987) (Dhondt and Ioncioaia, 2017), no significant student opposition occurred afterwards. Students were, nevertheless, one of the main drivers of the Romanian Revolution of 1989. The communist regime downplayed students' social status during the 1980s, and admission to higher education became hard due to a mismatch between demographic realities and educational policies (Deaconu, 2020). Students played an essential role in the most important towns where the Revolution outbreak, such as Timișoara (Granville, 2008) and Bucharest (Gheboianu and Murgescu, 2018). They had a decisive role as

they were among the first social category to be in the first line of the protests despite the bloody repressive measures taken by the authorities.

Toward a Pluralist Model of Student Representation in Romania

The Emergence of the Contemporary Student Movement and The University Square Phenomenon

The student's significant role in the Romanian Revolution of 1989 echoed immediately on the university campuses as the relations between teachers and students rapidly changed. The latter were part of the wave of democratization of Romanian society after the fall of the communist regime. Their involvement was affirmed by granting them a significant role in the HEIs governance bodies such as the Faculty Councils or the University Senate, even the right to veto decisions concerning students. The unprecedented empowerment of student representatives started to exhibit promptly. For instance, black-listing some teaching staff mainly for political views started in some faculties in late December 1989 (Gheboianu and Murgescu, 2018). Students perceived some of the teachers as sympathizers of the RCP or collaborators of the former Communist secret police (*Securitate*), one of the most efficient tools of repression until 1989.

The structuration of the local students' organizations started in 1990 from 'two poles of influence': the University of Bucharest and the Polytechnic University of Bucharest. Student movement structuration followed a "bottom-up track" as local students' associations organized in nongovernmental organizations (Proteasa et al., 2018, p. 38). Two national unions of students (NUS) emerged in late December 1989 and early January 1990—Liga Studenților [din România] (Romanian Students' League—LSR) from the University of Bucharest and Uniunea Națională Independentă Studențească (The Independent National Student Union—UNIS) from the Polytechnic University of Bucharest. The latter became the first Romanian NUS that successfully applied to the European Student Information Bureau (ESIB), which carried out the activity of the Western European Students Information Bureau (WESIB) (Proteasa et al., 2018).

Apart of the academic and social concerns, students also had significant political concerns while the representation function gained impressive momentum. The Romanian Students' League, especially throughout the league from the University of Bucharest, was at the core of the massive protests during the "The University Square" phenomenon. The movement was an anti-communist cultural and social manifestation led by LSR protesting the new political regime after the fall of communism, the only one of such kind in Europe. The students felt that the change was only apparent with the same communist party leaders holding power, restraining the genuine liberalization of Romania (Bejinaru, 2019).

Ultimately, in June 1990, the ruling party started a violent campaign against the demonstration in University Square and entered the final phase: direct aggression. Based on a plan at the highest level, the police force intervened brutally, and the few demonstrators and hunger strikers still in the Square were brutalized and arrested. The Students' League declared a strike and demanded

the release of the arrested students. Students barricaded themselves in the University building. A couple of hours later, more than 10,000 miners arrived in Bucharest. Accompanied by the government's representatives, they triggered one of the most barbaric political repressions that the current Romanian society has known. Students in the building were savagely assaulted, and the miners' destroyed laboratories and classrooms and devastated LSR headquarters. Hundreds of students in severe health conditions were arrested and detained. These events significantly damaged the democratization process in Romania and the international perspective on the newly elected regime (Marcău, 2019), but also left a mark on the importance of the student movement in Romania, a legacy which lasted for decades.

Student Representation in 1990s and Early 2000s Romania

Proteasa et al. (2018) have charted several waves of structuration in the 1990s as the early goals of the LSR could be resumed to the acquisition of the patrimony of the former UASCR and to improve students' conditions in terms of dormitories, cafeterias, public transportation, or scholarships. Above all, there were also political pursuits, best seen throughout the University Square Phenomenon, but also through the nationalistic wave of LSR in the mid-90's. The Independent National Student Union (UNIS) emerged from the most significant technical higher education institution, the Polytechnic University of Bucharest. LSR had its headquarters in the University of Bucharest, a comprehensive higher education institution with a significant history. This student union remains today one of the most emblematic student associations and one of the most known social actors in 1990s Romania.

In 1995, the Văcăroiu government drafted and enacted a new Law on Education in Romania, repealing the remnants of Communist legislation. However, the process was done without student participation, which led to the biggest post-revolutionary student protests in Romania, more than 100.000 students protesting in the streets. The situation was so severe that the Ministry took into consideration cancelling the academic year altogether. Even though students lost some of their rights (decrease in student participation in HEI governing bodies from 30 percent to 25 percent and the right to veto), the protest was considered a huge success since an adopted law was fundamentally altered.

The loss of power of LSR, based on the perceived over politicization of the top management (as they received roles in the anti-communist Constantinescu regime) and the imposed top-bottom approach created a vacuum of legitimacy in the student movement. Local unions started lobbying on the national stage, with the government trying to divide the student movement.

In this context, twenty-four local unions with geographical representativity across Romania founded ANOSR as a new actor on the Romanian Higher Education stage in 1999, during the International Students' Week in Timisoara, the city which sparkled the Romanian Revolution and became the heartland of ANOSR. Fearing an independent student movement, the government tried to block the formalization of ANOSR in courts, with the Supreme Court of Justice of Romania giving ANOSR legal personality.

In 2000, the Ministry of Education and Research established a National Student Council (Consiliul Național al Studenților) with its membership composed of elected students in each university's Senate. Proteasa et al. (2018) argue that it was an enjoyed representational monopoly

and a hierarchal structure illustrated through the low number of formal positions. It rapidly became an arena for confrontations between ANOSR and other NUSes and factions created and sustained by the Social Democratic Party until it was abolished in 2005, without being ever functional. The attempt of the government to undermine the student movement massively influenced ANOSR, shaping its long-standing policy of caution of any collaboration with political parties, as well as firm rebuttal of any organization of national student representation by the state.

Student Politics and Representation on the National Level after 2000s

This section describes how Romania's most representative student association (ANOSR) evolved from early 1999 until now. We focus on the organizational characteristics that Klemenčič (2012) suggest are defined by the organization's balancing between the "logic of membership" and the "logic of influence." Klemenčič (2012) distinguishes between two types of national student unions: a social movement-type or an interest group-type organization. ANOSR does not fit well with either of these ideal types but displays a hybrid combination between the types mentioned above.

Two issues are significant for the development of ANOSR. First, the founding of ANOSR took place in Timișoara, the city where students' protests of 1956 were the most vibrant and where students took the frontline when the Romanian Revolution occurred in 1989. So, as the two emblematic student organizations in the first half of the 1990s, LSR and UNIS were based in Bucharest, ANOSR emerged as a rather national movement in one of the most significant university centers outside the capital. Second, we argue that ANOSR was a driver of "Europeanization," both on subjects concerning higher education and other significant topics since 2012, such as preserving the rule of law or the environmental issues. We understand Europeanization as a "process by which domestic policy areas become increasingly subject to European policy-making" (Börzel, 1999, p. 574). However, we also understand the influences of the Bologna process, which is an intergovernmental process and not an EU-driven process, as an aspect of Europeanization. More broadly, as discussed by Dobbins and Kwiek (2017) in Central and Eastern European countries, Europeanization is a part of a sustained effort to pivot the countries from a communist paradigm of higher education based on ideology of state overregulation toward more autonomous higher education institutions part of innovative HE systems that are compatible with human capital development.

Organizational Structure of ANOSR—The Pluralist Model

On a legal basis, ANOSR is a federation of NGOs. Concerning organizational structure, ANOSR has a well-defined hierarchy as its members are student organizations that "confine to represent students and professional student organizations in the country that follow ANOSR principles" (ANOSR, 2022). According to its statute, ANOSR defines a *student organization* as one that "has students as at least 75 percent of its total members and aims to defend and promote the rights and students' interests from a social, educational, civic and professional point of view" (ANOSR

Statute). There are several types of membership: active, candidate, associate, suspended, and founder. The General Assembly (*Adunarea Generală*) of ANOSR is the governing body, and it consists of all active unions that have the right to vote. Between two General Assemblies (GA), the Executive Committee—EC (*Biroul de conducere*), composed of thirteen members elected individually by the GA for a one-year mandate, is entitled to coordinate the federation's activity and implement the GA decisions.

To understand the evolution of the number of student unions in the GA of ANOSR, it is necessary to underline that even though openness is stated as a fundamental principle, there is a robust entrance mechanism in the federation that has evolved across time. In 2022, in ANOSR there are a total of 115 members.

Internal Resources of ANOSR

ANOSR has inconsistent administrative funding as it often competes for EU/EEA or national grants based on its projects. Based on the historical reluctance, ANOSR doesn't accept direct and special funding from the government or political parties. Accordingly to its statute, ANOSR has a vital principle of independence as several financing sources could not be compatible with the organizational mission. Also, Năstase (2018) found out that student organizations in Romania attract funding on an "event-driven" record, mainly with an impact on the short term. Student organizations deal with an unpredictable cash flow, which can explain the low membership fee in ANOSR—approximately 20 euros per year. Also, the GA introduced membership fees only in 2008, a decade after ANOSR was founded.

As ANOSR scrambles for financial stability, it relies on volunteers for its daily base activity. EC members are not paid, and their activity is supported by several sectoral committees (Education, Regional Development, Organizational Development, PR, or Projects and Fundraising) supplied with members from local unions. They also work on a voluntary base. ANOSR elaborates its extensive studies in-house, by the EC, as a professionalized administration does not exist. However, the financial situation greatly improved in recent years, with ANOSR obtaining increased funding, especially from EEA (Norway-Iceland-Lichtenstein) grants.

ANOSR maintains a "high degree of coordination of the overall organizational purpose" (Klemenčič, 2012), which is specific for an interest group approach. The federation provides training both at local level, depending on the interests of students' association, and on a national level periodically, on fields that can vary—future leadership of student organizations (*NextJR*), recruiting members in student organizations (*NextHR*), Public Relations and Communication in a local union (*NextPR*), or fundraising (*NextFR*). Constant regional and national-level student representation trainings are also held.

A Strong Commitment for Europeanization of Higher Education in Romania

In order to understand the political agenda of ANOSR, it is required to comprehend the principles cultivated over time that are at the core of its statute. Some of the main principles were adopted

during a GA meeting shortly after Romania embraced at a full scale the Bologna Process (ANOSR, 2006a) and are similar to the four pillars of student representation adopted in ESU/ESIB (Proteasa, 2009): *Democracy, Legitimacy, and Representativeness among students, Involvement in the decision-making process or Non-partisan approach toward politics*. As ANOSR became a full ESIB member in the early 2000s, the structuration process of students' organization became a top-down process deeply connected to the Bologna Process (Proteasa et al., 2018).

Deca (2013) spotlighted three noteworthy moments for the implementation of the Bologna Process in Romania: 1999 as the moment when the Bologna Declaration was signed; 2004–5 as the period when national legislation enacted the declaration and subsequent policy frame; 2010–12 as the process of adopting a new Law on Education and hosting the Bologna Process Secretariat in preparation for the 2012 EHEA Ministerial Conference. ANOSR assumed the role of a “change agent” or “norm entrepreneur” (cf. Börzel and Risse, 2003), persuading the domestic policymakers to initiate change, as the main stakeholder promoting and overseeing the implementation of the Bologna Process in Romania, and increase higher education funding (Deca, 2013, pp. 18–19).

ANOSR strived to change the perception of student organizations in society from “organisers of freshmen’s prom and strikes” to actively involved actors in the reform of higher education. For example, in 2006, the political agenda focused on sectorial topics that had in their core the Bologna Process (ANOSR, 2006b). This is an example of adjusting organizational features coherently to accomplish their representative function as discussed by Klemenčič (2012).

A substantial increase in (higher) education budget was the most prominent request during the protests of 2003, 2005, and 2009. Students urged a minimum budget of 5 percent of GDP in 2003 (Moldovan, 2003) and 2005 (Jitea, 2005). Firstly, the Romanian Government did not fulfill the request, but several facilities were given, such as increased access to railway transportation or increase in public grants awarded to students. Instead, the “Give me five” campaign in 2005 was more fruitful in terms of results. The campaign converged with the most significant protest movement of school teachers in the history of Romania (Jitea, 2005). Though mainly the society and media were focused on teachers’ strikes (Agabrian, 2008), ANOSR received a positive answer for their requests after negotiations with the governmental officials: Education was to have an extensive budget of 5 percent of GDP for Education for investments in infrastructure rather than salaries (ANOSR, 2005).

In 2009, as Romanians began to sense the economic crisis, students urged for an increased budget for scholarships, student dorms or cafeterias and for maintaining the allowances on local transportation. They received a 15 percent increase in scholarship funding and maintained their facilities on local and national transportation (ANOSR, 2009).

Since the start of the Bologna Process, articulating the Bologna Process reforms in Romania was on top of the ANOSR agenda. ANOSR sought a better differentiation between the study cycles in the legal framework. As substantial changes and revisions commenced on bachelor, master, and doctoral degrees starting from the academic year 2005–6, there were ambiguous aspects concerning how universities should conduct this process. The Ministry of Education conducted the process of reorganizing higher education as stated in Law no. 288/2004. It approved (and still does today) the study programs and further specializations annually. There was no clear differentiation concerning the professional or academic type of study programs (Deca, 2013). Also, the new master’s programs occurred only in 2009–10 though some universities piloted

them in the years before. Still, lecturers perceived it roughly as another form of the bachelor's program during the preparations for transition (Szolárl, 2014). In this regard, ANOSR received a governmental agreement for the latter to spend more than 15 million euros in 2006 on student issues (ANOSR, 2005).

By this time, ANOSR had three main action lines: it focused on adequately implementing the ECTS system to achieve student-centered learning, promoting a quality culture in universities and involving students as genuine partners in all educational decision-making processes (ANOSR, 2006b). Implementing the ECTS system confronted universities' opposition as there was no common ground concerning aspects that should be reflected in the credit value (Szolár, 2014). Further on, students were not consulted on ECTS implementation, even though they were "those who tried to fill the gap" (Deca, 2013, p. 18).

Student participation in the decision-making inside universities grew as they became involved in quality assurance processes through the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS) in 2006 (Damian, 2011) as a follow-up of the "Give me five" campaign (ANOSR, 2005). In the same year, two national student federations delegated members to ARACIS Council: ANOSR and UNSR. Members of the ANOSR Quality Assurance Experts Pool became an efficient tool for monitoring the development of a quality culture in Romanian universities.

The risk of eroding the connection with the "grass-roots student body" arose (cf. Klemenčič, 2012, p. 6) as ANOSR became increasingly involved in enacting the Bologna Process in Romania. Starting from the good practices of ESIB (2005), which launched a Black Book of the Bologna Process, ANOSR published its own national-level booklet to emphasize that eight years after the Romanian representatives signed the Bologna Declaration, few steps were made toward positive and in-depth changes in higher education. Also, in the same year, ANOSR addressed the topic of the Bologna Process to students through a guide (Brumă, Caragea and Atanasiu, 2006) and specific events in each university centre—"Bologna Weeks in Universities." For instance, Deca (2013) recalls that they "were perceived as the most supportive actors to Bologna reforms and as powerful critics of the way in which the Bologna Process was communicated top-down and implemented at institutional level" (p. 18) even though at the beginning of the reforms, in the late 1990s and early 2000s, students, among other actors, "did not easily understand the essence of Bologna" as "Information was rather scarce and confusion was widespread among academics" (Damian, 2011, p. 60). This context determined ANOSR to fill the gap of policy by the national authorities, writing extensively on the implementation of Bologna Process and, from that point, professionalizing its discourse with the most comprehensive studies and ground analysis of the state of the art in HE system in Romania elaborated by stakeholders.

A New Education Law and When Dreams Come True

In 2007, a Presidential Commission for analysis and policymaking in education and research was established that produced an exhaustive report that screened education and research in Romania. Its conclusions led to a National Pact for Education signed by all parliamentary political parties and the main stakeholders, including ANOSR. After parliamentary and presidential elections, starting in 2009, a new political majority was established (Dobbins, 2017). The Ministry of

Education carried out the task to elaborate on a new Law on National Education (Law no. 1/2011) adopted in 2011.

ANOSR adopted a mix of strategies that combined lobby and advocacy processes and conflictual episodes such as repeatedly protests or flash-mobs in February, March, and November 2011. Also, once again, it adapted some organizational characteristics to enhance its representative function as the number of vice-presidents in educational affairs grew from one to three in 2010. If some of the core action lines of the Bologna Process had been transposed within Law no. 1/2011, student participation in decisional bodies both at the university and national level would have been reduced. Nevertheless, after constant pressure from ANOSR, the Ministry of Education adopted a Student Rights and Obligations Code in 2012. Even though it was one of the most important tools in ensuring students' rights and implementing student-centered learning within the universities, the document partly neglected this crucial action line from the Bologna Process (Matei, Hâj and Alexe, 2015).

ANOSR continued to militate for increased financing for higher education. On November 13, 2013, under the motto of "6 percent [of GDP—o.n.] for Education!," more than 9.000 students protested in various university centers in Romania. It was the last major protest organized entirely and exclusively by ANOSR across the country. The requests would have served public universities' budgets as they still strived after the economic crisis. Those were based on an in-depth analysis of public financing of higher education (ANOSR, 2013). Also, as an ANOSR report on student support services revealed in 2012(a), scholarships, student dormitories, and cafeterias were severely underfunded. In 2014, ANOSR continued to promote topics such as improving graduates' employability through centers as it was one of the decisive actors that pressed the Ministry of Education to adopt subsequential legislation to enact them (ANOSR, 2014a,b,c).

The national federation continued to push further for a significant increase in public funding for higher education. It revealed that between 2011 and 2014, when Romania did not fully recover after the economic crisis, 81 percent of the state universities increased their taxes. Additionally, though the budget for student dormitories increased by 10 percent after the 2013 protests, 38 percent of the universities did increase the taxes for these services in 2014 (ANOSR, 2014d).

As ANOSR's public discourse became increasingly professionalized as the positions on different topics relied on increasingly comprehensive internal analysis, it is to be mentioned that also the political agenda became more transversal. ANOSR and the Romanian Council of School Students (Consiliul Național al Elevilor—CNE) vehemently opposed the project of developing pit gold mining remote settlement of Roșia Montană, situated in the Apuseni Mountains (Hotnews, 2013), expressing their disbelief in the massive protests that erupted in the Romanian largest cities that autumn (Olteanu and Beyerle, 2017). In a pivotal moment in recent history, a fire broke out in the Colectiv nightclub in Bucharest, killing sixty-four persons due to systematic failures to respect minimal safety regulations. ANOSR, along with CNE and the Romanian Youth Council (Consiliul Tineretului din România), launched a campaign to mobilize youth to participate at the protests (ANOSR, 2015). As the largest protests after the 1989 Romanian Revolution sparked, an impressive number of young people, many of them members of student organizations, participated in the protests that culminated with the resignation of the prime minister.

In late November 2015, ANOSR negotiated an increase of 21.7 percent of the budget for scholarships for the next year with the Romanian government (Pantazi, 2015). Meanwhile, the

organizational focus started focusing on topics the organization was unfamiliar with. Such a topic was ethics and integrity in higher education after several plagiarism scandals broke out in the past years (ANOSR, 2016a). Up to today, ANOSR is the only national stakeholder in Romanian HE fighting for academic integrity. In the autumn of 2016, ANOSR launched a national campaign—The future implies students! (*Viitorul Implică Studenții!*). Its abbreviation, VIS, meant “dream.” Students proposed fifteen objectives for the future parliament that was elected in December 2016. These objectives were mainly focused on topics such as an increased budget for higher education, improved and stable legal framework, better living conditions, enhanced counseling, and orientation in career facilities, better traineeships, and internships to improve graduates’ employability or improvements in quality assurance procedures while implying students in all QA evaluations (ANOSR, 2016b).

Several meetings with some of the political contenders were held as the parties that won the election—Social Democratic Party (PSD) (ANOSR, 2016c) and the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats (ALDE) (ANOSR, 2016d) signed a commitment that part of the ANOSR objectives will be implemented with the support of the future administration. As PSD became the primary partner in the Coalition government in December 2016, ANOSR asked that the commitment signed during the electoral campaign be implemented. On January 6, 2017, the Romanian government adopted Emergency Ordinance no. 2, which provided free railroad transportation for students and an increase of 201 percent in scholarship funding. While the government started to deliver other aspects of the agreements, on January 31, 2017, the government adopted an Emergency Ordinance no. 2, which conducted several changes to criminal law that severely affected the rule of law in Romania. Immediately protests broke out across the country, as students were the main drivers of this social movement (Burean, 2019).

Though the relationship between ANOSR and Coalition became tense due to the strong involvement in #rezist protests, the government or the parliament legislated further aspects concerning the agreements signed in 2016. Public expenditure on higher education rapidly started in 2017, with an increase of 111.69 percent between 2016 and 2020. The average costs for a student more than doubled (103.64 percent) in the same period (Figure 32.1).

Similarly, the average expenditure on scholarships per student increased by 137.21 percent between 2016 and 2020, as intermediate costs for student facilities in student dormitories and cafeterias grew by 16.03 percent (Figure 32.1). These were results of a systematic push from ANOSR toward political factors to increase higher education financing in the last years. The national federation adapted its intermediation with the public authorities to deliver more promising student outcomes. A mix of formalized and informal relational structures between ANOSR and the public authorities proved to be a good decision. After 2016, especially after the Government Ordinance no. 915/2017 started to be enforced, students became members of all types of QA evaluations in Romanian higher education. The expert students’ pool enlarged almost ten times due to the increased number of evaluations where students participate.

ANOSR also became increasingly active in the Romanian civil society, supporting causes such as the introduction of sex education in lower secondary education (ANOSR, 2020) or publicly supporting the LGBT+ community by criticizing the 2018 referendum on the definition of family in Romania, which aimed to constitutionally ban same-sex marriages (ANOSR, 2018).

In recent years, even though ANOSR still demanded the increase of public funding of HE, considering the slow developments of expected outcomes, the focus shifted on how public

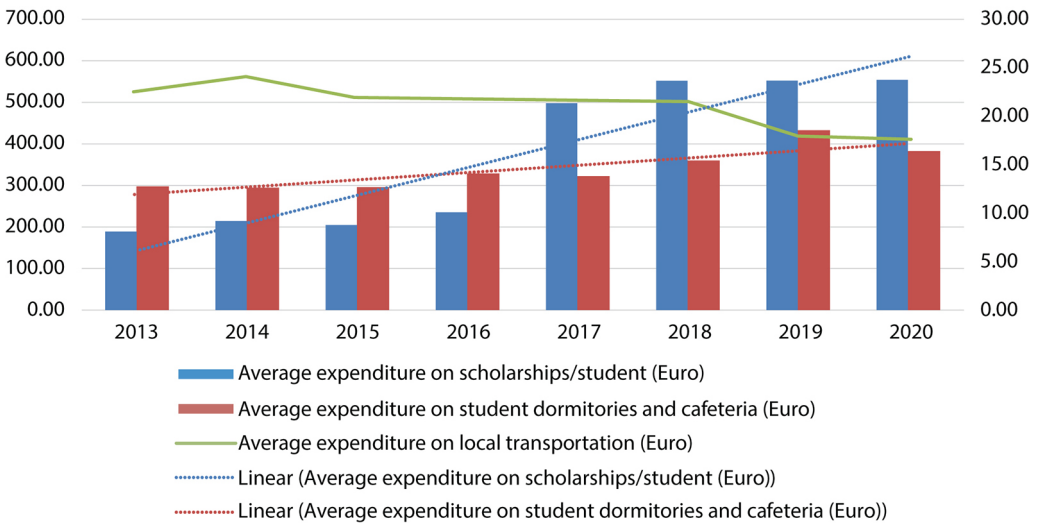


Figure 32.1 Average expenditure on student support services and scholarships in euro between 2013 and 2020.

Source: Ministry of Public Finance 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020.

funding is used in terms of HEI management. Other priorities included student camps (resulting in the increasing of the number of places by more than 50 percent), scholarships, and student dormitories (resulting in increasing the minimum amount of scholarships and 10 percent increase in student dormitories), rewriting the Methodology of QA (heavily influenced), including HE in the National Recovery and Resilience Plan, the effects of Covid or counseling services for students. A contentious issue was and still is the election and power of rectors, as ANOSR lobbied for students having 25 percent of the vote for rector elections (currently the percentage varies around 10 percent). Through political loopholes, some rectors are actively trying to increase their power at the expense of the academic community, eliminating their term limits and becoming de facto the sole stakeholders listened to by the Ministry of Education. After many years, two protests were organized by ANOSR in 2021, one for increasing student scholarships and the other one against the Governments’ decision to roll back on the free railway transportation for students.

Student Politics and Representation in Romanian Higher Education Institutions

Law no. 1/2011 requires that at least 25 percent of each University Senate and Faculty Council should be composed of student representatives. These should be elected through a direct, secret, and universal vote of all students from the faculty or university level. Also, a student representative

should be elected to the University Board of Directors, and at least one student should be a member of committees such as Ethics or Internal Quality Assurance.

In order to better understand student representation at the university level in Romania, we will analyze the LOC-SIHEG-Romania (2022) survey answers. Forty local student unions entirely from ANOSR have responded to the questionnaire, all of them being registered as NGOs. Almost half of them (47.5 percent) have more than 200 members, and one union has more than 1.000 members. The most frequent funding source comes from the membership fees (82.5 percent), as only 25 percent receive institutional grants and 15 percent obtain government grants. Nevertheless, as Năstase (2018) also commented, 75 percent of the local organizations receive funding based on projects.

Regarding budgeting, 55 percent of the unions have a maximum budget of 10.000 USD, as almost one-third have less than 500 USD annually. This underlines the scarcity of internal resources, most probably as they encounter fluctuating incomes, especially after Covid. In this regard, none of them owes any property as 97.5 percent of them receive the office space for free, most probably from the university where they have members. Not any local student unions have employed staff. Their leadership is entirely elected, without exemption. Those positions are 90 percent voluntarily, being uncompensated. Only 7.5 percent have some expenses reimbursed.

Among the most demanding issues on the political agenda are the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, student motivation, and mental health. In this sense, local unions' membership was severely affected by the low motivation to attend online courses. Other topics of interest are the accommodation problems, especially during the pandemic, internships, and the companies' approach to the pandemic, the implementation of hybrid education and the student's rights during the exam sessions, the integration of the international students, students' involvement in the local community or concerning related to internal quality assurance.

The most common mode of action in the local unions is through representation in institutional governing bodies. As mentioned above, a clear legal framework can be verified throughout QA external evaluations in terms of applying the minimum requirements in formal student representation. Thirty percent have expert or consultancy roles in institutional administrative bodies, while only 5 percent marked protest or contentious politics as a mode of action. Almost ten years have passed since the latest large protests organized by ANOSR, and the culture of protest is fading out in the local unions. Nevertheless, 25 percent of the local student association can retrieve a large-scale student protest within their higher education institution. Among the reasons are the election of some of the rectors, the elimination of the free rail transportation for students (governmental decision), copyright regulations that endangered students' work, tuition fee raises, or Covid-19-related aspects.

None of the surveyed local unions has a relationship with a political party. Hundred percent consider them to be "autonomously on its political and professional agenda," and 97.5 percent have "complete autonomy in organizing internal structures and decision processes." Also, vast majority did not approach trade unions to establish a contact point.

Concerning the last student elections, 37.5 percent mentioned that the turnout was no more than 10 percent, indicating a flawed legitimacy of the student representatives. In total, 90 percent of the local student unions had less than 50 percent of students participating in the last elections. Primarily, student associations indicated that in the last five years, the turnout had been approximately the same (40 percent), as a quarter of them revealed that the number of students

voting for their representatives is decreasing (25 percent). Nevertheless, a similar percentage (22.5 percent) had observed an increase in voters as the overview picture depicts different trends in student representation.

All local unions indicated that students are represented in the governing body of the higher education institution, mainly the University Senate. The vast majority of them revealed that they have an equal vote on all matters (87.5 percent) as 10 percent of the local unions perceive that even though the students have seats in the governing body, they can vote only on particular subjects. In the case of 70 percent of local union answers, student representatives are usually included in education-related committees, such as Ethics or Internal Quality Assurance. A similar percentage is related to student representatives in student affairs commissions. Neither Law no. 1/2011 nor the Student Rights and Obligations Code demand that students should participate in the Teaching Department Councils meetings, despite their importance, especially for the curriculum or other student-centered education-related issues. Nevertheless, 20 percent of the local student unions responded that student representatives are invited permanently, while 42.5 percent answered that sometimes, an invitation to attend these meetings is issued.

62.5 percent of local student unions agreed that they are invited by the HEI management to discussions on an ad hoc or need-basis when asked by one of the sides, while 20 percent indicated that they have both regular and formal meetings at least once a year. The most common answers were the dean, the vice-dean for students' problems, the rector and the vice-rector.

Conclusion

The student movement in Romania has suffered many complex developments, especially in the last twenty years. The early and comprehensive Europeanization of ANOSR, through ESIB, marked its discourse on the national stage and working methods and became a driver for this process, especially in higher education. Parts of the Europeanization also reflect internally throughout the adoption of internal procedures (study visits, development visits, rules regarding conducting the GA) of ESU decisively. ANOSR guided its policies starting from the pillars of student representation adopted in ESIB:

- *Democracy.* Students commit to fighting for democratic values and defending fundamental human rights.
- *Legitimacy and representativeness among students.* A pledge to represent students in an honest manner and on an objective basis. It will promote authentic values in academia, and student representatives should be elected based on proven skills to act diligently in good faith.
- *Involvement in the decision-making processes.* Students should become equal partners in all decision-making processes concerning higher education at local, national, and international levels.
- *Non-partisan approach toward politics.* ANOSR should not be associated with any political ideology or party while sustaining an unbiased and collaborative approach.

The initial bottom-top approach of ANOSR, incredibly robust during the first ten years of existence (1999–2009), ensured the connection with the grassroots, while the subsequent top-bottom approach developed since improved the NUSes' outreach and established it as a professionalized stakeholder involved in the day-to-day decision-making processes on HE at the national level. The most prominent topics on the ANOSR agenda between 2003 and 2010 were:

- *Increasing education funding at all access levels at a certain percentage of GDP, mostly 5 percent.* The increase should reflect on developing adequate infrastructure for teaching and learning rather than higher teacher wages. Also, the Ministry of Education should introduce more qualitative indicators concerning financing higher education, such as the percentage of scholarships awarded by HEIs, or the number of traineeships offered by higher education institutions.
- *Better living conditions and an improved learning environment.* The budget for scholarships and transportation should increase while learning spaces, cafeterias, and student dorms should be repaired and improved. The Ministry of Education should adapt the legal framework to better support students with financial restraints and increase mobility locally and nationally through public transportation.
- *A more tenacious and lucid implementation of the Bologna Process.* The implementation of the action lines adopted through the Bologna Process started heavily, almost five years after the initial declaration was adopted. ANOSR's haste for a quicker conducting of the legislative package was in line with the development at the societal level as Romania signed the Treaty of Accession in the EU in 2005 as it became a member state in 2007. Also, improving quality in the Romanian universities became a strong incentive to promote Europeanization. Consequently, ANOSR became the most prolific and active stakeholder in promoting the quality assurance system in Romania.
- *Student participation at the local and national levels, especially in Ministerial Committees and the Quality Assurance Agency.*

Balancing policy content writing as an interest group and lobbying at the national level as a social movement, with solid capacity development activities directed to enhance local unions' capacities, ANOSR sits in a syncretic position between the models of a student organization. Nevertheless, it managed to profoundly shape Romanian higher education due to a constant push toward increasing financing of public higher education, constant improvement of the QA mechanism, and substantial participation of students as equal stakeholders at local and national levels in relevant decisional bodies for higher education.

References

- Agabrian, M. (2008). Greva generală a profesorilor din noiembrie 2005 și jocul politic. O analiză de conținut: The November 2005 teachers' general strike and political games. A Content Analysis. *Sociologie Românească* 6(2): 3–20.
- ANOSR. (2005). Comunicat de presă—5% din PIB pentru EDUCAȚIE!. Communicatedepresa.ro. <https://www.comunicatedepresa.ro/aliana-nationala-a-organizatiilor-studentesti-din-romania/5-din-pib-pentru-educatie/> (accessed March 6, 2022).

- ANOSR. (2006a). Minutes of the Board meeting.
- ANOSR. (2006b). Cartea Neagră a Procesului Bologna. Exemple de implementare greșită în universitățile din România.
- ANOSR. (2009). Istoricul protestelor studentesti din 2009. anosr.ro. <https://anosr.ro/istoricul-protestelor-studentesti-din-2009/> (accessed March 6, 2022).
- ANOSR. (2013). “Responsabilitate pentru educație,” anosr.ro. <https://anosr.ro/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/2013-%E2%80%93-Studiu-%E2%80%93-Responsabilitate-pentru-Educatie-%E2%80%93-efectele-subfinantarii-educatiei.pdf> (accessed July 22, 2022).
- ANOSR. (2014a). Serviciile de Consiliere și Orientare în Carieră. Perspectiva ANOSR. anosr.ro. <https://www.anosr.ro/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Serviciile-de-consiliere-si-orientare-in-cariera-Perspectiva-studentilor.pdf> (accessed July 22, 2022).
- ANOSR. (2014b). Serviciile de consiliere și orientare în carieră, un mecanism nefuncțional implementat de Ministerul Educației. anosr.ro. <https://anosr.ro/activitate/serviciile-de-consiliere-si-orientare-in-cariera-un-mecanism-nefunctional-implementat-de-ministerul-educatiei/4702/> (accessed July 22, 2022).
- ANOSR. (2014c) Retrospectivă a activității ANOSR în anul 2014. anosr.ro. <https://anosr.ro/uncategorized/retrospectiva-a-activitatii-anosr-in-anul-2014/5144/> (accessed July 22, 2022).
- ANOSR. (2014d). Taxele învățământului gratuit. anosr.ro. <https://anosr.ro/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/2014-%E2%80%93-Taxe-invatamantului-gratuit.pdf> (accessed July 22, 2022).
- ANOSR. (2015). Reprezentanții tinerilor își încurajează colegii să iasă în stradă. anosr.ro. <https://anosr.ro/slide/reprezentantii-tinerilor-isi-incurajeaza-colegii-sa-iasa-in-strada/5885/> (accessed July 22, 2022).
- ANOSR. (2016a). Universitățile „copy-paste”: fenomenul plagiatului și impostura academică în învățământul superior românesc—perspectiva studenților. anosr.ro. https://anosr.ro/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/pozitie_ANOSR_plagiat_etica_2016-6-iunie.pdf (accessed July 22, 2022).
- ANOSR. (2016b). Viitorul Implică Studenții: 15 obiective ale studenților pentru un sistem de învățământ superior performant și de calitate. anosr.ro. https://www.anosr.ro/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/ANOSR_Viitorul_Implic%C4%83_Studen%C8%9Bii_15_obiective_pentru_educa%C8%9Bie.pdf (accessed July 22, 2022).
- ANOSR. (2016c). Răspunsul Partidului Social Democrat—PSD la propunerile studenților. anosr.ro. <https://www.anosr.ro/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Raspunsul-PSD-la-propunerile-studentilor-08.12.2016.pdf> (accessed July 22, 2022).
- ANOSR. (2016d). Protocol de susținere a învățământului superior / obiectivele studenților din România. anosr.ro. <https://www.anosr.ro/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Angajament-ALDE-ANOSR.pdf> (accessed July 22, 2022).
- ANOSR. (2018). Poziția ANOSR privind referendumul pentru revizuirea Constituției României. anosr.ro. <https://anosr.ro/slide/pozitia-anosr-privind-referendumul-pentru-revizuirea-constitutiei-romaniei/8069/> (accessed July 22, 2022).
- ANOSR. (2020). The Youth Support the Implementation of Sexual Education in Schools. anosr.ro. <https://old.anosr.ro/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/28.05.2020-Students-support-the-implementation-of-sexual-education-in-schools.pdf> (accessed July 22, 2022).
- ANOSR. (2022). *Statute of ANOSR*, anosr.ro. <https://anosr.ro/despre-anosr/statut-anosr-2/> (accessed August 23, 2022).
- Bejinaru, S.C. (2019). Protestele din Piața Universității (1990) și tineretul. *Caiete de Antropologie Istorică* 34: 239–51.
- Börzel, T.A. (1999). Towards convergence in Europe? Institutional adaptation to Europeanization in Germany and Spain. *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 37(4): 573–96.
- Börzel, T.A. and Risse, T. (2003). Conceptualizing the domestic impact of Europe. In Featherstone, K. and Radaelli, C.M. (eds.), *The Politics of Europeanization* (pp. 57–82). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Brumă, T., Caragea, V. and Atanasiu, V. (2006). Procesul Bologna. Ghid pentru studenți.
- Bureau, T. (2019). Democrats on the streets. Drivers of student protest participation in Romania. *Partecipazione e conflitto*, 12(1): 22–42.

