

POLICY PAPER:

**MODEL OF ADEQUATE STUDENT
PARTICIPATION IN THE DECISION-MAKING
PROCESS AND IN QUALITY ASSURANCE, AT
SARAJEVO UNIVERSITY**

Prepared with the professional and financial support of

The National Fellowship Programme of the Open Society Fund,
Bosnia and Herzegovina

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Sarajevo, February 2005

We would like to express our gratitude to the Open Society Fund BiH which made this policy study possible through excellent public policy training, the National Fellowship program and ongoing professional support. Furthermore, we are grateful to our mentor, Leslie Pal, for crucial guidance throughout the drafting of this policy paper.

Our professionalism in and passion for this subject we owe to the extraordinary mind and soul of Leslie Aliason.

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Introduction

“In the Beginning was the student”¹! These are the words of Professor Gudmund Hernes, Director of UNESCO’s International Institute for Education Planning and former Norwegian Minister during the Bologna Follow-Up seminar in Oslo. Talking about the history of how universities are organized, he reminded the participants that “in Bologna some three quarters of a millennium ago, the first university was created which emulated the existing professional guilds and created a learning space where professors were called upon to teach these first university students who organized among themselves all necessary facilities and conditions”.²

We are aware that their role has increasingly changed since then. In practice, their role and potential in the process of quality control and assurance (QA) has been somewhat underestimated. Many Western universities have been working on improving their systems for quality assurance (QA) for decades, giving students a larger role within it. Being a partner within an educational institution offers an opportunity to shape the system, so as to reflect their needs. In many universities with a developed quality assurance culture and education, students are now seen as one of the key partners in ensuring quality in education. “Students are the ones for whom education has primarily been designed. They are the ones dealing with it day in day out over several years. This makes them real experts on QA; students know best what their (ideal) education and study environment should look like”.³ As such they have a true interest in the evaluation of higher education.

¹ Bologna Follow-Up Seminar, “Student Participation in Governance in Higher Education”, Oslo, Norway – June 12/14 2003, available at: <http://www.esib.org/documents/studentpart-generalreport.pdf>, 2/2

² Ibid.2/2

³ Friend-Pereira, J. C., Lutz, and K. Heerens, N. *European Student Handbook in Quality Assurance in Higher Education*, ESIB, 2002, <http://www.esib.org/projects/qap/QAhandbook/>

The issue of quality in higher education and the role of Higher Education Institutions in promoting and assuring quality are officially recognized within the Bologna process by the Berlin Communiqué⁴, by which ministers of European countries have committed themselves to “supporting the further development of higher education quality assurance at the institutional, national and European level”⁵. Various models of quality assurance in higher education exist throughout Europe and they differ in their formal setting, criteria and methodologies. The Berlin Communiqué emphasizes that primary responsibility for quality assurance in higher education lies with each institution itself, and national assurance systems should include:

- “a definition of the responsibilities of the bodies and institutions involved
- evaluation of programs or institutions, including internal assessment, external review, participation of students and publication of the results
- a system of accreditation, certification and comparable procedures
- international participation, co-operation and networking”⁶

Since the signing of the Bologna Declaration, the role of students in quality assurance has been a topic of discussion on the institutional, national and international level. At the Prague Ministerial Summit, student participation was identified as one of the most important topics for future discussion within the Bologna Process and the Norwegian Ministry took the initiative to organize a follow-up seminar. This is why more than 100 representatives from the Ministries, institutions, European organizations and student organizations gathered in Oslo in June 2003.⁷ All conclusions from this seminar

⁴ European University Association, “EUA’s Policy Position in the Context of the Berlin Communiqué”, April 14 2004. <http://www.eua.be>

⁵ Conference of Ministers responsible for Higher Education, “Realizing the European Higher Education Area”, Communiqué of the Conference of Ministers responsible for Higher Education in Berlin on 19 September 2003, available at <http://www.cags.ca/reunions/pdf/patricio.pdf>, 2/7

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Bologna Follow-Up Seminar, “Student Participation in Governance in Higher Education”, Oslo, Norway – 12/14 of June 2003, available at: http://www.see-educoop.net/education_in/pdf/bologna-seminar-oslo2-jun03-oth-enl-t02.pdf, 2/2.

underlined the need to strengthen the role of students within decision-making bodies, as well as the role of student associations.

Bosnia and Herzegovina, like many other former communist countries has neither a practice of effective student participation, nor a developed system of quality control. Although student unions function within departments and the university as a whole, the level of student activism through these unions, and student influence on the educational process is very limited; even non-existent. Although the Framework Law on Higher Education (not yet adopted) provides a framework for an alternative role for students - participation of students in decision-making bodies and student participation in the evaluation process within departments⁸ - it is still not clear how to implement it.

In this respect this study aims to develop an optimal model of student involvement in university governance and quality assurance at the University of Sarajevo. The aim of enhancing the role of students within the university is that it is likely to improve the quality of education within the University of Sarajevo, as well as meet the Bologna standards to which Sarajevo University is a signatory. In order to propose an effective model of student participation, this study will explore different models. The aim of the analysis is to identify good practices/procedures and explore how they would work if applied to the present structure and existing conditions of the University of Sarajevo. An optimal model for the University of Sarajevo is to be developed in order to ensure meaningful student participation under the present circumstances.

This paper is composed of four main sections, with a number of sub-sections. The first section elaborates on the basic concept of Quality Control and Assurance, its role within the Bologna Process, and the role given to students within this Process. A profile of Sarajevo University, with a special focus on formal provisions and actual student participation in decision-making processes and quality assurance, is elaborated on in the second section. Best practices in procedures ensuring effective student participation within different universities are presented in the third section of this paper, while the final

⁸ Council of Europe, *Framework Law on Higher Education, Bosnia and Herzegovina*. Final version of the Council of Europe, 18 December 2003, available at <http://www.unsa.ba>.

section outlines the necessary procedures for meaningful student participation at the Sarajevo University, under present circumstances.

Our research methodology combines the **content-analysis method** applied to various pieces of legislation, communiqués, universities' internal acts, self-evaluation reports of universities, external evaluation reports performed by recognized national and international organizations, interest groups and individual experts, student union leaflets, magazines etc.; the **focus-group method**, specifically performed for this research, using a sample of 18 students enrolled at Sarajevo University (from different departments and different years of study), with the aim of determining their perception of various aspects of how the university functions; and **interviews** conducted with the managing staff of student unions operating within Sarajevo University. In addition, a comparative approach was applied in analysing good procedures ensuring effective student participation within different universities.

1. Quality assurance and student participation

This section will explain what quality assurance is, what kind of role students are supposed to play within it, and university governance in general, in accordance with the Bologna Process. It will also outline what the benefits are where students are seen as partners in the educational process.

1.1. What is quality assurance?

The concept of controlling and assuring quality in higher education is understood differently in different political, social and economic settings; however a commonly-used approach recognizes a reasonably consistent set of principles:

- “Meeting public information needs, so that stakeholders have information about the quality and standards of learning and teaching at different Higher Education Institutions (HEI) and in different subjects
- Recognizing the primary responsibility of each HEI to have suitable internal mechanisms for monitoring and assuring quality

- Ensuring that HEIs are not burdened with administration, that the system is accountable and that maximum value is secured from the resources invested”⁹
- Making the desire for quality an overarching principle in every undertaking (creating a culture of quality)
- Ensuring an understanding of the needs of students and academics (stakeholders)
- Improving the appeal of the HEI through meeting social and economic trends and maintaining a high level of academic integration and superior quality¹⁰

Evaluating the quality of higher education can take different forms, and may focus on one or all of them, but generally evaluation concerns evaluating the programme, the courses, and/or the institution as a whole. Institutional self-evaluation is usually the core document for all discussions concerning quality assurance.

The quality of higher education is definitely at the heart of setting up a European Higher Education Area. During the Ministerial Conference in Berlin in 2003, the ministers committed themselves to supporting the further development of quality assurance at the institutional, national and European level. It has also been emphasized that “primary responsibility for quality assurance in higher education lies with each institution itself and this provides the basis for real accountability in the academic system within a national quality framework”¹¹.

1.2. The students’ role in quality assurance

Although the main result of a quality assurance system should be an increase in the quality of education within each institution for students, the role of students in creating and maintaining such a system has become one of the main areas of concern within the

⁹ Friend-Pereira, J. C., Lutz, and K. Heerens, N. *European Student Handbook in Quality Assurance in Higher Education*, ESIB, 2002, <http://www.esib.org/projects/qap/QAhandbook/>

¹⁰ Friend-Pereira, J. C., Lutz, and K. Heerens, N. *European Student Handbook in Quality Assurance in Higher Education*, ESIB, 2002, available at: <http://www.esib.org/projects/qap/QAhandbook/>

¹¹ Conference of Ministers responsible for Higher Education, “Realizing the European Higher Education Area”, Communiqué of the Conference of Ministers responsible for Higher Education in Berlin on 19 September 2003, available at <http://www.cags.ca/reunions/pdf/patricio.pdf>, 2/7.

Bologna Process over the last decade. As previously stated, the educational system has been designed for students, and as such they are potentially a huge resource in the quality assurance process.