- Ciofâncă, A. (2006). Repere pentru o istorie a Uniunii Tineretului Comunist. *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie "A.D. Xenopol" Iași* 43–4: 527–48.
- Curaj, A., Deca, L. and Hâj, C.M. (2015). Romanian higher education in 2009–2013. The Bologna process and Romanian priorities in the search for an active European and global presence. In Curaj, A., Deca, L., Egron-Polak, E. and Salmi, J. (eds.), *Higher Education Reforms in Romania. Between the Bologna Process and National Challenges* (pp. 1–24). Cham: Springer.
- Damian, R.M. (2011). The Bologna process as a reform initiative in higher education in the Balkan countries. *European Education* 43(3): 56–69.
- Deaconu, Ș.m (2020). Limitările mobilității sociale prin intermediul învățământului superior la sfârșitul regimului comunist din România. In Báthory, D., Bosomitu, Ș. and Budeancă, C. (eds), *România de la comunism la postcomunism. Criză, transformare, democratizare. Anuarul Institutului de Investigare a Crimelor Comunismului și Memoria Exilului Românesc* (vol. XIV–XV, pp. 195–208). Iași: Polirom.
- Deca, L. (2013). The discursive uses of the Bologna process in Romanian higher education reform. Paper prepared for the Conference "Bologna and Beyond," Strasbourg, June 20–1, 2013. <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/18439199.pdf> (accessed March 6, 2022).
- Dobbins, M. (2017). Exploring higher education governance in Poland and Romania: Re-convergence after divergence?. *European Educational Research Journal* 16(5): 684–704.
- Dobbins, M. and Kwiek, M. (2017). Europeanization and globalization in higher education in Central and Eastern Europe: 25 years of changes revisited (1990–2015). *European Educational Research Journal* 16(5): 519–28.
- Dhondt, P. and Ioncioaia, F. (2017). Christmas Carolling in Bucharest and Camfire Singing in Iași. Students as a Specific Social Group in Ceaușescu's Romania. In Dhondt, P. and Boran, E. (eds), *Student Revolt, City, and Society in Europe. From the Middle Ages to the Present* (pp. 203–16). New York: Routledge.
- Dragoș, S. (2015). *Limitele meritocrației într-o societate agrară. Șomaj intelectual și radicalizare politică a tineretului în România interbelică*. Iași: Polirom.
- ESIB. (2005). *The Black Book of the Bologna Process*. Bergen.
- Granville, J.C. (2008). «We have Wine of All Kinds: Red, White, and Green»: Romanian reactions to the Hungarian Uprising in 1956. *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 2(54): 185–210.
- Gheboianu, M. and Murgescu, B. (2018). Student Assessment of Professors in Revolutionary Context. Case-Study: The History Faculty of the University of Bucharest (1989-1990). *International Review of Social Research* 8(1).
- Hotnews (2013), ANOSR si CNE condamna decizia privind exploatarea minereurilor de la Rosia Montana, <https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-esential-15494804-anosr-cne-condamna-decizia-privind-exploatarea-minereurilor-rosia-montana.htm>.
- Jitea, M. (2005). Studentii lanseaza Campania «Give me 5». Ziua, November 8, 2005. <http://www.ziua.ro/display.php?data=2005-11-08&id=188103> (accessed March 6, 2002).
- Klemenčič, M. (2012). Student representation in Western Europe: Introduction to the special issue. *European Journal of Higher Education* 2(1): 2–19.
- Marcău, F.c. (2019). Hindering the process of democratization in Romania as a consequence of the social protests in the early 90s. *Research and Science Today* 1: 69–76.
- Matei, L., Hâj, C.M. and Alexe, D. (2015). Student centred learning: Translating trans-national commitments into institutional realities. The Romanian experience. In Curaj, A., Deca, L., Egron-Polak, E. and Salmi, J. (eds.), *Higher Education Reforms in Romania. Between the Bologna Process and National Challenges* (pp. 105–26). Cham: Springer.
- Moldovan, D. (2003). Protestele studenților iau amploare. *Curierul Național*, October 31, 2003. <http://etimpulnostru.3x.ro/ziaare/Curierul/Curierul%20National%20Protestele%20studentilor%20iau%20ampliare.htm> (accessed March 6, 2022).
- Năstasă-Matei, I. (2016). Sistemul universitar în România interbelică. In Băncescu, I., Stoian, I. and Belenyi, A. (eds.), *2,14 tipuri de școli de arhitectură* (pp. 77–87). Bucharest: Ion Mincu Publishing House.

- Năstasă, P. (2018). Hidden in plain sight: student fund-raising in Romanian universities. *International Review of Social Research* 8(1): 47–54.
- Olteanu, T. and Beyerle, S. (2017). The Romanian people versus corruption. The paradoxical nexus of protest and adaptation. *Partecipazione & Conflito* 10(3): 797–825.
- Pantazi, R. (2015). Studentii cer guvernului, condus interimar de ministrul Educatiei, 6% din PIB pentru educatie in proiectul bugetului de stat pe 2016. Hotnews.ro. <https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-esential-20572312-studentii-cer-guvernului-condus-interimar-ministrul-educatiei-6-din-pib-pentru-educatie-proiectul-bugetului-stat-2016.htm> (accessed May 15, 2022).
- Proteasa, V. (2009). Pillars of the student movement. In Øye, O., Jungblut, J. and Chatchava, K. (eds.), *The Student Union Development Handbook. For a Stronger Movement* (pp. 11–24). Brussels: ESU.
- Proteasa, V., Andreescu, L., Botgros, V. and Dodiță, A. (2018). Mapping students' organizations in postcommunist Romania: a structuration perspective. *International Review of Social Research* 8(1).
- Sadlak, J. (1990). *Higher Education in Romania, 1860–1990: Between Academic Mission Economic Demands and Political Control*. Buffalo: State University of New York.
- Szolár, E. (2014). The Bologna process in Romania. In Kozma, T., Rébay, M., Óhidy, A. and Szolár, E. (eds.), *The Bologna Process in Central and Eastern Europe* (pp. 183–222). Cham: Springer.
- Tismăneanu, V. (ed.) (2007). *Raportul final al Comisiei Prezidențiale pentru analiza dictaturii comuniste din România*. Bucharest: Humanitas.

Legacy, Bureaucracy, and Meritocracy of Leviathan: Student Representation in Post-Soviet Russia

Dmitry Efimov

Introduction

One of the most important, successful, and consistent reforms in post-communist Russia was the reform of higher education which introduced several new public management practices. How did this reform affect the students at Russian universities in terms of how their interests were taken into account? How and why were the existing Russian student councils and professional student unions formed? In this chapter, I consider student representation in contemporary Russia: its formation history, current forms, and possible future trends. First, I examine the existing literature about the transformations of Post-Soviet Russian higher education and consider the evolution of views on student representation within its framework. Next, in the empirical part, the chapter addresses the institutional level of representation, shows what collegiate student bodies of Russian universities are, and then discusses the formats of their interaction and the possibility of collective action to influence national policies.

The experience of studying student representation in Russia is framed by the optics that were used even before its actual foundation: most often it is considered not as an independent phenomenon, but as part of the process of “educating” a student, a pedagogical process, part of extracurricular activities that can be organized by the university for a student (Ponomarev, 2008; Popova, 2007). A much smaller part of research contains empirical studies of existing practices of student representation or their perception. We should mention the line of qualitative research on student representative bodies (Chirikov and Gruzdev, 2014; Efimov, 2021), as well as on the descriptive statistics of surveys, censuses, and elections (Efimov, 2022; Fatov, Kulikov and Sarukhanyan, 2018; Popov, 2009; Stegnii, 2016). The third important area of research is legal analysis of documents regulating student representation at different levels (Fatov and Matvienko, 2016; Shalamova and Fatov, 2014). The main discussion lines in empirical research are the role of professional student unions and, in general, the organizational forms of student representation. Unfortunately, there are clearly few empirical studies, which focus not on one or two cases, but on the system as a whole, and more often these are not academic studies, but official statistics as discussed by Efimov (2020). This chapter, developing on the secondary literature and based on empirical data collection, tries to fill this gap and present a relatively comprehensive vision of the development of student representation in Russia by the early 2020s.

The chapter relies on the following data: twenty-five interviews with leaders of student councils of leading Russian universities, twenty-four interviews with university vice-rectors for academic affairs, five expert interviews with people involved in student representation at the national, regional, and supra-university levels, as well as documents regulating student representation at the national level (federal law and acts of the Ministry of Education) and open information from websites and/or pages on social networking sites, owned by the student representation bodies of fifty leading Russian universities and key organizations of the national student representation. The interviews were conducted in 2021–22 in three waves: winter-spring 2021 (student leaders), summer-autumn 2021 (university officials), and spring-summer 2022 (experts). Universities in different interview waves do not fully correspond to each other, as these were technically different research projects. In addition, data from a survey of university rectors are also used as part of the research project “Monitoring of Education Markets and Organizations” (MEMO) aimed at studying the transformations of Russian education in the post-Soviet era. This long-term monitoring project was initiated by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation and conducted jointly by the HSE University, Levada Centre and Public Opinion Foundation. Special “censuses” and “rankings” of student representation bodies conducted by relevant nation-wide organizations are also used.

Pivotal findings of this chapter include detailed periodization of student politics development (with references to legal, political, and social factors), as well as analysis of institutional, national, and alternative arenas of student representation. Contemporary student leaders mention five key origins of student representation in universities: educational units, thematic extracurricular student clubs, dormitories, professional unions, and personal leadership teams. As for the main activities of the representation institutions, these are primarily bureaucracy-, information-, or entertainment-related; about one third of the universities make students real participants of the internal governance processes. The national level of student representation is structured in a corporatist manner, with several government-related entities, but effectively without formal decision-making rights and without one single powerful organization with ambition to represent all Russian students. Finally, the chapter emphasizes the crucial status of institutional and national educational policies in Russian student representation.

Periodization of Student Representation in Post-Soviet Russia

Historically, from a formal point of view, students had the greatest power in Russian universities after the Revolution of 1917 and the Civil War, in the 1920s and the first half of the 1930s. They participated in the work of governing bodies and often had an equal and often dominant status with teachers. But we should not be deceived: the role of students was not much different from the role of the Soviets in the entire system of government of the USSR—in fact, they were all puppets of the ruling Communist Party and organizations controlled by it (its youth branch, the Komsomol; professional unions). We can talk about real representation and self-governance only in relation to the last years of the USSR (Popov, 2009). Also, we should mention several objective

external factors that set the framework for the periodization of student representation and student politics in modern Russia.

The first factor is *demographic situation*: after 1988–9 and a long period of population growth, the country experienced a prolonged decline in the birth rate. As a result, until 2005, the number of school graduates increased, and then started to fall sharply. The decline continued until 2018–19 (Smelov and Nikitina, 2021). This trend had a strong impact on the transformations of the Russian student community: while in the 1990s higher education remained largely state-funded just as in the Soviet era, in the 2000s the majority of students had to pay for their education (increase in demand without significant increase in supply). However, in the 2010s, the ratio of students was approximately equal, with the continuing slight prevalence of self-funded education (Gokhberg et al., 2021). This illustrates that the worldwide higher education trends of massification and marketization have not bypassed Russia either.

Another important factor is the *state policy regarding education and student representation*. The legacy from the Soviet Union was the system of state-funded higher education, in which representative functions during the last years of the state's existence (Perestroika) were performed by organizations of the *Komsomol* (youth organization of the Communist Party, active until 1991–2) and professional unions of students—*profsoyuzy* (Chirikov, 2016, Chirikov and Gruzdev, 2014). Whereas in the 1990s the key focus of the Ministry of Education was the urgent modification of the education system for it to fit the new reality, in the 2000s a set of reforms was carried out which eventually led the transition to a model of highly selective government funding of some research universities. The accompanying reform measures included, for example, the introduction of a single state exam—analogue of the SAT and an experiment with educational vouchers. In the 2010s, this trend was reinforced: new state programs were introduced to encourage the universities that successfully met scientific and educational objectives to build competitiveness, and there were closures and mergers of universities deemed ineffective (Forrat, 2016). As regards student representation, the Ministry of Education made several attempts to stimulate its development in 2001–02, 2006–07, and 2012–14. Each period resulted in the publication of new normative and recommendatory acts regulating the work of universities with student representation bodies, and creation of new bodies, instead of or in addition to the student professional unions inherited from the Soviet period (Fatov and Matvienko, 2016; Federation Council, 2017; Russian Union of Youth, 2018). However, their implementation varied depending on the university's status (state, non-state, special) and its founder, which can be either the Ministry of Education, the government, or other ministries (e.g., Health Ministry—for medical universities). Due to this, the regulations of the Ministry of Education in the field of student representation have a limited influence (Efimov, 2021), and their implementation varies notably across higher education institutions in Russia.

Finally, the third factor is the *transformation of the political regime in Russia*. Whereas in the 1990s and early 2000s, there was a post-communist transition process with the continued significant influence of the Communists (who had a majority in parliament and among regional governors in the late 1990s), after 2003–4 their influence decreased, and the new pro-presidential party “*United Russia*” became dominant (Petrov, Lipman and Hale, 2014). Furthermore, in 2000–05 there were several “color” revolutions in countries close to Russia (Serbia, Georgia, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan), and it is noteworthy that in most of them political mobilization of students played a significant role. In the second half of the 2000s, the state policy in the field of education,

according to some research discussions (Chirikov, 2016; Forrat, 2016), was adjusted with the desire to minimize the possibility of such a scenario in Russia. To do this, it was necessary to divide the academia, not allowing it to unite and instead forcing it to compete. In the field of student representation, the period of 2006–07 was marked by another attempt of the Ministry of Education to form new student representative bodies at universities that would eliminate the monopoly of students' professional unions that existed since Soviet times. Next, in 2011–12, large-scale post-electoral protests took place in Russia (sometimes called the failed “color” revolution), and yet in 2012–14, the Ministry of Education once again attempted (this time more successfully) to introduce new bodies of student representation. Between December of 2012 and mid-2014, they were established in federal law and ministerial regulations (as “student council” or “joint council of students”—*studencheckiy sovet* or *ob’edinennyi sovet obuchayuschikhsya*, in *Russian*) (Efimov, 2021; Federation Council, 2017; Russian Union of Youth, 2018).

An important external factor was the Covid-19 pandemic, which presented new challenges for higher education in 2020, and resulted in shifts within the framework of internal interaction between student representation bodies and university administrations (Efimov, 2021, University official, personal communication, August 30, 2021). It was necessary to cooperate closely to overcome difficulties, and the pandemic brought about another wave of changes regarding the role of student representation, especially since this overlapped with the formation of new Russian government in 2020 and the appointment of a new Minister of Education.

Based on this set of factors, five key periods in the development of student representation in modern Russia can be identified: 1987–91, 1992–2005, 2006–12, 2013–20, from 2020 until present. Whereas at the end of Perestroika both the Komsomol and professional student unions were still active, in the 1990s the latter received an almost complete monopoly on the expression of student voice as a result of liquidation of the former. This monopoly was reinforced by ties with other professional unions and university rectors. Along with that, the number of school graduates and students continued to increase until 2005. By the mid-2000s, there was a point when such monopoly and resources were perceived by the state as danger, and the transition period began, during which new student representation bodies were successfully introduced. The culmination was the process of drafting and adopting a new law “On Education” in 2011–12, which eliminated the monopoly of professional student unions. During the period from 2011 to 2013, the number of student representation bodies of new formats—student councils and joint councils of students—has increased sharply. Professional student unions lost their privileged position and either joined the new bodies or received an equal status. And since 2020, due to the pandemic, the roles of student representation in many universities have changed dramatically.

In the next sections, we will show, based on the interviews with respondents and other available data, what the student representation that developed by the end of the 2010s in Russia is, as well as what prospects can be identified for its transformations.

Local Level of Student Representation

Since 2012, the federal law “On Education” prescribes all Russian universities to have student representation bodies for interaction, at least, on the development and approval of new internal

regulatory acts, on the imposition of disciplinary penalties, as well as on granting scholarships.¹ As noted earlier, after the adoption of the law in the 2010s in Russia, the composition of the student representation bodies changed and diversified immensely. How are they formed now?

Recent research (Efimov, 2021) identified the key origins and forms of organization of student representation bodies in Russian universities, which vary depending on what they are based on: educational units, thematic student clubs, dormitories, professional student unions, personal leadership teams. Their characteristics are briefly outlined in Table 33.1.

Even though the legislation formally creates an alternative (student council vs. professional student union), de facto great number of universities create a council which includes the existing professional union as a part (sometimes—a leading part). In these cases, a professional union operates as one of the biggest student clubs with features of educational units’ structure. In some other examples student council and professional student union can coexist, sometimes also with other institutions—for instance, council of dormitories, or council of academic group presidents. This coexistence can suggest both cooperation (most often in a form of functional differentiation)

Table 33.1 Origins of student representation in Russian universities

Origin	Description and typical formation procedures	Specific functions
Educational units (Faculties, programs, academic groups)	Direct or multi-level elections of representatives from individual educational units. Potentially all students participate, without additional membership requirements.	Representation of students on issues of educational policy of the university, educational activities
Thematic extracurricular student clubs	Membership of students engaged in a certain type of activity. Internal election of the head or selection and appointment by the previous head.	Mass cultural and informational activities
Professional student unions	Membership of students who pay the membership fees. Elections according to divisions correlated with the internal university educational units.	Protection of social and material rights and interests of students (scholarships, financial assistance, etc.)
Student dormitories	Participation of potentially all students living in a certain dormitory. Elections or other procedures.	Protection of specific rights and interests of students from other cities living in dormitories
Personal leadership teams	The head of the body gets the opportunity to introduce his team into its composition (in one capacity or another). Team itself does not go through the election or passes it in a simplified format.	Support of the leader and his/her policy, no other specific activities

Source: Prepared by the author based on Efimov, 2021.

and competition (most often in a form of conflict for credibility from students and university administrators). Also, there is a group of universities with councils and without professional unions, as well as a group of universities with professional unions and without councils. This deep integration is a key reason for placing professional student unions in the list of other student representation origins without specific highlighting and separation.

The results of the “*All-Russian Census of Student Councils*”² and the “*Ranking of Student Councils*”³ of 2016–17 show that the term of office in the majority (87 percent) of student representation bodies in Russian universities is one or two years. In addition to the origins of the councils’ composition, an important difference is the method of determining the body head. The key procedures are internal elections by the vote of the body itself, election at a separate “Election conference” (will be discussed further), as well as direct elections by student vote (each option is prevalent in 20–40 percent of the universities).

As noted earlier, the existing models of student representation bodies at Russian higher education institutions comprise combinations of all these options and are quite diverse across different universities (Efimov, 2021, Expert 2, personal communication, May 13, 2022). The most common model is a distributed model, in which all or almost all types of student organizations are represented. In this model, “The Joint Council of Students” (in Russian—*Ob’edinennyi sovet obuchayuschikhsya*) exists as a body consisting of all university student organizations’ heads. This distributed model is officially recommended by the Ministry of Education (Ministry of Education and Science, 2014). Another relatively popular option also recommended by the Ministry is the forming of student council at the “Election conference”—in practice, it is indirect elections, when some number of students from each education unit and extracurricular student club meet together and elect the very small number of representatives who will be student council members and leaders regularly. It is known that the more the university is connected with the Ministry, the more likely is the application of these models.

Universities with a more independent policy, due to their special status,⁴ resources, or ties with other government agencies, often use a different model. For example, in St. Petersburg State University, educational units are the only origin of the representative body composition. In Peter the Great St. Petersburg Polytechnic University, only the council of dormitories and the professional student union exist. In ITMO University (St. Petersburg) only the chairman of the student council is elected by direct students’ vote and the council is comprised of his/her team.

Another important issue is the general relationship between the procedures of *election*, *selection*, and *appointment* in the formation process of student representation bodies. There are no unified standards for *student elections*: they could be direct or indirect, online or paper-based, for the top-level or low-level positions in student representation. In most cases, when elections are held, they are organized not by independent authorities (like electoral commissions), but by the current student representatives. Multi-level indirect elections are much more common than the direct ones. In cases when the *selection* practice dominates, the decision is made not by voters, but by special experts (for instance, the previous representatives), based on the evaluated characteristics of the candidates. These practices can coexist with the elections in the multi-level design. Selection also can even transform to the practice of *appointment*: in this case, transfer of student representation statuses goes without collegial decisions at all. De facto five current types of representation institutions diverge to the two directions: election-selection tradeoff (educational units, professional unions, dormitories) and selection-appointment tradeoff (thematic clubs,

personal teams). Thus, namely *selection* (based on some characteristics of candidates) is the most powerful formation procedure for student representation bodies in Russian universities.

As can be inferred from the data indicated in Efimov (2022), as well as from the interviews with student leaders, the sociopolitical engagement of students in student representation in Russia often replicates the existing social and demographic divisions in society. Differences in engagement exist between men and women (men are more active on average). State-funded and self-funded students also act differently (the former tend to be more politically engaged, the latter tend to follow more a “consumer” logic of making claims to university leadership). In addition, participation in student representation is often strongly correlated with a student’s age and course of study. As a rule, there are more younger students among representatives; graduates and postgraduates are less interested in engagement in representational bodies. Data discussed in Efimov (2021) also pose an issue of a significantly different study fields influence: the absolute majority of student representation leaders belong to social and economic sciences (but there is no such an effect in the level of ordinary participants). All these factors contribute to the complexity and heterogeneity of student representation bodies.

What are the functions of the university bodies of student representation in Russia? According to the analysis carried out in Efimov (2021), it can be indicated that the key areas are *university bureaucracy, informing students and cultural activities*. The first one exists because student representation bodies are formally included in the structure of the university administration to comply with the federal law “On Education,” and their opinion is required to make all decisions affecting the rights and interests of students. This means that student voice is included in decisions on new local regulatory acts, disciplinary sanctions of students, granting scholarships to students, and setting fees for accommodation in dormitories. In all such cases, student representatives must provide the university with a document where their opinion is indicated. Further, the university can either adopt or ignore this position. Another important part of the official bureaucratic processes is the direct participation of student representatives in various university management bodies, and this will be discussed later.

In addition to meeting the requirements of the university bureaucracy, other two main activities of student representation bodies are informing students about what is happening at the university and organizing entertaining extracurricular events. Almost all (80–92 percent) student councils have their own social media (Russian Union of Youth, 2016, Student Ombudsman of Russia, 2016), and this often becomes one of their key assets: they share information received from the university administration with ordinary students. Cultural activities—that is, organization of entertaining events for students—are also in most cases delegated by the university as part of its policy of “educating” students. In general, all the most common functions of student representation are rather defined by the interests and motives of university administrations, rather than students. Within the university administrations, there is usually an appointed vice-rector or a separate department of youth policy or extracurricular work responsible for communication with student representation bodies.

In contrast, other functions were mentioned by a significantly lesser proportion of respondents. About a half of interviewed student leaders consider as important the protection of educational rights and interests, legal support, monitoring of social and living conditions, active participation in the distribution of scholarships, career, and professional orientation. About a third of interviewed student leaders mentioned that in their domain of responsibilities is also participation in the

university processes concerning research, sports, adaptation of new students (including foreign ones). Finally, more rarely student representation bodies also interact with external partners, university applicants, volunteers, and manage finances.

In addition to the abovementioned functions, let us now consider the role of student representation bodies in university governance. This role also includes direct participation of student representatives in several collegial bodies of the university, which make various decisions. First of all, it is the Academic Council of the University—the highest collegial governing body. In addition, there are specialized bodies: rector's executive council, commissions or committees on educational issues, scholarships, transferring students from self-funded places to state-funded ones, disciplinary sanctions, and other ones. According to various estimates (Russian Union of Youth, 2016, Student Ombudsman of Russia, 2016), in 2016–17, about 82–89 percent of universities invited student representation to participate in the work of Academic Councils (including 60–67 percent—with the formal voting membership of student representatives in the council, and another 15–28 percent—invited to meetings and having an advisory voice). According to the “Ranking of Student Councils,” among the specific university governing bodies, students are most often represented in scholarship commissions, disciplinary commissions, and commissions for transfer to state-funded places. Somewhat less often student representatives are present in commissions on educational issues, transfers of students to other educational programs and their reinstatement. Much less often (less than half of all the cases) they are involved in making decisions regarding finance, procurement, acceptance of works, and services.

According to the same data, the amount of funding for the activities of student representation bodies varies quite a lot, and there is considerable inequality among student councils in this regard. About 30 percent have no funding at all; the remaining 70 percent receive average funding of 5 million rubles per year, which equals about 70 thousand USD. The maximum amount of financing in 2016 amounted to 47 million rubles per year, or about 670 thousand USD per year. In the majority of cases these funds are allocated from the university budget and controlled by the university administration, most often designated for the organization of events supervised by the student council.

It may seem that, due to participation in the work of collegial governing bodies, the influence of Russian student representation bodies on the educational policy of their universities is relatively large. However, it should be borne in mind that the decision-making rules in these bodies most often presuppose simple or absolute majority. Student representatives in most cases occupy only one or several seats and can only effectively influence the decision-making process in the stage of formulation and discussion (if it is open and transparent). Moreover, according to the survey of university rectors (see Figure 33.1), the key areas of university policies with students' influence remain to be the educational process and admission policy, but these are noted by only 20–40 percent of universities. Interestingly, the proportion of universities which include student representatives to the rector's executive council, is in this range too (36 percent) (Student Ombudsman of Russia, 2016). All other areas—money distribution, personnel, investment, scientific policy of the university—are influenced by students only in 2–5 percent of cases. In the period of 2012–13, there were significant fluctuations, which can be attributed to the fact that, as we discussed earlier, at that time there was a forced introduction of new models of student representation by the Ministry of Education, and the situation was characterized by a high degree of uncertainty.

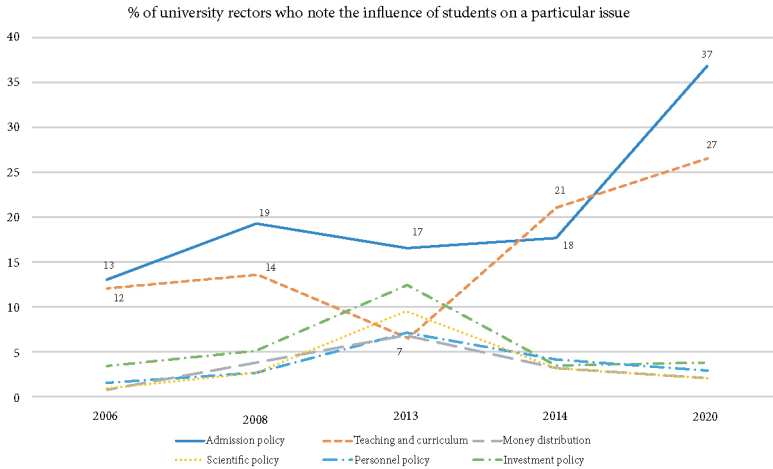


Figure 33.1 Dynamics of influence of students at universities according to a survey of rectors.

Source: Prepared by the author based on the Monitoring of Education Markets and Organizations (2006, 2008, 2013, 2014, 2020).

Thus, the scope of student representation in Russian universities is very much connected with state regulation (in the federal law and by laws of the Ministry), as well as with the initiatives of the university's management. In fact, in many cases there is a “fusion” of students and the university administration: the student representation body de facto almost becomes a division of the university and performs a variety of functions ranging from bureaucracy to social media marketing. Interestingly, some studies (Efimov, 2022) directly show that students wanting to participate in representation are also interested in the internal university agenda, but not in external sociopolitical activity (for instance, it reflects in the media consumption, career preferences, and sociopolitical interests). Consequently, members of student representation bodies at Russian universities are more a personnel resource for university management and related youth policy than for public politics or civic activism. These practices of “fusion” pose a specific trade-off between logic of influence and logic of membership (Klemenčič, 2014) in the Russian case of student representation: acquired “administrative weight” is both strength (opportunity for domestic lobbying) and weakness (dependency from university administration) for the representation as an idea.

Why is this happening? As noted in previous studies (Efimov, 2021), the functions of student representation bodies are strongly interrelated with the procedures and origins of its formation. Entertaining and informational activities are typical for student thematic clubs, which are the first (the most common) key origin of student representation bodies in a significant number of Russian universities. On the other hand, the interests of professional student unions (another of the key origins) have long concerned material benefits—for example, scholarships. At the same time, academic affairs are directly connected with the third key origin—educational units (faculties, programs, academic groups). The prevalence of the first origin over the second and third results also in the respective distribution in the range of functions: entertainment and informing are often more important than academic and social affairs.

Regional and National Levels of Student Representation

Despite the strict regulation and encouragement of universities to create student representation bodies through legislation, the Russian government had significantly less interest in creating equally formal representation bodies at the national level. Considering the trends following 2005 (Chirikov, 2016; Forrat, 2016), the presence of powerful organizations that had the potential to mobilize students and at the same time were not controlled by the government, would pose a potential danger under the scenario of a possible “color revolution.” Therefore, the state policy regarding student representation at the national level in Russia was initially less structured and more tactically than strategically oriented. De facto, there are several different organizations, none of which has been fully recognized by the state as a representative of the students’ voice at the national level. Let us consider them in more detail.

Government-Organized Non-governmental Organizations (GONGOs)

The key examples of this type are the Russian Union of Youth (RUY),⁵ and the Association of Students and Student Associations (ASSO).⁶ Some smaller organizations also exist. The RUY was formed in 1990 and runs many state projects on youth policy aimed at schoolchildren, university students, and graduates. De-facto, the RUY was partly a successor to the Komsomol system, without ideological and, for the first time, political content. The ASSO was established in 2014 as a subsidiary of the RUY responsible for supporting the development programs of student representation and student clubs. These are vertical organizations without a real function of “bottom-up” representation: the main activities are the organization of training and joint events (including competitions), as well as broadcasting of certain practices (e.g., an attempt to introduce direct universal elections of student council chairmen) from national or regional representation levels to universities (Expert 2, personal communication, May 13, 2022). According to this, student representatives of individual universities are only observers or ordinary participants with the ability to gain information, but without a real opportunity to state their own agenda and implement it at the national level. It is not surprising that most of the student councils’ representatives in interviews either do not mention the interaction with these organizations at all or do so only in the context of networking.

The System of “Ombudsmen”

During the period from 2013 to 2018, there was an “ombudsman for students’ rights” (*Upolnomochennyi po pravam studentov*) in Russia,⁷ elected first directly by students in an all-Russian internet-vote, and then by heads of individual Russian universities’ student representation bodies. The post itself was established by the Ministry of Education, and technically the Ombudsman was an advisor to the Minister. The only person who held this position was Artem Khromov. Although it did not last long, the experience of this institute was crucial for the student representation in Russia (Expert 1, personal communication, March 22, 2022). In fact,

it was the Ombudsman who became the “battering ram” of the Ministry, thanks to which in the 2010s it was possible to transform the system of student representation at the level of individual universities and create new student councils. Despite the obvious dependence on the ministry, the Ombudsman also had electoral accountability to universities and students. Therefore, he not only pursued a “top-down” policy, but also implemented several initiatives in response to the requests of individual universities and students. For example, there is the abolition of the “curfew” in dormitories of Russian universities—before that, students were unable to enter their dormitories after 22:00–23:00. On the other hand, the initiatives directly contradicting the Ministry’s policy (e.g., on the issue of merging different universities) were not effectively promoted. In addition to the All-Russian Ombudsman, there also were ombudsmen at the level of individual regions and, in some cases, individual universities, along with the collegiate student council at the same university. One of the main goals here was networking of various student leaders, but, unlike the previously discussed examples of GONGOs, there was also an opportunity to work in the “bottom-up” paradigm. Perhaps it was the potential political agency that became the factor due to which the institution of ombudsmen did not gain a foothold on a long-term basis: after Dmitry Livanov’s resignation from the Ministry of Education (2016), the ombudsman’s influence was sharply reduced, and eventually he resigned. The elections of a new ombudsman were not held. Another explanation is the fact that the Ombudsman fulfilled his function of “battering ram” and transformed the system of representation at the level of individual universities.⁸ Regional ombudsmen ceased their activities around the same time (2018–19). At the level of individual universities (e.g., HSE), ombudsmen have been functioning until now (2022), but their political influence is only within their respective higher education institutions.

Professional Student Unions

The system of professional student unions, as mentioned earlier, was inherited from the Soviet period. At first, it actually dominated Post-Soviet Russia, but in the second half of the 2000s and early 2010s the situation changed. Monopoly was eradicated. “Joint councils of students” were created, in which professional unions were often included as an integral part. However, today professional student unions remain a coherent system with coordination up to the national level. The Student Coordinating Council of the All-Russian Professional Union of Education (SCS of the Professional Union) is an organization that unites professional student unions of most Russian universities.⁹ It allows this organization to claim the representation of 1.4 million students—members of professional student unions who pay the specific fees (approx. about one third of Russian higher education students). Along with it, these claims are not practically recognized by the Ministry and other officials. Aiming to increase the influence, the system of professional unions attempted to “seize” the institution of the Ombudsman considered earlier: in the two elections which were held, the rivals of the current ombudsman were the SCS of the Professional Union representatives. As it was noted in previous research (Chirikov, 2016; Chirikov and Gruzdev, 2014; Popov, 2009), the main focus of this system is socioeconomic issues: for example, scholarships, financial assistance, dormitories, career development. In terms of people, the system of representation in professional unions is built “bottom-up”: the current (for 2022) head of the SCS of the Professional Union was the head of the professional student

union of Smolensk University for ten years. However, unlike the personal matters, we do not know examples of a *problem-oriented* “bottom-up” approach in the representation system of professional student unions. As a rule, the main activities of professional student unions differ slightly from the GONGOs discussed earlier: methodical training, joint events. In both cases, there is an important fact that non-students very often become “representatives” of actual students: the leaders of both professional student unions and student-oriented GONGOs are often thirty to fifty years old and continue to lead their structures decades after their graduation from university. Naturally, the problems of ordinary students may have lower priority here.

Specific Ministries and Regions

As mentioned earlier, not all Russian state universities are directly subordinate to the Ministry of Education. Some are coordinated directly by the president and the government, and the other ones by individual ministries corresponding to the universities’ main field. For example, there are separate groups of medical universities¹⁰ and transport universities. In this case, the ministries themselves create additional coordination structures to unite and represent students with these majors. Due to relatively nontransparent nature, the real content of these structures is open for further research, but there is no doubt that the agenda of these councils is determined by the founding ministry. In addition, several regional governments in Russia (e.g., St. Petersburg,¹¹ Tatarstan, etc.) have established collegial bodies to unite student councils and student organizations of the entire region. As a rule, this body most often includes the councils’ heads of individual universities, and it considers issues related to youth, student, and social policy at the regional level, as well as organizes local networking. The activities, resources, and existence of regional councils also depend heavily on the policies of the respective regional government.

As we can see, there are quite a lot of organizations in the Russian higher education system that in one way or another claim to express the opinion of students. Most of them are more or less connected with the state (different governmental departments and levels). At the same time, the Ministry of Education in 2021–2 began to promote a new initiative—the creation of a “Council of Students under the Ministry of Science and Higher Education.”¹² In December 2021, the composition of the council was formed, in March 2022 it elected the thematic working groups’ heads, and in July 2022 the chairman and the presidium were elected. The council now consists of one person from each region of the Russian Federation: first, their candidacies were nominated by the universities of the region, and then all the nominated candidates were tested and selected by the experts of another GONGO “Russia—Land of Opportunity” (eighty-two out of more than 1,500 candidates were selected). It is difficult to outline the prospects for this council, although, most likely, the “meritocratic” formation and composition on the regions’ basis do not really contribute to the goals of representation (students from capital cities and other regions with many diverse universities will be underrepresented). The council’s term of office, according to the order of the Ministry, is two years, so it will work in this composition until the end of 2023, and only after that it will be possible to lay out its prospects more accurately.

All this supports the hypothesis of a corporatist model of interaction (Klemenčič, 2012) between students and the state in Russia: GONGOs, “Ombudsman,” professional unions, university councils, councils under the ministries, and regional governments are all under the

supervision of governmental or university officials. There is no full control and there are different governmental domains, but the extent of state engagement and the fact that the government was a driver of all discussed representation shifts forces us to suggest the corporatist nature of state-student relationships. The only institution which also has a potential for neo-corporatist style is professional unions' system (despite the origin of structure, they are more autonomous from the government itself and they have financial resources through membership fees). But lack of national influence in terms of interaction with authorities, deep integration into the representation structure at the university level, and the age gap between students and leaders of professional unions make it impossible.

Nevertheless, some form of an explicit litmus test for the representation of the Russian students at the national level will be participation in the discussion on the updated model of Russian higher education, which arose in 2022 in light of the withdrawal from the Bologna process. The first round of this discussion was held in the spring-summer of 2022 at the conceptual and theoretical level, and the next round is expected in the fall of 2022—it will be within the framework of specific proposals from the Ministry of Education.¹³ Based on whether feedback will be given on these proposals by student representation structures, it will be possible to estimate the state of Russian student representation at the national level in current and new forms.

Non-institutional Activism and Cooperation

The existing corporatist practices and the influence of university administrations and state agencies on student representation inevitably lead to formation of student groups who do not favor the current situation with representation channels and would like to have other opportunities to express and represent their own opinions. The members of these groups may or may not participate in the activities of the official student representation bodies, but in parallel they create informal communities engaged in activism at the university level. Quite often such communities function as mass media. At the higher levels, there is a similar pattern in behavior of individual universities that are not satisfied with the current formats of interaction and representation. Let us take a closer look at each phenomenon, considering its key features and examples.

University Level

The most famous examples of such student groups are the “*MSU Initiative Group*” (at Moscow State University) and “*DOXA*” (originally at the HSE University). The first was formed in 2009–11, and the second one in 2017–19. Some of their founders are ex-members of the official university student representation bodies, who were not satisfied with the limitations of official capabilities, and some are initiative students interested in civil activism. The focus on the creation of independent information platforms was what was common in the activities of both. The first organization was more focused on intra-university activism concerning the development of MSU (Initiative Group of MSU: overview, 2020). The second group at one point started to develop as a media about the problems of students from different universities but continued to focus on

specific issues of HSE's development.¹⁴ Since these organizations do not have a formal status, they use methods of thematic public campaigns aimed at influencing the universities' policies: petitions, pickets, collecting signatures, and public information resonance. Another important activity is electing their participants to the official representation bodies or cooperation with sympathized official representatives. Due to the limited opportunities to influence university processes, over time the activities of such organizations get more and more focused on general civil or general academic issues. For example, the initiative group of MSU paid significant attention to protecting the right of students to vote in federal, regional, and local elections, as well as to protecting the university's territories from commercial and external use (Expert 3, personal communication, July 7, 2022). There is also one ironic observation: although such organizations use horizontal governance methods, it is highly likely that over time they will metamorphose toward personalism and the influence of individual (most often initial) activists, who may already be graduates or otherwise study in different universities. At this point, these groups sometimes converge with their seemingly opposite counterparts, that is, the previously considered GONGOs and official professional student unions.

National Level

Sometimes collective action outside the established institutional framework is initiated not only by ordinary students within a particular university, but also by ordinary student councils and students at different universities. As discussed earlier, the possibilities of raising problems in the "bottom-up" paradigm at the national level remain rather scarce. In these settings, creating "informal coalitions" on certain important issues is a possible strategy for representation bodies and individual students. The two most prominent examples of recent years are the campaigns "For Scholarships" (2018–20) and "Against amendments to the law on educational activities" (2021). The first case¹⁵ is an initiative to raise the monthly scholarship amount from 1,800–3,000 rubles, or about 30–50 USD, to the minimum wage, which equals approximately 200 USD. A group of students from different universities, including Moscow State University, HSE University and Russian State University for the Humanities, held pickets, collected signatures for petitions, and even interacted with State Duma opposition parties, the relevant parliamentary committee, and the Ministry of Education (Expert 3, personal communication, July 7, 2022). However, due to budgetary policy restrictions it was impossible to increase the scholarships' volume, although the bill has not yet been finally considered by parliament as of July 2022.¹⁶

The second example concerns the reaction of society to the resonant changes in Russian legislation in the beginning of 2021: new legal norms imposed significant restrictions on "educational activities" (dissemination of knowledge outside the framework of official educational programs, e.g., short courses, trainings, public lectures). All such activities were placed within the framework of state regulation and supervision, and requirements were established for individuals and organizations engaged in "educational activities." In addition to bureaucratic and educational terms, one of the key requirements was the absence of the foreign financing. The explanatory notes to the bill mention that one of the main goals of these changes was the fight against foreign propaganda.¹⁷ The bill was criticized by many stakeholders because it put universities and other scientific and educational organizations in a controversial position due to their international

activities. A civil petition against it gained more than 240,000 votes¹⁸; the expert petition of scientists gained 1,200 signatures, including representatives of the Russian Academy of Sciences; the Accounts Chamber of Russia expressed a negative opinion. The student representative bodies of thirteen leading Russian universities also issued a joint statement criticizing the bill and calling on parliament to reject it.¹⁹ This group included such leading universities as Moscow State University, St. Petersburg State University, HSE University, Moscow Institute for Physics and Technology, Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration. One representative of this student representation bodies group was later invited to participate in a Public Chamber of Russia meeting, where he presented this position orally.²⁰ However, despite this campaign, the bill was passed by Parliament and went into effect on June 1, 2021.²¹ Although, when the Ministry of Education issued by laws detailing the application of the law, it became clear that some remarks and suggestions were implemented, including the ones made by the student representation bodies.

Frustration of students and activists as a result of the limitations of official corporatist student representation channels gives rise to informal groups and coalitions. As the analyzed examples show, the actual effectiveness of these groups in terms of influencing decision-making processes turns out to be relatively low. However, like some examples of other institutions considered earlier, they eventually contribute greatly to the networking of their participants, which is particularly important at the inter-university and national level. In addition, such initiatives may have an indirect effect on the decisions of the state and universities: for example, it is highly likely that the efforts of the Ministry of Education to create a new All-Russian Council of Students in 2021–2 were also dictated by the need of an alternative future position of Russian studentship against the group of leading universities' students, united to oppose the law "On educational activities." The representation scheme of the new council de facto works against them.

Conclusion

Student representation in Russia is a good example of a predominantly *corporatist* system, which, however, was formed gradually, under the influence of demographic factors, as well as internal, external, and educational state policies. Whereas at the end of the USSR Komsomol and professional student unions were also parts of the corporatist system, after several transformations of 2000s and 2010s the new student representation bodies together with the heirs of professional student unions comprised a new system of the same type. The system of student interests' representation established in Russia by the end of the 2010s is closely tied with the state and university administrations. This prevents such mobilization of students, which would be undesirable for state or university interests. The activity of student councils at individual universities quite often makes them de-facto parts of the university bureaucracy or university departments. At the national and regional level, the possible scope of activities undertaken by the existing associations is also in most cases determined by different governmental agencies. We can suggest the *corporatist* nature of the overall system because of statist supervision under almost all major institutions, although some of them (professional unions) acquired neo-corporatist features. However, these conclusions should not be considered as evidence that the

student representation in Russia does not fulfill its functions (as we mentioned, sometimes we note the gain in form of “administrative influence”)—rather, it shows the context in which student representatives operate.

An important feature that also cannot go unnoticed is the procedures and origins of the Russian student representation bodies’ formation at different levels. As noted in this research and earlier in Efimov (2021), in many cases the formation of the university councils and national student bodies is more of a *selection*, rather than an *election* (e.g., thematic clubs, newly created Council under the Ministry of Education). Elections, in cases when they are held, are more of a personalist character (election of one leader) or become a part of a multi-level process. At the same time, the relationship between the formation of representative bodies and the range of their functions is clear: for instance, the focus on the representation of educational units is associated with great attention to the students’ educational interests in university policy. In general, it is the range of internal university features (its autonomy, subordination, management practices) that creates a rather large variation in how the student representation system will work beyond what is formally defined by law.

Moreover, student activity is more than only the official system of representation. Students and representative bodies, who recognized the limits of formal institutions, are creating *informal groups and coalitions* so as to promote their interests in a different way. Due to the general state- and university-dominated design of the system, the available examples show that this practice is rather unsuccessful strategically, but tactical success in this matter is also quite possible.

What awaits the Russian student representation in the future? We noted above that, in fact, a new stage of its development began in 2020–1, as the period of rapid growth of local student councils that lasted from 2012 to 2013 came to an end. In 2020, the system experienced the Covid-19 shock and intensification of the interaction between universities and student leaders. In 2021–22, the new Minister of Education V. Falkov created an advisory All-Russian Council of Students. In 2022, all Russian higher education, including students, faced new challenges related to the withdrawal from the Bologna process and the associated transformation of the educational system. The way in which students and their representatives will participate in determining the further development of Russian education will soon show the extent and limits of their influence. Next transformations of the Russian student representation are also likely to be associated with changing domestic and foreign policy factors, state, and university educational policies.

Notes

- 1 Federal Law On Education in the Russian Federation (2012). http://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_140174/ (accessed 12.08.2022, in Russian).
- 2 Russian Union of Youth (2016). *Report on the Results of the All-Russian Census of Student Councils*. <https://studorg.ru/assets/media/Итогипереписистудсоветов—2016.zip> (accessed 10.08.2022, in Russian).
- 3 Student Ombudsman of Russia (2016). *Ranking of Student Councils in Universities*. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1PL9eAZhrv2HQB-98yTroYaV1GUy8HT8h/view?usp=sharing> (accessed 10.08.2022, in Russian).
- 4 Leading higher education institutions of two Russian capitals—Moscow State University and St. Petersburg State University—are the subject of specific federal law and coordinated directly by the

- Russian President. Some other universities are also coordinated not by the Ministry of Education, but by the Russian Government as a whole or by other ministries.
- 5 Russian Union of Youth. *Student Representation*. <https://www.ruy.ru/projects/studencheskoe-samoupravlenie/> (accessed 10.08.2022, in Russian).
 - 6 Association of Student and Student Organizations of Russia. <https://asorf.ru/about/chto-takoe-aso.html> (accessed 10.08.2022, in Russian).
 - 7 Student Ombudsman of Russia (2015). <https://web.archive.org/web/20151014135311/http://studombudsman.com/> (accessed 10.08.2022, in Russian).
 - 8 Russian Education (2018). *Student Ombudsman is a President of Student Council*. <https://www.edu.ru/news/tochka-zreniya/studencheskiy-ombudsmen-eto-predsedatel-studsovet/> (accessed 10.08.2022, in Russian).
 - 9 Student Coordinating Council of the All-Russian Professional Union of Education. URL: <http://sksrf.ru/about> (accessed 10.08.2022, in Russian).
 - 10 Student Council of Russian Health Ministry. URL: <https://фцпдн.рф/students> (accessed 10.08.2022, in Russian).
 - 11 Saint-Petersburg Student Council. URL: <https://www.gov.spb.ru/gov/otrasl/kpmp/molodezhnoe-samoupravlenie/studsovet/> (accessed 10.08.2022, in Russian).
 - 12 Ministry of Science and Higher Education (2021). *On the Council of Students under the Ministry of Science and Higher Education*. <https://studsu.ru/upload/iblock/cc0/ak8ek19yz08dpasczwvbi12t6098pn69.pdf> (accessed 10.08.2022, in Russian).
 - 13 Erozbek D. (2022). The New National Higher Education System Can Start to Work in Russia from the Next Year. *Kommersant*. URL: <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/5492484> (accessed 10.08.2022, in Russian).
 - 14 Logunova M. (2019) “We Are Fighting the Students Intimidation”: Meet Doxa, the Most Relevant Media of the Year. *Afisha Daily*. URL: <https://daily.afisha.ru/cities/13017-my-boremsya-s-zapugivaniem-studentov-poznakomtes-s-doxa-samym-aktualnym-media-goda/> (accessed 10.08.2022, in Russian).
 - 15 Campaign “For scholarships.” URL: <https://vk.com/zastipendii> (accessed 10.08.2022, in Russian).
 - 16 Amendments to the Federal Law “On Education in the Russian Federation” regarding the establishment of a scholarship in the amount not lower than the subsistence level. URL: <https://sozd.duma.gov.ru/bill/888395-7> (accessed 10.08.2022, in Russian).
 - 17 State Duma (2021). *What Will be the New Law on Educational Activities?* URL: <http://duma.gov.ru/news/50970/> (accessed 10.08.2022, in Russian).
 - 18 Change.org (2021). *Against amendments on educational activities*. URL: <https://www.change.org/p/государственная-дума-рф-против-поправок-о-просветительской-деятельности-1e6d7a97-a61a-49b9-a7a7-80da49172ccf> (accessed 10.08.2022, in Russian).
 - 19 Statement of the Student Representation Bodies of Russian Universities (2021). URL: <http://rustudents-declaration.tilda.ws/> (accessed 10.08.2022, in Russian).
 - 20 Public Chamber of Russia (2021). *Discussion on the Draft of Government Decree on Educational Activities*. <https://youtu.be/yOP-VT0Q9mk?t=7080> (accessed 10.08.2022, in Russian).
 - 21 Amendments to the Federal Law “On Education in the Russian Federation” regarding the introduction of educational activities. URL: <https://sozd.duma.gov.ru/bill/1057895-7> (accessed 10.08.2022, in Russian).

References

Amendments to the federal law “On education in the Russian federation” regarding the establishment of a scholarship in the amount not lower than the subsistence level. <https://sozd.duma.gov.ru/bill/888395-7> (accessed August 10, 2022, in Russian).

- Amendments to the federal law “On education in the Russian federation” regarding the introduction of educational activities. <https://sozd.duma.gov.ru/bill/1057895-7> (accessed August 10, 2022, in Russian).
- Association of student and student organizations of Russia. <https://asorf.ru/about/chto-takoe-aso.html> (accessed August 10, 2022, in Russian).
- Campaign “For scholarships.” <https://vk.com/zastipendii> (accessed August 10, 2022, in Russian).
- Change.org (2021). *Against amendments on educational activities*. <https://www.change.org/p/государственная-дума-рф-против-поправок-о-просветительской-деятельности-1e6d7a97-a61a-49b9-a7a7-80da49172ccf> (accessed August 10, 2022, in Russian).
- Chirikov, I. and Gruzdev, I. (2014). Back in the USSR: Path dependence effects in student representation in Russia. *Studies in Higher Education* 39(3): 455–69.
- Chirikov, I. (2016). Do Russian research universities have a secret mission? A response to Forrat. *Post-Soviet Affairs* 32(4): 338–44.
- Efimov, D.B. (2020). Research of student representation bodies in universities: Current state, problems and prospects. *University Management: Practice and Analysis* 24(3): 105–21. (In Russian).
- Efimov, D.B. (2021). The structure and activities of student representative bodies in modern Russian Universities. *Educational Studies Moscow* (4): 74–96. <https://vo.hse.ru/index.php/vo/article/view/15775>.
- Efimov, D.B. (2022). Student representation in university governance: Factors of involvement. *Monitoring of Public Opinion: Economic and Social Changes* (2): 140–67. <https://www.monitoringjournal.ru/index.php/monitoring/article/view/1757>. (In Russian).
- Erozbek, D. (2022). The new national higher education system can start to work in Russia from the next year. *Kommersant*. <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/5492484> (accessed August 10, 2022, in Russian).
- Expert 1, personal communication (March 22, 2022).
- Expert 2, personal communication (May 13, 2022).
- Expert 3, personal communication (July 7, 2022).
- Fatov, I.S., Kulikov, S.P., Sarukhanyan, M.G. (2018). Some socio-political science aspects of the All-Russian census of student councils. *Humanities, Socio-Economic and Social Sciences* (5): 71–4. <https://www.elibrary.ru/item.asp?id=35124108>. (In Russian).
- Fatov, I.S. and Matvienko, E.V. (2016). *Organizational and Legal Basis for the Activities of Student Councils*. Moscow: LLC «Prondo» (In Russian).
- Federal Law “On Education in the Russian Federation” (2012). http://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_140174/ (accessed August 12, 2022, in Russian).
- Federation Council. (2017). *Transcript of the round table meeting on the topic “Student councils as part of the system of public administration in education: State, problems and prospects for development.”* <http://council.gov.ru/media/files/UGkrkh7EGB7h9KABD1r5FmJrVkG0UMJv.pdf> (accessed August 10, 2022, in Russian).
- Forrat, N. (2016). The political economy of Russian higher education: Why does Putin support research universities? *Post-Soviet Affairs* 32(4): 299–337.
- Gokhberg, L.M. et al. (2021). Education in Numbers: 2021: A Short Statistical Collection. *Moscow, HSE University*. <https://www.hse.ru/mirror/pubs/share/516715423.pdf> (accessed August 10, 2022, in Russian).
- Initiative Group of MSU: overview. (2020). *MSU for you. Chronicles of student representation in the MSU*. https://chronicles.igmsu.org/igmsu/ig_summary/ (accessed August 10, 2022, in Russian).
- Klemenčič, M. (2012). Student representation in Western Europe: Introduction to the special issue. *European Journal of Higher Education* 2(1): 2–19.
- Klemenčič, M. (2014). Student power in a global perspective and contemporary trends in student organising. *Studies in Higher Education* 39(3): 396–411.
- Logunova, M. (2019). “We are fighting the students intimidation”: Meet Doxa, the most relevant media of the year. *Afisha Daily*. <https://daily.afisha.ru/cities/13017-my-boremsya-s-zapugivaniem-studentov-poznakomtes-s-doxa-samym-aktualnym-media-goda/> (accessed August 10, 2022, in Russian).
- Ministry of Education and Science. (2014). *Methodological recommendations on the creation and activities of student councils in educational organizations*. https://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_159460/0f427f7026db017bcdbec6a4a326ea7bc1d7f399/ (accessed August 12, 2022, in Russian).

- Ministry of Science and Higher Education. (2021). *On the Council of Students under the Ministry of Science and Higher Education*. <https://studsu.ru/upload/iblock/cc0fak8ekl9yz08dpasczwvbi2t6098pn69.pdf> (accessed August 10, 2022, in Russian).
- Monitoring of Education Markets and Organizations. (2006, 2008, 2013, 2014, 2020). <https://memo.hse.ru/en/about> (accessed August 10, 2022).
- Petrov, N., Lipman, M. and Hale, H.E. (2014). Three dilemmas of hybrid regime governance: Russia from putin to putin. *Post-Soviet Affairs* 30(1): 1–26.
- Ponomarev, A.V. (2008). Training potential of student self-government. *Knowledge. Understanding. Skill* (1): 106–10. <https://www.elibrary.ru/item.asp?id=17964367>. (In Russian).
- Popov, V.R. (2009). Student self-governance: An attempt at a comparative socio-historical analysis. *Education Studies Moscow* (2): 211–23. <https://vo.hse.ru/article/view/15274>. (In Russian).
- Popova, G. (2007). Student self-governance: System and diagnostics. *Higher Education in Russia* (9): 141–4. <https://www.elibrary.ru/item.asp?id=9926324>. (In Russian).
- Public Chamber of Russia. (2021). *Discussion on the draft of government decree on educational activities*. <https://youtu.be/yOP-VT0Q9mk?t=7080> (accessed August 10, 2022, in Russian).
- Russian Education. (2018). *Student ombudsman is a president of student council*. <https://www.edu.ru/news/tochka-zreniya/studencheskiy-ombudsmen-eto-predsedatel-studsovet/> (accessed August 10, 2022, in Russian).
- Russian Union of Youth. (2016). *Report on the Results of the All-Russian Census of Student Councils*. <https://studorg.ru/assets/media/Итогизпереписистудсоветов-2016.zip> (accessed August 10, 2022, in Russian).
- Russian Union of Youth. (2018). *Summary analytical report on the state of student representative bodies in the Russian federation*. <https://www.ruy.ru/upload/iblock/666/66669e379281e4814899484542674033.pdf> (accessed August 10, 2022, in Russian).
- Russian Union of Youth. *Student representation*. <https://www.ruy.ru/projects/studencheskoe-samoupravlenie/> (accessed August 10, 2022, in Russian).
- Saint-Petersburg Student Council. <https://www.gov.spb.ru/gov/otrasl/kpmp/molodezhnoe-samoupravlenie/studsovet/> (accessed August 10, 2022, in Russian).
- Shalamova, L.F. and Fatov, I.S. (2014). *Social and legal aspects of student self-government in Russia*. Moscow: AIR. (In Russian).
- Smelov, P. and Nikitina, S. (eds.) (2021). The demographic yearbook of Russia. 2021. Statistical Handbook. *Rosstat*. <https://rosstat.gov.ru/storage/mediabank/dem21.pdf> (accessed August 10, 2022, in Russian).
- State Duma. (2021). *What will be the new law on educational activities?*. <http://duma.gov.ru/news/50970/> (accessed August 10, 2022, in Russian).
- Statement of the Student Representation Bodies of Russian Universities. (2021). <http://rustudents-declaration.tilda.ws/> (accessed August 10, 2022, in Russian).
- Stegnii, V.N. (2016) Students' view on the student self-government. *Vlast' (The authority)* 24(4): 169–75. (In Russian).
- Student coordinating council of the all—Russian professional union of education. <http://skrsrf.ru/about> (accessed August 10, 2022, in Russian).
- Student council of Russian health ministry. <https://фцпдн.рф/students> (accessed August 10, 2022, in Russian).
- Student Ombudsman of Russia. (2016). *Ranking of student councils in universities*. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1PL9eAZhrv2HQb-98yTroYaV1GUy8HT8h/view?usp=sharing> (accessed August 10, 2022, in Russian).
- Student Ombudsman of Russia. (2015). <https://web.archive.org/web/20151014135311/http://studombudsman.com/> (accessed August 10, 2022, in Russian).
- Student Ombudsman of Russia. (2015). <https://web.archive.org/web/20151014135311/http://studombudsman.com/> (accessed August 10, 2022, in Russian).
- University official, personal communication (August 30, 2021).

Historical Evolution of the Legal and Political Framework for Student Representation in Spain

José-Luis Parejo

Introduction

A university can be considered a “small-scale” democracy in which students can participate and, to some degree, influence their daily lives as part of the institution. If we consider the university to be a school of citizenship (Bergan, 2004) and a space for political socialization, it can train and motivate students to participate in “large-scale democracy” (Andersen and Roßteutscher, 2007). And if one of its explicit objectives is to foster spaces for student participation (Teixeira and Klemenčič, 2021), it will be more successful in promoting such objectives (García-Albacete, 2013). Moreover, these spaces can lead students interested in politics to significantly change their attitudes (Dinas, 2014). The latest edition of the *Youth in Spain Report* published by INJUVE (Simón, Clavería, García Albacete, López Ortega and Torre, 2020) reveals that, as one progresses through the educational system, student participation decreases, especially at pre-graduate levels and beyond, in the following activities: voting for student representative bodies, being elected as a delegate or representative in the various university governing bodies, attending student assemblies to discuss issues, and collaborating or attending the events of student associations. Although student strikes and demonstrations are the type of action most frequently carried out by student movements, despite their high costs and as found by previous studies (Caínzos, 2006; Deth, 2011), they value institutional channels more than activism and protests as means of participation in the university (Jover, López and Quiroga, 2011).

At a social level, university students participate more than other young people of the same age not only in protests and demonstrations, but also in elections (Dee, 2004, Milligan, Moretti and Oreopoulos, 2004). So why don't they take advantage of the opportunities for institutional participation that the university offers them? In Spain, the regulations have granted the universities, in the exercise of their right to autonomy, the definition of the percentage of student representation in collegiate bodies and in the election of the rector. This percentage, as will be seen, is much lower than that of the teaching staff, which has always had more than half of the representation. Perhaps for this reason the figures for elections for the rector or the Senate, by universal suffrage, are usually very low. For example, in the last elections held in March 2022, at the University of Valladolid, only 13.53 percent of students participated in the election of their

rector (with a weight of 28 percent) and only 11.18 percent for their representatives in the Senate (84 members out of 300) (UVa, 2022). Given these figures, it is worth questioning whether the existing organizational mechanisms and policies in universities are adequate and sufficient to promote student involvement in universities (Martín Cortés, 2007). Several studies at a national (Soler, Vilá, Fullana, Planas and Pallisera, 2012) and international level (Plantan, 2002) have analyzed the causes of this issue and outlined some proposals to address it.

Research on the participation of the Spanish student movement in the anti-Franco struggle has been widely addressed in the literature (e.g., Maravall, 1978; Sandoica, Baldó and Ruiz Carnicer, 2007). During the democratic period, the movement has been analyzed at specific moments of cycles of protests against university reforms or social issues (González Calleja, 2009). However, little scholarly attention has been paid to the evolution of the channels and structures of student participation in university governing bodies over the last forty years. This will be the focus of this chapter. To this end, I conduct a historiographic analysis through a documentary analysis of legislative sources, news media, and student manifestos (Parejo, 2016). The chapter is structured according to the criteria of proposal, debate, approval, and repeal of regulations at the state level and their impact on universities. I present and discuss the weight and articulation of legal provisions concerning student representation, as well as its continuities and discontinuities, in the Spanish university system from 1978 to 2022.

The Spanish Constitution (SC)

In Spain, the political participation of university students is legally protected by the Spanish Constitution (SC) enacted in 1978. Article 23.1 declares the right of citizens to participate in public affairs, either directly or through their representatives, which are freely elected in periodic elections by universal suffrage. This article *de facto* implies a democratization not only applicable to Spanish political institutions of political representation at different levels (General State Administration, municipalities, etc.), but also extends to universities. This democratization is present in the direct or indirect participation of students in elections, as well as the unipersonal governing bodies of the university (rector, dean, department director, etc.) and their representatives in collegiate bodies (Social Council, Governing Council, Senate, Faculty Board and Department Council).

Likewise, Article 22 defines the fundamental right to association, in this case of students, provided that said association is legally constituted and, in this case, can benefit from the material and budgetary support of both the public administrations and the universities themselves. Similarly, Articles 20.1a and 21.1 recognize freedom of expression and assembly as fundamental rights. These rights cannot be limited in the case of students, although their organization may be regulated on campus (Jiménez-Soto, 2009). Article 27.7 states that students shall participate in the control and management of all centers supported by the Administration with public funds under the terms established by law. This article, contained as part of the right to education, is a reaffirmation and commitment to the democratization of educational institutions, regardless of their level. Finally, Article 27.10 enshrines the historical recognition of the autonomy of universities, which allows them to be guaranteed the right to academic freedom, as well as

to govern and manage themselves academically and economically through their own statutes and internal regulations, without interference from state power, but under the protection of the provisions of the legislation in effect (Morenilla and Herrejón, 2002).

The University Reform Law (LRU)

After the Socialist Party won the 1982 election, one of the political projects of its president, Felipe González, was the modernization of universities. A year later, the University Reform Law (*Ley de Reforma Universitaria*, LRU) passed with a strong parliamentary majority. This law made effective some of the provisions of the General Education Act of 1970 (*Ley General de Educación*, LGE) and adapted to the new political configuration of the country into autonomous regions. Emphasizing that higher education was to be considered a public service, it organized teaching by departments and reformed the cyclical structure of teaching, among other changes (Morenilla and Herrejón, 2002). At the university government level, Article 27.4 advised each university, within the framework of its organizational autonomy, to modify its statutes in order to establish a guarantee of participation of student representatives in the governing and administrative bodies of the university. The percentage of student representation in these bodies was to be dependent on the internal statutes of each university. However, in the Senate the professors would always have a majority ($\frac{3}{5}$), and its members were to be elected by weighted universal suffrage of the entire university. The Senate was to be the collegiate body that directly elected the rector and from which the governing board would be formed. This board was to be the ordinary management body of the university, in which all sectors of the university were to be represented, including students and the rector's team. Once again, the statutes, if applicable, were to be the ones to regulate the self-organization of student representation at all levels of the university (in general, by faculties and by departments).

The approval of the statutes of the University of Valladolid in 1985, to adapt to the LRU, was strongly opposed by students, as in other universities. One of the reasons for this opposition was the students' limited participation in their creation and their low weight in the Senate (27.5 percent). However, a student representation body was created (art. 149).

The Organic Law on Universities (LOU)

A decade after the enactment of the LRU in 1983, the higher education community and the political sphere started demanding a reform to Title V, regarding the faculty. During the second legislature of José María Aznar, this time with an absolute majority, the People's Party government rejected the idea of partially modifying the LRU and set about drafting a new law. The Organic Law on Universities (*Ley Orgánica de Universidades*, LOU) of 2001, despite having been enacted almost two years after the approval of the Bologna Declaration, did not modify the basic structure of university education, nor did it establish the appropriate mechanisms for the integration of the Spanish university system into the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). It was approved

at the same time that meetings of rectors in Salamanca and ministers in Prague were being held, both of which were fundamental to follow up and advance the Bologna agreements that had been signed two years earlier (Parejo, 2016).

Another widely discussed issue in the parliamentary processing of the LOU was the reduction of student representation in university governing bodies. For example, in the Governing Council, student participation was set at 40 percent of the members elected by the Senate for that body. This change *de facto* reduced the representation of the student sector in the highest governing body of the institution to 10 percent. The composition of the Social Council expressly recognized the participation of a student, elected by the Governing Council. In the Senate, the doctoral officials of the teaching bodies represented a simple majority (51 percent). Universities were to define the composition of this highest representative body in which students would be represented. In the Faculty Board, as in the Governing Council, the faculty was assured 51 percent of representation, while the remaining percentage (where the students were supposed to be), was to be defined by each university. The Department Council was to be composed of the doctoral members of the Department, representation of the non-doctoral teaching and research staff, and students, as determined by the statutes of each university.

The main novelty of the LOU regarding university government was the election of the rector. The government's aim was to strengthen the figure of the rector and give them a presidential quality. Contrary to what happened in the LRU, where the rector was elected only by the Senate, the new law proposed, in Article 20.2, that the rector be elected exclusively by the university community, by direct election and free and secret universal suffrage, with the vote weighted by sectors: doctoral faculty in university teaching bodies, other teaching and research staff, students, and administrative staff, as determined by the statutes of the university. However, as in the Senate, the combined vote of the doctoral teaching staff belonging to the university teaching bodies was weighted to represent at least 51 percent of the total. In Spain, until then, there had been no international references that endorsed this model of election of the rector, except for some experiences in Latin America (for example, at the San Carlos University in Guatemala), where it had been discarded due to the problems it generated. It was thought that there could be problems of politicization and legitimization (Congreso de los Diputados, 2001).

As we have observed, in the various collegiate bodies of university government, as well as in the system for electing the rector, there continued to be, as with the LRU, an unequal distribution of student representation, which was further worsened in the Governing Council and subject to what each university provided in its statutory framework for the Senate, the Faculty Board and the Department Council. In reality, for the model of university government proposed by the LOU to have been truly "democratic," the composition of its various bodies together with the value of the vote in the election of the rector of the various groups of the university community should have been balanced. This was not the case. We were faced with an apparent democratic model, given that the representation of the different sectors that comprise the university community in the governing bodies was standardized and, for example, in the election of the rector, the vote was weighted—which meant that some votes were worth more than others. The LOU was strongly opposed by students and rectors, as well as by the parliamentary opposition, which resulted in fierce demonstrations and protests. This law was criticized because of the way it was processed (with dialogue conspicuously absent), its model of government, and its lack of modernization of the Spanish university system (Parejo, 2016).

The second transitional provision of the LOU forced universities to set up a new senate within six months to draw up statutes. The provisions where the university community was given freedom to agree on the weight of the different sectors in the governing bodies generated conflict and unease among the students, who saw their participation quotas reduced. The interpretation of the LOU by the faculty and administrative staff was aimed at increasing their share of power to the detriment of that of the students. For example, the students of the University of Alcalá protested against the proposal approved by the governing board and submitted to the Senate that it intended to reduce their representation from 30 percent to 20 percent (González Luciano, 2002). Finally, with the reform of the statutes to adapt them to the LOU in 2003, the percentage was set at 25 percent for the following bodies: Senate, Central Board, and Department Council. Paradoxically, the report *Universidad 2000* published by the CRUE (Bricall, 2000) proposed a dual way of electing the rector: either directly or through the Senate. Student participation in elections for the highest representative of the university by universal suffrage has always been around 11 percent, ranging from 0.8 percent to 26 percent, according to a study by Martín Cortés and Lorente (2011).

The Organic Law for the Modification of the Organic Law on Universities (LOMLOU)

On April 7, 2006, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, the Prime Minister of Spain and member of the Socialist Party, appointed Mercedes Cabrera as Minister of Education and Science. The new minister had the mandate to complete the modification of the LOU begun that the People's Party had started, and to guide the process of Spain's incorporation to the EHEA, especially regarding the reform of specific articles. The modification of the LOU that was approved in 2007, known as LOMLOU (*Ley Orgánica de Modificación de la Ley Orgánica de Universidades*) and currently in effect, gave greater autonomy to universities, allowing them to define in their statutes the representation of the different sectors of the university community in the Senate. In Article 16, the Senate recovered its former power to elect the rector. The election of the rector could be carried out in two ways: through the Senate or by direct election and universal suffrage of the university community (Articles 20.2 and 20.3). In the second case, weighting by sectors, the actual majority (as with the Governing Council and the Faculty Board) was granted to professors with permanent bonds with the university. However, despite the flexibility granted by law in the election of the rector, most Spanish universities have preferred electing the rector by universal suffrage, except for the University of Seville, which returned to the system of election by the Senate.

Article 46.2 of the LOMLOU stipulates the rights of university students, among which are the rights to political participation and representation in the governing bodies of the University under the terms established by law and in the respective statutes or rules of organization and operation. Likewise, the LOMLOU, in Article 46.5, defined the basic pillars that would mark the development of student participation policies at the institutional level. Firstly, it entrusted the central government with the task of approving a University Student Statute containing the constitution, functions, organization, and operation of a University Student Council. This Council was defined as a collegiate body of student representation attached to the competent

Ministry. This article also defined the basic composition of this newly created body: “the student representation of all universities and, where appropriate, with an adequate participation of representatives of the autonomous student councils.” This new body was a vindication of the Coordination of Representatives of Public Universities (Coordinadora de Representantes de Universidades Públicas, CREUP), a national association of student representatives that brought together the largest number of student councils constituted in the country’s public universities, as well as FAEST, a student association linked to the Socialist Party (Parejo, 2016).