From the signing of the Bologna Declaration (1999), the major principles of which are based on the opening up of educational systems and the mobility of teaching staff and professors, the role of students in quality assurance has been a topic of discussion on the institutional, national and international level. Although their role in quality assurance has not explicitly been mentioned in the Bologna Declaration, a range of Ministerial summits, as follow-up meetings to the Bologna Process that took place after the Bologna meeting, have increasingly underlined their role.

Only two years after the signing of the Bologna Declaration, a growing number of Ministers met again in Prague (2001), where they pointed out that building a European Higher Education Area is a precondition for enhancing the appeal and competitiveness of higher education institutions in Europe. They actually supported the idea that higher education should be considered a public good and is and will remain a public responsibility, and that students are full members of the higher education community. Leading on from this point they agreed to add three more lines of action, one of which was the **involvement of higher education institutions and students as essential partners in the Bologna Process**. They stressed that students should participate in and influence the organization and content of education at universities and other higher education institutions¹². At this summit, the presence of European National Student Unions (ESIB) was ensured. The need for a follow-up seminar on student participation was also raised.

This is the reason why more than 100 representatives from Ministries, relevant institutions, European organizations and student organizations gathered in June 2003 in Oslo at a seminar hosted by the Norwegian Royal Ministry for Education and Research,

¹² European Ministers in charge of Higher Education, "Towards the European Higher Education Area". Communiqué of the meeting of European Ministers in charge of Higher Education in Prague on 19 May 2001, available at http://www.bologna-berlin2003.de/pdf/Prague_communicuTheta.pdf, 2/4.

and where ESIB, the Norwegian National Union of Students (NSU and STL) and the Council of Europe, acted as co-organizers.¹³ Conclusions from this seminar were as follows:

- “Further involvement of students is needed at all levels of decision-making, this involvement should not only be legally permitted but actively encouraged by providing the means necessary for active participation both formally and informally.
- This encouragement could include mechanisms of recognition and certification of the experience, and of the competences and skills acquired by being a student representative. It should also require the active involvement of other stakeholders to mobilize student representatives, as well as encourage students to participate in elections and in the decision-making process
- Further involvement brings greater responsibility and demands more. Mechanisms of assuring accountability, transparency and the flow of information to other students should be prioritized.
- There is an ethical obligation to transmit knowledge gained so that an effective student representation exists independently of the rotation of individual student representatives.
- Student organizations should be supported in obtaining the financial, logistical and human resources necessary for creating equal participation. Informed and motivated students are often the driving force behind beneficial reforms instead of being a grain of sand in the clockwork.
- Universities that ensure student participation, and student organizations that organize this participation, must definitely be seen as schools of citizenship and agents of the development of society not only on the local level but also as part of an international responsibility for solidarity and co-operation. Where this is implemented, it will be society that emulates the environment in Higher

¹³ Bologna Follow-Up Seminar, “Student Participation in Governance in Higher Education”, Oslo, Norway – 12/14 June 2003, available at: http://www.see-educoop.net/education_in/pdf/bologna-seminar-oslo2-jun03-oth-enl-t02.pdf, 2/2.

Educations Institutions and not the other way around. Bearing this in mind, students cannot be considered simply as consumers or clients”.¹⁴

During the following Ministerial Summit in Berlin (2003), Ministers recognized the fundamental role played by Higher Education Institutions and student organizations in the development of the European Higher Education Area. The constructive participation of student organizations in the Bologna Process has once again been emphasized, as has the need to continuously include students from an early stage in further activities. Ministers noted that national legal frameworks for ensuring student participation are by in large in existence throughout the European Higher Education Area. Therefore they call on institutions and student organizations to identify ways of increasing actual student involvement in higher education governance¹⁵.

As can be seen over the last decade a lot has been done on the international level to strengthen the position of students in university governance. However, various surveys that were conducted to compare actual student involvement with legislation existing on the national and institutional level show significant discrepancies between norms and practice. This does however differ from one university to the next, with the culture of education playing a significant role.

1.3 Students as partners in the educational process

According to one of the Oslo conclusions, it is clearly stated that “students cannot be considered simply as consumers or clients”¹⁶. Although a partnership approach has been underlined as one of the key principles in all the above-mentioned documents, the

¹⁴ Bologna Follow-Up Seminar, “Student Participation in Governance in Higher Education”, Oslo, Norway – 12/14 June 2003, available at: http://www.see-educoop.net/education_in/pdf/bologna-seminar-oslo2-jun03-oth-enl-t02.pdf, 2/2.

¹⁵ Conference of Ministers responsible for Higher Education, “Realizing the European Higher Education Area”, Communiqué of the Conference of Ministers responsible for Higher Education in Berlin on 19 September 2003, available at <http://www.cags.ca/reunions/pdf/patricio.pdf>, 3/7.

¹⁶ Bologna Follow-Up Seminar, “Student Participation in Governance in Higher Education”, Oslo, Norway – 12/14 June 2003, available at: http://www.see-educoop.net/education_in/pdf/bologna-seminar-oslo2-jun03-oth-enl-t02.pdf, 2/2.

creation of such a system for some European universities will be easier than for others. The culture of education plays an important role in this process.

Feeling like a partner or a consumer within an educational system depends very much on the relationship between staff and students of the said institution. A number of new developments in higher education governance and higher education financing perceive students as consumers and have introduced a more market-driven approach, while there is also the concept that students are partners in the educational process. In reality however it may not be possible to reach a situation where student is only a partner or only consumer¹⁷.

Having students as partners means creating an interactive relationship based on mutual confidence and equal treatment. For students it also means greater responsibilities shared with other stakeholders, “the obligation to perceive the long-term perspective and the necessity to deal with information gathering and dissemination, and the transmission of knowledge within the student body”¹⁸.

During the Bologna Follow-up seminar in Oslo, it was noted that students have a sound knowledge of their higher education “environment” and this potential needs to be used. Being a partner gives them the chance to change the organization from the inside, motivating them but also making them accountable for the functioning of the university. It also makes higher education more democratic and contributes to the development of the social skills of the student involved¹⁹.

On the other hand, where students are only consumers their internal participation in decision-making processes and their motivation for involvement may be reduced. This can make students “more individualistic and narrow-minded”²⁰.

¹⁷ Bologna Follow-up Seminar. “Student participation in Governance in Higher Education”, General Report, Oslo, Norway, 12/14 of June 2003, <http://www.esib.org/documents/studentpart-generalreport.pdf>; 10/15.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

Both approaches to student involvement offer a significant role for student organizations and other bodies in which students are represented. In a partnership approach, student unions and programme/department representative structures can contribute a great deal to facilitating university governance. These structures should actually offer a means of communicating student opinions²¹.

One of the goals of higher education is to strengthen the development of active, critical and productive citizens. A democratic academic community and democratic student organizations are important places for developing these qualities. This is the reason why “a democratic, partnership-based relationship between the administration of Higher Education Institutions, staff, students and student organizations is hugely important in the creation of a democratic environment and is not just a system which administers all these organizations.”²² Higher education is more than just a product or service because it plays an important role in the general development of society.²³

2. The University of Sarajevo

The purpose of this section is profile the University of Sarajevo, taking into consideration the political context of BiH and its communist legacy concerning how the university functions, the university’s structure, its faculties/departments, quality assurance within the university, and the work of student unions. The focus will be on the students’ position within the current system, the formal provisions ensuring their representation within the system, and actual student participation.

This analysis will be based on: the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (2004), EUA’s Institutional Evaluation Report, as well as a Report on the Attitudes and Opinions

²¹ Ibid.

²² The National Union of Students in Europe, “Students’ Rights – Human Rights”, ESIB, available at www.esib.org/poliies/human_rights-student_rights.htm, 3/3.

²³ Bologna Follow-up Seminar. “Student participation in Governance in Higher Education”, General Report, Oslo, Norway, 12/14 June 2003, <http://www.esib.org/documents/studentpart-generalreport.pdf>; 10/15.

of Sarajevo University's Students, based on focus group research and produced by the MediaCentar Sarajevo specifically for this research. Moreover, interviews conducted with selected presidents of student unions within the University of Sarajevo, will also be used in this analysis.

2.1. Political context

Bosnia and Herzegovina is a decentralized state, composed of two entities: the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska. The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina is decentralized further, and subdivided into ten cantons, while the Republic of Srpska is more centralized and only subdivided into 6 regions. In addition, the Brcko area has a special status as a separate district²⁴. The formal division between the Federation of BiH and the Republika Srpska (RS) is paralleled in educational governance.²⁵

The State of Bosnia and Herzegovina has almost no authority in higher education - there is no Ministry of Education at the State level. Recently, a new department within the State Ministry of Public Affairs was created that deals with educational issues²⁶. Higher education in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina is under the authority of the Cantonal Ministry of Education and Science. Each canton is legally allowed to have its own Law on Higher Education²⁷. In Republika Srpska, the Ministry of Education of the Republika Srpska is responsible for educational matters within this entity.

Currently, there are eight universities in the country. Four of them were in existence before the recent war, the University of Sarajevo being the largest one. The establishment of new universities under extremely difficult social and economic

²⁴ University of Sarajevo, "Internal Self-Evaluation of the Current Situation", Sarajevo, January 2004, available at <http://www.unsa.ba>, pp. 4.

²⁵ Council of Europe, "Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Governance, Finance and Administration". Report by the Council of Europe for the World Bank, available at http://www.seerecon.org/bosnia/documents/education_report.pdf, pp. 3.

²⁶ University of Sarajevo, "Internal Self-Evaluation of the Current Situation", Sarajevo, January 2004, available at <http://www.unsa.ba>, pp. 4.

²⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 5.

conditions can be seen, as well, as a result of a high level of decentralization²⁸ but also owing to the political context of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The political situation, characterized by ongoing tensions between the three national parties, which constitute a majority in certain areas of the country, are best illustrated by a year-long procedure for the adoption of the new Higher Education Law for Bosnia and Herzegovina as a whole. Although it contains the necessary provisions for higher education reform, it was rejected on several occasions by certain political parties who proclaimed it as “contrary to the national interest” of respective national parties.

On the other hand, the major focus of the international community in Bosnia and Herzegovina over the last three years has been reform of the system of education in general, and higher education in particular. The international institutions that mostly deal with higher education reform today are the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Council of Europe (CoE).

Many delays that occurred in the legislative process had a significant impact on the World Bank’s financial support for Higher Education Reform. Namely, this institution conditioned its support on the passing of this law by 31 March 2004, and subsequently extended it to 7 May 2004 in order to reach the necessary political compromises. However, the draft law has still not yet been passed.

2.2. Legacy of former-Yugoslavia

The system of education in the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, including Bosnia and Herzegovina, was structured in such a way that a relatively high number of students were enrolled in higher education. Curricula and teaching methods reflected socialist values that stressed “conformity over critical thinking and analysis”²⁹.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Council of Europe, “Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Governance, Finance and Administration”. Report by the Council of Europe for the World Bank, available at http://www.seerecon.org/bosnia/documents/education_report.pdf, pp. 3.

The current system of education in Bosnia and Herzegovina is a product of the “self-management” concept of former-Yugoslavia, which reflects a mentality and a culture inherited from a Yugoslav past. Indeed, “the majority of universities in the region of the former-Yugoslavia are still marked by the self-management ideology of communist days – as expressed in particular by the legal independence of departments grouped around a weak central structure that acts simply as an arena for dialogue among equals”³⁰.

The main features of the system of higher education in former-Yugoslavia, which are still very much present today, are:

- the authoritative position of teaching staff in relation to students
- an ex cathedra way of teaching
- overburdening of the curriculum
- a lack of standardized practice in the education process
- an over-bureaucratic university administration
- very limited student mobility (between faculties and with other institutions)
- no tuition fees for regular students
- on average a long period of study

As a result of the above, there is limited student participation in the University of Sarajevo. This lack of student participation, however, is not only a weakness of the educational process, but continues to be a very important factor in the future of society as whole. In the years that have passed since the fall of communism a lack of active citizenship is one of the main obstacles for the country’s democratization.

2.3. The legal framework

Higher education in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina is decentralized, centered on the Cantonal level. The University of Sarajevo is funded by the Assembly of the Canton of Sarajevo and is governed by Cantonal Law on Higher Education (adopted in

³⁰ Ibid.

1998). This law does not contain any provisions that provide for a framework for educational reforms that must be implemented in accordance with the Bologna Process and Standards.

On the other hand, in September 2003, Bosnia and Herzegovina signed the Bologna Declaration, (along with many other international documents supporting the creation of a European Higher Education Area), consequently necessitating extensive reform of the existing educational system in BiH.

The Framework Law on Higher Education at the state level, which has been in the process of being adopted by the Parliament for quite some time, is based on “Bologna standards”. A draft of the law, prepared by the Council of Europe and a group of national experts, was proposed to the government after extensive consultation with Universities and other stakeholders. Adoption of the law will generate concrete and far-reaching institutional reforms of higher education. It would encourage fundamental changes in the educational process in accordance with the Bologna Process. This new legislation is considered by most decision-makers to be particularly important for fuller employment and more rapid integration into the European market³¹.

According to the Framework Law, the key reforms of higher education are as follows: integration of universities meaning strengthening the role of universities vis-à-vis departments, which are currently separate legal bodies with a large measure of autonomy; setting up a quality assurance system on the national, institutional and departmental level, and the standardization of the universities’ operations. According to this draft law, there is a provision for the establishment of the National Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation, as well as guidelines for the running of university and department quality assurance systems.

³¹ European University Association (EUA), Report presented to the University of Sarajevo, EUA Institutional Evaluation Program 2004, available at: <http://www.unsa.ba>, pp. 2.

Unfortunately since the law has not yet been passed, no National Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation has been established, or Quality Assurance systems developed within universities. However, due to the fact that Bosnia and Herzegovina is a signatory to numerous international legal documents in the field of higher education, certain obligations emerge from those. Moreover, activities in the field of higher education reform are the focus of the international community. In this respect, although national legislation for higher education has not yet been passed, a significant number of university officials are aware that activities should begin. One such example where practice precedes a legal regulation is the University of Sarajevo.

2.4. University structure

The University of Sarajevo is a large educational system with 1.640 teaching staffs, 893 other non-academic employees and approximately 47.000 students. The university constitutes a weak confederation of independent higher educational institutions (26 departments, academies and colleges) with an extremely weak central leadership, administrative structure and power. “At the present day, there are many power centers as there are departments and institutes – a structure of distributed interests that certainly does not facilitate streamlined accountability to society [*sic*]”.³²

The **Board of Directors/Trustees** is the central governing body of the university, and is composed of seven to nine members appointed by the Cantonal Government. The Cantonal Government appoints a **Supervisory Board of Directors**, composed of three members, and the main responsibility of the Supervisory Board is to control the university’s finances. **The Rectorate** is the central executive body of the university, composed of a Rector, three Vice-Rectors and a Secretary General and is a legal entity per se. The **Senate** is the highest academic body of the University of Sarajevo with its members representing each higher educational institution/department within the university, the Rector, Vice Rectors and a student representative.

2.4.1 Departments

³² Ibid.

All departments are independent legal entities which have full control over their management, administration, finances, and programs of education, courses and the teaching process. The quality of the educational process is the sole responsibility of each department, and thus differs greatly from one department to the next.

Internal regulation of the university and the departments do not cover the issue of Quality Assurance. Since standards in higher education have not yet been adopted, necessary conditions for quality assurance do not exist either on the national or the university level. Formal provisions do not specify standards and criteria of quality in higher education, and therefore particular procedures and mechanisms to ensure the quality of the educational processes do not exist either. Some departments such as the Department of Economics do apply some self-evaluation procedures that to some extent include student participation. But such participation is still more formal than outcome-oriented, as there are no clear follow-up procedures.

2.4.2 Student involvement in decision-making bodies and quality assurance

The aim of this section is to present the formal provisions for and actual practice of student representation in decision-making bodies and the quality assurance system within Sarajevo University³³.

2.4.2.1. Student participation in quality assurance

The aim of this sub-section is to present the formal provisions for and actual practice of student representation in controlling and assuring quality within Sarajevo University.

2.4.2.1.1. Formal provisions

The Statute of the University of Sarajevo sets out the university's responsibility towards its departments and other members of the university, the government of the Canton of Sarajevo and Bosnia and Herzegovina as a whole, without mentioning its responsibility

³³ Although student representation in decision-making bodies presupposes representation in a quality assurance system as well, such a system does not exist within Sarajevo University. Therefore, for the purpose of this policy paper, student representation in decision-making bodies and their representation in a quality assurance system, will be elaborated separately.

towards its students.³⁴ The same article prescribes assessment of programs and courses every four years in order to introduce innovations, but it does not explain the procedure and the goals of the assessments. It refers neither to any further procedures regarding evaluation of the quality of programs, courses, and teaching, nor to student involvement in the whole process³⁵.

Quality assurance policy in higher education at the University of Sarajevo should be based on the Law on Higher Education of the Canton of Sarajevo, and the university's Rules and Regulations; and Rules and Regulations on the departmental level. Since standards and norms in higher education do not exist, the basic preconditions for the establishment and development of a quality assurance system in higher education are not present within the University of Sarajevo. The university's authorities are aware of the need for a better-defined and improved quality assurance system for better quality management in higher education³⁶.

According to the Strategic Plan of Sarajevo University's Development (2003 – 2007) three areas have been identified as priorities for educational reform and development: *university integration, the Development of procedures for Quality Control and Assurance, and the Development of information technologies at the University of Sarajevo*³⁷.

Moreover, a significant part the Framework Law on Higher Education, which has still not been passed, deals with the regulation of procedures and the identification of actors (from the departmental, institutional and national level) for quality control and assurance. An active role for students in the process of evaluation within departments

³⁴ University of Sarajevo, Statute of the University of Sarajevo, Article 24, available at <http://www.unsa.ba>

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ University of Sarajevo, "Internal Self-Evaluation of the Current Situation", University of Sarajevo, January 2004, available at <http://www.unsa.ba>, pp. 21

³⁷ Strategic Plan of Sarajevo University, University of Sarajevo, 2004, available at <http://www.unsa.ba>

(Article 51)³⁸ is mentioned, but clear mechanisms for ensuring an active role in this process for students have not been identified.