It is also worth highlighting that this modification included a new right to academic recognition for participation in university student representation activities, among others (Article 46.2.i). Article 12.8 of Royal Decree 1393/2007 developed this precept of the LOMLOU with a recognition of a maximum of 6 ECTS in the degree’s curriculum. Subsequently, in the two subsequent amendments made in Royal Decrees 861/2010 and 43/2015, the possibility was introduced for students to request the academic recognition of at least 6 credits of the total of the degree curriculum (Article one, point 5). A year after the approval of the LOMLOU and the momentum of the process that this regulation gave to the adaptation of the university system to the EHEA, an anti-Bologna student movement arose in protest against the risk of commercialization and the underlying university model. This movement initiated a cycle of mobilizations, protests, and lock-ins in faculties and universities due to the lack of participation and a perceived imposition of this reform on the university community (Fernández-González, 2014). Even so, the organized student movement, through the Spanish student representation via CREUP throughout this decade, influenced the definition and critical orientation of university policy as part of an “stakeholder” with the Government (Klemenčič, 2012), partly because of the contact they had with European associations, especially ESU-ESIB, a partner of the Bologna Process, of which it had been part since 2005 (Michavila and Parejo, 2008; Parejo, 2016).

The University Student Statute and the State University Student Council (EEU) (CEUNE)

Three years later than expected, as stipulated in the Fourteenth Additional Provision of the LOMLOU, within the framework of the *University Strategy 2015* (Ministry of Education, 2010) and in accordance with the recommendations of the Prague and Berlin summits, the Council of Ministers approved on December 30, 2010 the Royal Decree 1791/2010 of the University Student Statute (Estatuto del Estudiante Universitario, EEU). The aim of this regulation was to establish mechanisms to improve student participation in university life and increase student contribution to the design of university policies. In addition to specifying the rights and duties of students at a general level and by cycles (bachelor’s, master’s and Ph.D.), regulating their participation and representation within the universities, as well as their integration in national and international organizations, it also addressed issues related to teaching orientation and programming, extracurricular activities, and values education. However, it was up to each university, in the exercise of its autonomy, to develop the different rights contained in this Royal Decree and to guarantee them. For Jiménez Soto (2009), the approval of the EEU was appropriate given that it standardized the regulation of the rights and duties of students. As users of a public service, these

rights and duties would be guaranteed in every university within the State. However, the repeal of the Decree of September 8, 1954, on academic discipline (student duties) from the Franco era, which was still in effect, was still to come.

The EEU contemplates the implementation of the State University Student Council (Consejo de Estudiantes Universitario del Estado, CEUNE). The CEUNE is a collegiate body attached to the Ministry with competence in university matters, similar to that of the rectors (Council of Universities) and the Education Councilors of the autonomous communities (General Conference on University Policy). This body is for students to deliberate, consult, and participate before the Central Government. The LOMLOU does not specify that the CEUNE is binding. The main functions of the CEUNE, according to Article 51 of the EEU, are to inform the general public of the criteria of the government's policy proposals regarding university students; to be a valid speaker before the Ministry; to contribute actively to the defense of student rights; to ensure that the governing bodies of the universities act appropriately in relation to the rights and responsibilities of students; to receive and, where appropriate, channel complaints submitted by university students; to submit proposals to the government, and others. The composition of the plenary of the CEUNE is indicated in Article 48 and the term of office of the members of the CEUNE, excepting the *ex officio* members, is two years from their election, unless their term has been terminated for other causes provided for in the Statute, as stated in Article 50.

In addition to the above, and in accordance with the regulations governing the organization and functioning of the CEUNE, joint commissions may be formed to coordinate this body with the Council of Universities and the General Conference on University Policy. The CEUNE, as the highest representative body of the students of public and private universities as well as their associations, has the function of conveying their demands to the government, "from the bottom up," and the government, for its part, informs and gathers the opinion of the students on its university policies. The political will of the government of the day gives meaning to the nature of this State-level student representation body, so that the "voice" of all students can be heard. In the future, it should be assessed whether the pluralist model in state-student interactions predominant in the last four decades in Spain may be evolving, following Schmitter's (1974) theory, toward a neo-corporatist model, following the typology of national representation systems proposed by Klemenčič (2012), with the creation and functioning of the CEUNE (Parejo and Lorente, 2012). Martín Cortés and Lorente (2011) investigated the political profile of the members of this body and their assessment of the organizational models of student participation in Spanish universities (delegation, associative, and assembly). Parejo and Maestu (2023) have carried out a recent analysis of the political agenda carried out by students in the CEUNE during its first period of operation.

Law on the University System (LOSU)

2020 saw the rise of the first coalition government after the restoration of Democracy, forged between the Socialist Party and Unidas Podemos and led by Pedro Sánchez. Manuel Castells, the newly appointed Minister of Universities, vowed to develop a new law to replace the 2001 LOU. This had already been tried before by socialist minister Pedro Duque in 2018 without success. The first draft of the Law on the University System (*Ley Orgánica del Sistema Universitario, LOSU*) was

presented in 2021. In this regard, it proposes several innovations on the previous law at the level of organization and governance. First, there are some changes to the process of electing rectors (Article 28). Second, there is a small change in the option of universal suffrage, with the statutes being able to correct the weight of a sector if a minimum percentage of participation among its members is not reached, in order to guarantee a democratically significant participation. This, according to CREUP (2021), is a frontal attack on the student body, the largest constituency of the university and the most difficult to reach in election campaigns for rector and other governing bodies.

Furthermore, the traditional option of electing the rector via the Senate is to be eliminated and an *ex novo* option is added: by means of a “specific body.” This specific body for the election of the rector is to comprise twenty to thirty members, 50 percent of which are to be teaching and research staff, 10 percent students, 10 percent technical, management and service staff, and 30 percent people from outside the university of recognized academic, cultural, social, business, or institutional prestige, whether local, national, or international. The majority of the faculties of the university were to be representative. The procedure for the election of the rector would involve the organization of an open competition in which the curriculum vitae (academic, research, management, and professional merits), the institutional project of the university presented by the candidates, and the corresponding interviews were to be evaluated. In addition, the rector, according to Article 27.5, would appoint the dean from a list of three candidates proposed by the faculty council, instead of electing him/her directly through the Faculty Council. His term of office would be six years, non-extendable (Article 20.2). Undoubtedly, this new procedure for electing the rector and new powers has been the element of greatest controversy within universities, especially among students, as it is considered a managerial model (Luescher and Mamashela, 2010) and undermines their participation in the election of the highest academic authority of the university. It is a system for electing the rector that includes some of the proposals derived from a study commissioned by the Socialist government in the framework of the *University Strategy 2015* (ME, 2010) and others contained in the 2013 document prepared by experts for university reform of the People’s Party government (MECD, 2013).

Next, the preliminary draft of the LOSU incorporates in Article 83 an unprecedented section on participation and representation rights. It urges universities to guarantee students an active, free, and meaningful participation in the design, implementation, and evaluation of university policy, as well as the effective exercise of their freedoms of expression, assembly, and association. It also recognizes the right to active, meaningful, and participatory representation in the governing and representative bodies of the university, in the processes for their election and, in particular, in the Student Council of their university, which forces universities to create it (Article 24), and in the CEUNE as well. In the first case, it is established that the Student Council of the university is the highest collegiate body of representation and coordination of the student body, responsible for defending its interests in its governing bodies and ensuring the fulfillment and respect of its rights and duties. Its members shall be elected by universal, free, equal, direct, and secret suffrage among students of the different centers as determined by the university statutes. It is also stated that this body will enjoy full autonomy for the fulfillment of its purposes within the university’s own regulations and that the university will provide it with the necessary means for the development of its functions. Likewise, the composition of the Senate, defined as an “advisory body” of representation and participation of the university community, is limited to 100 members and the Governing Council to fifty, and the membership of students is included,

without determining their percentage in each body, which will be the responsibility of the statutes of each university. At the faculty and department council level, student representation will be at least 25 percent. However, organized student representation demanded a minimum of 30 percent representation in all collegiate bodies (CREUP, 2021).

Finally, given the lack of consensus that the first draft of the LOSU had among rectors, students, unions, and political parties, and in order to facilitate dialogue and consensus among all the agents involved in the university reform, the Ministry decided to withdraw the draft. Months later, Minister Castell resigned and Joan Subirats was appointed in his place. He took up the preliminary draft of the LOSU to “make it his own” and overcome the most controversial points of the reform. His first milestone was the approval of the University Coexistence Law in February 2022, which repealed the 1954 Decree. In July, he presented the LOSU project to the Congress of Deputies. The most important change in this new version is that it modifies the system of rector election, establishing only a single way in Article 51.2: by direct election and through universal suffrage weighted according to the members of the university community, 51 percent going to professors. The weight of the other groups of the university community, including students, was to be determined by the statutes of each university. The Senate is once again considered, as in the LOU, the body of maximum representation and participation of the university community, according to Article 45.1, and the limit on its composition is no longer part of the law. In this sense, CREUP and CEUNE (2022) consider that student representation should be at least 35 percent. (...). They demand the Ministry of Universities keep their word to put the student body at the center of the Law. However, it also included, a great change, long demanded by the student movement. Article 33.p recognizes the right of students to academic strike. This right cannot be exercised during exam periods. To date, only the University of Seville, since the beginning of democracy, has contemplated this right of students in Article 96.1.n. of its statutes, at the initiative of its highest student representation body, the CADUS.

Conclusions

If we assume that the university can and should be a space for civic education (Bergan, 2004, Zgaga, 2009), it should favor the development and political socialization that makes it possible to improve the quality of postmodern democracies (García-Albacete, 2013). The legal framework for student participation in university governance over the last forty years of democratic period remains limited. The power in decision-making continues to fall mostly on the faculty, although at some point students may be able to modify an election for rector if they agree on it as a collective and the faculty vote is dispersed. However, the Spanish Constitution of 1978 recognizes the right to student participation in Article 27.7. This right should be guaranteed in the development of the right and principle of university autonomy contemplated in Article 27.10, which establishes that university institutions have the power to self-organize in their respective statutes and, therefore, the opportunity to improve and expand the mechanisms and formal channels of student participation. The model of university government has not changed substantially from the approval of the LRU in 1983 to the LOSU draft of 2022, except for the LOU of 2001 and the proposal to elect the rector of the LOSU preliminary draft through a *board*.

Lawmakers have always granted universities the freedom to establish in their statutes the percentage of student representation in collegiate bodies and in the election of the rector. This percentage has been decreasing in successive statutory reforms to adapt to the new legal provisions. On the other hand, lawmakers have always granted the majority of power to the faculty: $\frac{3}{5}$ in the LRU and 51 percent to civil servant professors, to which must be added the rest of the non-civil servant professors, in the LOU, LOMLOU, and LOSU. This majority was also assured when the LOU introduced the “weighted” election of the rector, by direct, universal, free, and secret suffrage. For its part, the LOMLOU recognized academically the right to student participation and through the EEU created the CEUNE, the highest student representation body of all Spanish universities before the Government. Finally, the LOSU introduced a new right: the academic strike and the obligation of universities to create a student representation body.

In short, we are faced with a model of university government, which is classified as “democratic” because elections are held and there are collegiate decision-making bodies. These are bodies in which the different groups that comprise the academic community do not have the same interests or the same amount of power, perhaps because of the feudal origin of the University as an institution. This “democratic” (class-based and weighted) model will remain in force in the coming years with the foreseeable approval of the LOSU, as we have analyzed. The data on the political participation of students at the institutional level in the last twenty years reveal a lack of interest in this model of university governance, perhaps due to lack of information, lack of training, or a profound inequality of representation in the organization, even though it is the main and largest group of the institution and a full member of the academic community. If there is a consensus in the Spanish university to have a democratic organizational model, it must reform its model of government to make it truly democratic. In the words of Alfred E. Smith, the problems of democracy are solved with more democracy.

References

- Andersen, J.G. and Roßteutscher, S. (2007). Small-scale citizenship: Citizen power in the domains of everyday life. In Van Deth, J.W., Montero, J.R. and Westholm, A. (eds.), *Citizenship and Involvement in European Democracies. A Comparative Analysis* (pp. 245–78). London and New York: Routledge.
- Bergan, S. (2004). *The University as Res Publica: Higher Education Governance, Student Participation and the University as a Site of Citizenship* (Vol. 1). Strasbourg: Council of Europe.
- Bricall, J.M. (coord.) (2000). *Universidad 2000. Informe sobre la enseñanza superior en España*. Madrid: CRUE.
- Caínzos, M.Á. (2006). Participación de los jóvenes españoles en manifestaciones. Comparación con los jóvenes europeos y análisis de sus determinantes. *Revista de Estudios de Juventud* (75): 121–53.
- Congreso de Los Diputados. (2001). *Diario de sesiones de la Comisión de Educación, Cultura y Deporte* 344: 11049–50. https://www.congreso.es/public_oficiales/L7/CONG/DS/CO/CO_344.PDF
- Congreso de Los Diputados (July 1, 2022). 121/000111 Proyecto de Ley Orgánica del Sistema Universitario. XIV Legislatura. *Boletín Oficial de las Cortes Generales*. Serie A: Proyectos de Ley. Núm. 111–1. [https://www.congreso.es/busqueda-de-publicaciones?p_p_id=publicaciones&p_p_lifecycle=0&p_p_state=normal&p_p_mode=view&_publicaciones_mode=mostrarTextoIntegro&_publicaciones_legislatura=XIV&_publicaciones_id_texto=\(BOCG-14-A-111-1.CODI.\)](https://www.congreso.es/busqueda-de-publicaciones?p_p_id=publicaciones&p_p_lifecycle=0&p_p_state=normal&p_p_mode=view&_publicaciones_mode=mostrarTextoIntegro&_publicaciones_legislatura=XIV&_publicaciones_id_texto=(BOCG-14-A-111-1.CODI.))
- Coordinadora de Representantes de Universidades Públicas (CREUP) (2021). *10 Razones por las que la LOSU ataca al estudiantado*. <https://www.creup.es/10-razones-por-las-que-la-losu-ataca-al-estudiantado/>

- Coordinadora de Representantes de Universidades Públicas (CREUP) y Consejo de Estudiantes Universitario del Estado (CEUNE) (May 10, 2022). El estudiantado universitario evidencia que la LOSU no avanza lo suficiente en participación estudiantil. *Nota de prensa*. <https://www.creup.es/comunicacion/notas-de-prensa/2022/05/10/el-estudiantado-universitario-evidencia-que-la-losu-no-avanza-lo-suficiente-en-participacion-estudiantil/>
- Cortes Generales (1978). *Constitución Española*. [https://www.boe.es/eli/es/c/1978/12/27/\(1\)/con Decreto 221/2003, de 23 de octubre, del Consejo de Gobierno de la Comunidad de Madrid, por el que se aprueban los Estatutos de la Universidad de Alcalá.](https://www.boe.es/eli/es/c/1978/12/27/(1)/con Decreto 221/2003, de 23 de octubre, del Consejo de Gobierno de la Comunidad de Madrid, por el que se aprueban los Estatutos de la Universidad de Alcalá.)
- Dee, T.S. (2004). Are there civic returns to education?. *Journal of Public Economics* 88: 1697–720.
- Decreto 324/2003, de 25 de noviembre, por el que se aprueba el Estatuto de la Universidad de Sevilla.
- Decreto 55/2017, de 11 de abril, por el que se aprueba la modificación de los Estatutos de la Universidad de Sevilla, aprobados por Decreto 324/2003, de 25 de noviembre.
- Decreto de 8 de septiembre de 1954 por el que se aprueba el Reglamento de Disciplina Académica de los Centros Oficiales de Enseñanza Superior y de Enseñanza Técnica dependientes del Ministerio de Educación Nacional.
- Deth, J.W. van (2011). Is creative participation good for democracy?. In M. Micheletti World y A.S. McFarland (eds.), *Creative Participation. Responsibility-Taking in the Political* (pp. 148–72). New York: Routledge.
- Dinas, E. (2014). Why does the apple fall far from the tree? How early political socialization prompts parent-child dissimilarity. *British Journal of Political Science* 44: 827–52.
- Fernández-González, J. (2014). *El movimiento estudiantil desde las teorías de acción colectiva: el caso del movimiento anti-Bolonia en el estado español* (Doctoral dissertation, Universidad del País Vasco-Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea).
- García-Albacete, G.M. (2013). Promoting political interest in schools: The role of civic education. In Abendschön, S. (ed.), *Growing into politics. Contexts and Timing of Political Socialization* (pp. 91–114). Colchester: ECPR Press.
- González Calleja, E. (2009). *Rebelión en las aulas. Movilización y protesta estudiantil en la España Contemporánea*. Madrid: Alianza.
- González Luciano, R. (2002). *Carta: “Para los estudiantes, pero sin los estudiantes”*. Alcalá de Henares (Madrid): Consejo de Estudiantes de la Universidad de Alcalá.
- Jiménez Soto, I. (2009). *Derechos y deberes en la comunidad universitaria*. Madrid: Marcial Pons.
- Jover, G., López, E. and Quiroga, P. (2011). La universidad como espacio cívico: valoración estudiantil de las modalidades de participación política universitaria. *Revista de Educación*: 69–91.
- Klemenčič, M. (2012). Student representation in Western Europe: Introduction to the special issue. *European Journal of Higher Education* 2(1): 2–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21568235.2012.695058>
- Ley Orgánica 11/1983, de 25 de agosto, de Reforma Universitaria.
- Ley Orgánica 6/2001, de 21 de diciembre, de Universidades.
- Ley Orgánica 4/2007, de 12 de abril, por la que se modifica la Ley Orgánica 6/2001, de 21 de diciembre, de Universidades.
- Ley Orgánica 2/2023, de 22 de marzo, del Sistema Universitario.
- Ley 3/2022, de 24 de febrero, de convivencia universitaria.
- Luescher Mamashela, T.M. (2010). From university democratisation to managerialism: The changing legitimization of university governance and the place of students. *Tertiary Education and Management* 16(4): 259–83. doi: 10.1080/13583883.2010.529161.
- Maravall, J.M. (1978). *Dictadura y disenso político. Obreros y estudiantes bajo el franquismo*. Madrid: Alfaguara.
- Martín Cortés, I. (2007). La participación política de los estudiantes universitarios dentro y fuera de la Universidad. *Panorama social* (6): 119–32.
- Martín Cortés, I. and Lorente, J. (2011). *La participación política de los estudiantes universitarios*. Paper presented at the “Escuela de Participación Estudiantil.” CREUP & UIMP.
- Michavila, F. and Parejo, J. L. (2008). Student participation policies in the Bologna Process. *Revista de Educación*, 85–118.

- Milligan, K., Moretti, E. and Oreopoulos, P. (2004). Does education improve citizenship? Evidence from the United States and the United Kingdom. *Journal of Public Economics* 88(9–10): 1667–95.
- Ministerio de Educación (ME) (2010). *Strategy university 2015: Modernising the university*. Madrid: ME.
- Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte (MECD) (2013). *Propuestas para la mejora de la calidad y eficiencia del sistema universitario español*. Madrid: MECD. <https://www.educacionyfp.gob.es/servicios-al-ciudadano/informacion-publica/audiencia-informacion-publica/cerrados/2013/sistemauniversitario.html>
- Ministerio de Universidades (MU) (August 31, 2021). Anteproyecto de Ley Orgánica del sistema universitario. <https://www.universidades.gob.es/portal/site/universidades/menuitem.21ef60083f296675105f2c10026041a0/?vgnxtoid=660607559eaab710VgnVCM1000001d04140aRCRD>
- Parejo, J.L. (2016). *La participación de los estudiantes en la Universidad. Políticas y estrategias para su mejora en el contexto del Espacio Europeo de Educación Superior* (Doctoral dissertation, Complutense University of Madrid). <https://eprints.ucm.es/id/eprint/40422/>
- Parejo, J.L. and Lorente, J. (2012). From student associations to CEUNE: the development of student representation in Spain. *European Journal of Higher Education* 2(1): 78–94. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21568235.2012.691245>
- Parejo, J.L. and Maestu, E. (2023). The political agenda in the participation of college students in the Spanish State Council of university students. *Bordón: Revista de pedagogía* 75(2): 177–91. <https://doi.org/10.13042/Bordon.2023.97311>
- Plantan, F. (2002). *Universities as Sites of Citizenship and Civic Responsibility*. Final General Report. Steering Committee for Higher Education and Research [CDESR (2002) 2]. Real Decreto 1286/1985, de 26 de junio, por el que se aprueban los Estatutos de la Universidad de Valladolid.
- Real Decreto 1791/2010 del Estatuto del Estudiante Universitario.
- Sandoica, E.H., Baldó, M., Ruiz Carnicer, M.Á. (2007). *Estudiantes contra Franco (1939–1975): oposición política y movilización juvenil*. Madrid: La Esfera de los Libros.
- Schmitter, P. (1974). Still the century of corporatism?. *The Review of Politics* XXVI(1): 7–52.
- Simón, P., Clavería, S., García Albacete, G., López Ortega, A. and Torre, M. (2020). *Informe Juventud en España 2020*. Injuve. <http://www.injuve.es/observatorio/demografia-e-informacion-general/informe-juventud-en-espana-2020>
- Soler, P., Vilá, M., Fullana, J., Planas, A. and Pallisera, M. (2012). La participación de los estudiantes en la universidad: Dificultades percibidas y propuestas de mejora. *Revista de Educación* (358): 542–62. doi:10-4438/1988-592X-RE-2010-358-090.
- Souvirón Morenilla, J.M. and Palencia Herrejón, F. (2002). *La nueva regulación de las universidades: comentarios y análisis sistemático de la Ley Orgánica 62001, de 21 de diciembre de Universidades*. Albolote (Granada): Comares.
- Teixeira, P.N. and Klemenčič, M. (2021). Valuing the civic role of university education in an age of competition and rapid change. In *The promise of higher education* (pp. 145–51). Cham: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-67245-4_23
- Universidad de Valladolid (UVA) (2020). *Estatutos de la Universidad de Valladolid*. Aprobados por Acuerdo 111/2020, de 30 de diciembre, de la Junta de Castilla y León (BOCYL núm. 269, de 31 de diciembre y BOE núm. 19, de 22 de enero).
- Universidad de Valladolid (UVA) (2022). *Elecciones a rector 2022. 1ª vuelta*. UVA. http://elecciones.uva.es/export/sites/elecciones/_documentos/DATOS-PARTICIPACION.pdf.
- Universidad de Valladolid (UVA) (2020). *Estatutos de la Universidad de Valladolid*. Aprobados por Acuerdo 111/2020, de 30 de diciembre, de la Junta de Castilla y León (BOCYL núm. 269, de 31 de diciembre y BOE núm. 19, de 22 de enero).
- Universidad de Valladolid (UVA) (2022). *Elecciones a rector 2022. 1ª vuelta*. UVA. http://elecciones.uva.es/export/sites/elecciones/_documentos/DATOS-PARTICIPACION.pdf.
- Zgaga, P. (2009). Higher education and citizenship: “The full range of purposes.” *European Educational Research Journal* 8(2): 175–88. Doi:10.2304/eej.2009.8.2.175

The Student Participation in the Governance of the Complutense University of Madrid

Jorge-Antonio Fernández de los Ríos and Enrique Maestu Fonseca

Introduction

The University Complutense of Madrid (UCM) is one of the oldest public universities, and the largest on-campus university in Spain with twenty-six faculties. During the academic course 2021–2, the university had 68,872 students enrolled. Due to its large number of students and UCM's own relevance among the group of universities in Spain, it has traditionally had an important student movement especially since the student opposition to General Franco dictatorship until the student movements fighting against the mercantilization of higher education and the Bologna Process.

In this chapter, we focus on the different mechanisms of student participation in the governance of the UCM. The chapter is structured in several sections. First, we briefly present the current regulatory framework at the national and UCM levels. The second section presents a series of possible main factors that hinder such student participation in UCM governance. In the third section, we analyze the multiple ways of student participation in UCM governance classified in a series of subfields. Finally, we focus on the Central Student Delegation whose activities during the recent years have been developing as an engine of participatory innovation in the university community.

This chapter is based, partially, on the results of a case study about student participation in an UCM faculty (Fernández de los Ríos, 2021), providing data and analysis updated as of July 2022 about student participation in UCM governance. Specifically, this study consisted of fieldwork in which data were collected from documentary sources (national legislation, UCM regulations, reports, minutes, and field diary) and from seventy-three testimonies [forty-eight students (twenty of whom were student representatives and fourteen were members of student assemblies, among others), twenty-three teachers with experience in university management and governance, and two administrative and service employees] and through various methods (participant and nonparticipant observation, documentary analysis, thirty-nine individual interviews and nine focus groups). The data obtained were analyzed qualitatively with the help of the Nvivo program (v.12).

Normative Framework of the Student's Right to Participate in the University Governance

The Organic Law 2/2023, of March 22, 2023, better known as LOSU, is the law that develops the current legal framework of universities in Spain and stipulates important aspects regarding student participation. Regarding student participation in the governing bodies of Spanish public universities, the LOSU provides for the presence of students in the University Senate (art. 45.3), in the Faculty Boards (art. 49.3), in the Department Councils (art. 49.3), in the Social Council (art. 47.3), and in the Governing Council (art. 46.3) of the universities.¹ Furthermore, we can also find in the LOSU (arts 33 and 34) the following rights that allow the participation of students in the governance of the University: right to receive guidance and information by the University about its activities that affect them; right to obtain academic recognition and to promote the compatibility of their participation in university activities of student representation and university associations, among others; right to active, free and significant participation in the design, implementation and evaluation of university policy, as well as the effective exercise of freedoms of expression and the rights of assembly, demonstration and association; right to participate in student representation and association activities, as well as their active involvement in university life and activity (specification in the study plans, evaluation of university degrees and teaching, management of services linked to university life, active promotion of teaching innovation, links with society, and university coexistence); right to active, meaningful and participatory representation in the governing and representative bodies of the university, as well as in the processes for their election; and finally, right to be guaranteed their rights, through appropriate procedures.

UCM has further regulations concerning student representation. A reference to student participation in UCM governance can be found in the UCM Statutes (2017) that regulate the functioning of the entire University. In addition to the aforementioned rights contemplated in the LOSU, the UCM Statutes (art. 115) establish the following rights related to student participation in the governance of the University: to participate in the processes of evaluation of the quality of the teaching received; that a procedure be established to collect complaints, suggestions, and petitions from students about teaching; the right to be facilitated in the exercise of the rights of association, assembly, and expression in the university environment through the provision of material and economic means; and, finally, the right to request and receive information from the governing and representative bodies of the University in aspects concerning their activity.

Furthermore, students also have a series of rights when they become student representatives (art. 117). Every student enjoys active and passive suffrage to participate in the election of representatives, as well as to be elected, in the different governing and representative bodies of the UCM or in the student bodies, such as the Central Student Delegation (CSD) and the class or faculty delegates. The aim of this complex structure of participation is to ensure the presence of the students in all the university bodies.

On the other hand, according to art. 6 of the UCM Student Statutes (1997), one of the student representative's functions is to process the proposals, complaints, and claims made by students before the UCM governing bodies, although any student can make complaints and proposals without it being mandatory to resort to the student representatives. In addition, the representatives have the right to receive true and accurate information on matters affecting students before any governing

body and, also, to have their opinion considered in the decision-making process, especially in those matters in which students may be affected (art. 7). In any case, the activities of the student representatives must have a series of guarantees to carry out their activities (art. 8). The faculties themselves must arbitrate the procedures so that the academic work of the representatives is not affected and the academic career is balanced with the tasks of representation. Furthermore, student representatives must be able to carry out their duties freely and exercise their right to free expression.

Review of Literature: Factors Hindering Student Participation in the Governance of the UCM

In the study by Fernández de los Ríos (2021), a list of possible main factors that hinder the participation of students in the governance of the UCM is exposed, which are classified into three groups: factors endogenous to the teaching staff, to the students, and at the institutional level.

There are three factors endogenous to teachers. The first is the conduct contrary to student participation by some teachers (Parés, Chela and Martí, 2012b; Sundberg, 2018), such as hindering the students' right to strike. The second is teachers' opinions opposing to student participation (Galán Palomares and Pietkiewicz, 2015; Lizzio and Wilson, 2009; Parés, Chela and Martí, 2012b; Soler, Vilá, Fullana, Planas and Pallisera, 2012), such as questioning the right of students to participate in the governing bodies of the University (cf. Klemenčič, 2020b). The third is a lack of training and information on the part of teachers on the ways of student participation and on how to promote them (Rodero et al., 2012; Soler, Vilá, Fullana, Planas and Pallisera, 2012; cf. Klemenčič, 2020b).

There are also factors endogenous to the student body. One is the predominance of an external motivational locus (Lizzio and Wilson, 2009; Soler, Vilá, Fullana, Planas and Pallisera, 2012), such as participating only when having problems. Another is a lack of information and training to participate (Lizzio and Wilson, 2009; Martín and Lorente, 2011; Soler, Vilá, Fullana, Planas and Pallisera, 2012; Sundberg, 2018), such as students not knowing their rights and the ways of participation at their disposal. The third is a conformist attitude or lack of awareness (Martín and Lorente, 2011; Soler, Vilá, Fullana, Planas and Pallisera, 2012). The fourth factor is perceiving participation as something negative (Krause, 2005; Lizzio and Wilson, 2009; Soler, Vilá, Fullana, Planas and Pallisera, 2012), for example, considering it as a waste of time or an extra workload. A fifth factor is the general lack of feeling of belonging to the university (Astin, 1999; Krause and Coates, 2008; cf. Klemenčič, 2018). Another factor is the occasional participation and a lack of replacement in the leadership of student initiatives. The seventh is a lack of representativeness of the representatives and student associations (Lizzio and Wilson, 2009; Martín and Lorente, 2011; Rodero et al., 2012; cf. Klemenčič, 2020a): many students do not feel represented by them and the representatives of students do not usually make themselves known enough among their peers. Another factor is a certain degree of lack of coordination and inefficiency of the student representatives due to the lack of delegations in some faculties or due to an excess of work for so few students involved. The ninth factor is that student assemblies tend to be homogeneous, sectarian, small, and without the capacity to grow in support (Parés, Chela and Martí, 2012b). When decisions are made only by consensus, there is a likelihood of discriminating against internal discrepancies and without democratic guarantees. The tenth factor is the low weight of

students in the different university representative bodies (only 25 percent maximum) compared to the demographic weight they represent within the University as a whole (Galán Palomares and Pietkiewicz, 2015; Parés, Chela and Martí, 2012; Soler, Vilá, Fullana, Planas and Pallisera, 2012; Sundberg, 2018). This situation is aggravated by the absence of student representatives in those bodies and by the loss of their status as representatives. The eleventh is the low relevance of the voice of students at the decision-making level in the functioning of the University (Galán Palomares and Pietkiewicz, 2015; Soler, Vilá, Fullana, Planas and Pallisera, 2012; Sundberg, 2018) due to their ignorance about certain issues that are dealt with in the representative bodies.

Finally, there are also institutional factors that hinder student voice in university governance. In the first place, the difficulties in reconciling university participation with the rest of academic, work, or family life (Ariño, Llopis and Soler, 2014; Astin, 1999; Krause, 2005; Martín and Lorente, 2011; Parés, Chela and Martí, 2012b; Soler, Vilá, Fullana, Planas and Pallisera, 2012), with a very busy academic schedule and without time reserved for anything other than attending class. The second factor is that the regulations do not sufficiently protect the attendance of all student representatives to the governing bodies, given that they have to choose between representing or preparing for the exams during exam times. The third is that sometimes the minutes and agendas of the meetings of the bodies with student representatives are sent at very short notice (Parés, Chela and Martí, 2012bb), which makes their work difficult. Fourthly, in the collegiate bodies of the UCM the secret vote is not guaranteed, so patronage dynamics are facilitated. The position of the class delegate is not sufficiently guaranteed (Galán Palomares and Pietkiewicz, 2015), considering that they depend on whether the corresponding faculty has a regulation that includes their election system and their functions or, alternatively and informally, students elect their class delegates. Another factor is the rigid structure of student participation and representation (Martín and Lorente, 2011; Soler, Vilá, Fullana, Planas and Pallisera, 2012), with a strong antagonism between participating through official ways or through alternative ways (cf. Klemenčič and Park, 2018). Likewise, there is a certain inefficiency of the university information and communication media aimed at students (Parés, Chela and Martí, 2012). Finally, the educational model of the University neglects the quality of teaching compared to other priorities such as research, which translates into a pedagogical model in the University that is not based on students (Galán Palomares and Pietkiewicz, 2015; Sundberg, 2018; cf. Klemenčič, 2020c), where learning through university extension activities with a relatively low recognition in the academic record is disregarded.

The Ways for Student Participation in the UCM Governance

In most cases, the actual participation of students goes beyond what university regulations allow. In addition to defending the rights of students in the governing bodies or addressing specific problems, the life of university students involves many more participatory activities that include political activities of a broader scope, development of cultural, artistic, and sports activities through associations, or participating in the evaluation of quality or participating in university

management. There are many ways of student participation, so in order to better organize each of them, we will use the classification provided by Fernández de los Ríos (2021), who identifies eight different subfields for student participation in the UCM governance.

To Be a Student Representative

One of the main ways is to be a member of the Central Student Delegation of the UCM (art. 117.1.b of the UCM Statutes), which will be discussed in more detail in the third section of this chapter. In addition, two other ways are the student delegations of the faculties, which are homonymous bodies to the CSD in each faculty, and being a class delegate (art. 117.1.c). In both cases, their regulation depends on whether the corresponding faculty has a regulation that includes the election system and its functions, which is why some faculties have it and others do not, and not all classes always have a delegate.

Other ways consist of being a representative in a Faculty Board, in a Department Council and in the University Senate of the UCM, where students have 25 percent of the total composition reserved (arts. 52, 56, and 42) and are elected by universal, free, equal, direct, and secret suffrage, by the rest of the students (art. 75.1), and their mandates are two years (art. 40) except in the Department Councils, which is annually (art. 113 of the UCM Electoral Regulations, 2017).

In the Senate, students have up to seventy-five seats out of the total of 300 members (art. 3 of the UCM University Senate Regulations, 2019) but, as for July 2022, they were just fifty-four students,² due to the loss of their status as student representatives, either by ceasing to be a student or by abandonment or resignation of the position. In turn, student representatives in the Senate can participate in the University Governing Council of the UCM with five students (art. 48 of the UCM Statutes), with a mandate of two years (art. 30 of the UCM Government Regulations, 2017). Likewise, among the five students in the Governing Council, one can be part of the Social Council of the UCM, with a mandate of two years (art. 45 of the UCM Statutes).

Equally, students can also participate in the management of the University's system of student residences in two ways (arts. 94 and 91 of the UCM Centers and Structures Regulations, 2010). One is to be representative of the University Residence Halls Advisory Council, the body that serves to advise the Rector in this matter and in which three students participate. Another is through the Collegiate Council of each residence hall owned by the UCM, where they exercise advisory functions in the development of the life of the residence hall, and are composed of between ten and twelve students democratically elected by an Assembly formed by all the students of the residence hall.

Another way is to be a representative on a quality commission, the bodies responsible for overseeing institutional and degree quality. There are the UCM Quality Commission,³ the quality commissions of the faculties⁴ and the quality commissions of the degree programs.⁵ The quality commissions of the faculties and degrees are governed by their respective regulations⁶ approved by their corresponding faculty councils, so there is no fixed number of total members or students in said commissions. In any case, the number of students does not reach 25 percent of the total.

To Exercise Active Suffrage in University Elections

Students can vote in the different electoral processes. The main one is to vote in the elections to the Rector, being the vote weighted by sectors of the university community, corresponding to students 25 percent (art. 176.1 of the UCM Electoral Regulations). However, traditionally students have participated very little in such elections. For example, in 2015 the participation was 12.14 percent of the total number of UCM students, while in the 2019 elections the participation dropped to 8.53 percent. On the other hand, the students can also exercise their active suffrage directly (art. 117.1 of the UCM Statutes): vote for representatives in the Faculty Board and vote for student representative in the University Senate every two years; and vote for representatives in the Department Councils and vote for class delegate every one year.