Furthermore, priorities outlined in the Strategic Plan of the University of Sarajevo constitute significant preparation for the development of quality assurance procedures that have already been carried out. Within a project supported by the World Bank, a team was established to set up a quality assurance system at the University of Sarajevo. Two main objectives of the project were:

1. To set up of a Coordination office for the reform and introduction of a quality assurance system on the university level
2. To establish the necessary conditions and procedures for the introduction of the European Credit Transfer System on the university level

According to the draft document produced by this team, a strategy for quality assurance procedures was established. Within the strategy, it was stated that the position of students should be amended to a ‘partnered position’ in the whole educational process in accordance with the Bologna standards. In this respect, very advanced procedures have been set up in order to create an environment where the quality of education will be improved. A significant role has been given to students, such as the regular evaluation of professors and their teaching methodologies. It has been stated that at the end of each year students complete a questionnaire related to the quality of each professor’s tuition and the educational process as a whole. Data collected in this way brings to the academic staff a certain number of points needed for their academic promotion³⁹, but student representation on committees for quality assurance in the departments have not been regulated. Moreover, student participation at all other stages of the quality assurance process is not covered by this strategy.

³⁸ Council of Europe, *Framework Law on Higher Education, Bosnia and Herzegovina*. Final version of the Council of Europe, 18 December 2003, available at <http://www.unsa.ba>.

³⁹ University of Sarajevo, Draft document on Quality Assurance Procedures, available at: <http://www.unsa.ba>, pp. 19.

Quality control and assurance represent the core of academic reform. Therefore, where the level of academic standards of teaching has itself declined (curriculum delivery), involving students, teaching staff, courses and instruction, it is essential to improve existing quality assurance measures. New ones need to be introduced in the stages of quality management where they have not existed before⁴⁰.

2.4.2.1.2. *Actual participation*

Before an investigation into students' actual involvement in controlling and assuring quality at Sarajevo University, it is necessary to outline the main features of the learning process, that reflect quality of education.

EUA's report based on findings of the University's Self-evaluation Report states that "the lecturing process is typical mass education mainly centered on *ex cathedra* lecturing"⁴¹. The main features of such a lecturing system are "an overburdened curriculum, too theoretical an approach and a lack or even the non-existence of active student participation in the learning process"⁴² This type of university does not care about the learning process of the students. In such an institution exams are more of a tool for teacher's affirmation than a tool for the student's development.⁴³ Furthermore, there are no uniform examination procedures (95% of all exams are oral) which makes studying more frustrating for students. All of these facts contribute to an "extremely long period of study (on average 7-9 years) with a low rate of completion (12-15% in the first year of undergraduate studies)"⁴⁴.

A majority of teaching staff are in their 50s and 60s, being educated in former-Yugoslavia. They hold their positions (or move from one to another) for many years. Teaching methodologies are usually outdated, as a result of the non-existence of regulations which would push them to regularly update and amend their lectures and

⁴⁰ University of Sarajevo, "Internal Self-Evaluation of the Current Situation", University of Sarajevo, January 2004, available at <http://www.unsa.ba>; pp. 21

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

teaching methodologies. Overall study conditions have not been modified according to the need of contemporary studies “both in terms of the quality of teaching and contemporary teaching methodologies, as well as access to academic literature and electronic media”⁴⁵. In addition there is no developed practice of modern mentoring, where students are stimulated to build up and value independent and creative work with involvement in research activities and projects⁴⁶.

Since a system for quality assurance has not yet been established, quality assurance committees in the departments do not exist either. Within the team for the establishment of the procedures for a quality assurance system at Sarajevo University, there are two student representatives, but how they were elected for team membership is very unclear. Moreover, none of the Presidents from the student unions who were interviewed knew the student representatives who were selected for the evaluation team⁴⁷. On the other hand, student participation in the evaluation of professors, courses, and institutions is very rare. Such a tradition at Sarajevo University does not exist. But even where it does in fact exist, it is more formal than outcome-oriented, as there are no clear follow-up procedures. In 2003, the Student Union of the University of Sarajevo conducted a student evaluation of teaching staff in each department within the university. However, although the evaluation results were presented on the union’s web site there was no follow-up action based on the evaluation results.

This argumentation has been clearly underlined by students’ perceptions. They claim that they don’t know what happened with the questionnaires they completed, or what the purpose of the questionnaires was. The responses of students reflect a general lack of knowledge among students on what quality assurance actually is, and what their rights are within the educational system⁴⁸. None of the presidents of the student unions

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Abaspahic, Haris, Interviews conducted with the managing staff of Sarajevo University’s Student Unions, October 2004.

⁴⁸ Media Center, “Model of adequate student involvement in quality control and assurance at the University of Sarajevo”, MediaCentar, October 2004, pp. 24.

that were interviewed knew what a quality assurance system in higher education meant either⁴⁹.

A view expressed by one of the students about what quality assurance is, actually illustrates the overall situation in the university:

“Maybe something similar to what happens in Europe where students are not the only ones being assessed, but professors are as well, with the aim of taking mutual control on a regular basis. But I think this will be difficult. Firstly because there is no student association because there is no awareness about students’ rights, and secondly because we are in a post-communist transition, where many of us are still afraid after a lecture to ask (when the professor asks) are there any questions? Everybody is silent, though we certainly do have questions⁵⁰.”

2.4.2.2 Student participation in decision-making bodies

This section aims to present the formal provisions for, as well actual student participation in decision-making bodies within Sarajevo University.

2.4.2.2.1 Formal provisions

Amongst numerous advancements that The Framework Law on Higher Education contains (still in the process of being adopted), a framework for an alternative role for students - student participation in decision-making bodies (Article 13, 30) - is provided⁵¹. As mentioned above, student representation has not been guaranteed on The Board of Directors/Trustees, as the central governing body of the university. The only body on the university level where the presence of one student representative is guaranteed (delegated by the Student Union of the University of Sarajevo) is in the university’s Senate. The Student representative in the Senate does not have a right to vote.

⁴⁹ Abasphic, Haris Interviews conducted with the managing staff of Sarajevo University’s Student Unions, October 2004.

⁵⁰ Media Center, “Model of adequate student involvement in quality control and assurance at the University of Sarajevo”, MediaCentar, October 2004, pp. 24.

⁵¹ Council of Europe, *Framework Law on Higher Education, Bosnia and Herzegovina*. Final version of the Council of Europe, 18 December 2003, available at <http://www.unsa.ba>.

Student Representatives participate in the work of the departments' Scientific Councils in a number of the university's departments. The scope of formal student participation in these Councils varies from department to department (in a few departments there are several student representatives participating in the work of the Scientific Council with the right to vote, in others there is only one student representative who participates in the work of the council with or without the right to vote, while in some departments no students participate in the work of the council at all). The scope of formal student participation in the work of Scientific Councils is not uniform and decisions related to this issue are made by Scientific Councils and Deans of the departments. There are no common standards, rules and regulations that define the scope and mechanisms for guaranteeing adequate student participation in the process of decision-making within departments.

2.4.2.2.2 Actual participation

The student union representatives that were interviewed unanimously stated that the influence of student representatives in Scientific Councils is completely insignificant⁵². Fragmentation of the student body, corresponding to the dispersion of departments (and their autonomy), makes it very difficult for students to express common views that could influence academic affairs and current practices at university level. Over the last few years the university leadership has offered greater visibility to students. For the former Rector Prof. Boris Tihi, it is obvious that any change will necessitate a commitment to a different future from those who will benefit from it; the younger generation. Students, however, have no resources to develop their own common action: they depend on the resources granted to their associations by the departments - resources used to support student welfare in the teaching units. In political terms, and according to institutional by-laws, student status at present is that of "a silent observer of the internal decision-making process"⁵³.

⁵² Abaspahic, Haris, Interviews conducted with the managing staff of Sarajevo University's Student Unions, October 2004.

⁵³ University of Sarajevo, "Internal Self-Evaluation of the Current Situation", University of Sarajevo, January, 2004, available at <http://www.unsa.ba>; pp. 21.

The surveys based on focus-groups conducted specifically for this policy study supports this argument. The results show that students are not completely, or are not sufficiently familiar with the mechanisms of departments and how the university functions⁵⁴. According to the results of the survey, student representatives can participate in the sessions of departments' managing bodies, and students voices may be heard, but the question is how much is it a matter of form, and how much can they substantially influence important decisions?⁵⁵ This is well expressed by the words of a student in the department of Law:

“In the Law department, there is student representation on the Academic Council, where it is actually very important to have a voice. Before, we used to have a voice. Now, we do not have one any more but we have the right to be present. Thus, the representative of our organization is present on the Academic Council. Sometimes, a presence is permitted for the whole session, sometimes not. Depending on the importance of the session, professors themselves decide on it.”⁵⁶

The results of the EUA's Report show that students are reluctant to express opinions that might upset the academic establishment. Reasons for this may be rooted in a fear that the association could lose its official support or, on a more personal level, rebellious opinions could result in bad exam results or even physical threats. In other words, student participation in democratic institutional decision-making is not real so long as their involvement depends on the Dean's good will⁵⁷. All this contributes to the overall de-motivation of students who are missing out on minimal study requirements: proper learning conditions and participation in the development of their institution⁵⁸.

2.4.3. Student organizations

⁵⁴ Media Center, “Model of adequate student involvement in quality control and assurance at the University of Sarajevo”, MediaCentar, October 2004, pp. 21.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Media Center, “Model of adequate student involvement in quality control and assurance at the University of Sarajevo”, MediaCentar, October 2004, pp. 21.

⁵⁷ Report presented to the University of Sarajevo, EUA's Institutional Evaluation Programme 2004, available at <http://www.unsa.ba>; pp. 5 - 6

⁵⁸ European University Association (EUA), Report presented to the University of Sarajevo, EUA's Institutional Evaluation Programme 2004, available at: <http://www.unsa.ba>. pp. 5 – 6.

The purpose of this section is to explore the self-organization of students. This will be done through the exploration of formal provisions related to student organizations on the one hand, and actual student involvement and the level of development of student organizations on the other.

2.4.3.1 Formal provisions

Students of the University of Sarajevo are organized in the Student Union of Sarajevo University (USUS), as well as various student associations in departments, colleges and academies. Today, USUS comprises 25 departments' unions and other specialized student associations. The total number of students represented by USUS from the current 2004/2005 academic year is over 50.000⁵⁹. The Student Union of the University of Sarajevo is registered as a "citizen's association, a non-governmental, impartial network of departments' student organizations, colleges and academies on the territory of the Canton of Sarajevo"⁶⁰. After the signing of the Dayton Peace Accord, the student union ceased to function due to a lack of legal regulations. Formal registration of the union, as a citizen's association, and in accordance with the Law on Associations and Foundations, took place in 2000. 2002 was a turning point in the union's structuring, when the program's aims and tasks, as well as working methodology, were defined⁶¹.

Currently, in Bosnia and Herzegovina there is no law which regulates student self-organization. As a result there are huge problems for the student population, with no systematic method of electing student representatives, student manipulation, terminating of the work of departments' unions etc⁶². A lot still needs to be done, not least the passing of a law on student self-organization, but also an active follow-up to and participation in the process of higher education reform⁶³. As part of the campaign for the introduction of a law on student self-organization, activists of the student union drafted a proposal for the law, which has been submitted to the Cantonal Ministry of Education and Science, and which still has the status of a proposal. According to Article 3 of the proposed law, "...a

⁵⁹ University of Sarajevo Union of Students, USUS leaflet, pp. 4.

⁶⁰ Ibid., pp.3.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid, pp.4.

⁶³ Ibid.

member of the student union is any undergraduate student enrolled at the University of Sarajevo”⁶⁴. Article 4, further stipulates “...only one student union may be registered/exist in a higher education institution”.⁶⁵

Section VII of the draft law (Articles 14- 20) deals with the bodies of the student union, while section IX (Articles 27 – 35) explains the election procedure for student bodies. The rights and obligations of student union members are laid out in section VIII. Within this section, Article 21 stipulates “the rights and obligations of the student union are to represent and advocate for the interests of its members in relation to others, and to be concerned with the position of students in the process of higher education”⁶⁶. Article 26 is of key importance, as it stipulates that student representatives in university bodies have a right to participate in the decision-making process on all issues, within the authority of the relevant body, with a veto right on decisions which directly affect students⁶⁷.

The financing of the union should be regulated (according to the proposed law) in the following way: student organizations are funded by the Canton of Sarajevo, from the university’s budget, to the tune of 5% of the total amount of tuition fees collected during the academic year. The student organization further obtains funds to the tune of 5% of funds collected from temporary employment contracts of students. Regular membership fees, gifts and donations from legal bodies and individuals are also part of the student union’s budget (Article 36)⁶⁸.

2.4.3.2. Existing student organizations

Student participation in student unions at Sarajevo University is not satisfactory, since these organizations exist as remnants of the former system and do not correspond to current needs. Moreover, a majority of existing organizations reflect a very closed

⁶⁴ Ibid, pp.6.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid, pp.10.

⁶⁷ Ibid, pp.11.

⁶⁸ Ibid, pp.13.

“society” that promotes the goals of certain groups of people. Usually, their interests and objectives do not correspond to those of the rest of the student population.⁶⁹

The departmental student organizations are extremely fragmented as a result of the decentralization of departments. Therefore, it is very difficult to express common views and exert influence in a substantive way. Depending on the university authorities that provide them with basic financial support, departments are very limited in their capacity to exert influence.⁷⁰ The overall level of support to the departments’ student unions provided by departmental bodies and Deans is unsatisfactory and varies hugely from one department to another within the university. Some of the departments’ authorities ignore the work and existence of the student unions, with the effect that some unions were not able to survive (for example: The Union of Students of the Music Academy ceased to exist in 2003, the Union of Students of the Architecture Department do not perform any program activities and do not participate in the work of any departmental body, etc).⁷¹ The financial support of departments to student unions also varies from one department to another (there are no rules, regulations nor standardized procedures covering departmental support to their student unions). In some cases, departments provide financial support to their unions on a regular (annual) basis, by covering their basic operational expenses. Other departments provide very limited financial support upon the request of the union. Other university departments do not financially support their student unions at all⁷².

The student union, which operates on the university level is a well-structured organization with a clear vision, mission, internal organization etc. The Student Union of Sarajevo University is the most senior of all student organizations but their members are mainly from departmental students unions, which are weak institutions without a clear internal structure and without transparent mechanisms for identification of student needs

⁶⁹ European University Association (EUA), Report presented to the University of Sarajevo, EUA Institutional Evaluation Program 2004, available at: <http://www.unsa.ba>, pp. 5 – 6.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Abasphic, Haris, Interviews conducted with the managing staff of Sarajevo University’s Student Unions, October 2004.

⁷² Ibid.

nor representation mechanisms⁷³. All student union presidents who were interviewed stated that their organizations do not have developed mechanisms for selecting student representatives in their governing bodies, furthermore there are no guidelines on the internal organizational of their unions, and there are no mechanisms for identifying student interests that they should be representing⁷⁴.

According to the results obtained from the focus-group survey, the reason why students are not more involved in decision-making process is that they are not properly self-organized, at least not to the extent that they are able to formulate their requests in a proper way and present these requests through established mechanisms. According to the survey, participants' lack of interest in these issues has led to a situation where student associations virtually no longer exist nor have any influence. Moreover, a lack of knowledge about their rights (owing to a lack of interest) and about the principles of how the educational system functions, has resulted in the inability of students to articulate opinions that go further than simply fighting for so-called "social" exam⁷⁵ dates⁷⁶. These are the only occasions during the academic year when the public is aware that student unions exist. When we talk about these social exam dates, it seems that this fight is actually the result of a very spontaneous process – a widespread dissatisfaction of students expressed by radical acts such as threatening to block roads etc⁷⁷. It seems that all other union activities are mostly related to the improvement of the social conditions of studying, discounts for public transport, student accommodation etc., which would in some more developed countries, be considered as an indication that students are generally satisfied with the quality of education.

Although by enrolling in the university the student automatically becomes a member of the union, the results of the survey showed a great deal of uncertainty among participants about membership, a lack of knowledge about election procedures in

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ The term "social exam" means an extra term for passing the exam at the end of the academic year, usually set up by university governance under pressure from student unions.

⁷⁶ Media Center, "Model of adequate student involvement in quality control and assurance at the University of Sarajevo, MediaCenter, October 2004, pp. 22.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

managing bodies, the kind of managing bodies that exist within the university, etc.⁷⁸ Moreover, some of the existing unions are shaped by the personal interests of the students who are leading them, which often results in resistance towards such a method of self-organization⁷⁹. As has been seen, the proposed draft law contains some very advanced provisions such as election procedures, the structure of unions, etc., which the union lacks at the moment and which therefore has many obstacles ahead of it. On the other hand, the provision which states that only one student union can exist at the level of a higher education institution automatically limits the choice of students for their activism in the event of dissatisfaction with the union's work. It also hampers competitiveness among student unions, which might motivate them to improve their operations. Taking into consideration current dissatisfaction with or disinterest in the union's work, a lot has to be done in order to create conditions for mobilizing students to participate in the work of the union, and thus conditions for proper representation of their interests in the university's body.

2.5. Concluding remarks

It has been shown that the position of students within the learning and governance process is far from adequate. Most notable is student apathy and a lack of interest in taking part in governance processes and procedures and in the work of student organizations. All this results in students being unproductive critics, capable only of complaining about the current situation, but without the real will or knowledge of how to collaborate with academic staff. The present situation which offers enough points for criticism, is characterized by teachers' conservative attitudes towards students, and students' lack of motivation to do anything, and has led to the creation of an unproductive and frustrating atmosphere where it is not possible to expect either the growth of the university or the development of society as whole⁸⁰. All these factors reflect the necessity for some kind of guidelines for possible change.

⁷⁸ Ibid, pp. 23.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ University of Sarajevo, "Internal Self-Evaluation of the Current Situation", University of Sarajevo, available at <http://www.unsa.ba>; pp. 15.

3. Student participation in higher education; best practices

3.1. Formal provisions for student participation in higher education governance, according to national legislation

The General Report on the Bologna Follow-Up Seminar “Student Participation in Governance in Higher Education” (General Report), covers several European best practices related to student participation in higher education, and shows that “considerable differences exist within the legal framework that supports student participation”.⁸¹ As stated in the General Report, “in some of the examples given, in a small number of articles the legislation covers full provisions for student participation on different levels of governance (examples of Austria and Hungary) or just on the national level (Italy).”⁸² In some countries in post-communist transition, such as Romania and Serbia, student organisations register themselves simply as NGOs in order to gain greater strength outside a highly politicized higher education “establishment”.⁸³ In most successful cases of increased influence, such as in Sweden, Ireland and Finland, students have even succeeded in achieving legislative change such as in the regulation of national advisory boards.⁸⁴

The report also demonstrates that “the institutional level is generally better provided for in terms of legislation than the national level, be it by rule of law or by internal institutional settings”.⁸⁵

3.2. Actual student participation

Membership in and legitimisation of student organisations also differs from one European country to another. The General Report demonstrates that “some have compulsory membership for individual students (Sweden, Finland, and Austria), others for their local councils or organisations (Hungary, Czech Republic and Macedonia)”.