To Participate in the University Electoral Organization

Students can be members of an Electoral Board (EB) and an Electoral Table of the University, which are the electoral administrations of the University and assume the function of guaranteeing the transparent and objective development of all electoral processes. The electoral boards are the Central EB, the EB of the faculties, and the EB of the departments, and, in all cases, they are composed of five members designated by lots, of which one is a student (art. 73.5 of the UCM Statutes and arts. 4.2 and 5.1 of the UCM Electoral Regulations). On the other hand, they can be members of an electoral table in university elections, in which there will be at least one table for each sector (teachers, students, etc.) formed by a president and two members designated by lots from among the voters who are to cast their vote in it (arts. 21.1 y 22.2 of the UCM Electoral Regulations).

To Participate in the Management of University Services

At UCM, a student may be Assistant Director or Head of Studies of any of the five university residence halls owned by UCM (art. 88 of the UCM Centers and Structures Regulations), whose functions are to collaborate in the organization of the activities of the residence hall. They are appointed by the Rector at the proposal of the Director of the residence hall, from among the UCM students who are members of the residence hall and have completed more than half of their degree. On the other hand, curiously, another way of student participation is to be a Delegate of the Rector (art. 97 of the UCM Government Regulations), who can appoint, among all the members of the university community, the Delegates he/she deems convenient for the exercise of specific functions. In these ways the positions are not representative as they are not elected by the students but appointed by the university officials.

To Participate in the Evaluation of University Quality

All the students can participate in the evaluation of the quality of their degrees through online surveys and in the evaluation of the quality of teaching, either through official surveys or through informal evaluations prepared by teachers or students. Also, they can participate in the evaluation of the quality of the Practicum and in the evaluation of the quality of student mobility programs.

To Participate in University Student Associations

The students have the right to create their own student associations in the University context (e.g., political, cultural, social, or athletic associations, etc.) and to participate in them (art. 3 of the UCM Student Association Regulations, 2000). The associations may act in one or more faculties and may request economic or material support from the University for the use of spaces and the organization of events (arts. 2 and 8). In the last decade, there has been an almost constant increase in the number of active student associations at UCM, as shown in Table 35.1. During the academic year 2021–2, out of the twenty-six faculties of UCM all but one had at least a student association, being the average number of associations 4.65 per faculty. The faculty with the most associations had fifteen and the one with the least had one.

To Participate in a Student Assembly

Student participation in faculty assemblies and assembly coordinating bodies has traditionally been the form of organization of university protest and where they deal with issues that concern students related to their rights, environmentalism, or feminism, for example. These student assemblies, created informally by students as an alternative form of participation (and even antagonistic) to the official ways of student associationism and representation, have no formal hierarchy and are open to the participation of all. As of 2011 there was a certain increase in assemblies in many faculties of the UCM, which usually take the name of their respective faculties, such as the Assembly of Education in the Faculty of Education. In addition, another way of assembly participation, but formal in this case, is to take part in an Assembly of any of the residence halls owned by the UCM, which are the organs of expression of these communities

Table 35.1 Active student associations at UCM by year between 2011 and 2022

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2021/22
Active associations	92	79	88	88	99	118	123	113	124	121

Source: 2019–20 Report from the Vice-Chancellor of Students, p. 89 and the UCM website.

formed by all the students of the residence hall (art. 90 of the UCM Centers and Structures Regulations).

To Participate in Protest or Awareness-Raising Actions

Such as participating in a student strike, carrying out a lock-in at the University, carrying out a referendum or unofficial poll among students, organizing an act or campaign of denunciation or awareness, or issue a complaint, a request or a suggestion in writing (complaint box, etc.) or verbally to a teacher or academic responsible.

The Central Student Delegation at UCM: An Innovative Approach to a Traditional Student Delegation

The Central Delegation of Students (CSD) of the University Complutense of Madrid is the body for student participation and representation of the students interests at University Complutense. This body is composed of student representatives who have been elected by other students in the different governing bodies of the university (Academic senate, University council, or faculty board). The CSD was created in 1997 but their activities have remained linked to the student's mobilization cycles until 2015, when the student's representatives made the CSD evolve into the main way of student mobilization, multiplying its activities beyond the governing bodies of the university. Its main purpose is to channel the rights and duties of students, and also to mediate in case of conflicts that might appear between students, professors, and university officials. As a student body of the university its main functions are to coordinate the work of student's representation in the university governing bodies, collaborate with the information and counseling services, promote the creation of associations and the realization of cultural and sports activities. And also, to work for the granting of scholarships to UCM students who might need them.

As we have seen above, the UCM has a long tradition of political and student mobilization since the student protests against the dictatorship of Francisco Franco. At the campus there have traditionally been spaces for a dense exchange of ideas, opinions, protests, and mobilizations under an assembly system of organization, which in its activities prioritized the organization of student protests, leaving in a second level the organization and defense of students in the governing bodies of the university. However, in the middle of the last decade, since the attendance at the faculty assemblies had decreased, the student participation began to have more presence in the Faculty Student Delegations and in the Central Student Delegation. In 2017 the direction of the CDS changed radically when a progressive coordinate candidature won the student elections with a strong commitment with the daily problems of the students and inspired by progressive ideas and a sense of social equity in education. With wide support among the faculties, the CDS started developing proactive actions to improve the situation of students in their day-to-day life. The participation of the student representatives moved from participating in normal functioning

of the governing bodies of the university, to introducing new topics on the agenda. Particularly developing gender equality and anti-discriminatory actions such as the promotion of an anti-harassment protocol⁷ in the university, favoring equality and non-discrimination measures in the faculties, accompanying students in their claims, promoting a UCM’s own scholarship system and making significant contributions to the university’s internship system to improve their conditions.

The CSD has also been a very active actor in national higher education policy. Through its participation at the Council of the University Students of the State (Consejo de Estudiantes Universitarios del Estado CEUNE), it has been one of the main actors that has promoted the increase of university scholarships and has promoted the lowering of prices, as well as the inclusion in the next university law of specific mentions to the needs of people with special needs, the attention to mental health and fundamentally the achievement of academic strike as a right of the students.

In terms of organization, the CSD is a highly structured bureaucracy. More than 300 students participate in this structure organized in twenty-six faculty delegations, which in many occasions must be organized and coordinated in very short periods of time. None of these students perform these activities professionally, although they may receive some ECTS credits as academic recognition. This means that, as in all Spanish universities, every year student representatives finish their studies and pass the baton to new students. This makes student representation a constant task of training new people in the defense of the students. As Carmen Romero, the former president of the CSD acknowledges: *“in the firsts years we spent most of the time studying the procedures of the governing bodies, how to strategically intervene to develop our actions, and to negotiate with the Rector several students’ problems such as scholarships, loans but also the budget of the CDS”* (Interview, July 10, 2022).

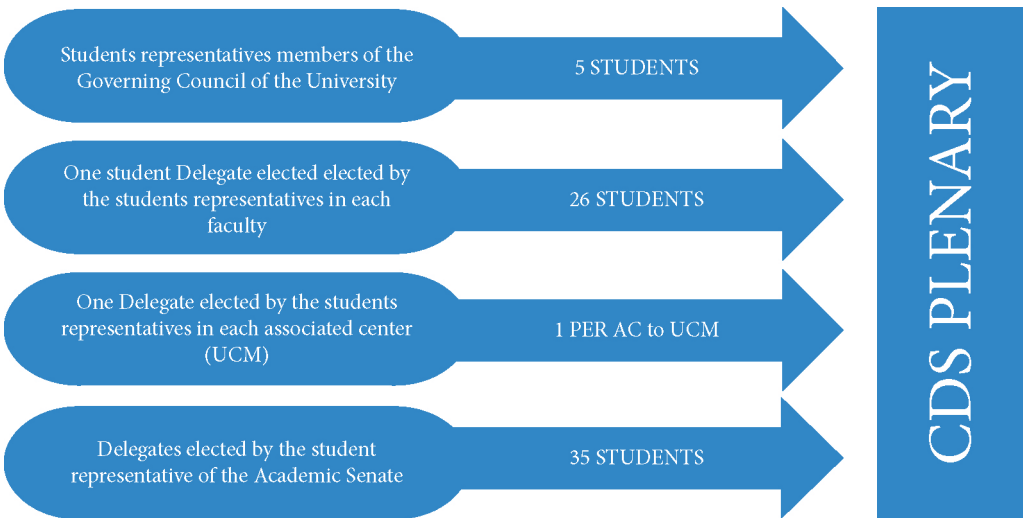


Figure 35.1 Central Student Delegation composition chart.

Source: own elaboration within the data available on the CDS statutes (art. 3).

As the CSD statutes establish (arts. 16 and 17), the students are members as long as they are student representatives; when their term of office ends or they decide to resign from their position, they are replaced by their alternate or by the corresponding electoral process. CDS's decision-making bodies are both collegiate and unipersonal (art. 6). Among the former, there are two types. Firstly, there is the plenary (arts. 7 and 8), which is made up of all student representatives and is the highest decision-making body of the Delegation (see Figure 35.1 for details). Its competences are to elect or revoke the President, Vice Presidents, and the members of the Governing Committee and different committees, but also to approve the Action Plan for each year and to approve the general budget of the CSD. Secondly, there is the Governing Committee (art. 9 and 10), as the permanent representative body in charge of coordinating the activities of the Delegation, approving resolutions in conflicts in its area, preparing the action plan and budgets and calling the internal elections of the different bodies of the Student Delegation.

The statutes of the CDS also contemplate an internal organization with different positions and responsibilities. In the first place, there is a President (arts. 11 and 12) who is elected for two academic years and is eligible for a second term. He/she represents and directs the central delegation and its functions are to chair and direct the debates of the plenary and the Governing Committee, to coordinate the execution of the agreements, to mediate between the parties in conflict within the CSD, and, finally, to coordinate the actions of the student representation in the rest of the university bodies. There are also two Vice-Presidents (art. 13), who, like the President, must be elected by an absolute majority of the Plenary in the first ballot and a simple majority in the second, and may be re-elected only once. The Vice-President for Organization is responsible for coordinating the action plan for the planned activities of the CSD, keeping the bodies informed and requesting the necessary information. The Vice-President for Economic Affairs is in charge of preparing the budget and the annual economic report and coordinating the meetings of the governing committee in economic affairs.

The UCM Rector designates an official from the University to perform the management tasks on the economic and personal resources of the CSD (art. 14). Within its statutes, an annual budget is recognized for the development of the representation activities, which in 2021 had a funding of 30,000 euros and 15,000 euros more derived from the costs of student participation managed through the Student House under the Office of the Vice-Rector for Students (UCM budget, 2021, p. 337).

In 2017, one of the CSD's first ideas was to change the way the delegation's budget was managed. The students proposed to cede part of the budget to the university associations. In this way, the student associations of each faculty gained autonomy to carry out their activities, and the CSD became a sponsor of student participation in the university, using a competence that allows it to make concrete proposals within the budget of the Vice-Rectorate for Students. In this way, students can organize conferences, assemblies, trips to congresses, or print exhibitions or information for other students (Memoria del Vicerrectorado de Estudiantes de la UCM del curso, 2019-2020, p.63)

The choice of projects is made by the CSD representatives, which will establish the criteria for each occasion. The call is open to a wide range of initiatives. However, there are also restrictions on those initiatives that address sexist issues, involve any type of discrimination; those activities

in which the only person who benefits is the organizer, or the projects seeking profit (Parejo and Maestu, 2023). In all cases, the students who wish to participate in those activities are required to submit a dossier explaining the reasons for which the information is requested. This initiative became very popular among the student associations and individual students and many projects were carried out in fields such as historical memory in Spain, social movements history, local initiatives against the climate crisis, etc.⁸

Also noteworthy is the work of the student representatives in providing information to university students about the different services provided by the university. Especially during the two years of the Covid-19 pandemic, the CSD representatives have distributed information about specific UCM scholarships, practical experience, and employment programs, disseminated the initiatives of the Student House with information about scholarships, courses, housing, and students with special situations during the pandemic, as well as mental health care programs.⁹ In this way, the student delegations have strongly contributed to make known all the services offered by the university to a generation of students who have lived during the lockdown and diverse modalities of blended learning for almost two years.

Conclusions

In this chapter, we have given an account of the laws and regulations that, at the national and UCM levels, develop the right of the students to participate in university governance. Then we pointed out the main possible factors causing difficulties in student participation at the UCM level. These are classified into endogenous factors to the teaching staff, to the student body, and at the institutional level. These three classifications are intended to facilitate the identification of the main subjects of each of these factors. Next, we have exposed and classified all the existing ways of student participation in UCM governance, both official and alternative, individual and collaborative, showing a complex system in multiple subfields and at different levels (campus, faculty, classroom), highly bureaucratized, with both direct and indirect ways of participation with varying degrees of representativeness and influence capacity of students. Finally, we have focused on the case of the Central Student Delegation, as the main body of participation in the UCM governance, and its recent evolution from a type of organization focused on covering student representation in the governing bodies, toward a more proactive model, strongly coordinated and structured with the faculties and with the agency to introduce issues and reform proposals in the University agenda, paying attention to the issues that concern students in their daily lives.

Notes

- 1 The Academic Senate is the highest representative body of a university, where all matters concerning the development of the university are discussed and decided. The Faculty Boards are the governing bodies of each faculty and are chaired by a dean. The Department Councils are the bodies in charge of coordinating the teaching of one or more areas of knowledge. The Social Council is a body of

- participation of agents of society who, together with members appointed by the Senate, validate certain types of decisions proposed by the Governing Council. Finally, the Governing Council is the executive body appointed by the Academic Senate by its own members.
- 2 <https://www.ucm.es/composicion-claustro>
 - 3 There are only two students out of twenty-three members appointed by the Vice-Rector for Quality at the proposal of the student representatives on the UCM Governing Council (art. 4 of the UCM Quality Commission Operating Regulations, 2016).
 - 4 There are usually between two and three students appointed by the corresponding faculty board. These students may or may not be members of the faculty board, depending on the case.
 - 5 There are usually between one or two students of the degree appointed by the president of the quality commission of said degree.
 - 6 <https://www.ucm.es/calidad>
 - 7 An evolution of the developments of the anti-harassment protocols can be found at Blanco Fuente, I.; Blanco García, M., Martín Pelaez, P., Romero Bachiller, C.: Violet spots against sexual harassment in the University: an activist collective response from Spain EASST Review Volume 37(3) 2018.
 - 8 For more information on the activities promoted by the CSD and the different associations, please consult the calendar and the delegation's archive <https://www.ucm.es/dcestudiantes/archivo-historico>.
 - 9 The UCM developed a series of specific actions to facilitate the study during the 2020 quarantine that can be consulted here (<https://www.ucm.es/medidas-generales-y-especificas-ucm>). In addition, it also expanded its psychological support service PSICALL-CoVid19 for the university community, through telematic attention from psychology professionals (www.psicall.ucm.es).

References

- Acuerdo del Consejo de Gobierno de 18 de diciembre de 2017, por el que se aprueba el Reglamento de Gobierno de la Universidad Complutense de Madrid. BOUC de 21 de diciembre de 2017.
- Ariño, A., Llopis, R., y Soler, I. (Dirs.) (2014). *Desigualdad y Universidad: la Encuesta de Condiciones de Vida y de Participación de los estudiantes universitarios en España 2011*. Valencia: Universidad de Valencia. http://roderic.uv.es/bitstream/handle/10550/42244/Desigualdad%2cdiversidadyUniversidad_content.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y
- Astin, A.W. (1999). Student involvement: A developmental theory for higher education. *Journal of College Student Development* 40(5): 518–29.
- Budget Universidad Complutense de Madrid 2021. <https://www.ucm.es/portaldetransparencia/file/presupuestoucm-2021-3>
- Decreto 32/2017, de 21 de marzo, del Consejo de Gobierno, por el que se aprueban los Estatutos de la Universidad Complutense de Madrid. BOCM de 24 de marzo de 2017.
- Fernández de Los Ríos, J.A. (2021). *La cultura de participación del estudiantado de la Facultad de Educación-Centro de Formación del Profesorado de la Universidad Complutense*. [Tesis]. <https://eprints.ucm.es/66381/1/T42191.pdf>
- Galán Palomares, F.M. Pietkiewicz, K. (eds.) (2015). *Bologna with Student Eyes 2015*. Bruselas: ESU. http://media.ehea.info/file/ESU/32/8/Bologna-With-Student-Eyes_2015_565328.pdf
- Klemenčič, M. (2018). The student voice in quality assessment and improvement. In Hazelkorn, Ellen, Coates, Hamish and McCormick, Alex (eds.), *Research Handbook on Quality, Performance and Accountability in Higher Education* (pp. 332–43). Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Klemenčič, M. (2020a). Student governments. In Shin, J.C. and Teixeira, P. (eds.), *International Encyclopedia of Higher Education Systems and Institutions*. Springer.
- Klemenčič, M. (2020b). Higher education institution governing boards: Student board members. In David, Miriam E. and Amey, Marilyn J. (eds.), *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Higher Education* (Vol. 5). SAGE.

- Klemenčič, M. (2020c). Students as actors and agents in student-centered higher education. In Hoidn, Sabine and Klemenčič, Manja (eds.), *Routledge International Handbook on Student-Centered Learning and Teaching in Higher Education*. Routledge.
- Klemenčič, M. and Yun Park, Bo (2018). Student politics: Between representation and activism. In Coates, Hamish, Cantwell, Brendan and King, Roger (eds.), *Handbook on the Politics of Higher Education* (pp. 468–86). Edward Edgar Publishing.
- Krause, K.L. (2005). *Understanding and promoting student engagement in university learning communities*. Comunicación presentada en el James Cook University Symposium 2005, Sharing Scholarship in Learning and Teaching: Engaging Students. September 21–2, 2005. Townsville/ Cairns, Queensland. http://melbourne-cshe.unimelb.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/1761523/Stud_eng.pdf
- Krause, K.L. and Coates, H. (2008). Students' engagement in first-year university. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education* 33(5): 493–505.
- Ley Orgánica 2/2023, de 22 de marzo, del Sistema Universitario. BOE de 23 de marzo de 2023.
- Lizzio, A. and Wilson, K. (2009). Student participation in university governance: The role conceptions and sense of efficacy of student representatives on departmental committees. *Studies in Higher Education* 34(1): 69–84.
- Martín, I. y Lorente, J. (2011). *La participación política de los estudiantes universitarios*. Ponencia presentada en la “Escuela de Participación Estudiantil—La participación Estudiantil en el Horizonte 2020: Bases para el Cambio Universitario,” organizada por la UIMP y la CREUP. http://api.ning.com/files/b3GgIxSo*vFxDPYWSAkTaM0oXRczMWLuQ3BI5pndknlYIHEI8%20WSCZ-9*9q3QhU2fz24Qd4o30yGhRxbIXAeGkMzRh611*zx8/informeIMartinJLorente.pdf
- Memoria del Vicerrectorado de Estudiantes de la UCM del curso 2019-2020. <https://www.ucm.es/file/1.6-v-estudiantes>
- Parejo, J.-L. and Maestu-Fonseca, E. (2023). The political agenda in the participation of college students in the Spanish State Council of University Students. *Bordón, Revista de Pedagogía*, 75(2), 177–191 <https://doi.org/10.13042/Bordon.2023.97311>
- Parés, M., Chela, X. y Martí, M. (2012). *La participación estudiantil en las universidades. Análisis comparado de casos*. IGOP-UAB. http://pagines.uab.cat/participacionestudiantil/sites/pagines.uab.cat/participacionestudiantil/files/DT_analisis%20comparativo_IGOP.pdf
- Parés, M., Chela, X., y Martí, M. (2012b). *La participación estudiantil en las universidades. Guía de propuestas*. IGOP-UAB. http://pagines.uab.cat/participacionestudiantil/sites/pagines.uab.cat/participacionestudiantil/files/DT_propuestas_IGOP_0.pdf
- Reglamento de Asociaciones de Estudiantes de la UCM (2000). <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1mfLPSbF8jRF6tmBCMtdyNkBUHYgHYBb/view?usp=sharing>
- Reglamento de Centros y Estructuras de la UCM. BOUC de 11 de febrero de 2010.
- Reglamento del Claustro de la Universidad Complutense de Madrid. BOUC de 14 de marzo de 2019.
- Reglamento Electoral de la Universidad Complutense de Madrid. BOUC de 1 de diciembre de 2017.
- Resolución de 30 de mayo de 1997, de la Universidad Complutense de Madrid, por la que se publica el Estatuto del Estudiante. BOCM de 1 de agosto de 1997.
- Resolución de 30 de mayo de 1997, de la Universidad Complutense de Madrid, por la que se publica el Reglamento de la Delegación de Estudiantes. BOCM de 1 de agosto de 1997.
- Rodero, E., Ferrer, M., Figueras, M., Hernández-Leo, D., Mir, J., Murillo, C., y Fernández, F. (2012). *La participación estudiantil en la UPF*. Barcelona: Universitat Pompeu Fabra. https://www.academia.edu/attachments/32731138/download_file?st=MTYwNjA4MzMxNCw2Mi4xNzQuMTg4LjlyMiwyMTcxMDQy&s=profile&ct=MTYwNjA4MzMxMywxNjA2MDgzMzM5LDIxNzEwNDI=
- Soler, P., Vilá, M., Fullana, J., Planas, A., y Pallisera, M. (2012). La participación de los estudiantes en la universidad: Dificultades percibidas y propuestas de mejora. *Revista de Educación* Mayo-agosto 2012 (358): 542–62.
- Sundberg, C. (ed.) (2018). *Bologna With Student Eyes 2018*. Brussels: ESU. https://www.esu-online.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/BWSE-2018_web_Pages.pdf

Student Representation in the UK: In the Face of Criticism and Maintaining Legitimacy

Mike Day

Introduction

Student representation in the UK originates with the creation of the student representative councils (SRC) in Scottish universities between 1884 and 1889 (Ashby and Anderson, 1970). These institutions, unlike their English counterparts, appointed a Rector, an official who traditionally spoke on behalf of students within their universities; this role reinforced the idea that students had some legitimate voice in the development of the university community (Farrington, 1998, Janin, 2008, Morgan, 1933). Similar developments in England and Wales were more hesitant as there was a lack of willingness to represent the views of others (Bates and Ibbotson, 1994). At this stage the word *union* represented the idea that student societies had *united* rather than acting as an advocacy organization (Jacks, 1975). This initial reluctance to assert this role aligned with the predominant academic view that students were junior members of the university and had to earn the right to speak with authority through academic endeavor (Ashby and Anderson, 1970, Day and Dickinson, 2018). Despite this, all subsequent expansions of higher education in the UK recognized some form of students' union (SU) role in representation, albeit restricted to representation on committees discussing accommodation, sports, library, and catering facilities. Similar attitudes influenced the creation of the National Union of Students (NUS) in 1922¹. The founders made it clear that the union was not a "*propagandist*" organization focusing rather on practical activities that would bring students together, post the First World War, through travel and exchange (Macadam, 1922). However, students were not immune from the political movements in the 1930s, student leaders looked more to socialist and communist solutions having become disillusioned with the unemployment and poverty prevalent in the UK (Simon, 1987). This political shift led to NUS being frozen out of government consultations. With the post-war expansion of HE however, NUS was able to reposition itself as an educational pressure group that was consulted by government and decision-makers (Appleton, 1987, Ashby and Anderson, 1970). This focus on representation was mirrored in local SUs.

Student representation increased during the long 1960s, partially as a response to the student revolt (Jacks, 1975). High-profile protests, discussions on curricula content, questions about the role of the university, and strongly expressed views on political issues drew a level of hostility to students because they were seen as recipients of government funds, who had never worked,

who did not pay tax, and were seen as having no right to express their political views until they had become “adults” (Crouch, 1970, Jacks, 1975). Politically active students influenced the dynamics within NUS and SUs, bringing about constitutional changes to allow a wider discussion of political issues and changing the leadership’s approach both nationally and locally. NUS successfully used both professional lobbying and student protest to achieve its aims, but tensions over whether one approach should be used over the other is a live discussion to the present day.

In current discourse, students find themselves described as dangerous, intolerant radicals looking to destroy the British way of life and at the same time “snowflakes” who melt at the slightest hint of opposition to their naïve worldview (Morris, 2019). SUs are portrayed by some as dens of excess drinking, organizations that seek to censor free speech and places of immature debate. Student leaders speaking out on issues of the day are often portrayed in mainstream media as illegitimate and these perceptions led to calls by Members of Parliament (MPs) for legislation. So in 1994, the Education Act was passed, which requires SUs to meet certain standards, in addition to the requirement to comply with UK charity legislation. This provided a high level of accountability, yet despite this, arguments for SU reform and the role they play, which were deployed thirty years ago, are resurfacing in the 2020s. SUs view themselves as changemakers and important players in the overall student experience, recent campaigns to secure greater rights for trans students and to decolonize the curriculum have led, as NUS’s leadership on “liberation” issues has always led, to a barrage of criticism (Mumsnet, 2021). NUS and SUs are just one of the institutions on the front line of the post-Brexit “culture war.” In this chapter, I will review the literature on the student movement in the UK, outline the current infrastructure for student representation through students’ unions and NUS-UK, and then chart the key phases in the development of student representation and the arguments around the legitimacy of the student voice.

Literature on the Student Movement in the UK

There have, until recently, been few publications focused on student organizations and the student experience in the UK using archives generated by student organizations themselves at a local and national level. Two theses provide accounts of the development of NUS-UK covering 1922–68 (Rhodes, 1968 published in 1990) and the other from 1968 to 1982 (Thorn, 1991). The student unrest of the 1960s generated *empirical works*, rapidly published, which provided perspectives on a situation that had reached public consciousness, examples being Staff and Students of Hornsey School of Art (1969) and Thompson (1970). Linked to these are edited works that place the UK student revolt into an international context and focus in particular on its links to left-wing movements, examples include Cohen et al. (1962), Cockburn et al. (1969), Crick and Robson (1970) all of which see NUS as a restraint on student radicalism.

The first widely available *overview of the development* of student organizations and NUS traces their origins back to the late nineteenth century (Ashby and Anderson, 1970). In this account, the authors are keen to emphasize the “responsibility” of those that had taken the lead in creating SUs and NUS and contrast them with radical students and as such must be seen as part

of the body of studies seeking to understand the student radicalism at the time. Other examples include a detailed analysis of events at the London School of Economics (Blackstone et al., 1970, Crouch, 1970, Kidd, 1968) and narrative accounts from a range of perspectives on troubles at the Polytechnic of North London (Campbell, 1975) and (Jacka et al., 1975). There have been more recent theses and publications that have reviewed the late 1960s: Fraser (1986) includes some British voices in his oral history of 1968, Thomas (1996), whose thesis challenges contemporary conclusions reached about the causes of the student revolt arguing that the reasons are far more complex, and Hoefflerle (2013), who sees the process emerging in the 1950s and lasting until the mid-1970s, most recently an edited collection looks at a range of aspects of student life in the twentieth century (Burkett, 2018).

In-house histories of universities and colleges at times touch on the role of their SU (McClintock, 2011) in others they barely rate a mention. Some SUs have produced their own histories (Taylor, 1968, Bates and Ibbotson, 1994; Mathers, 2007) whilst others, like Manchester University SU, acknowledge their heritage on websites (Manchester University Students' Union, 2022).

Some former NUS presidents have published memoirs that include chapters on their time as student leaders (Jarvis, 2014, Jenkins, 2000, Simon, 1998, Straw, 2012). More recent studies have focused on themes, the experience of women students (Dyhouse, 2006), apartheid and racism (Burkett, 2013), community action and student volunteering (Brewis, 2014), international students (Perraton, 2014), and anti-Semitism within the student movement (Rich, 2018). Others have taken a sociological approach analyzing the difficulties faced by student leaders operating within what they see as a neo-liberal marketized higher education system, suggesting that increased SU professionalization has distanced them from their roots in the student movement (Brooks et al., 2016, 2016, Klemenčič, 2012, Raaper, 2018, 2019, Silver and Silver, 1997). Baron (1987) argues that staff recruitment changes in the 1980s included ex officers who were far more in touch with student demands. NUS-UK has also taken the opportunity to publish narrative house histories to celebrate their fortieth (Savage, 1962) and ninetieth anniversaries (Day, 2012a).

In preparing this chapter on the UK, I have made use of the archives of NUS-UK, which are held at the Modern Records Centre (MRC) at Warwick University and the NUS Scotland Offices in Edinburgh. In addition to materials relating to NUS-UK, they also hold publications and reports from SU members, thereby covering both local and national perspectives. In examining the current state of student representation, use has been made of the NUS-UK Survey (and its previous iteration from SUSOC/AMSU), which has collected statistics on SUs from the early 1990s onward and newspaper/social media sites. These materials will be used to summarize the development of student representation at a local and national level and discuss why the concept of student representation attracts criticism and more recently why the way in which SUs and NUS-UK are organized and funded are once again coming under scrutiny.

The Organization of Student Politics in the UK

Before examining the historical development of students' unions in the UK, I will outline the current infrastructure that facilitates student representation. An SU exists in all public universities

in the UK, fulfilling similar objectives, working in the areas of academic representation, well-being, advice, sports, leisure, and mutual trading services. Resources vary (SUSOC/AMSU Surveys, 1992–2000); some own nightclubs, bars, cafes, and supermarkets whilst others might have little more than an office and a small shop (Baron, 1987, Silver and Silver, 1997). Membership of the SU is automatic upon registration with a right to opt out. Leadership is provided by students elected to “sabbatical office” by their peers who are paid to serve for a year before seeking re-election, for a maximum of two years. In 2021, the average sabbatical pay was £18,961 but could be as much as £25,884 (NUS-UK SU Survey, 2020).

SU Finance comes primarily from a block grant negotiated with the university, surpluses from mutual trading and one-off grants for specific projects. In 2020, the average block grant was £1,019,017, rising to £3,528,000 at the upper end, representing an average of £61 per student (NUS-UK SU Survey, 2020). Changes to funding caused many SUs to expand their mutual trading services with the aim of reducing reliance on university funding (Baron, 1987, Silver and Silver, 1997). This approach served SUs well until the late 1990s when intense competition from the high street started to draw students away from their SUs (Day and Dickinson, 2018); between 1996 and 2006, sales of brewed products fell by 46 percent, and trading overall fell by 19 percent between 2004 and 2006 (NUS-UK, 2007). Services like these inevitably led to an increase in paid staff to professionalize services and provide advice to student leaders (Baron, 1987, Brookes et al., 2016). SU staff organized themselves through the Students’ Union Senior Officer’s Conference (SUSOC, later the Association of Managers in Students’ Unions—AMSU), which coordinated professional development activities and collective enterprises, forming a series of purchasing consortia that bought products in bulk, thereby reducing the cost; this process is now coordinated by the NUS-UK Charity (Day, 2012).

The primary legal form of an SU is that of a charity. Following the *Charities Act of 2006*, SUs in England and Wales were required to apply for charitable status, whereas in Scotland the *Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005* assumed that all SUs were charities unless information came to light demonstrating that they were not. Before this, SUs had either sought formal charitable status or were assumed to be a “charity in law” and required to act as if they were charitable (Farrington, 1998). Charitable status added an additional level of scrutiny; in recent years, SUs have focused on demonstrating the impact and legitimacy to justify continued funding. Charitable registration led to the creation of trustee boards consisting of students and external advisors tasked with making sure SUs complied with constitutional and charitable objectives.

NUS-UK is divided into two organizations for legal purposes. NUS-UK is an unincorporated association acting on behalf of its SU membership. It is not required to follow the charitable legislation that governs SUs in the UK and can, as things stand, engage in political campaigning. NUS Charitable services is governed by UK Charity Law and is funded by a combination of surpluses produced from trading support to SUs, and a membership contribution of 0.5 percent of SU block grants. It also makes bids for project funding from sector and governmental bodies, all funding streams amount to £2.3m, 60 percent of which comes from trading support and 24 percent from membership fees, external funding represents 8 percent of the total. The Charity provides organizational infrastructure, commercial support for SUs, and capacity-building services, which include strategic advice and learning and development opportunities. Both

organizations employ professional staff to support the elected officers and volunteers who work from offices in Edinburgh, Macclesfield, Cardiff, and Belfast; seventeen work for NUS-UK and fifty-four work for the NUS Charity (NUS Connect, 2022a). SU members can join NUS-UK and the Charity or just one of the organizations.

NUS-UK is a confederation of 433 SUs, 155 of which are at HEI's, who through their democratic structures decide whether to affiliate to the national body (Day, 2012b). In 2021, there were fifteen HEI SUs not affiliated to NUS-UK. This process is usually carried out through a referendum at the member institution in which all students can vote. Through its members, NUS-UK represents around 4.2m students.

The governing body of NUS-UK is the Annual National Conference, which takes place in spring. The conference discusses prioritized policies submitted by members, holds the elected officers to account, receives financial information and other reports, and every other year elects four full-time sabbatical officers to form the organization's leadership team. In 2022, the posts are President, VP Higher Education, VP Further Education, and VP Equalities and Diversity; the post holders, who must be students, are elected for a two-year mandate. The VP for Equalities and Diversity is elected by a Liberation Campaign Conference, which amplifies the voice of women, Black students, LGBT students (with a distinct trans section), and disabled students. Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland also hold their own conferences (as well as attending and voting in the NUS-UK conference), which elect a President for each nation who are also part of the NUS-UK leadership team, all of whom are paid for their work. NUS-UK conference also elects a Democratic Services committee that schedules debates for conferences and a Scrutiny Committee that meets five times a year that holds the leadership team accountable in between conferences.

Funds for NUS-UK are derived from membership fees, with students' unions paying 2.5 percent of their block grant annually and share dividends from Endsleigh insurance (an insurance company established by NUS in 1965 and sold in 1975). In 2020–1, the proportional level of support was 57 percent from membership fees and 43 percent from Endsleigh Share Dividends, amounting to £3.3m per year. Some of the funds from Endsleigh are also used to cover NUS-UK/Charity infrastructure costs and the organizational pension fund deficit. The operations of NUSUK and the Charity are overseen by a Trustee Board consisting of NUS officers, elected students, and external advisors appointed by the Annual Conference NUS Connect 2022.

Meetings with government and sector decision-makers in all parts of the UK are informally arranged and held as and when required or requested. If we apply the analysis developed by Klemenčič (2012), NUS-UK can be described as a “Neo-Corporatist” model in which there is one national representative organization, informally recognized by governments, who are autonomous from any governmental coercion or influence. The invitation to provide input into legislation very much depends on the political complexion of the government of the day. In recent years, Conservative-led governments have sought to bypass NUS-UK; however, the devolved UK model means that levels of engagement will vary and as such we can further define NUS-UK as a territorially differentiated neo-corporatist model. Levels of engagement with the government appear to depend on the ideological position taken by the government itself or NUS-UK at different times. In the next section, we chart the phases of development of student representation in the UK.

Phases of Development of the Student Movement in the UK

The debate concerning student representation and what is a matter of proper concern to students and the role they play in an academy or wider society features throughout the 140 years of formalized student-led organizations in the UK. The original impetus to create SRCs/SUs had come from student leaders at Edinburgh university (Schlapp, 1934, Scotland, 1969), who sought a channel of communication between students and the university (Ashby and Anderson, 1970). By 1889 parliamentary recognition was given to Scottish SRCs in the *Act for the Better Administration and Endowment of Universities in Scotland 1889*, which stated that arrangements should be made for an SRC in each university (Day and Dickinson, 2018). Developments in England and Wales emerged later, with prominent academics often taking the initiative, seeking to add a greater community dimension to university life (Truscott, 1943). The first English SU recognized by its institution was University College London in 1893, with an academic chosen as the first President (Bates and Ibbotson, 1994). More English student organizations followed suit (Birmingham Guild of Students, 2011, Mathers, 2007), creating social spaces that also represented student views on committees relating to catering, library, accommodation, and sports, where a student view was seen as legitimate. In 1908, student representatives at Queen's University, Belfast were granted a place on the Academic Senate, the only SRC to enjoy that status for over fifty years (Day and Dickinson, 2018, NUS, 1966). Students were only really seen as part of the academic community upon graduation (Ashby and Anderson, 1970).