⁸¹ Bologna Follow-Up Seminar “Student Participation in Governance in Higher Education”, General Report, Oslo, Norway – 12/14 June 2003.

⁸² Ibid, pp. 7.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

“Others have voluntary membership in local councils and organisations (Ireland, Serbia, Germany and Romania)”.⁸⁶ The direct involvement of students or student organisations through a political party is treated differently by several student organisations depending on the historic and political context of the country concerned. “They are visible and accepted in Austria and Finland and rejected in countries like Serbia, for example”, it is claimed in the General Report.

Furthermore, differences exist in the “modus operandi” of student organisations which in some cases focus their work only on student issues whilst others recognize and focus on their role in society as a whole.⁸⁷ Within those national student organisations, the training of students as a proactive force is a high priority, understood “as a way to improve the ‘performance’ of student participation at all levels (as the survey showed in Ireland, Czech Republic, Hungary and Serbia)”.⁸⁸

3.3. Case studies of student participation in higher education in Europe: Sweden, Germany, and Hungary

This paper utilizes cases studies of models of best practices of student participation in higher education in three European countries: Sweden, Germany and Hungary. Although there are many other examples of good practice in Europe, these three cases have been chosen to illustrate best practices of student participation in three areas:

1. A high level of student participation in the quality assurance system of higher education both on the national and institutional level as shown by the example of Sweden
2. A high level of student participation and influence in decision-making bodies of higher education institutions as shown by the example of Germany, and
3. A high degree of student organization as a precondition for influencing decision-making processes in higher education as well as its quality

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid, pp. 8.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

This is not to say that each case is lacking or excluding the other two areas. On the contrary, where there is a highly efficient system of student participation in higher education, all three areas are interlinked and interdependent. Therefore, the case of Hungary demonstrates well the necessity of well-organized and proactive student organizations in post-communist countries in which higher education is in transition from a strong “traditionally communist” higher education system to one that is compatible with the European Higher Education Area. Well-organized and proactive student organizations in Hungary are seen as a precondition for gaining more influence for students over legislation and a quality assurance system in higher education. The case of Germany represents a highly developed model of student representation in the decision-making bodies of higher education institutions, in which emphasis is given to representation of students in university governing bodies as necessary to counterbalance other very important higher education stakeholders (i.e. professors and administrative staff). The case of Sweden illustrates well that this highly developed system of student participation at all levels, and especially where students meaningfully influence quality assurance in higher education, was set as a condition by legal framework securing student participation in decision-making bodies and a high degree of student organization.

3.3.1. Student participation in quality assurance in higher education: case study of Sweden

The Swedish model represents one of the best models of student participation and influence in assuring quality in higher education. However, only through a legislative framework guaranteeing student representation in legislative bodies (both national and institutional), as well as with the aid of mechanisms to guarantee the existence of student organizations and associations, could this model become one of the most progressive in establishing a system and a culture in which students are not seen as consumers but as creators of higher education.

3.3.1.1. Student organizations

A survey of student involvement in the Nordic countries illustrates that the Swedish National Union of Students (SFS), is an association of about 100 student unions in universities and university colleges in Sweden representing approximately 240,000 students.⁸⁹ “Students are required by law to be members of the local student union of their university”.⁹⁰ However, it is optional for the local union to be a member of SFS. As W. Froestad and P. Bakken demonstrate in their study, “SFS protects the Swedish students’ interests in social welfare and educational issues and represents Swedish students on a national and international level. SFS aims to look after common concerns among students and represent Swedish students in relation to the government and the authorities in education, social affairs, the labor market and international affairs”.⁹¹

SFS has three main purposes:

1. To be the voice of the Swedish students
2. To be a source of knowledge in educational matters, and
3. To be a meeting place for students⁹²

A general assembly of representatives of local student unions from all over Sweden meets once a year to decide on different issues concerning students. The general assembly elects a board of 23 persons with a mandate of one year. The board meets once every month. The general assembly also elects one president and two vice-presidents, while the board elects the PhD ombudsman and the International Officer. “The president, two vice presidents, PhD ombudsman, international officer and the secretary general make up the executive committee which is responsible for everyday tasks carried out by a team of 8 persons”.⁹³

“Student representatives in student unions at the level of higher education institutions are usually directly elected; there are some examples where they are

⁸⁹ Froestad, W. and Bakken, P. (ed.) *Student Involvement in Quality Assessments of Higher Education in the Nordic Countries*. Nordic Quality Assurance Network in Higher Education, Korkeakoulujen arviointineuvosto, Helsinki, 2004, pp. 23.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

nominated but even in these instances they are usually appointed by the student organisation”.⁹⁴ According to Swedish Law all students at the university have to pay a membership fee to the student union. As the example of the University of Stockholm demonstrates, all members have the right to vote in the annual election of the student union’s board.⁹⁵ “The student union’s main mission is to secure student influence over their own education”.⁹⁶

Student unions and student representatives in the universities are included in higher education governance, and like other Nordic countries play a significant role in quality assurance in higher education institutions.

3.3.1.2. Students’ formal rights to participate in higher education governance

Swedish law and consequently legislation on higher education institutions in Sweden, provide for strong formal rights for student participation in higher education governance. Students are represented on several levels and in different ways, as is illustrated in Annika Persson’s report on student participation in Sweden:

National level

- The board of the National Agency for Higher Education
- The Council for the Renewal of Higher Education
- Student delegates are entitled to financial remuneration⁹⁷

Institutional level

- Institutional, faculty and departmental levels
- The right to be represented within all decision-making and advisory bodies that are of importance for education and conditions for students

⁹⁴ Bologna Follow-Up Seminar “Student Participation in Governance in Higher Education”, General Report, Oslo, Norway – 12/14 June 2003.

⁹⁵ University of Stockholm web site: <http://www.su.se/english/exchange/studentunion.php3>

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Parsson, A. *Student participation Sweden*. General Report Bologna Follow-Up Seminar “Student Participation in Governance in Higher Education” Oslo, Norway – 12/14 June 2003.

- A minimum number of seats on the board of the institution (equal to the number of teachers)
- The right to vote on all issues
- Quality evaluation of courses and programmes
- Statement in annual financial report
- Compulsory membership in a student union⁹⁸

3.3.1.3. Informal participation of students

National level

- Contact with the Ministry
- Working groups, committees and proposals for consideration
- National group on the Bologna Process
- Debate over the annual budget
- Representation in all national bodies of relevance to higher education and conditions for students
- Contact with the Parliament
- Contact with the National Rectors' Conference
- Quality evaluation at national level⁹⁹

Institutional level

- Most institutions have a policy on student participation
- Participation in all advisory bodies
- Continuous dialogue between the institutional management (rector etc)/administration and the student union
- Continuous dialogue between teachers and students¹⁰⁰

3.3.1.4. Students' formal rights to participate in a quality assurance system

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

The quality assurance system of higher education in Sweden underwent a major change in conception and structure in 1992, as the focus and responsibility for higher education evaluation were shifted to different higher education institutions. Finally, the students “were seen as the most important actor in higher education governance and quality assurance of higher education”.¹⁰¹ It was mainly student interest that guided priorities for the institutions. “The basic idea for quality evaluation is; what have students actually learned by the time they leave?”¹⁰²

Students are granted rights to participate in assuring quality in higher education by national acts: the Higher Education Act and Higher Education Ordinance. The acts themselves emphasize that the quality of higher education is “the responsibility of staff and students alike”.¹⁰³ “Participatory rights mean that students can appoint a representative in all decisions-making bodies, as well as in groups preparing decisions.” Centrally-placed student representatives are appointed by student unions, while the students in departments appoint their representatives to the departmental board.¹⁰⁴

At the same time the higher education institution is obliged to provide an opportunity for students to internally present their experiences and opinions on the evaluation of courses and the institution as a whole. The results of course evaluations are made public as well as any subsequent actions based on the course evaluations.¹⁰⁵

Furthermore, students are also included in the external panels evaluating higher education institutions:

“The institutions may propose evaluators and also propose students, but the national Agency decides on the composition of the expert panel. Whereas the professionals recommended cannot be from the institution’s own staff,

¹⁰¹ Friend-Pereira, J. C., Lutz, and K. Heerens, N. *European Student Handbook in Quality Assurance in Higher Education*, ESIB, 2002, pp. 34.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Froestad W. and Bakken, P., *Student Involvement in Quality Assessments of Higher Education in the Nordic Countries*. Nordic Quality Assurance Network in Higher Education, Korkeakoulujen arviointineuvosto, Helsinki, 2004, pp.21.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, pp.21.

institutions may (and usually do) put forward their own students. However, institutions are instructed to check the selected names with the local student organization. Obviously, a student will never take part in the evaluation of his/her own institution. Students are nominated by the national student organization when they are part of audit panels”.¹⁰⁶

Selection criteria for students nominated for the external panels include: good knowledge of the education system, good knowledge of evaluations, and experience of decision-making bodies or student organizations. “In audits and institutional evaluations, experience from student organizations and decision-making bodies at the institutional level is essential. Very often, the students selected have considerable experience from boards, other decision-making bodies and student organizations”.¹⁰⁷

In sum, student participation in higher education is very positive in Sweden. “There is a high ambition to include students in higher education governance as competent and equal partners. There is both a fairly strong formal student participation and strong informal participation with an emphasis on openness, dissemination of information and a culture of listening and compromise.”¹⁰⁸ However, very low student turn-out for student union elections is noticeable in Sweden, as in many other European countries.