Following the devastation of the 1914–18 war, it was these new university SUs who founded the National Union of Students (NUS) in February 1922. Their motivation was to create an organization that could represent British students at meetings of the Confédération Internationale des Étudiants (CIE), where, it was hoped, “*the future leaders of the world*” could meet and develop mutual understanding (Laqua, 2017) of one of many student-led initiatives to promote future peace (Brewis, 2014). Initial activities included international tours, exchanges, and pen friends. The focus was on “practical activities” (Macadam, 1922). The economic realities of the 1930s led to discussions on issues of the day, the 1932 NUS Congress discussed “*The Future of Britain*” (Rhodes, 1968, p. 109), and in 1937 NUS published its first national report, which concerned student health in 1937 (Day, 2012). NUS became more vocal on the purpose of universities and university reform (Ashby and Anderson, 197).

A desire for a meaningful role in university development caused SUs attending the 1940 NUS Congress to vote for a Charter of Student Rights (Ashby and Anderson, 1970, Jacks, 1975), which called for the right of free expression of opinion, to organize meetings, discussions, and study on all subjects within the university to belong to any organization, whether cultural and political or religious, to participate in all activities outside the universities, and to collaborate with extra-university organizations, and to share in the government and administration of the universities. The final right attracted criticism with a distinction being drawn between the mature academic and the student who, in time, would earn the right to a share in government but not before (Truscott, 1943). This did not deter student leaders, discussions during the 1939–45 war focused on postwar reconstruction, and the role that universities should play in the future (Simon, 1943). NUS made the case for the recognition of informal learning, for free education with fully paid tuition fees and grants and a stronger link between universities and their local community

(NUS, 1944), much of it based on input from Communist students who at that time formed NUS's leadership (Simon, 1987). These ideas were pursued, irrespective of political motivations, in the immediate postwar period; student leaders were, on average, older and in many cases had led troops in battle; they expected a more equal relationship (Jenkins, 2000, Malcolm, 2017). During the 1950s, NUS distanced itself from the prewar leadership positioning itself as an educational pressure group (Appleton, 1987). With the introduction of a student grant (1962) and a lowering of the age of majority (1970), the relationship between students and their institution changed, students were now adults. Some of the earliest incidents in the UK student revolt concerned the application of a disciplinary system that treated students "in loco parentis" and lacked fairness (Blackstone et al., 1970; Crouch, 1970; Malcolm, 2017).

NUS's response to student unrest was to call for more formalized student representation. It was hoped that more representation would reduce campus tensions. The approach culminated with an agreement between NUS and the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals (CVCP) and the Council for Local Education Authorities (CLEA) in 1968 that called for joint consultative committees and accepted the idea of student participation, albeit students were defined as "junior members" of the academy (Day, 2012, p. 72). The growth of student radicalism led, in 1969, to changes to NUS's constitution, the clause restricting debate to issues concerning "*students as such*" was revoked, and candidates who supported the change won a majority in the elections to the NUS executive. This change meant that candidates for election stood on electoral platforms that mirrored national politics. The new radicalism led conference delegates to rescind the CVCP/LEA deal on representation the following year (Hoefflerle, 2013). Despite this, universities and SUs carried on developing local representation agreements, and students were now at the top of the table; however, they were to find that some decisions gradually moved to another table with the growth of "managerialism" within universities (Silver and Silver, 1997).

Whilst NUS and sector bodies were trying to find ways to constructively channel the student voice, the Conservative government (1970–4) proposed legislation to restrict SU finance and activities, and student protests led to the proposals being dropped, at least for a while. Within the Conservative party itself a body of opinion was growing that saw legislation to restrict SUs as essential, and having opened the door for national politics to play a role within NUS, the organization changed from a nonpartisan pressure group into a campaigning body. The case for SU legislation found expression in the Federation of Conservative Students (FCS), who based much of their thinking on a series of articles contained in the "*Black Papers*" published between 1969 and 1977 (Cox, 1969, Cox and Dyson, 1969). The tone was hostile to modern educational developments and SUs were seen as part of a sector-wide Marxist shift in educational policy, which the authors feared would transfer to wider society. Articles questioned amongst other things the expansion of HE "*more means worse*" (Amis, 1971) and the use of public money by SUs and their representative legitimacy. NUS-UK had tried and failed to join the Trades Union Congress (TUC) but were closely associated with the Labour party, which damaged its credibility in the eyes of the Conservatives who were not to forget the call by NUS-UK to vote Labour in the 1974 General Elections (Day, 2021). The FCS argued for voluntary membership and other measures to weaken SUs. At the same time NUS-UK responded to the "*rivers of blood*" speech by Enoch Powell MP by passing a "No Platform" policy (Smith, 2020, p. 86) stating that declared racists and fascists would not be given a platform within NUS-UK, most SUs followed suit. A policy that was concerned with the safety of student members and genuine fears of a resurgence of the far

right was misrepresented by some as a restriction on freedom of speech and used as a stick with which to beat the student movement, then and now.

Following the election of Margaret Thatcher, there were periodic attempts to legislate on SUs. Changes were made to SU funding; the SU fee was incorporated into the tuition fee, which did not lead to a reduction in SU funding as the legislators had hoped for (Boyson, 1995). Legislation followed on “freedom of speech” in the Education (No2) Act 1986, which had the adverse effect of reducing the numbers of externally invited speakers (Smith, 2020, p. 160–1). The Attorney General issued guidelines on Ultra Vires (illegal) payments by SUs in 1983 (Farrington, 1998), advice that is still seen as the basis for the control of SU expenditure. To keep up the pressure, the FCS published *Forgotten Closed Shop* (Gibb and Neil-Smith, 1985), which listed alleged abuses by SUs, mostly untrue; they were widely quoted by willing allies in the House of Commons prepared to sponsor private members bills, which aimed to put pressure on the government to introduce legislation. In 1985, the government published a *Green Paper on Higher Education into the 1990s*, which contained suggestions for the restructuring of higher education and highlighted what was seen as the unrepresentative nature of SUs, claiming that there was a proliferation of full-time sabbaticals and that freedom of speech was prevented by “*No Platform*” policies. It was suggested that if these issues were not addressed voluntarily by institutions, the government would legislate. NUS-UK responded by pointing out the extent to which SUs were accountable, the false assumptions upon which the paper was based, and described the positive role played by SUs in institutional life.

Successive legislation in the 1980s sought to make HE more responsive to the needs of the market, with legislation that focused on “efficiency,” industry rather than students were seen as the key stakeholders. Student and lecturer representatives were removed from university committees (Farrington, 1998, p. 68). The same drive saw the abolition of the binary divide, with polytechnics and colleges able to apply for university status and funded centrally (Simon, 1998).

In July 1991, John Major’s Conservative Government launched a “Citizen’s Charter initiative” that aimed to improve the standards of public services and empower citizens to demand better (Farrington, 1998, p. 280–2, Seely and Jackson, 1995, Silver and Silver, 1997, p. 167). The Charters for Higher and Further Education outlined what a student should expect in terms of entry requirements, quality of teaching, accommodation, and access to services. The Charters also made reference to unspecified forthcoming legislation on SUs that would allow students to actively opt in (abolishing automatic membership) as well as giving access to a third-party organization that would investigate complaints about SUs. NUS-UK responded with a series of its own charters on the student experience, which were well received by the sector, making the case that they were well equipped to provide informed feedback, but the government wanted individual not collective feedback, students were consumers not partners (Day and Dickinson, 2018).

The *Further and Higher Education Act 1992* placed a duty on the Higher Education Funding Council of England (HEFCE) to assess teaching quality. The focus on individual feedback led to concerns by student leaders that they could be sidelined; however, the most common model was for the SU to take charge of training and supporting course representatives and coordinating feedback processes. Government-led proposals to change the membership model of SUs emerged in a bill published in 1992, which sought to restrict SU activities by introducing voluntary membership,

stopping (perceived) victimization of students, and preventing taxpayers' money being used for "political" purposes; the government's objective was to remove NUS-UK as a legitimate voice for students. The CVCP saw it as "*a sledgehammer to crack a nut.*" The campaign by NUS-UK and SUs, supported by sector bodies and NUS Alumni, was highly effective, combining research, highly professional lobbying, and demonstrative activity. A compromise was reached, the more negative clauses were removed, and the *Education Act 1994* gave legal weight to practices that were already commonplace. A Code of Conduct was to be agreed between institution and the SU adding the right of students to opt out of membership. A positive benefit of the legislation was the way in which SUs emerged with a renewed sense of purpose on the benefits of student-led organizations; they were neither as extreme nor as undemocratic as critics had portrayed them. In 1993, John Patten, the HE Minister, had dismissed SUs as "*supporting dubious causes of no interest to students*" (Castle, 1993); by 2007, his successor David Willets stated publicly how much he valued SUs, indicating that institutions would be much poorer places were they not to exist (Day and Dickinson, 2018), and yet within a decade that role was once again being questioned.

Throughout the 1990s, there were periodic attempts to reform NUS-UK's structures; at the core of the debate was how to maximize membership involvement and what tactics to use in campaigning and organizational focus. It was the "no politics" debate of 1968–9 expressed in terms of prioritizing educational matters or bringing about educational reform through wider societal change. Underpinning the debate were discussions about whether NUS-UK was a union of students' unions or a union of students; legally it was the former. The "grassroots" approach was adopted by the NUS-UK liberation campaigns, LGBT, Black, Disabled, and Women students who had successfully fought for autonomous conferences within NUS-UK's structures, which included a full-time officer supported by an executive committee accountable to the conference that elected them rather than NUS-UK's annual conference. They saw themselves as marginalized from formal student movement structures and placed more value on direct contact with individual members. Liberation campaigning activities were at the heart of political divisions at NUS-UK conferences; they argued that a total restructuring of society was a necessary precursor to justice, equity, and change. The liberation groups increased the diversity of student leaders and carried on the tradition of NUS-UK debating difficult issues of diversity, inclusion, and identity long before wider society (Day and Dickinson, 2018; Malcolm, 2018).

Differences in approach were further accentuated with the introduction of devolved legislatures, for Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland in 1997. NUS-UK had been operating on a devolved basis for twenty-five years and was prepared for this significant change in UK politics (Day, 2018). The consequence of devolution is that each part of the UK is governed by different political parties with different approaches taken to student consultation and student issues, funding being the most significant area. NUS Scotland successfully campaigned for the abolition of tuition fees, NUS Wales secured a return to a grant system and in Northern Ireland tuition fees were frozen, student leaders were able to take advantage of different political ideologies, but less successfully at a UK/Westminster level. In Scotland, a sector-wide initiative, proposed by NUS Scotland, created a partnership, *Student Participation in Quality Scotland* (sparqs), whose mission is to support and train course representatives and to work with institutions to develop a partnership approach to quality; it was a clear statement that the student voice and those that

represented it had a legitimate part to play in developing the student experience. In 2013, sparqs developed *A Student Engagement Framework for Scotland* (sparqs, 2013), which has five pillars:

- Students feeling part of a supportive institution
- Students engaging in their own learning
- Students working with their institution in shaping the direction of learning
- Formal mechanisms for quality and governance
- Influencing the student experience at a national level

Similar initiatives were developed in Wales and England but with less commitment from the sector agencies in those parts of the UK, leading to their collapse. In the same year, the Scottish HE sector agreed a “*Framework for the Development of A Strong and Effective Students’ Association*,” which was agreed in the wake of the “*Post 16 Education (Scotland) Act*,” whilst it only applied to colleges the acceptance of an SU as a legitimate partner was acknowledged; in effect a college would not be funded unless it could demonstrate mechanisms for consulting with a student representative body, the framework set standards and expectations on all parties (NUS Scotland et al., 2013). Again, it demonstrates policy divergences between Holyrood and Westminster.

Distinctions between identity, nationhood, educational sector, and political approach fed into difficult debates at NUS-UK conferences on student funding as means tested grants gave way to loans and then tuition fees. Loans had been successfully resisted since the 1960s, but with the massification of HE sector allies had come to accept that some form of student contribution was inevitable. NUS-UK developed an alternative funding model “*Blueprint for an Alternative Higher Education Funding System*,” which suggested a hypothecated tax that would be invested and grown into a fund that could deliver free education within a forty-year period; the report showed a willingness to contribute creatively to the debate, but successive governments persisted in increasing the reliance on loans and raising tuition fees. Faced with a lack of acknowledgment of the difficulties faced by students, arguments for free education as a matter of principle gained support. Despite its challenges, NUS-UK continued lobbying at a national level with a Labour-led administration (1997–2010) that was prepared to listen if not always to accede to student demands.

Evidence-led campaigning was adopted in the lead-up to the 2010 general election. An *Independent Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance*, established in 2009, was scheduled to report after the election, effectively removing any concrete proposals from election debates. To avert the possibility of an increase in tuition fees, NUS-UK launched a campaign in which all parliamentary candidates were asked to sign a pledge, “*I pledge to vote against any increase in fees in the next parliament and to pressure the government to introduce a fairer system*” (Day, 2012); it was signed by 1,526 candidates including all those from the Liberal Democrats and the Scottish National Party. There was no overall majority, and the Liberal Democrats joined a formal coalition with the Conservatives. They failed to honor the pledge, and tuition fees of £9,000 were introduced. In the lead-up to the final vote in Parliament, NUS-UK organized a national demonstration under the slogan “*Demolition 2010*,” and it was the largest turnout of students in a generation; despite this, the legislation passed (Day, 2012). The vote caused a level of disillusion among voters, which may well partially explain the decline of the Liberal Democrats’ share of the vote at subsequent elections; it also had the effect of calling into

question the effectiveness of partnership work and lobbying among student activists. The success of the demonstration strengthened the argument for a more grassroots approach. In 2017, NUS-UK was forced to make a series of redundancies to address a deficit of over £3m caused by a combination of lax financial scrutiny, changing student habits, and commercial developments that were less successful than planned. NUS-UK also lost some members (and income) following the remarks made by the incoming president in 2016 (Bowden, 2016; Leach, 2016). The organization retrenched, full-time officers were reduced from eighteen to seven, and the affiliation fee was cut by 50 percent to retain membership confidence. The NUS-UK leadership was forced to reappraise the focus of the organization choosing a grassroots campaigning approach and supporting SUs to do the same, in preference to research and lobbying work.

Current Issues for Student Representation in the UK and Conclusions

From 2017, there have been some significant changes in the governance of HE and the part played by students in developing their experience. The *Higher Education Research Act 2017* established a new regulatory body, the Office for Students (OfS), merging the HE Funding Council and the Office for Fair Access (OFFA); the aims expressed in 2022 are to promote participation, ensure that students have a fulfilling experience, ensure that they can progress into employment, and that they receive value for money (Office for Students, 2022). There was controversy over some of the appointments made to the Board, one of which led to an enquiry by the Commissioner for Public Appointments, which, among other things, found that it had not been made clear that student representatives with previous involvement in SUs and NUS-UK were precluded from appointment (Commissioner for Public Appointments, 2018) appointing students by individual application. The government has charged the OfS with monitoring “freedom of speech” (Kernohan and Dickinson, 2022), just one example of the use by the current administration of “culture wars” since the general election of 2019. The freedom of speech debate was highlighted by an online magazine *Spiked*, which developed a free speech index with a traffic light system (Smith, 2020), SUs attracted at least an orange if they had a sign in their bar asking members to desist from sexist or racist behavior (Slater, 2019). In April 2022, legislation was going through the UK parliament on “*Free Speech and Academic Freedom*” in an attempt to strengthen the OfS duty to uphold freedom of speech, which intends to place the cost of noncompliance on SUs (UK Government, 2022).

SUs find themselves once again subject to criticisms that question the value and continued existence of formalized student representation. In September 2020, the Adam Smith Institute published a report “*The State of Students’ Unions*” (Young and Dube, 2020). The report rehashes ideas developed in the *Black Papers*, too many sabbatical officers, too much funding, unrepresentative leadership and activities, a cancel culture, and low election turnouts. It is as if the *1994 Education Act* never happened. The report represents a mood; relationships between NUS-UK and the UK government are, at the time of writing, openly hostile and there is a possibility that the reports proposals find their way into legislation over the next few years. In recent months, the

Minister for Higher Education has called upon SUs to disaffiliate from NUS-UK and the Secretary of State for Education indicated they would no longer meet with the organization following alleged remarks made by the newly elected president now subject to an independent investigation by a Queen's Counsel (QC). The government has, in effect, "no platformed" NUS-UK (Dickinson, 2022). By delegitimizing student organizations, their views on mental health, decolonizing education, and the role and purpose of education are rendered unrepresentative. The most recent development has seen the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), who are contracted to act as the Designated Quality Body (DQB) by the OfS, withdraw from the contract because the OfS is no longer compliant with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) and, as a consequence, the QAA has lost its membership of the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR), one reason being that the OfS sees no role for students in quality processes (QAA, 2022).

The legitimacy of NUS-UK and SUs is challenged at three levels. Within the student movement, debates over tactics and political approach continue to be debated, against a backdrop of political division within the UK as a whole. A collective organization, NUS-UK's unity is put under strain by SUs who are responsible for their own members and trustee boards who may question whether NUS-UK helps or hinders their charitable purposes, or devolved nations that might see setting up an independent body as a better option; NUS Scotland has recently voted to investigate "independence" (NUS Connect, 2022b). The value and urgency of students asserting individual identities bring both strain for the organization but presage debates that wider society must and will have but may initially find uncomfortable. Within the academy, we have seen that the idea that students have a role in shaping their academic experience has gained currency but is not yet fully accepted. In wider society, the debates that students have and the conclusions they reach are challenging for public bodies and government, and the current strategy appears to be to marginalize and de-legitimize student-led organizations in England, with Scotland and Wales taking a different approach. Currently, both NUS-UK and the government in Westminster have reached an ideological point where they see no value in talking to each other. The idea of formalized student representation is once again in the firing line. The next few years will prove to be a critical time for the UK student movement.

Note

- 1 Initially NUS represented students in England and Wales and was known as NUS(EW). Queen's University of Belfast joined in 1948, adding students from Northern Ireland NUS (EWNI). When Scottish universities joined in 1971, it became NUS-UK. This chapter will refer to NUS until 1971 and thereafter NUS-UK.

References

- Amis, Kingsley (1971). Pernicious Participation *Black Papers*, Cox and Dyson (eds.), first appeared in *The Black Paper—The Fight for Education* (1968).

- Appleton, Stuart (1987). *The National Union of Students a Contributor to Educational Policy Making?* London: National Union of Students UK London.
- Ashby, Eric and Mary, Anderson (1970). *The Rise of the Student Estate in Britain*. London and Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Baron, Michael (1987). *A Study of Certain Aspects of Theory and Practice of Management in Students' Unions*. Dissertation submitted in part requirement for the degree of Master of Business Administration. Glasgow: University of Glasgow.
- Bates, James and Ibbetson, Carol (1994). *The World of UCL Union*. London: UCL Union.
- Birmingham Guild of Undergraduates (2011). *Guild of Students—Our History*. Birmingham: University of Birmingham Guild of Students.
- Blackstone, Tessa, Gales, Kathleen, Hadley, Roger and Lewis, Wynn (1970). *Students in Conflict LSE in 1967*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.
- Bowden, George (2016). “NUS President election candidate Malia Bouattia responds to anti-semitism claims” Huffington Post April 20, 2016. https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/nus-president-election-candidate-malia-bouattia-responds-to-anti-semitism-claims_uk_570fa2dae4b01711c61318c4 (accessed July, 19, 2022).
- Boyson, Rhodes (1995). *Speaking my Mind*. London: Peter Owen.
- Brewis, Georgina (2014). *A Social History of Student Volunteering Britain and Beyond, 1880–1980*. New York; Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Brooks, R., Byford, K. and Sela, K. (2016). Students’ unions, consumerism and the neo-liberal university. *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 37(8): 1211–28.
- Burkett, Jodi (2013). *Constructing Post-Imperial Britain—Britishness, “Race” and the Radical Left in the 1960’s*. New York; Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Burkett, Jodi (2018). *Students in Twentieth-Century Britain and Ireland* essays Edited by Dr. Jodi Burkett. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Campbell, F.J. (1975). *High Command—The Making of an Oligarchy at the Polytechnic of North London 1970—1974*. Birmingham: Polytechnic of North London.
- Castle, Stephen (1993). “Patten ready to outlaw student union closed shop.” The Independent Saturday June 26, 1993. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/patten-ready-to-outlaw-student-union-closed-shop-1494132.html> (accessed July 30, 2022).
- Cockburn, Alexander and Blackburn, Robin (1969). *Student Power*. (Essays) Middlesex: Penguin Special.
- Cohen, Mitchell and Hale, Dennis. (1962). *The New Student Left*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Commissioner for Public Appointments (2018). Report 2018 Sections 33 and 34 Appendix D. <https://39h2q54dv7u74bwyae2bp396-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Commissioner-for-Public-Appointments-Investigation-OFS-Final.pdf> (accessed July 25, 2022).
- Cox, Brian (ed.) (1969). Crisis in education. *Black Papers*. Critical Quarterly.
- Cox, Brian and Dyson, A.e. (ed.) (1969). Fight for education. *Black Papers*, March 1969. Critical Quarterly.
- Crick, Bernard and Robson, William A (1970). *Protest and Discontent* (ed). Harmondsworth: Penguin. A Pelican Book.
- Crouch, Colin (1970). *The Student Revolt*. London: Bodley Head.
- Day, Mike (2012a). *NUS90 A History of the National Union of Students*. London: St James Publishing.
- Day, Mike (2012b). Dubious causes of no interest to students? The development of the National Union of Students in the United Kingdom. In Klemenčič (ed.), *European Journal of Higher Education*, 32–46. Oxford: Routledge.
- Day, Mike (2018). *The National Union of Students and Devolution in Students in Twentieth-Century Britain and Ireland*. Essays edited by Dr. Burkett, Jodi. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Day, Mike (2021). “Once there was a war on students’ unions.” Wonkhe Blogs 17th April 2021. <https://wonkhe.com/blogs-sus/the-war-on-students-unions/?msg=fail&shared=email> (accessed July 19, 2022).
- Day, Mike and Dickinson, Jim (2018). “David vs. Goliath: The past, present and future of students’ unions” in the UK higher education policy institute. London. September 6, 2018. <https://www.hepi>

- ac.uk/2018/09/06/david-versus-goliath-past-present-future-students-unions-uk/ (accessed March 21, 2022).
- Dickinson, Jim (2020). Do students' unions waste money? Wonkhe Analysis September 20, 2020. <https://wonkhe.com/blogs/do-students-unions-waste-money/> (accessed March 21, 2021).
- Dickinson, Jim (2022). The government is "disengaging" in NUS—does it matter? Wonkhe Blogs. May 16, 2022. <https://wonkhe.com/blogs/the-government-is-disengaging-from-nus-does-it-matter/> (accessed July 30, 2022).
- Dyhouse, Carol (2006). *Students: A Gendered History*. Abingdon, Oxfordshire: Routledge.
- Farrington, D.J. (1998). *The Law of Higher Education*. Butterworths London.
- Fraser, Ronald (1988). *1968—A Student Generation in Revolt*. Pantheon New York.
- Gibb, Nicholas and Neil-Smith, David (1985). *The Forgotten Closed Shop: Case for Voluntary Membership of Students' Unions*. Cleveland: Published by Federation of Conservative Students. London.
- Hoefflerle, Caroline M (2013). *British Student Activism in the Long Sixties*. Oxon: Routledge Abingdon.
- Jacka, Keith, Cox, Caroline and Marks, John (1975). *The Rape of Reason—The Corruption of the Polytechnic of North London*. Enfield, Middlesex: Churchill Press.
- Jacks, Digby (1975). *Student Politics and Higher Education*. London: Lawrence and Wishart.
- Janin, Hunt (2008). *The University in Mediaeval Life*. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Company.
- Jarvis, Fred (2014). *You Never Know Your Luck*. Guildford, Surrey: Grosvenor House Publishing Limited.
- Jenkins, Stanley (2000). *So Much to Do So Little Time—An Autobiography*. Ferring, Sussex: Willow Press
- Kernohan, David and Dickinson, Jim (2022). OfS has new priorities letter from ministers. Wonkhe Blogs March 31, 2022. <https://wonkhe.com/blogs/ofs-has-a-new-priorities-letter-from-ministers/> (accessed July 30, 2022).
- Kidd, Harry (1968). *The Trouble at LSE 1966—1967*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Klemenčič, Manja (2012). Student Representation in Western Europe: introduction to the special issue. *European Journal of Higher Education* 2(1): 2–19.
- Laqua, Daniel (2017). Activism in the "students" League of Nations': International Student Politics and the Confederation Internationale des Etudiants 1919–1939. *English Historical Review* CXXXII(556). Oxford University Press.
- Leach, Mark (2016). NUS disaffiliations could a trickle turn into a flood. Wonkhe Blogs May 13, 2016. <https://wonkhe.com/blogs/analysis-nus-disaffiliations/>(accessed July 24, 2022).
- Macadam, I.S. (1922) "Youth in the Universities a paper on national and international student organisations" *National Union of Students*, London.
- Malcolm, David (2017). As much freedom as is good for them Wonkhe "As much freedom as is good for them"—looking back at in loco parentis | Wonkhe (accessed July 24, 2022). <https://wonkhe.com/blogs/much-freedom-good-looking-back-loco-parentis/>.
- Malcolm, David (2018). A curious courage: the origins of gay rights campaigning in the National Union of Students. *History of Education* 47(1): 73–86. A curious courage: the origins of gay rights campaigning in the National Union of Students: History of Education: Vol 47, No 1 (tandfonline.com) (accessed July 24, 2022).
- Manchester University Students' Union (2022). Our history. <https://manchesterstudentsunion.com/our-history> (accessed July 19, 2022).
- Mathers, Helen (2007). *Standing Up for Students: One Hundred Years of the University of Sheffield Union of Students*. Sheffield: University of Sheffield Union of Students.
- McClintock, Marion (2011). *Shaping the Future: A History of the University of Lancaster 1961–2011*. Lancaster: University of Lancaster.
- Morgan, A. (1933). *Scottish University Studies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Morris, James (2019). "Piers Morgan leads furious snowflakes backlash as students' union calls off Peter Hitchens talk on LGBT+ views. Evening Standard. London. February 8, 2019. <https://www.standard>.

- co.uk/news/uk/piers-morgan-leads-furious-snowflake-backlash-as-portsmouth-students-union-calls-off-peter-hitchens-talk-over-lgbt-views-a4061051.html (accessed July 20, 2022).
- Mumsnet (2021). “Typical lunatic statement about transphobia from NUS” post by RoyalCorgi on thread Feminism: sex and gender discussions. https://www.mumsnet.com/talk/womens_rights/4285680-Typically-lunatic-statement-about-transphobia-from-NUS (accessed July 19, 2022).
- National Union of Students (1944). *The Future of University and Higher Education*. London: NUS London.
- National Union of Students (1966). Student Participation in College Government NUS London.
- National Union of Students (2008). *A Wave of Change-The Future Landscape of the Student Movement*. London: NUS London.
- NUS Scotland, NUS Charity and sparqs (2013). Framework for the development of strong and effective college students’ association. <https://www.dcsa.uk/the-framework#:~:text=The%20Framework%20for%20the%20Development%20of%20Strong%20and,Scotland%2C%20to%20develop%20strong%20and%20effective%20students'%20associations.> (accessed July 19, 2022).
- NUS Connect (2022a). Where your money is spent website of NUS-UK. <https://www.nusconnect.org.uk/membership-support/membership-contribution> (accessed July 24, 2022).
- NUS Connect (2022b) NUS Scotland Conference votes in favour of an independent NUS Scotland April 6, 2022. <https://www.nus.org.uk/articles/nus-scotland-conference-votes-in-favour-of-an-independent-nus-scotland> (accessed July 30, 2022).
- Office for Students (2022). Our Strategy. <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/about/our-strategy/> (accessed July 24, 2022).
- Perraton, Hilary (2014). *A History of Foreign Students in Britain*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Quality Assurance Agency (2022). QAA demits DQB status to focus on sector and students in England. QAA July 20, 2022. <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/news-events/news/qaa-demits-dqb-status-to-focus-on-sector-and-students-in-england> (accessed July 30, 2022).
- Raaper, Rille (2018). Students’ unions and consumerist policy discourses in English higher education. *Critical Studies in Education* 61(2): 245–61. DOI 10.1080/17508487.2017.1417877
- Raaper, Rille (2019). Constructing political subjectivity: the perspectives of sabbatical officers from English students’ unions. *Higher Education* (2020) 79: 141–57. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-019-00400-9>
- Rhodes, F.A. (1968). The national union of students 1922–1968. M.Ed thesis submitted to the Institute of Education, London (published by SUSOC 1990).
- Rich, Dave (2018). *The Left’s Jewish Problem—Jeremy Corbyn, Israel and Anti-Semitism*. London: Birkbeck College, University of London.
- Riddell, Sheila, Elisabet, Weedon and Minty, Sarah (eds.) (2016). *Higher Education in Scotland and the UK—diverging or converging systems?*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Savage, Bill (1962). *NUS the first forty years*. London: National Union of Students.
- Schlapp, Otto (1934). The origin of the SRC in *The Student* (Edinburgh University Magazine) XXXI(35): 96. see also Orr, A.S.A history of the SRC in the same volume pp. 97–9.
- Scotland, James (1969). *The History of Scottish Education Volume 2 1872—Present Day*. London: University of London Press.
- Seeley, Antony and Jenkins, Peter (1995). Citizens Charter Research Paper 95/66 May 25, 1995 House of Commons Library. Citizen’s Charter (parliament.uk) (accessed March 4, 2022).
- Silver, Harold and Pamela, Silver (1997). *Students Changing Roles—Changing Lives*. Society for Research in Higher Education.
- Simon, Brian (1943). *A Students View of the Universities*. London: National Union of Students.
- Simon, Brian (1987). The student movement in England and Wales during the 1930s. *History of Education* 16(3).
- Simon, Brian (1998). *A Life in Education*. London: Lawrence and Wishart.
- Slater, Tom (2019). Free Speech in University Rankings. Spiked February 24, 2019. <https://www.spiked-online.com/free-speech-university-rankings/> (accessed July 24, 2022).

- Smith, Evan (2020). *No Platform—A History of Anti-Fascism, Universities and the Limits of Freedom of Speech*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Sparqs (2013). A framework for student engagement. <https://www.sparqs.ac.uk/upfiles/SEFScotland.pdf> (accessed March 22, 2022).
- Straw, Jack (2012) *Last Man Standing—Memoirs of a Political Survivor*. Basingstoke and Oxford: Macmillan.
- Students and Staff of Hornsey College of Art (1969). *The Hornsey Affair*. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Educational Specials.
- Taylor, David (1968). *The Godless Students of Gower Street*. London: UCL Union.
- Thomas, Thomas Nicholas (1996). The British student movement 1965–1972. Unpublished PhD thesis submitted to Warwick University.
- Thorn, Nicholas J. (1991). Revolutionaries and Reformists unpublished PhD thesis submitted to Warwick University.
- Thompson, E.P. (1970). *Warwick University Ltd—Industry, Management and Universities*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Educational Special.
- Truscott, Bruce (1943). (pseudonym for Prof E. Allison Pears) (1943) *Redbrick University*. London: Faber and Faber Ltd.
- UK Government (2022). Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill (HL Bill 30). https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/lbill/58-03/030/5803030_en_2.html#pb1-11g3 (accessed July 30, 2022).
- Young, Maximilien and Dube, Lucky (2020). The state of the (student) unions Adam Smith Institute September 20, 2020. <https://www.adamsmith.org/news/the-state-of-the-student-unions> (accessed July 24, 2022).

Conclusion: A Historical and Global Comparison

Manja Klemenčič

The chapters in this Handbook offer empirical evidence confirming the two theoretical propositions presented in the introduction: that changes in higher education (HE) policies reinforce the dynamic nature of student politics and representation (i.e., “new policies create a new politics”), and that students also have effects on HE (i.e., “student impact on HE”).¹ New policies create new political opportunities for various stakeholders in HE and influence the power balance between these stakeholders. In some world regions, students have been gaining political leverage, and elsewhere their political power has been curbed. But students are not merely subjected to and react to the changes in the HE policies and the HE politics. Students have political agency, that is, competences to influence decisions in HE, to build student representation, and/or to affect other changes in HE.

In the earliest forms of student organizing, students in mediaeval Bologna University (founded around 1088) were organized into “nations,” which initially offered them mutual welfare, protection, and collective security against the local authorities (Cobban, 1971; Haskins, 2007/1923). These nations eventually developed control of the academic affairs of the overall university (Kibre, 1948; Schwinges, 1992). Student nations approached the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick Barbarossa (1122–1190), who granted students, represented through nations, the right to elect “Dominus Rector.” The Rector, who was a student, imposed strict controls over teaching doctors’ activities, such as time when they teach, when they could be absent from town, and levies in case they did not meet the rules (Cobban, 1971). This decree created a type of university in which sovereign power resided in the student body—the student estate associated into nations, and students effectively controlled the university. In a way, the arrangement aligned well with the origins of a university, or as Rashdall (1936, pp. 161–2) put it: “To appreciate the fact that the university was in its origin nothing more than a guild of foreign students is the key to the real origin and nature of institution.” However, by the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries this model ceased to exist and with a few exceptions was not replicated elsewhere (Rashdall, 1936). The downfall of student-governed universities was prompted by academics threatening migration. Academics also sought supplementary financing from town officials and private donors to cease financial dependency on students, which gradually led to the establishment of new bodies in institutional governance and weakening of student power in governance (Rashdall, 1936). By the sixteenth century, the few remaining student nations acted “as units of administrative convenience, not as organs of student power” (Cobban, 1971, p. 55). The more widespread and lasting was the Parisian model where

student nations did not have an official status (Cobban, 1971), but students could elect a student rector who shared decision rights with the teachers' guild (Haskins, 2007/1923).

In the spirit of times, students in eighteenth-century Europe were interested in and active in political movements of the day. Given the elite nature of HE institutions and (mostly) elite background of students enrolled at these institutions, there was an implicit expectation that these students were educated to become future elites. As emerging elites these students often had a heightened sense of their political role to instigate desired social and political changes. Furthermore, in the absence of work or familial responsibilities, and unconcerned about their job prospects, they also had the leisure of time to engage in political debates, organizing and mobilizing in political and social movements of the time. Nineteenth and twentieth centuries gave rise to political and religious student associations as well as representative ones (Gevers and Vos, 2004). In the early twentieth century, some of the oldest still-existing national student associations were created by congregations of university student councils.

An expanded and more diverse student body in high-participation HE systems from the mid-twentieth century altered the collective social position of students and their political power, as much as it affected access and student experiences and outcomes. From early post-Second World War—which in many countries of the world coincided with colonial and early post-colonial phases—students as a collective social group underwent significant transformations. Students as a collective body started off as an educated elite, which represented only a small fraction of the national population and was highly homogeneous in terms of (male) gender, (high) socioeconomic status, and (majority) ethnic background. Furthermore, as emerging economic, political, cultural, and intellectual elites these students had a heightened sense of political responsibilities and role in developments of their countries and often brought upon themselves to bring about political and social change (from either left or right of political spectrum) (Weiss, Aspinwall and Thompson, 2012).

Students from modest backgrounds started entering HE institutions in increasing numbers in the second half of the twentieth century. Given their backgrounds, they faced striking alienation in HE institutions, which were created to serve elites. The radicalization of the student body and the worldwide spread of student protests in the 1960s and 1970s were in many ways a reflection of a clash of values between the student masses that were now increasingly diverse in their backgrounds (and gender) and the academic spaces they entered. Rising in numbers, students became a powerful political force. Transition to mass HE altered the students' status as marginal elites as producers of collective (knowledge) goods and political outcomes, and enjoying community support and special privileges (Weiss, Aspinwall and Thompson, 2012). Students lost their privileged social status associated with their prospects as emerging societal elites. In expanded HE systems, students became more strongly associated with the professional class. Accordingly, symbolic alliances between student unions and trade unions representing workers became more likely. But with diversity of students, student collective political identity based on shared values and interests also became more difficult to establish.