Despite the differences in approaches, the Nordic experiences of involving students in quality assurance practices have been very progressive. “Student participation adds to the relevance and legitimacy of the evaluations and it strengthens their role as equal members in the academic community. Also, the challenges of student participation cover questions about their representativeness, a constant need to train new students for evaluation tasks and their motivation to participate in self-evaluations”.¹⁰⁹ Regardless,

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, pp. 42.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Friend-Pereira, J. C., Lutz, and K. Heerens, N. *European Student Handbook in Quality Assurance in Higher Education*, ESIB, 2002, pp. 35.

¹⁰⁹ Froestad W. and Bakken, P., *Student Involvement in Quality Assessments of Higher Education in the Nordic Countries*. Nordic Quality Assurance Network in Higher Education, Korkeakoulujen arviointineuvosto, Helsinki, 2004, pp. 4.

Sweden demonstrates that students should and may be valuable partners and creators of high quality post-secondary education.

3.3.2. *Student participation in higher education governance: Germany*

3.3.2.1. *Students' formal rights to participate in higher education governance*

According to the principle of cultural sovereignty (*Kulturhoheit*) in Germany, the reconstruction of the higher education system after the Second World War was a matter for the Länder.¹¹⁰ Their policy on higher education was coordinated by the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany, whereas the Federal Government initially had no influence on its development.¹¹¹ “The expansion of higher education made national planning more and more imperative; while financial requirements began to increase at a very high rate for a single Lander. Consequently, the Federal Government became increasingly involved in matters of higher education. In 1969 the constitution or Basic Law (*Grundgesetz* - R1) of the Federal Republic of Germany was amended to take this development into account.”¹¹² Under articles 91a and 91b of the Basic Law, the development of higher education institutions, as well as educational planning and research activities, are now among the *joint tasks* of the Federal Government and the Länder.¹¹³ “The Federal Government was also thereby empowered to enact framework legislation concerning 139 general principles of higher education. This led to the passing of the *Hochschulrahmengesetz*, or Framework Act for Higher Education, in 1976”.¹¹⁴

A widespread debate over reform had a strong influence on the development of higher education in the 1960s and 1970s in Germany. Among other things, “it concerned the organization of university studies (structure of basic and advanced sections of studies, intermediate examinations, limits on the duration of study programs, practical orientation,

¹¹⁰ The Education System in the Federal Republic of Germany 2002: A description of responsibilities, structures and developments in educational policy for the exchange of information in Europe - Excerpt -, pp. 2.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

and the like), the constitutions of higher education institutions, and above all, the participation of students and research assistants along with professors in the university's administration".¹¹⁵

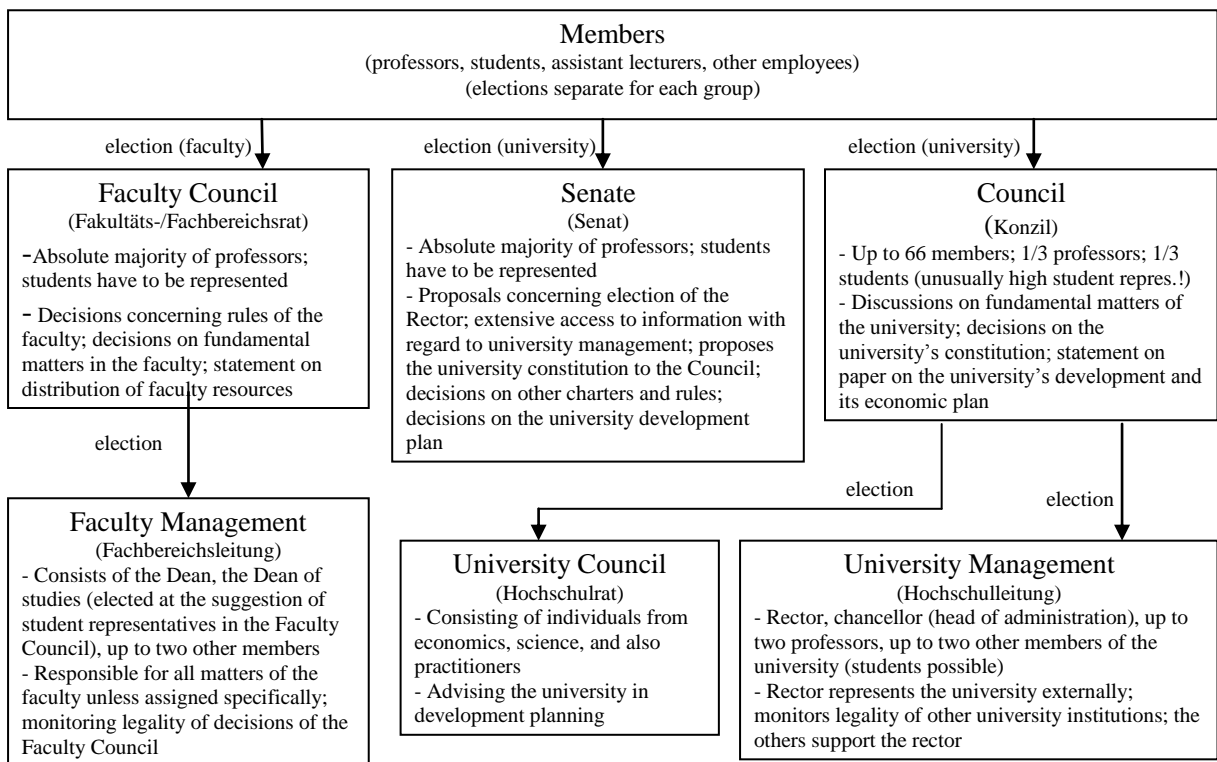
As a result of the reforms, there was an introduction of a so-called "group"-university after 1968 by which "professors, students, assistants, 'junior lecturers' ('Mittelbau'), and other employees are involved in self-administration and governance"¹¹⁶. This model emphasizes the position of professors in institutional bodies "who have a strong influence (at least 50 % of votes) in decisions immediately concerning teaching, and a decisive influence (more than 50 % of votes) in decisions immediately concerning research".¹¹⁷ However, student participation in the self-governance of universities is significant, and several models have been implemented by different Länders in Germany as seen in the diagrams that follow.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, pp. 4.

¹¹⁶ Kohler, Prof. dr., as presented at "Student Participation in Governance in Higher Education" Oslo, Norway – 12/14 June 2003.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

Model of university self-governance
(Example: Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania; similar structure in other
Länders)¹¹⁸



Although, both senates of the university and the faculty councils are made up of an absolute majority of professors, students must be represented in these decision-making bodies. Furthermore, in the Council of the university which discusses fundamental matters on the university and makes decision on the university's constitution, the university's development and its economic plan, 1/3 of the members are professors and 1/3 are students. On the faculty level, the Faculty Management consists of members, such as the Dean of studies, who are elected at the suggestion of student representatives.

3.3.2.2. Actual participation of students in higher education governance

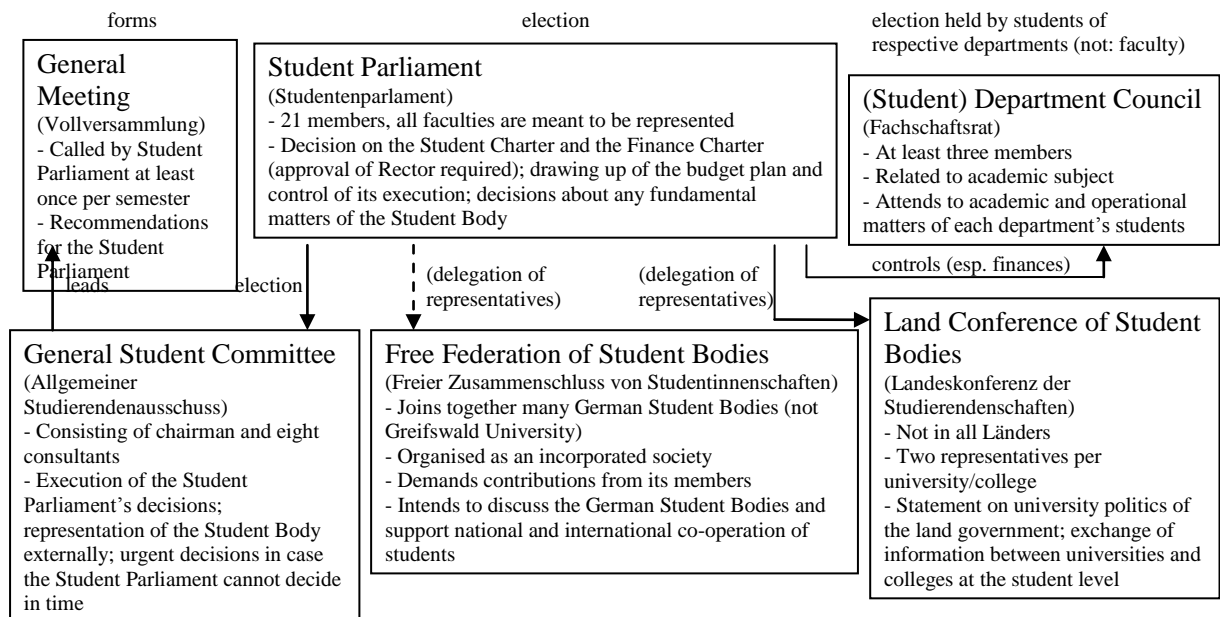
Actual influence of students in decision-making processes depends also on the structure of the students' self-governance, and each model represented below is a good example of how student self-governance structures are trying to make sure that student

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

representatives in the university’s decision-making bodies represent the actual views and needs of a majority of students, and guarantees student representation in the self-governance of universities.