The 1960s student protests in many universities in Europe, the United States, and some parts of the British Commonwealth resulted not only in governance and curricular reforms of HE institutions, but also in changes in legal and institutional provisions on student representative associations granting students more formal rights in the shared governance of HE institutions (De Groot, 1998; Luescher-Mamashela, 2010, 2013; Klemenčič and Park, 2018). In some parts

of the world, like Europe, these changes were long-lasting and significant. Elsewhere, such as in the United States, the changes were less pronounced and short-lived. By the 1980s, the spirit of potent student activism for student rights waned almost everywhere. New HE policies emerged putting emphasis on vocational outcomes of HE, students' private benefits of HE as rationales for tuition fees and introducing management principles from the private sector to HE. Reign of many conservative-leaning governments and earlier global financial recessions reinforced this trend. In developing countries and authoritarian regimes, student protests for regime change and social changes, however, continued.

At the turn of the century, the shift from democratic principles of shared governance into more corporate models was observed globally, more in some regions and institutions than others. Such a shift has undermined the political roles of students (and academic staff) and turned communal (democratic) rights and practices to neoliberal practices that advance individual consumer rights and choices. However, these reforms have been accompanied by three other distinct yet interconnected HE developments, which, arguably, offset the diminishing power of student estate. Considering the combination of these developments, student estate is changing, but ultimately student estate in contemporary times in most world regions is emerging stronger especially compared to the academic estate. Three global developments reinforce student power.

First, the liberal education movement highlights the centrality of students as actors in learning and teaching processes. The movement is concerned with the constitution and construction of student actorhood, indeed enhanced student actorhood, in student-centered higher education. Students are conceived as active participants, as agents in their own learning and education pathways, not passive recipients of knowledge disseminated through teaching by their teachers. Students have agency in the sense that they have the capabilities to participate in the construction of knowledge and of their learning environments. The constitution of students as actors in teaching and learning processes has implications for how we conceive the balance of power between teachers and students: in terms of the degree of their control over teaching-learning processes, the division of responsibilities in teaching and learning processes, and students' autonomy.

Second, quality assurance and accreditation became important instruments of accountability measures utilized by HE institutions and by the governments and other stakeholders. Students are constructing for themselves new roles and new types of authority in quality assessment, accountability, and performance. Students continue to be the prime data source for measures of quality of education provision (e.g., through course evaluations or student experience surveys). However, students are also adopting new roles as "student experts" serving in bodies conducting institutional evaluations. Furthermore, students are claiming authority in setting standards and guidelines on quality assurance procedures and structures. For example, the European Students' Union (ESU) and its member unions are influential actors in the European Higher Education Area where policies and instruments on quality assurance are developed and adopted. Student representatives are using their representative function to co-decide on policies and strategies on quality assurance in HE in Europe. The resulting European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Europe essentially made student involvement in external and internal HE quality assurance mandatory.

Third, the marketization of public higher education too is redefining student roles and authority. Major change is in a shift from student representative associations defending collective rights of students and pursuing collective student interests to protection of individual student

“consumer” rights. The latter occurs through student complaint procedures and attention to student expectations and satisfaction measured through student market research surveys and student satisfaction surveys. This model has always been common for private HE but is now also diffusing into public HE. The neoliberal HE policies imply that students—as consumers—ought to have more voice through course evaluations and course choice, but also possibly in curricular decisions within a course. In some countries, student governments integrate the democratic and consumerist rationales for student representation, and in others the new governance structures of public HE institutions are curbing student authority through democratic representation.

The above-presented trends are most visible in the European and English-speaking countries. The narrative of students-as-partners in HE does not resonate in other parts of the world, and there the transformations of student politics and representation are even more complex.

In African countries, students gained significant political powers in governance of HE institutions after these countries gained independence from colonial rule. In simple terms, students were rewarded for their political engagements in anti-colonialist and democratization movements. But African government and university leaders are aware of the political potency of the student body and fear its potential of becoming an oppositional force. In many African countries, attempts have been made to curb students’ political power, especially on national level and weaken the representative associations. This is especially the case in countries that seek to raise tuition fees, a measure that instigates student protests. Much of the contemporary discussion concerning student representation in African HE revolves around finding a right formula for student politics and representation: granting students some rights but preventing them from becoming too powerful and hence too difficult to control. Sanctions against student leaders are not uncommon. Violent student protests too are not uncommon nor are the sanctions for such deviant behavior, including imprisonment of student leaders.

The Asian countries with Confucian educational philosophy and/or paternalistic state impose powerful cultural frames onto student-university and student-government relations. Respect for authority is deeply ingrained in the HE cultures and largely incompatible with the Western narratives of students-as-partners. Student-consumer narratives too are emerging in Asia, and as elsewhere focus on quality and accessibility. Student politics remains under close oversight of institutional leaders. Student political identities are strongly influenced by national and religious identities. Although students in this region too have been part of independence struggles, the strong paternalistic states did not grant them the kind of autonomy and powers as, for example, in African and Eastern European contexts. Authoritarian regimes, such as China, practice the corporatist approach to student representation by cultivating student cadre within the Communist Party as a much more influential student body than other student organizations. Student representation is also not absent in autocratic regimes in the Gulf States, but student bodies have little autonomy and little political power in decisions. They were granted to exist to prevent radicalization of students and protests.

In the Latin American context, student movements are united in Latin American student solidarity, against neoliberal HE policies and against American neo-imperialism. Student representation tends to be fragmented and on a national level typically in antagonistic relationships to the state. The Chilean example of a successful protest against neoliberal reforms and election of student leaders to the national parliament presents in the entire region a remarkable narrative of student power and student impact. At the institutional level, the differences in governance

arrangements between public and private HE institutions are notable. Public institutions tend to uphold the traditions of democratic representation of students in HE governance while the private institutions involve students as sources of information and consultants.

The chapters in this Handbook showcase the existence of representative student associations and of some representational mechanisms in HE governance in HE institutions across all world regions. While student governments in some form are indeed a common feature of all twenty-five HE systems featured in this Handbook, the same is not the case with national student associations. For example, Singapore has no national student association. In the United States, some states have state-level associations and others do not. In Pakistan, student associations have been banned since 1984, and in 2022 there was a discussion about restoring the right of students to associate. In the transnational HE governance regimes, the Global Student Forum and the Commonwealth Student Association were founded recently, and the ASEAN does not have a transnational student association akin to other regional associations presented in this Handbook.

The variations in organizational structures of student governments are significant, even within the same global regions. While their membership, funding, legal status, and staffing in secretariats vary significantly, the political agendas of student governments across the world regions share notable similarities. The transnational regional associations undoubtedly facilitate diffusion of political ideas within the global regions. The Global Student Forum now further facilitates transnational diffusion of ideas globally by offering a platform for global exchange of ideas, political issues and practices in student politics and representation.

Between 2019 and 2021, the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on students in HE were a single political issue that has been pursued by student governments across countries from all global regions. It has been linked to access and quality of HE, exam taking during the pandemic, access to online learning material (such as e-libraries) and quality of online education, and/or students' mental health (NAT-SIHEG, 2021). The HE institutions' response to Covid-19 caused protests in Germany and Serbia since students were forced to vacate their dormitories as part of the Covid-19 regulations (NAT-SIHEG, 2021). The pandemic also negatively affected the workings of the student governments in most countries.

Access to higher education and fighting against rising cost of education is another major political issue on the agenda of student governments in most countries (NAT-SIHEG, 2021). Student welfare provisions, such as access to subsidized housing, subsidized transportation, and availability of student work, are common issues on the political agenda of student governments across world regions (NAT-SIHEG, 2021). Quality of HE in general, not just during the pandemic, is another key issue stated by most student leaders across world regions ((NAT-SIHEG, 2021). In some countries, such as Aotera-New Zealand, quality of HE is explicitly linked to student-centered learning and teaching (NAT-SIHEG, 2021). Student-centered learning and teaching are also highlighted as an important political issue by the student leaders from Europe and clearly linked to the European Students' Union policies to promote introduction of student-centered approaches to HE (NAT-SIHEG, 2021). Safety on campus is an issue that is raised mostly by student leaders from African countries (NAT-SIHEG, 2021). Gender equality, prevention of sexual harassment and violence, and provisions for student parents are highlighted by student leaders from Asia and Pacific and Europe (NAT-SIHEG, 2021). In Latin American countries, access to education and funding of HE most clearly stand out as key topics on the agenda of student associations (NAT-SIHEG, 2021).

The two models of student representation HE governance—the democratic participatory and the stakeholder consultative—reflect well the reality of student authority presented in the empirical chapters in this Handbook. On the one extreme is the Czech Republic where students have 30 percent of votes within the academic senates of HE institutions. On the other extreme are the many countries, and almost consistently private sector HE institutions, where students have no voting rights in the governing bodies but may be consulted or invited as observers to the decision processes. Political action repertoires by student governments can be based more on using the representational channels or more resorting to protest and contentious politics. In Maldives, Fiji, Singapore, and Sri Lanka in the Asia-Pacific region; in Ghana and Namibia in the African region, and in most European countries, student leaders mention representation as the predominant mode of political action for student governments (NAT-SIHEG, 2021). In Latin America and most African countries, as well as in India, Malaysia, and Pakistan, student leaders state protest and contentious politics as their predominant mode of political action (NAT-SIHEG, 2021). Most of the countries, however, use a combination of both modes of political action (NAT-SIHEG, 2021).

This Handbook offers the window into student representation in HE in twenty-five countries and through five transnational student associations into transnational regional and global HE governance regimes. The chapters review the history and basic characteristics of student representation within their systems and highlight specific elements most significant in student politics in their country. Future research is needed for deeper and more systematic comparisons on student politics and representation within and between the world regions, and for analyzing the structural conditions shaping student politics and representation. The impact of student representation on HE reforms is difficult to measure amidst the complex constellations of political actors and their political preferences. More feasible are investigations into representational structures and political dispositions and motivations of student leaders which can suggest potential for impact. Student representation in online, alternative, and networked HE institutions, such as student representation in the European University alliances, is another interesting research area for future exploration. It is related to the new avenues for research on the governance and management models for these emerging types of HE institutions. Finally, with the emerging class of student experts (i.e., students in voluntary or paid expert roles) and student professionals (students employed in campus jobs in professional/administrative roles) questions emerge about their role in student politics, relationship to student representation, and their effects of HE.

Note

- 1 This chapter draws on and further develops propositions made in Klemenčič (2012a,b, 2014, 2019, 2020 a,b,c,d, 2023 a,b, 2024).

References

De Groot, G.J. (1998). *Student Protest: The Sixties and After*. London: Longman.

- Cobban, A.B. (Nov. 1971). Medieval student power. *Past & Present* 53 (1): 28–66. <https://doi.org/10.1093/past/53.1.28>
- Cobban, A.B. (1980). Student power in the Middle Ages. *History Today* 30(2): 1–6.
- Gevers, L. and Vos, L. (2004). Student movements. In Rüegg, Walter (ed.), *A History of the University in Europe: Volume III: Universities in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries (1800–1945)* (pp. 269–344). Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.
- Haskins, C.H. (2007/1923). *The Rise of Universities*. New Brunswick: Transition Publishers.
- Kibre, P. (1948). *The Nations in Medieval Universities*. Cambridge, MA: Mediaeval Academy of America.
- Klemenčič, M. (2012a). Student representation in Western Europe: Introduction to the special issue. *European Journal of Higher Education* 2(1): 2–19.
- Klemenčič, M. (2012b). The changing conceptions of student participation in higher education Governance in the EHEA. In Curaj, A., Scott, P., Vlasceanu, L. and Wilson, L. (eds.), *European Higher Education at the Crossroads: Between the Bologna Process and National Reforms* (pp. 631–53). Dordrecht: Springer.
- Klemenčič, M. (2014). Student power in a global perspective and contemporary trends in student organising. *Studies in Higher Education* 39(3): 396–411. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2014.896177>
- Klemenčič, M. and Park, B.Y. (2018). Student politics: Between representation and activism. In Cantwell, B., Coates, H. and King, R. (eds.), *Handbook on the Politics of HE* (pp. 468–86). Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Klemenčič, M. (2019). Higher education expansion and students. In J.C. Shin and Teixeira, P. (eds.), *International Encyclopedia of Higher Education Systems and Institutions*. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Klemenčič, M. (2020a). Students as actors and agents in student-centered higher education. In Hoidn, S. and Klemenčič, M. (eds.), *Routledge International Handbook on Student-Centered Learning and Teaching in Higher Education* (pp. 75–92). Abingdon: Routledge <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429259371-7>
- Klemenčič, M. (2020b). Student governments. In Shin, J.C. and Teixeira, P. (eds.), *International Encyclopedia of Higher Education Systems and Institutions*. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Klemenčič, M. (2020c). Higher education institution governing boards: Student board members. In David, M.E. and Amey, M.J. (eds.), *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Higher Education*, 5v. Washington, DC: SAGE, 2020.
- Klemenčič, M. (2020d). Student employees. In Shin, J.C. and Teixeira, P. (eds.), *International Encyclopedia of Higher Education Systems and Institutions*. Washington, DC: Springer.
- Klemenčič, M. (2023a). The rise of the student estate. In Amaral, Alberto and Magalhães, António (eds.), *The Handbook on Autonomy and Governance of Higher Education Institutions*. Chapter 29, Cheltenham: Edgar Elgar Publishing.
- Klemenčič, M. (2023b). Student agency and student impact through representative student associations. In Baik, Chi and Kahu, Ella (eds.), *The Research Handbook on the Student Experiences in Higher Education*, Chapter 3, Cheltenham: Edgar Elgar Publishing.
- Klemenčič, M. (2024). A theory of student impact on higher education. In Conner, Jerusha, Raaper, Rille, Guzmán-Valenzuela, Carolina and Gauthier, Launa (eds.), *The Bloomsbury International Handbook of Student Voice in Higher Education*, Chapter 18. London and New York: Bloomsbury Publishers.
- Luescher-Mamashela, T.M. (2010). From university democratisation to Managerialism: The changing legitimization of university governance and the place of students. *Tertiary Education and Management* 16(4): 259–83.
- Luescher-Mamashela, T.M. (2013). Student representation in university decision making: Good reasons, a new lens?. *Studies in Higher Education* 38(10): 1442–56.
- NAT-SIHEG (2021). Survey of national student leaders. SIHEG—Student Impact in Higher Education Globally research project. Manja Klemenčič and the Global Student Forum.
- Rashdall, H. (1936). *The Universities in Europe in the Middle Ages*. Edited by F.M. Powicke and A.B. Emden. Volume I–III. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

- Schwinges, R.C. (1992). Student education, student life. In Rüegg, W. (ed.), *A history of the university in Europe*. Vol. 1, Universities in the Middle Ages (pp. 195–243). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Weiss, M.L., Aspinall, E. and Thompson, M.R. (2012). Introduction: Understanding student activism in Asia. In Weiss, M.L. and Aspinall, E. (eds.), *Student activism in Asia: Between protest and powerlessness* (pp. 1–32). Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press.

Index

- 100 Million Campaign 42, 48, 62, 85
- Academic Credit Transfer for Asia (ACTFA) 186
- academic freedom (AF) 71, 103–4, 199, 217, 551
- Act for the better Administration and Endowment of Universities in Scotland* (1889) 580
- Africa/African students 4, 41–4, 48–9, 55, 594.
See also The All-Africa Students Union (AASU)
- cost-sharing 120–1
 - during Covid-19 pandemic 120, 126
 - decolonization, universities and scholars 117, 124–5
 - ICT 120
 - massification 119, 121, 125
 - political involvement 118
 - post-independence decades 118
 - second liberation 118–19
 - student politics in 116–18
 - student protest repertoire 124
- African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) 49
- African Institute for Mathematical Sciences (AIMS) 120
- African Research Universities Alliance (ARUA) 120
- African Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ASG-QA) 49
- Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), India 249–50, 252, 256
- Algerian War 452, 454
- Aliansi Badan Eksekutif Mahasiswa Seluruh Indonesia (BEM SI) 194, 198
- The All-Africa Students Union (AASU) 2, 41, 63, 85, 95, 106
- autonomy of 50
 - collaborative partnerships 42
 - constitution 44–5
 - European Union-African Union projects 42
 - funding 46
 - governance 45–6
 - literature review 43–4
 - and national unions 47–8
 - organizational structure and capacity 44–5
 - partners 42–3
 - political activities 48–9
 - strategic priorities 41–2
- All India Students Association (AISA) 242, 245, 248–9, 250–2, 257 n.1
- All India Student Federation (AISF) 250, 257 n.1
- Amalgamated Rural Teachers Union of Zimbabwe (ARTUZ) 47
- American Civil Liberties Union 406
- American college student activism 405
- activists 406–7
 - activities 408–10
 - colleges and universities response 410–11
 - students becoming activists 407–8
- Aotearoa, New Zealand 205, 219
- Memorandums of Understanding 216
 - neoliberalization 206
 - student movement in 207, 210, 212, 221
 - students' associations 206, 217, 220
- Apartheid divestment movement, South Africa 147
- Arab Spring 123, 261, 265–6, 273
- ASEAN Higher Education Clusters 186
- ASEAN Quality Assurance Network (AQAN) 186
- ASEAN University Network (AUN) 185
- ASEAN University Student Council Union 186
- ASEAN University Student Council Union Conference (AUSCUC) 194
- ASEAN Youth Organization (AYO) 194
- ASEAN Youth Volunteer Programme (AYVP) 194
- Asia Law Students Association 194
- Asia-Pacific Youth Organisation (APYO) 194
- Asociación Colombia de Estudiantes Universitarios (ACEU) 366, 370–1
- Asociación Colombiana de Representantes Estudiantiles (ACREES) 366, 373–4, 380
- Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) 182, 185, 200 n.1
- Association of Students and Student Associations (ASSO) 540
- Associazione Nazionale per gli Organismi per il Diritto allo Studio Universitario* (ANDISU), Italy 500
- AUN ASEAN Credit Transfer System (ACTS) 186
- authoritarian regime 18–19, 22, 317, 319, 437, 593–4
- Bargad Organization 278, 286 n.5
- Belarusian Students' Association 71
- Berlinguer reforms 498
- Bharatiya Janata Party 257
- Black Consciousness 124

- Black Lives Matter movement 405, 407
- Black Papers* 581, 585
- Black radical feminism 124
- Black Students Refusing Further Inaction (BSRFI) 410
- Bogotazo 105
- Bologna Process 65–7, 74–7, 87, 384, 498, 518, 520, 522, 527, 543. *See also* European Higher Education Area (EHEA)
- Bergen Declaration (2016) 84–5
- Black Book of 521
- Bologna Declaration 65, 76, 520–1, 552
- Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG) 68, 71–2, 77
- political actions within 71–3
- Prague Ministerial Summit (2001) 66, 76
- Rome Ministerial Communique (2020) 71, 77
- Yerevan Ministerial Conference (2015) 73
- Bologna University 591
- Brazil, “Education Tsunami” 109
- British Commonwealth 592
- Bucharest, Romanian universities 514
- Buea University Students Union (BUSU) 136
- Bureau des Etudiant.e.s Administrateur.trices (BEA) 418, 425
 - activities and services 423
 - elections 422
 - funding 421–2
 - governance 422
 - legal status 420
 - membership 421
 - office and staff 422
 - ways of action, other 424
- Burma 183
- cadres’ elections, student government, China 234
 - cadre selection 231–2
 - in class committees 232–3
 - and student representation 230
- Cameroon, English-speaking 129
 - educational policy 142
 - model of student organizations 134–5
 - ratification of international legislations 130
 - student associations 130–1
 - students’ representation 131
 - student unionism and HE governance 129–30, 135–7, 144
 - challenges 137–9
 - politics of 140–2
 - stakeholder and shared governance theories 131–4
 - university management, decentralization 143–4
- Cameroon General Certificate of Education Board (CGCEB) 136
- Caribbean Regional Youth Council 401
- Catholics and *goliardi* 495–6
- Catholic University of Temuco 347
- catraçaos 109
- CBS, *The Activist* 405
- Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) 135
- Central American student spring (1944–58) 384
- Centro Universitario Democratico Italiano (CUDI) 496
- CFVU (The Education and University Life Commission, France) 471, 475, 481
- Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act* (2005) 578
- Chile
 - advanced neoliberalism 340
 - development of student organizations 329, 335–6
 - feminist movement 356
 - iron law, student activism 339
 - market and segmented massification 329–31
 - neoliberal modernization 339
 - privatization 330
 - social mobilization 109
 - State University Law 350
 - university/student protests 110, 331–4
 - youth indebtedness 331
- Chilean Social Outbreak (2019) 333
- Chilean student movement (1990–2020) 328, 359.
 - See also* Confederación de Estudiantes de Chile/Confederation of Students of Chile (CONFECH)
 - consequences and effects of 336–8
 - institutionalization 336
 - politics, society, and student mobilization 338–40
 - procedural capacity 337
 - socio-academic elite group 330
 - struggles of 349–51
 - student mobilization 331–5
 - substantive changes 337
 - symbolic-cultural level 337
- China/Chinese HE 225, 238 n.4. *See also* student government organizations, China
 - “Double First-Class University Plan” 237, 238 n.1
 - governance of 226
 - Maoist cultural revolution 10
 - Ministry of Education (MoE) rankings 226
 - party-leading model 237
 - socioeconomic development 225
 - student government in 228
 - student politics in 226
 - student representation 236

- Chinese Communist Party (CCP) 226, 235
- civil society/civil society organizations 9, 16, 88, 90–1, 94–6, 118, 169–70, 387, 423, 483, 488, 505, 523
- clandestine model, national systems of student representation 23
- Coalition against Privatization and Commercialization of Education (CAPCOE) 155
- collective action students 7–8, 27–9, 208–9, 459, 474, 531, 544
- Colombia
- Colombian Association of University Students 371–2
 - La Violencia 366
 - National Front (1958–74) 377
 - Plan Colombia 369
 - social struggles in 366–7
 - Truth Commission 378
- Colombian student movement 365–6, 381
- ANDES 369
 - ANEU 369
 - education as commodity 367–9
 - Historic Pact 379–80
 - involvement in Peace Process 375–7
 - national student associations within 370–4
 - Patriotic March 375–6
 - student representation 369–70
 - uprising of youth (2019–21) 377–9
 - victories 374–5
- Committee for ASEAN Youth Cooperation (CAYC) 194
- Commonwealth 4, 52–7, 60–3
- The Commonwealth Secretariat 52–3, 56, 58, 61, 183
- Commonwealth Students' Association (CSA) 2, 52, 61, 85, 106, 595
- 100 Million Campaigns 62
 - EXCO 57, 59–61
 - formation of 52, 54–5
 - future strategies 62–3
 - members of 53–4
- Commonwealth Youth Council (CYC) 60
- Commonwealth Youth Networks (CYN) 52
- Commonwealth Youth Program 52–3, 55, 60
- Communist Party Committees (CPC) 228–30, 232, 236–7, 238 n.3
- Communist Party of India (Marxist) 242, 256
- Communist Youth League Committees (CYLC) 227–37, 238 n.3, 238 n.5
- community of institutions (COMUE) 461
- comparative higher education regionalization 99
- Confederación de Estudiantes de Chile/
Confederation of Students of Chile (CONFECH) 328, 335–8, 341 n.4, 346, 352–3, 359–60
- educational system and neoliberalism 347–8
 - members/local branches organization 357–9
 - Ministry of Education and 354–5
 - mobilizations 335, 355–6
 - neoliberalism 346, 359
 - organizational structure 354
 - struggles of Chilean people 355–7
 - universal free policy 349–51
- Confédération Internationale des Étudiants (CIE) 580
- Confederazione degli Studenti 498, 501, 505
- Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (CCEM) 54–7, 59
- Consiglio Universitario Nazionale* (CUN), Italy 500, 508 n.4
- Constitutional Organic Law (LOCE) 349
- Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA) 49
- Continental Latin American and Caribbean Student Organization. *See Organización Continental Latinoamericana y Caribeña de Estudiantes* (OCLAE)
- Coordinamento delle Liste per il Diritto allo Studio (CLDS), Italy 497, 498, 501–2
- Coordination of Representatives of Public Universities (CREUP) 555, 557–8
- Cordoba Reform 103–4, 108
- Córdoba University 103
- corporatist model, national systems of student representation 22, 194, 198, 545
- Council of Europe (CoE) 65, 67–8
- Steering Committee for Education 68
- Council of the University Students of the State/
Consejo de Estudiantes Universitarios del Estado (CEUNE) 570
- Covid-19 pandemic 47–8, 62, 85, 111, 155, 183, 258 n.2, 269, 272, 316, 318, 346, 379, 478, 525, 534, 546, 572, 595
- Africa during 120, 126
 - impact on HE 61
 - UWI Mona Guild Council 397
- Crédito con Aval del Estado (CAE) 340 n.2
- CRUE, *Universidad* 2000 554
- Cuban Revolution 104
- cultural repertoires, student activism 12, 30
- Czech Republic 427, 596
- academic senates 429–31
 - student representation 427, 433–4

- Daily Mirror 309
 “decided first, revolt and readjust second” principle 236
 decision-making processes 18, 20, 26, 54, 85, 96,
 104, 123, 133–4, 136, 155, 229, 232, 237,
 262, 272, 285, 317, 395, 445–6, 526, 538,
 545, 563
 decolonization 116–17, 124–5, 161
 democratic participatory governance model,
 governance of higher education institutions
 20
Democrazia Cristiana (DC) 496
 de-stalinization, USSR 437
- Economic and Social Council of the United Nations
 108
 The Education and Academia Stakeholder Group
 (EASG), UN 88, 90–1, 96
 Education Cannot Wait (ECW) 88, 92–3
 The Education (Pastoral Care of Tertiary and
 International Learners) Code of Practice
 (2021) 208, 217
 Education International (EI) 88, 94–5, 98
Eesti Üliõpilaskondade Liit (EÜL) 436, 438, 445,
 447, 449 n.5
 external relationships 440–1
 membership/members 438–9, 448
 organizational capacity 439–40
 political issues 441–2
 structure 440
 egalitarianism 205–6, 208, 217, 219–21
 and neoliberalism 210–11, 213–14
 political 216
 Egerton University 172, 174
 Egerton University Students Association (EUSA) 172
 E4 Group organizations (European Higher Education
 Area) 72–4
 “El movimiento secundario in América Latina y el
 Caribe”/The Secondary Movement in
 Latin America and the Caribbean 111
 “Encuentro Juvenil Internacional Ideas que son
 banderas”/International Youth Meeting
 Ideas that are Flags 111
 entrepreneurial student activism 123
 Erasmus+ projects 67, 71, 73
 Erasmus Student Network (ESN) 67
 Estonia 436
 HEIs 442
 autonomy and dependence 443–4
 local student activism 445
 local student councils 444–5
 management and financing of local student
 unions 443
 Higher Education Quality Agency 439
 Soviet occupation 449 n.3
 student organizations and representation 437–8
 Ethics, Transparency, and Integrity in Education
 (ETINED) 68
 European Association for Quality Assurance in
 Higher Education (ENQA) 71
 European Economic Community (EEC) 65, 75
 European Education Area (EEA) 66, 77
 European Federation of Nurses Associations (ENSA)
 69
 European Higher Education Area (EHEA) 66–7, 73,
 77, 87, 552, 555, 593
 fundamental values 71–2
 European higher education policy field 67–8, 73–8
 Europeanization 65–6, 75, 518
 ANOSR 526–7
 of HE in Romania 519–21
 of public policy 65
 European Quality Assurance Register for Higher
 Education (EQAR) 72–3, 586
 European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) 586, 593
 European Student Information Bureau (ESIB) 68,
 75–6, 526. *See also* European Students’
 Union (ESU)
 European Students’ Union (ESU) 49, 66, 67, 68, 70,
 71–4, 75, 76, 85, 90–1, 93, 95, 106–7, 182,
 186, 501, 593
 “Bologna with Student Eyes” (BWSE) 67
 finances 69–70
 governance 70–1
 human resources 70
 membership 68–9
 organizational and policy development 75
 European Union (EU) 4, 65, 76, 87
 Directorate General for Education, Youth, Sport
 and Culture (DG EAC) 68
 European Strategy for Universities 75
 Eurydice 73
 Support to Higher Education in the ASEAN
 Region (SHARE) program 182–3, 186
 European Universities Initiative 66, 75, 78
 European Youth Forum (YFJ) 68
 European Youth Foundation of the Council 68
 experimental institutions 461
 external legitimacy, student governments 30, 33,
 267
- Fallism 124
 Faroese National Union of Students (MFS) 69
 Faure law 453–4, 469, 478 n.7
 FBU, Venezuela 109

- Federación de Estudiantes Universitarios (FEU) 366, 372–3, 376, 379
- Federación Universitaria Nacional (FUN) 366, 380
- Fédération des Etudiant.e.s Francophones (FEF) 418–19, 423
- Fédération des Etudiants d’Afrique Noire Francophone (FEANF) 133
- Federation of Conservative Students (FCS) 581–2
- Federation of Estonian Student Unions. *See Eesti Üliõpilaskondade Liit (EÜL)*
- Federation of General Student Associations/ Fédération des Associations Générales Étudiantes (FAGE) 451, 455–6, 458–9, 461–3, 470–3, 475–8, 478 n.3
- Federation of University Students of Honduras (FEUH) 383, 386, 388–9
- Federazione Italiana Goliardica (FIG)* 496
- Federazione Universitaria Cattolica Italiana (FUCI)* 496–7
- #FeesMustFall campaign 47, 124–5, 133
- Filipino NSOs 198
- Final Peace Agreement, Columbia 365, 370, 376
- Fioraso law 461
- Forgotten Closed Shop (FCS)* 582
- formal student representation 149, 266, 301, 513, 525
- Fossil-Fueled Universities 301
- France 135
 - National Union of Students 450
 - student representation in (*see* French student representation)
- Francisco Morazán Higher School of Teachers 385
- freedom of speech 261, 282, 582, 585
- Free Form, *Good Trouble* 405
- freeze votes 248–9, 251, 253, 255–6
- French Revolution 453
- French student elections
 - CFVU 469, 471
 - list building 471–2
 - local configurations 470–1, 477
 - pre-election campaign 473
 - rationalization of electoral process 473–4
 - repertoires 474–5
 - representative organizations 469
 - results, analysis 475–7
 - University of Lille 468–70, 473, 476–8
- French student representation 450–2, 457, 461, 464–5, 469
 - hybrid system 457–8
 - legal system 454–6
 - organizational characteristics 458–61
 - student interest intermediation 461–4
 - student organizations 456–7, 460
 - UNEF 450, 452–4, 456, 458
- Fronte Universitario d’Azione Nazionale (FUAN)*, Italy 495–6
- Further and Higher Education Act (1992)* 582
- Gabon 63
- Gender Sensitisation Committee against Sexual Harassment (GSCASH) 242, 247, 249, 253, 255–6, 258 n.2
- general enrollment rate (GER), Sub-Saharan women 121
- Generation Z (Gen Z) 404, 406
- Georgian Student’s Organizations Association (GSOA) 69
- Germany
 - freier Zusammenschluss von studentInnenschaften (fzs)* 482, 493 n.2
 - Nazi regime 10
- GERME, a study and research group on student movements, France 451
- Ghana 44, 46, 50, 86, 120, 122, 596. *See also* National Union of Ghana Students (NUGS)
 - cultural heritage 150
 - Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) 154
 - “Mmobrowa Struggle” 155
 - multipartyism on students 122
 - National Service Scheme 147–8
 - national student organizations, politicization 148
 - student and youth movements 147–8, 158
 - student representation 148–9
- Ghana Education Trust Fund (GETFund) 147, 155, 158
- Ghana National Union of Technical Students (GNUTS) 150, 155
- Ghana Union of Professional Students (GUPS) 150
- The Global Action for Trans* Equality (GATE) 408
- Global Campaign for Education (GCE) 88, 95–6
- global civil society organizations, student representation 88, 98
 - EI 88, 94–5
 - GCE 88, 95–6
 - IAU 88, 95
- global education financing institutions, student representation 88, 98
 - ECW 88, 92–3
 - GPE 88, 91–2
 - OSF 88, 93–4
 - World Bank 88, 92
- Global Education Reform Movement (GERM) 384
- Global Partnership for Education (GPE) 88, 91–2, 96

- Global Student Declaration (2022) 61
- Global Student Forum (GSF) 1–4, 49, 61, 83–4, 86, 98, 595
- The Academy in Activism, Leadership, and Advocacy 49, 87
- organizational characteristics and membership structure 85–6
- political activities and priorities 87
- Steering Committee 3, 61, 85–7
- student federations and 84–5
- government-organized non-governmental organizations (GONGOs) 540, 542, 544
- Graduate Employment Survey, Singapore MOE 292
- Graduate Students Association of Ghana (GRASAG) 150, 152
- Green Paper on Higher Education into the 1990s* 582
- Grenoble Charter 452, 488
- Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states 265
- Guyanese National Student Organization (GNSO) 58–9
- Harmonization of African Higher Education Quality Assurance and Accreditation (HAQAA) Initiative 42
- Higher Education Funding Council of England (HEFCE) 582
- higher education governance 1, 9–11, 15–20, 33, 118, 130–44, 186, 289. *See also* institutional governance, student representation
- managerial-corporatist model 17
- paternalistic governance 295, 298, 301
- shared governance 9, 20–1, 131–4, 386, 389, 413, 452, 463–4, 592–3
- higher education institutions (HEIs) 131, 134, 138, 163, 206, 260, 384, 413, 420, 438–9
- Cameroon 144
- Estonia 442–5
- Ghana 147, 150, 154
- Kenya 175
- Oman 260
- Pakistan 284–5
- Romanian 524–6
- Russian 533, 536
- Sri Lanka 307, 314, 318, 321
- Higher Education Institutions Student Advisory Councils Committee (HEISACC) 267
- The History of Ten Arab Public Universities* 262
- Honduran Council of Private Enterprise (COHEP) 387
- Honduras 383–5, 390. *See also* Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras (UNAH)
- horizontal student organizations, Aotearoa New Zealand
- diversity 216–17
- mixed membership 214–15
- and neoliberalism 208–11
- professionalization/unequal resourcing 215–16
- Human Development Report (2018) 277
- Hungarian Revolution 515
- identity-based activism 406–8, 412
- The Independent National Student Union (UNIS), Romania 513, 516–17
- Independent Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance* 584
- India 58
- General Body Meetings (GBMs) 243–4
- JNU elections (*see* JNU elections)
- student elections 241–2
- Indian Institutes of Technology 242
- Indonesia 184, 200
- corporatist national systems 189, 194, 198–9
- public protests 199
- informal student activism 149
- institutional betrayal 404–5
- institutional change 233, 235, 413
- institutional governance, student representation
- corporate type of shared governance arrangements 20–1
- democratic participatory governance model 20
- stakeholder consultative model 596
- institutional massification 116, 121, 332, 584
- Instituto Colombiano para la Evaluación de la Educación (ICFES) 373
- InterAsso (IA) 470, 472–3, 475–6, 478
- intergovernmental organizations, student representation 88, 98
- EASG 88, 90–1
- OECD 88, 91
- UNESCO 88–90
- internal legitimacy, student governments 33, 267
- International Association of Universities (IAU) 88, 95, 98
- International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) 130
- International Student Conference (ISC) 83–4
- International Union of Students (IUS) 49, 83–4
- intersectionality and decolonization 125, 290, 405
- Inter-University Network (IUN) 299–301, 303–4
- Inter University Student Federation (IUSF), Sri Lanka 308, 310–15
- Islami Jamiat Taulba* 283
- Islamization of educational curricula 281

- issue-based activism 407
- Italian student politics 510–11
 application and axes frameworks 504–7, 508 n.8
 collective actors 499
 first era (1945–68) 495–6, 506
 HE national institutional bodies 512
 HE sectors denominations 511–12
 local institutional bodies 512
 local level of student representation 502–3
 national 500–2
 political parties 511
 second era (1945–68) 497–8, 506
 third era (1945–68) 498–9, 506
- Italy 33, 69
Agenzia nazionale di valutazione del sistema universitario e della ricerca (ANVUR)
 Advisory Committee 500–1, 508 n.6
 Comunione e Liberazione movement 497–8
fuori corso 500, 508 n.2
 student politics (*see* Italian student politics)
- Jamaica 56–7
 legal and statutory framework 394–6
 Moyne Commission 394
 Revised National Youth Policy (2017–30) 395
 student representation 392
 Vision 2030 Development Plan 395
 women in politics 399, 402 n.14
- Jamaica Union of Tertiary Students (JUTS) 56–7, 395
- Janata Vimukti Peramuna (JVP), Sri Lanka 309–10, 320
- Jantar Mantar, protests 243
- Japan 182
- Japan-East Asia Network of Exchange for Students and Youths (JENESYS) Programme 194
- Japan International Cooperation Centre (JICE) 194
- Jawaharlal Nehru Student Union (JNUSU) election 241, 244
- Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) 241. *See also* JNU elections
- Jihadi* 281
- JNU elections
carnavalesque 245–6, 257
 as cultural artifacts 242–3
 lexical specificities of student organizations 251
 Organizational Vote (*see* Organizational Vote, JNU)
 organization-wise distribution of panel votes 253
 school-wise distribution of vote patterns 252, 254–5
 tribunician body 243
- Junta de Direccion Universitaria (JDU) 387
- Kabataang Makabayan revolutionary movement 184
- Kailash Satyarthi Children’s Foundation 49
- Kazakh Student Association (KSA) 69
- Kenya 48, 55, 175
 admin puppet 171–2, 175–6
 comrades power 176
 “Duale Bill” 172–3
 educational loan scheme 163
 generals 175
 Higher Education Loans Board (HELB) 167–8
 Mugo 175
 student leadership movements 161
 student organizations 162
 student politics in 162–4, 176
 students’ involvement in 161
 University Students’ Loan Scheme 163
 Wisemen/Wise-ladies 175
- Kenyatta University 167, 171–2
- Kenya University Students Organization (KUSO) 164, 166–8, 174, 176
- Keynesianism 207
- Khaturn University, students’ protest 161
- Kibabii University 166, 174
- Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) 265
- Komsomol* 533–4, 540, 545
- “La Calle es Nuestra” (“The Street is Ours”) 106, 110
- La Reforma de Córdoba, Argentina 103
- Latin America 3–4, 182, 365–6, 381, 553
 anti-imperialism 105–6
 education and funding of HE 595
 Latin American and Caribbean Student Congress IV 105
 “Reformists” (Los Reformistas) 103
 student movements in 103–5, 365, 594
- Latin American and Caribbean Continental Student Organization. *See* *Organización Continental Latinoamericana y Caribeña de Estudiantes* (OCLAE)
- leaderless spaces 205–6
- League of Filipino Students (LFS) 198–9
- League of Romanian Students Abroad (LSRS) 69
- legal position of students 16–17
- legitimacy, student governments 16, 24, 32–3, 291, 517, 526
- CNESER 462
- CSA 52
 congress, representation, and constitutional changes 55–7
 constitutional definition of NSOs 57–8
 legal and financial status 60–1

- new NSO 58–9
 - soft power strategy 59–60
- ESU 66, 69, 73–6, 78
- NUS-UK 581, 586
- OCLAE 105, 108–10, 112
- SAC 267, 273
- Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve crisis 418–19
- liberal education movement 593
- Lisbon Recognition Convention (1997) 65
- Lisbon Strategy (2000) 66
- Lyngdoh Committee 246, 258 n.3

- Makerere University, Uganda 121, 124
- Malaysia 54, 58
 - Gerakan Mahasiswa 13* (GM13) 199
 - student politics literature 184
 - UUCA 199
- Maldives National University Students Association 54
- Māori 205, 211, 215–16, 218
 - Renaissance, Aotearoa New Zealand 210
 - student movement 207
- marketization of HE 206, 210, 593
- Mauritius, CSA 54
- membership (in student organizations) 26, 29, 33, 85, 94, 214–15, 283
 - AASU 44–5
 - CSA 52–4, 60–2
 - ESU 68–9, 74, 78
 - EÜL 438–9
 - GSF 85–6, 90, 98
 - IUSF 308, 312
 - NUGS 151–4
 - SAC 268
 - ULB 421
 - UWI Mona Guild Council 396–7
 - WOSWA 169
- #MeToo movement 405
- Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region 261
- Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (MOHERI), Oman 267, 271, 274 n.7
- mobilization of students 46, 103, 109, 168, 173, 186, 298, 331–5, 338–40, 348–9, 355, 370–1, 376, 450, 452, 454, 497, 533, 545, 569
- Monitoring of Education Markets and Organizations (MEMO) 532
- Movimento Sociale Italiano* (MSI) 495
- Myanmar 288
 - student movements 199
 - student politics 184
- Nanyang Technological University (NTU) 291–2, 294, 298, 301–2
- Nanyang Technological University Students' Union (NTUSU) 295–8, 300
- Nanyang University 289–90
- The Nassau Declaration (2015) 54, 59
- National Accreditation Bureau for Higher Education (NAÚ) 432
- National Accreditation Commission (CNA) 355
- National Alliance of Student Organisation in Romania (ANOSR) 513, 517
 - agenda (2003 & 2010) 527
 - and Coalition 523
 - ECTS system 521
 - Europeanization of Higher Education 518–21
 - internal resources of 519
 - new education law 521–4
 - organizational structure of 518–19
 - policies 526
 - student organization 518
- National and District Scholarship Secretariats 155
- National Association of Socialist Students' Organisations (NASSO) 156
- National Autonomous University of Honduras. *See* Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras (UNAH)
- National Centre for Statistics & Information (NCSI), Oman 265
- National Centre for University and School Works (CNOUS) 450, 455–6, 469
- National Conferences of the Alliance, BEM SI, Indonesia 194
- National Congress of University Students (CNEU) 369, 371
- National Council of Education (CNE) 385
- National Council of Higher Education and Research (CNESER) 450, 453–7, 461–2, 469
- National Council of the University Students (CNSU) 498, 500–3, 505–6
- National Executive Committee (NEC) 153–4, 157, 371
- National Federation of Students of France (FNEF) 452, 454
- National Forum of Convergence (FONAC) 387
- National Health Students Association of Ghana (NAHSAG) 150–1
- national HE policy governance 21
 - clandestine model 23
 - corporatist model 22, 194, 198, 545
 - neo-corporatist model 451, 463, 486, 491, 556, 579

- pluralist model 451, 463, 486, 491
- regime-controlled student bodies 18–19
- statist model 22, 188
- student interest intermediation, systems of 21–2
- student representation, systems of 21–2
- National Redemption Council Decree (NRC) 150
- National Rifle Association-University 409
- National School of Agriculture 385
- National School of Forest Sciences 385
- national student associations. *See* national student organizations (NSOs)
- The National Student Coordinating Committee BAES Struggle 352–3
- national student organizations (NSOs) 21, 27–8, 32, 45, 53–4, 57–8, 86, 122, 187, 200 nn.2–3, 282–4, 205–6, 482–6
 - constitutional definition of 57–8
 - GNSO 58–9
- National Students' Assembly (NSA), North Macedonia 69
- National Students Federation (NSF) 278
- National Students' Union Of India (NSUI) 58, 251
- national systems of student representation. *See* typology of national systems of student representation
- National Union of Ghana Students (NUGS) 44, 148, 154
 - board of trustees 154
 - Central Committee 153
 - Congress 153
 - Constitution 154, 158
 - day-to-day activities 153
 - governance and membership 151–4
 - history of 149–50
 - organizational characteristics of 150–1
 - political infiltrations in 156–7
 - politicization 148
 - representation and activities 154–5
 - structure of 152
 - student unions and associations 150–1
- National Union of Malaysian Muslim Students (PKPIM) 58
- National Union of Students of the Philippines (NUSP) 198–9
- National Union of Students UK (NUS-UK) 53, 575–83, 585, 586 n.1
 - Blueprint for an Alternative Higher Education Funding System* 584
 - Demolition 2010* 584
 - legitimacy 586
- National University of Singapore (NUS) 289, 301
- National University of Singapore Students' Union (NUSU) 295–7
- National Youth Authority (NYA), Ghana 155
- National Youth Council (NYC), Singapore 298–9
 - Inter-University Network (IUN) 299–301, 303–4
- neo-corporatist model, national system of student representation 451, 463, 486, 491, 556, 579
- neo-interventionism 387
- neoliberalism 15, 75, 206, 213, 217, 219–20, 334, 349, 367, 369, 375, 381
 - educational system and (Chile) 347–8
 - neo-corporatist/pluralist equality 208–9
 - neoliberal egalitarianism 210–11
 - public/private debate 213–14
- New Public Management principles 15, 17
- New Zealand International Students' Association (NZISA) 205–6
- New Zealand Union of Students' Associations (NZUSA) 205–6, 213
 - horizontal engagement 208
- New Zealand University Students' Association (NZUSA) 207
- Ngā Toki Collective 211
- nonviolent student campus activism 10, 130
- Normalisation* 429
- Normalization of Campus Life policy (1978) 184
- Northern Ireland NUS (EWN) 586 n.1
- NUS, England and Wales (NUS(EW)) 583, 586 n.1
- NUS Scotland 577, 583, 586
- Oman 260
 - Arab Spring protests 261, 265–6
 - autocracy 265
 - Basic Statute of the State 265
 - HEIs 260
 - legislative documents 264
 - methods 264
 - Ministry of Higher Education 265, 267
 - National Centre for Statistics & Information (NCSI) 265
- Omani model 260, 264–5. *See also* student advisory councils (SACs), Oman
- “one country-one vote” policy 53
- Open Society Foundations (OSF) 70, 85, 88, 93–4, 96
- Open Society Foundations on Academic Freedom 72
- Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions (OBESSU) 85, 93
- Organización Continental Latinoamericana y Caribeña de Estudiantes* (OCLAE) 2, 104, 110, 356, 366

- history of 105–6
- imperialism 105, 111
- Latin American and Caribbean Congress of Students 107
- leadership and legacy 111
- legitimacy 105, 108–10, 112
- membership 106
- regional association 106–8
- School of Political Training for Student Leaders 111
- student activism 111
- Summit of Peoples (Cumbre de los Pueblos) 108
- Organizational Vote, JNU 243, 246, 256
 - dataset 247
 - elections under scrutiny 246–7
 - panel and freeze votes 248–9
 - party identification and 249–52
 - quantifying 252–6
- Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) 88, 91, 96
- Otago University Students' Association (OUSA) 207
- PACE Program for Access to Higher Education 347
- Pakistan 277
 - Anti-Ayub movement 281
 - Commission on National Education 280–1
 - Commission on Student Issues and Wellbeing 280–1
 - Constitution 285
 - methods and sources 278–9
 - National Educational Policy (1972–80) 281
 - student organizations 278, 595
 - ideological categorization 278–9
 - national-level 282–4
 - typology of 282
 - student politics and movements 280–2
 - first phase 280–1
 - fourth phase 281
 - second phase 281
 - third phase 281
 - student representation 284–5
 - student union 286 n.2
- Pakistan People's Party (PPP) 277
- Pan-Africanism 124
- Pan-African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency (PAQAA) 49
- Pan-African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework (PAQAF) 49
- Pan-American Agricultural School 385
- Pantera* (Panther) 497–8
- participative decision making 71, 88, 96, 103, 155, 237, 272, 419, 446, 521
- Pasifika 207, 212, 215, 218, 224
- peace process, Columbia 365–6, 375–7, 381
- Philippines 184
 - pluralist national system 189, 198–9
- “Pink Dot” 303
- pluralist model national system of student representation 451, 463, 486, 491
 - ANOSR 518–19
 - Philippines 198–9
- Political Constitution (1980) 339
- political party 4, 24, 30–33, 122, 148, 156, 158, 216, 220, 226, 265, 269, 277, 292, 309–10, 315, 319, 336, 359, 377, 397, 486–7, 491, 496, 505, 511, 525, 583
- political party identification 242–3, 249–52, 315
- Polynesian Panthers 207
- Popular Uprisings 365
- post-communist transition 533
- Post 16 Education (Scotland) Act* 584
- Post-Soviet Russia, student representation 531
 - Academic Council of the University 538
 - GONGOs 540, 544
 - influence of students at universities 539
 - informal groups and coalitions 546
 - “The Joint Council of Students” 536
 - local level of 534–9
 - ministries and regions 542–3
 - non-institutional activism and cooperation 543–5
 - ombudsmen 540–1
 - “On Education” 534, 537
 - origins of 535
 - periodization of 532–4
 - professional student unions 541–2, 544
 - Ranking of Student Councils 538
- Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) 312
- PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) 205
- Primavera degli Studenti (PdS), Italy 499
- Productivity Commission (2016) 214
- Program for Accompaniment and Effective Access to Higher Education (2016) 338
- Protection from Online Falsehoods and Manipulation Act (POFMA) 299
- Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) 150
- PSICALL-CoVid 19 573 n.9
- public higher education 108, 427, 527
 - cost-sharing in 120
 - marketization 593
- quality assurance (student involvement in) 25–6, 72–3
 - degrees of intensity 25
- Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) 586
- quasi-panel 253–4

- ragging practice 312–13, 317–18, 321–2
- Reformasi* movement 184
- Regional Centre for Higher Education Development (RIHED) 185
- regional student movement 2, 43, 63
- regional student representation 52, 93, 194
- Regional Students Representative Councils (RSRC) 157
- Republic's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration 46
- Rete Universitaria Nazionale (RUN), Italy 498
- Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) 375
- Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army (FARC-EP) 366
- RhodesMustFall (RMF) movement 123–4
- Rice Media 302
- rights of students. *See* student rights (rights of students)
- Rio de Janeiro Agreement on Environment and Sustainable Development 48
- Romania
- LOC-SIHEG-Romania (2022) survey 525
 - National Pact for Education 521
 - student politics 513
 - during communist regime 515–16
 - HEIs 524–6
 - nationalism 514–15
 - national level after 2000s 518
 - pre-war student movement 514–15
 - student representation (1990s and early 2000s) 517–18
 - Treaty of Accession 527
 - University Square Phenomenon 513, 516–17
- Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS) 521
- Romanian Communist Party (RCP) 515
- Romanian Revolution (1989) 513, 515–18, 522
- Romanian Students' League (LSR) 513, 516–17
- Romanian Workers' Party (RWP) 515
- Roosevelt Institute Network 409
- Russia 72, 531, 533–4, 537, 540, 542, 545. *See also* Post-Soviet Russia, student representation
- Russian Union of Youth (RUY) 540
- Scolasticus (A) Politicus: Typologizing Student Representation and Organization in Southeast Asia* 182
- Second World War 183–4, 393, 452, 454, 513
- self-identities and student representation
- political decision-making 219–20
 - token of appreciation 217–18
 - working hard 218–19
- sense of efficacy, student representation 19, 32
- shared leadership 131–3, 410
- Singapore 288, 303, 595
- Chinese-/English-medium education (1980) 288–90
 - Combat Apathy in New Millennium 291–2
 - contemporary student leaders, influence 293
 - data collection, methodology 292–3
 - diversifying student voices 301–2
 - formation of Quad Unis 297–8
 - higher education policy 288, 290
 - institutional statutes and regulations of universities 295–6
 - Societies Act (1966) 291, 294–5
 - institutions for common ideals 290
 - Inter-University Network (IUN) 299–301, 304
 - LGBTQ movement in 302–3
 - Ministry of Education (MOE) 289, 292
 - National Youth Council (NYC) 298–9
 - pragmatic resistance 302–3
 - publicly funded universities 288
 - student politics in 288–9
 - student representation nationally 293–4
 - student unions 288 and leaders' influence within institutions 296–7
 - restructuring 291
 - Transformative Leadership Programme 298
- Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT) 293
- Singapore Management University (SMU) 288, 301
- Singapore Management University Students' Association (SMUSA) 295
- Singapore Manufacturing Federation 298
- Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS) 293
- Singapore University of Technology and Design (SUTD) 295, 301
- Socialist Student Union (SSU) 309–10
- social media platforms 124
- social movement organization (SMO) 106, 108, 328, 355, 482–6
- Societies Act (1966) 291, 294–5
- socio-economic inequality 124
- soft power 59–60
- South Asian Institute of Technology and Medicine (SAITM) 309, 313
- Southeast Asia (SEA) 182, 200 n.1
- as consumer-stakeholders 185–6
 - corporatist national systems 194, 198
 - national student organization characteristics 187–8
 - student politics in

- decline and delegitimization 185
 - independence movements and social change 183–4
 - student representation and interest intermediation 189–94
- Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) 185
- Soweto Uprising 147
- Spain 550
 - EEU and CEUNE 555–6, 559
 - LOMLOU 554–5, 559, 563
 - LOSU 556–9
 - LOU 552–4, 559
 - LRU 552, 559
 - student movement 551, 555
 - university system 552–3
- Sri Lanka
 - Aragalaya 313
 - Free Education Policy (1945) 308, 310, 313, 316, 320
 - Frontline Socialist Party (FSP) 312–13, 315, 320
 - keta 314
 - Law Student Union (LSU) 309
 - The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) 311
 - LOC-SIHEG 2021_Sri Lanka survey 307, 309–11, 314, 320
 - service users 319, 322
 - student activism in 307–11, 320–2
 - student politics in 307
 - student representation at state universities 314–20
- stakeholder theory 131–3
- State University Student Council/Consejo de Estudiantes Universitario del Estado (CEUNE) 555–6, 558–9
- state violence 366–7, 378
- structural adjustment programs (SAPs) 118, 130
- student(s) 8
 - accommodation 218
 - ambassadors 7
 - autonomy 12, 32, 162, 291, 550, 593
 - capital 7, 17, 24, 30, 188
 - civic agency 10
 - as clients 123, 262
 - confederation 465 n.9
 - consumerism 123
 - councils 78, 170, 178–9, 198, 242, 311, 395, 437–9, 443–5, 449 n.2, 531–2, 535–8, 540–2, 544–5, 555
 - enrollments 116, 225
 - estate 7–9, 13–14, 591, 593
 - groups 10–11, 14–15, 26–9, 33, 75, 122, 147, 184, 206, 209–10, 212, 220, 221 n.2, 222 n.3, 263, 282–4, 389, 409, 497, 543
 - impact 1 (*see also* student impact theory on HE)
 - as incipient elite and citizens 123
 - influencers 7
 - interest intermediation 10, 15, 21–4, 30, 185–6, 194, 198–200, 458, 461–4, 484, 491
 - leaders 4, 12, 16, 43, 49, 54–62, 85
 - mobilization 11, 29, 46
 - movement 7, 9, 18, 32, 43, 60, 62–3, 66, 69, 94
 - parliament 29, 43, 496, 506
 - part-time jobs 218
 - political behavior 10, 185
 - self-formation agency 11–12, 34 n.3
 - services 30, 205
 - voice 14–15, 52, 54–7, 59, 62, 75, 89
- Student Action Committee (SAC) 283, 286 n.2
- student activism 1–2, 9–10, 104, 123, 163, 176
 - African 147, 149
 - American (*see* American college student activism)
 - entrepreneurial 123
 - Estonia 445
 - Ghana 148
 - India 116
 - informal 149
 - Kenya 163–4, 174–6
 - Latin American 111
 - models of student activism 10
 - Oman 261, 273
 - Singapore 297–300
 - Sri Lanka 307, 309–11, 313–16, 320–2
- Student Advisory Council Regulatory Guide (SACRG) 264, 267–8, 270–1
- student advisory councils (SACs), Oman 260, 264, 274 n.4
 - autonomy 267–8
 - establishment of 266
 - literature review and conceptual framework 261–2
 - new legal provisions validating 266–8
 - organizational capabilities, similarities/differences 268–9
 - representation at HEIs' governance 269–73
- Student Affairs Office (SAO) 297
- student agency 8, 11–13, 98, 186–7, 190, 199, 283, 410
 - agentic orientations 12, 14
 - agentic possibilities 12
 - capabilities 12–13
 - student political agency 1–3, 10–15, 34, 34 n.3, 123–4, 384

- student self-formation agency 11–12, 34 n.3
- student associations. *See* student organizations
- student authority 9–11, 15–17, 34, 594, 596
 - democratic governance model 16
 - legitimacy 16
- student cadres 226, 230–7, 594. *See also* cadres' elections, student government, China
- Student Chamber of the Council of Higher Education Institutions (SK RVŠ) 428–9
 - advantages and challenges 433–4
 - national representation 431–3
- Student Council Alliance of the Philippines (SCAP) 198–9
- student elections 4, 20, 28, 31, 148, 168, 170–2, 241–2, 389–90, 454, 456–7, 468, 472, 476–8, 525, 536, 569
 - cadres' elections, SG 230–4
 - France (*see* French student elections)
 - JNU (*see* JNU elections)
 - as student representation 256–7
 - UCM 566–7
 - USC 233, 235–6
 - UWI Mona Guild Council 396–7
- student elites, China 237
- Student Engagement framework for Scotland* 584
- Student Federation of the University of Chile (FECH) 335
- student governance/governments 2, 8, 15–16, 21, 26–8, 44, 61, 85, 93–4, 96, 131, 594–6
 - autonomy and legitimacy of 32–4
 - key organizational capabilities 29–32
 - lack of legitimacy 20
 - logic of influence 29–30, 73–6, 78, 464, 477, 483, 518
 - logic of membership 29, 73–6, 78, 464, 477, 483, 518
 - as organizations 11
 - purposes of 28
 - regime-control 19
 - typologies of 32
- student government organizations, China 225, 236
 - autonomy of 226, 229–30, 237
 - CCP 226
 - decision-making process 226
 - dual nature of 227–8
 - student cadres 230–3, 236–7 (*see also* cadres' elections, student government, China)
- student guild (guild of students) 121, 394–5, 591. *See also* UWI Mona Guild Council
- student impact theory on HE 2, 13–15, 30, 34
 - college effects on students 13
 - propositions 14–15
- student agency and 11–13
- student leaders 4, 12, 16, 43, 49, 54–62, 85, 104–5, 122, 130, 140–1, 143, 148, 158, 161, 164–5, 167, 171–6, 199, 216, 260, 292–3, 296–8, 300, 303, 311, 314–15, 318–20, 322, 328, 336–7, 375, 495, 502, 575, 577, 582–3, 595–6
 - contemporary 293, 532
 - union funding, issues 141
 - university administrations 140, 143
 - and university management 142
 - victimization 137
- student mobilization 11, 29, 46, 103, 109, 124, 168, 171, 173, 186, 298, 348, 376, 450, 452, 454, 497, 533, 545, 569
 - politics, society, and 338–40
 - in post-dictatorship Chile 331–5
- student movement 7, 9, 18, 32, 43, 60, 62–3, 66, 69, 94, 161, 384, 458, 496–7
 - Aotearoa, New Zealand 207, 210, 212, 221
 - Chile (*see* Chilean student movement (1990–2020))
 - Colombia (*see* Colombian student movement)
 - Ghana 148, 158
 - Jamaica 396
 - Latin America 103–5, 365, 594
 - Māori 207
 - Myanmar 199
 - Romania 514–17, 526
 - Spain 551, 555
 - UK 576–80, 586
- studentocracy 428
- student organizations 1–3, 8, 14–16, 21–6, 30, 32, 44–5, 47, 49, 52–4, 57–8, 60–1, 66–7, 86, 88, 90–1, 166, 450, 576, 580, 586. *See also specific student organizations*
 - Aotearoa New Zealand 208–17
 - Cameroon, English-speaking 130, 134–5
 - Chile 329, 335–6
 - Estonia 437–8
 - French student representation 456–7, 460
 - Ghana 148, 157
 - Global Student Forum 34 n.4
 - JNU elections 251
 - institutions and 214
 - Kenya 162
 - legitimacy 32–3
 - lists of 224
 - national (*see* national student organizations (NSOs))
 - Pakistan 282–6
 - Romania 514, 519

- students at institutional level 164–6
 - transnational 28–9
 - UK 576
- student participation 21, 71, 90, 92, 96–7, 103, 108, 133, 137, 163, 468, 581
 - Belgium 424
 - in decolonization 161
 - within institutions 87–9
 - in national politics and contemporary issues 173–5
 - in quality assurance 25–6, 72–3
 - UCM (*see* University Complutense of Madrid (UCM) governance, student participation)
- Student Participation in Quality Scotland* (sparqs) 583
- student political changes, Africa
 - expansion/transformation/fragmentation, institutional and national student bodies 120–1
 - gender gap 125
 - on HE 124–5
 - macro-political system 126
 - national political environments and socio-economic development 119
 - reflection 125–6
 - and representation/organizations, character 122
 - size/nature and institutional composition 119–20
 - technology and changing repertoire 123–4
 - university governance, student representation in 122–3
- student politics 1–2, 4, 8, 31, 48, 84, 161, 182, 261, 482, 594
 - Africa 116–18
 - China 226
 - Estonia 438–9
 - European HE policy field 67–8
 - institutionalized/noninstitutionalized forms 34 n.2
 - Italy (*see* Italian student politics)
 - Kenya 162–4, 176
 - Myanmar 184
 - at national level 188
 - national politics and contemporary issues in 173–5
 - Pakistan 280–1
 - Romania 514–16, 524–6
 - Singapore 288–9
 - Southeast Asia (SEA) 183–5
 - Sri Lanka 307
 - system 32, 482, 487, 491, 505
 - UK 577–9
- Student Politics in Africa: Representation and Activism* (2016) 187
- student power
 - Kenya 162–3
 - liberal education movement 593
 - marketization of public higher education 593–4
 - quality assurance and accreditation 593
- student protest 22, 124–5, 133, 136, 173, 284, 290–1, 328, 384, 386, 429, 437, 449 n.5, 455, 515, 576, 581, 592–4
 - Chile 339, 347–51
 - Romania 517
 - student protest analysis 333
 - student protest repertoires 123–4
- student representation 1–2, 4, 8, 10, 15, 104, 122–3, 260, 262, 273, 594, 596
 - arguments against 19–20
 - arguments in favor 17–19
 - authoritarian and totalitarian regimes 18–19
 - citizenship and civic education 19
 - democratic right 17–18
 - effective decision-making and service delivery 18
 - in Chinese HE 225
 - Colombia 369–70
 - conditions 2, 10, 15
 - Czech Republic 427, 433–4
 - elections as 256–7
 - formal 149
 - France (*see* French student representation)
 - Ghana 148–9
 - within global civil society organizations 94–6, 98
 - in global education financing institutions 91–4, 98
 - in governance of HE 170–3
 - in higher education institutions 16, 20–1
 - in intergovernmental organizations 89–91, 98
 - Italy 502–3
 - Jamaica 392
 - legislation 16
 - on national level 16, 21–3
 - organizations in AMS 191–3
 - Pakistan 284–5
 - political responsiveness 89, 97
 - Post-Soviet Russia (*see* Post-Soviet Russia, student representation)
 - Romania 517–18
 - Singapore 293–4
 - Southeast Asia (SEA) 189–94
 - Sri Lanka 314–20
 - strategies of 9
 - in transnational governance of HE 24–5
 - and transnational representative student associations 105
 - UK 585–6

- UNAH 389–90
 - in university governance 263
- student representative councils (SRC) 150–1, 575
- student rights (rights of students) 2–3, 8–10, 12, 16, 34, 42, 45, 47, 61, 63, 138, 169, 171, 210, 347, 372, 374, 405, 418, 439, 452, 518, 522, 525, 537, 540, 554–6, 565, 569, 593
 - political 9, 280
 - roles and authority 7–9
 - violations of 33, 164, 167, 341 n.3, 376, 378, 390
 - voting 17, 20–1, 56–7, 69, 218, 271–2, 296, 316
- Students Demand Action 409
- Students' Federation of India (SFI) 242, 252, 257 n.1
- Students for a Fossil Free Future (S4F) 301–4
- Students' Organization of Nairobi University (SONU) 163–4, 168, 170, 173, 176–7
- Students Representative Council (SRC) 136, 238 n.5
- student syndicate/*syndicat étudiant* 488, 493 n.3
- student unions (SUs) 41, 43–4, 49, 53, 58, 61, 63, 66, 71, 73, 76, 87, 93, 96, 131, 227, 575–8, 585–6
 - and CYLCs 232
 - golden age 464
- sub-Saharan Africa 116, 120, 161
 - student unions 43–4
- Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) 262, 266
- Sunrise Movement 409
- Sustainable Development Goals (2030) 63
- Tallinn Technical Institute 437, 449 n.1, 449 n.4
- Tashkent Pact 281
- Tauria Pasifika (TP) 205
- Teacher Trainees Association of Ghana (TTAG) 150
- Te Tiriti o Waitangi/The Treaty of Waitangi (1840)* 209, 211
- Thamil Manavar Peravai/Tamil Students Union (TSU) 311
- theory of student agency 8, 11–13
- theory of student impact on HE. *See* student impact theory on HE
- Togo 63
- transnational HE governance 2, 4, 595–6
 - student representation in 23–4
- transnational student associations/organizations 1, 3, 28, 49, 86, 596
- Tumuaki Māori Collective 207
- Tuning Africa Project Advisory Group (TAPAG)
 - phases 42
- TurningPoint USA (TPUSA) 409
- typology of national student organizations 32, 182, 210–11, 220, 282–4, 482–6, 490–1
 - characteristics 187–8
 - ideal types 484
 - political process 485
 - representation in Southeast Asia 195–7
- typology of national systems of student
 - intermediation 21, 24, 83, 189–90, 485
 - formalized and informal 24, 28
- typology of national systems of student
 - representation 189–90, 484
 - clandenstine 22–3
 - corporatist 22–3, 87
 - neocorporatist 22, 32, 46, 67, 87–8
 - pluralist 22, 32–3, 67, 87–8
 - statist 22
- Uganda
 - Makerere University in 121, 124
 - multipartism on students 122
- UN Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD) 48
- UNE, Brazil 109
- UNEN, Nicaragua 109
- UNESCO-SEAMEO RIHED 183
- Unione degli Universitari (UDU), Italy 495, 498, 502–3, 505
- Unione Goliardica Italiana (UGI) 496
- Unione Nazionale Universitaria Rappresentativa Italiana (UNURI) 496, 505–6
- Union Nationale des Étudiants de France (UNEF) 450–4, 456, 458, 461–3, 470–1, 474–5, 477–8, 478 n.4, 488, 493 nn.2–3, 496
 - investment for students 464
 - orientation syndicale* 452
 - top-down model 459
 - trends 458–9
 - UNEF-ID 454–5
 - UNEF-Renouveau 453–4
- Union Nationale Inter-universitaire* (UNI) 453
- Union of Gold Coast Students (UGCS) 149
- Union of Romanian Students' Associations (UASR) 515
- Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) 357
- Union of the Romanian Communist Students' Associations (UASCR) 515
- United Arab Emirates (UAE) 265
- United Kingdom (UK) 60
 - Charity Law 578
 - Designated Quality Body (DQB) 586
 - Free Speech and Academic Freedom* 585
 - high-profile protests 575
 - National Union of Students (NUS) 53
 - student movement in literature 576–7
 - phases of development 580–5

- student politics, organization 577–9
 - student representation, issues 585–6
- United National Party (UNP), “White Paper on Education” 310
- United Nations Declaration of Indigenous Peoples* 211
- United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) 42–3, 48, 88, 89–90, 95–6, 108
 - General Education Monitoring (GEM) Report 90
 - Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education 49
 - Global Education Coalition 48
 - “Opening the Big Door” student declaration 48
 - SDG4 High Level Steering Committee (SDG4HLSC) 90
 - Sustainable Development Goal 4 “Quality Education” 89
 - World Higher Education Conference (WHEC, 2022) 61, 84, 87, 90
- United States National Student Association (USNSA) 84
- United States of America (USA) 85, 182. *See also*
 - American college student activism
 - Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) 84
 - state-level associations 595
- Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras (UNAH)
 - Legislative Decree No. 52 of June 28, 1958 386
 - Organic Law (1957) 385–6
 - Organic Law (2004) 385, 387–8
 - organizational characteristics 388–9
 - student representation in government 389–90
 - Transition Commission 388
 - University Council 387–8
- Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB) 418, 425, 425 n.2, 425 n.4. *See also* Bureau des Etudiant.e.s Administrateur.trices (BEA)
 - Academic Board (*Conseil Académique*) 423
 - Administrative Board (*Conseil d’Administration*) 423
 - and faculty levels 423–4
 - legal and statutory framework 419–22
 - Plenary Assembly (*Assemblée Plénière*) 423
- Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia 186
- University College of the Gold Coast. *See* University of Ghana
- University College of the West Indies (UCWI). *See* University of the West Indies (UWI), Mona
- University Complutense of Madrid (UCM)
 - governance 562, 573 n.9
 - Academic Senate 572
- Central Delegation of Students (CSD) 562–3, 566, 569–72, 573 n.8
- Quality Commission 566
- Statutes 563
- student participation 562, 565–6
 - evaluation of university quality 568
 - factors hindering 564–5
 - management of university services 567
 - protest/awareness-raising actions 569
 - student assembly 568–9
 - university electoral organization 567
 - university governance 563–4
 - university student associations 568
- student representative 566
- suffrage in university elections 567
- University Governing Council 566, 573 n.3
- University Residence Halls Advisory Council 566
- university democratization 104
- University Federation of Students of Cuba (FEU Cuba) 105, 110
- University of Alcalá 554
- University of Bamenda, Cameroon 130–1, 134–6
- University of Buea (UB) 130–1, 134–6, 138
- University of Buea Students Union (UBSU) 135, 136, 139
- University of Cape Town 124
- University of Dar es Salaam 118
- University of Ghana 147, 149
- University of Nairobi 161, 163–5, 167–70
- University of Nairobi Students Association (UNSA) 164, 165, 170, 172, 177
- University of Nanterre 470
- University of New Zealand 207
- University of Peradeniya 309
- University of San Carlos (USAC) 386
- University of Seville 554
- University of Singapore (Amendment) Act 291
- University of South Africa 120
- University of Tartu 437–8, 443, 449 n.1
- University of Tartu Student Union (UTSU) 445, 449 n.5
- University of the West Indies (UWI), Mona 392–4. *See also* UWI Mona Guild Council
 - Carnival 398
 - history 393–4
- University of Valladolid 550, 552
- University of Yaoundé 135, 136
- university student congress (USC) system 226, 236, 238 n.5
 - growing enhanced 233–5
 - student deputy election/representation 233, 235–6
 - tri-angle relationship 234

- University Students Association of Ghana (USAG) 150
- UWI Mona Guild Council 392, 394
and advocacy 400–1
and decision-making bodies 400
gender dynamics 399
Guild Fees 396, 399
legal and statutory framework 394–6
membership and elections 396–7
portfolios, property and funding 398–9
- Velvet Revolution 427, 429
- Victoria University of Wellington, horizontal model
209
- Vietnam, corporatist national systems 189, 194, 198
- Vietnam National Union of Students (VNUS) 198
- West African Students Union (WASU) 43, 133, 147,
149
- Western European Students Information Bureau
(WESIB) 68, 70, 75–6, 516
- Women Students Welfare/Mentorship Association
(WOSWA) 169–70, 173, 176
- World Bank Group (WBG) 88, 91–2, 96, 183
- The Worldwide Student Summit on Climate Action
and Biodiversity 87
- Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative (YSEALI)
194
- Youth in Spain Report* 550
- Zimbabwe National Student Union (ZINASU) 47