Student self-governance in most Länders
(Example: Greifswald University, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania):
“Legal Entity Model”¹¹⁹

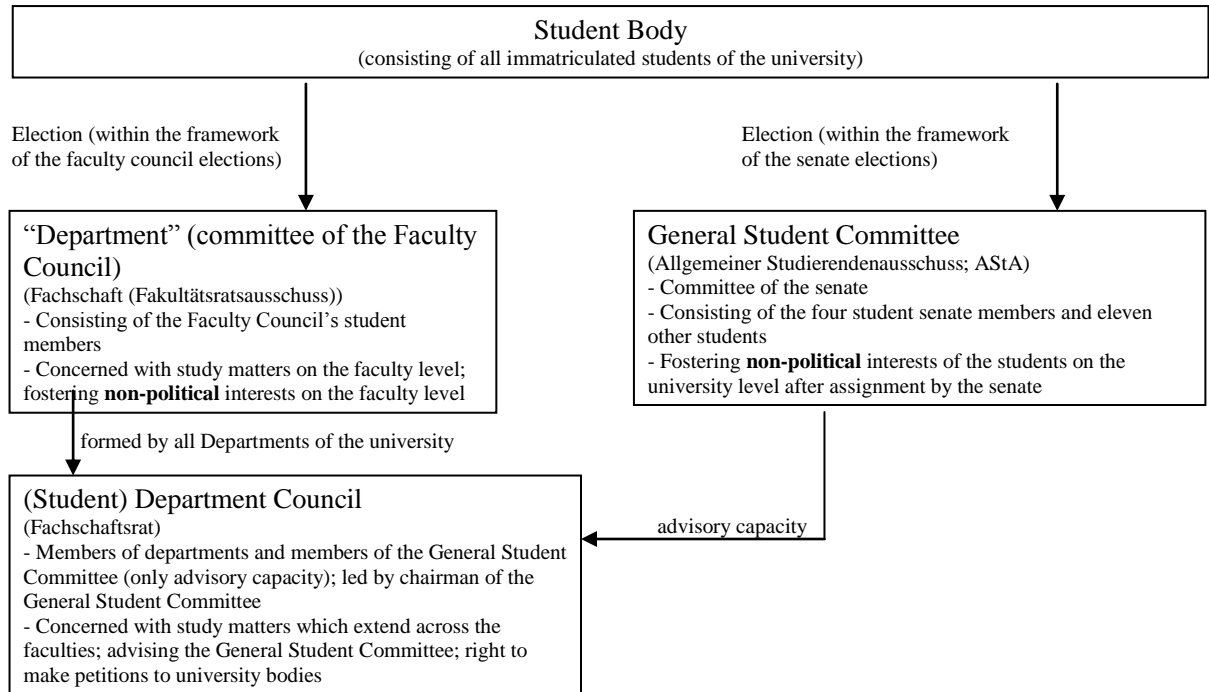
Student Body as a “collective legal entity”
 (“Verfasste Studentenschaft”)
 - Collective of students as a legal entity of public law
 - Consisting of all immatriculated students of the university
 - Demands contributions from its members in accordance with its Contribution Charter
 - Under legal supervision of the Rector; budget plan checked by state audit office



However, in some Länders the above “Legal Entity” model of student self-governance has been abolished and a so-called “non-legal-entity-model” has been put in its place. This model means that student organisations are not under the legal supervision of the Rector, but also have less influence in the decision making-bodies of higher education institutions.

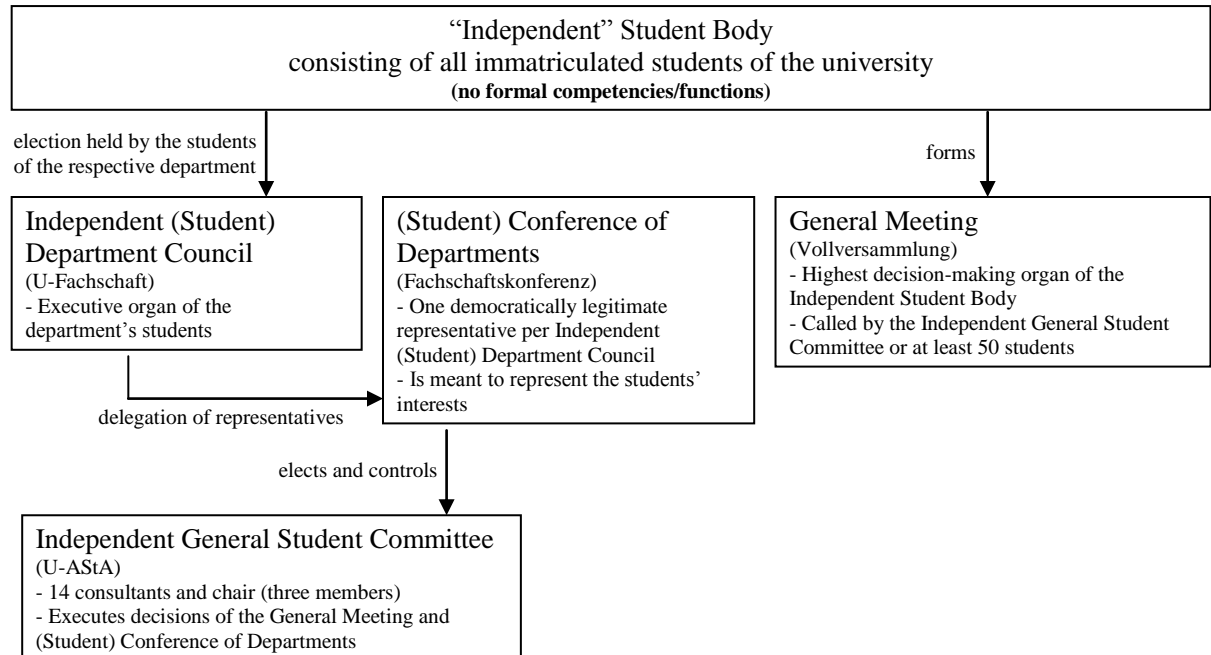
¹¹⁹ Ibid.

Student self-governance in some Länders
(Example: Freiburg University, Baden-Württemberg):
“Non-Legal-Entity-Model”
 (“official” structure)¹²⁰



¹²⁰ Ibid.

Student self-governance in some Länders
(Example: Freiburg University, Baden-Württemberg):
“Non-Legal-Entity-Model”
 (“unofficial” structure)¹²¹



This non-legal entity model is very similar to the student self-governance structure as it existed before the abolishment of the “legal-entity-model” in some Länders. Those students who actively participate in this system aim to re-establish the “legal-entity-model”. Furthermore, they do not accept the prohibition of political engagement.¹²²

It is also important to point out that 62 Studentenwerk organizations (student services organizations) are “responsible within the German higher education landscape for the economic, social, health-care and cultural support and promotion of some 1.8 million students.”¹²³ While in many Anglo-Saxon countries, these responsibilities are performed by departments as integral parts of universities, the Studentenwerk organizations in Germany are autonomous organizations which work closely with higher

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ <http://www.student-affairs.de/stw/index.htm>

education institutions.¹²⁴ “The Studentenwerk organizations manage the educational grants system based on the Federal Educational Assistance Act (BAföG), operate catering facilities, and build and administer student halls of residence.”¹²⁵ They also offer counseling services of various kinds (general social counseling, psychotherapeutic counseling, legal counseling, as well as advice centers for disabled and chronically-ill students), child-care facilities for students with children, support for student cultural activities, travel services and loan funds.¹²⁶ “The Studentenwerk organizations management bodies are composed of students, professors, and government representatives”.¹²⁷

In summary, the German system illustrates a high level of students’ rights to participate in the decision-making and management bodies of higher education institutions and their related student services. Together with professors, administrative and management staff, students are recognized and supported by the higher education system as one of its main stakeholders.

3.3.3. Proactive student organizations: Hungary

One of the greatest challenges to Hungarian higher education “that is of strategic importance is active participation in the formation of the European Higher Education Area.”¹²⁸ Since the signing of the Bologna and Prague declarations, numerous measures have been taken at both governmental and higher education level, in order to ensure that Hungarian higher education is brought closer to the requirements laid out in these declarations.¹²⁹ “As a further step in the modernization process, and in addition to the structural reforms that have already taken place in Hungarian higher education, the Ministry of Education is planning comprehensive legislation for the beginning of next year in order to authorize the necessary transformation of the educational structure: the more rational and efficient distribution of state resources, the support of excellence, the

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ministry of Education of Hungary, National Report on the Implementation of the Objectives of the Bologna Declaration in Hungary.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

expansion of the university's autonomy and the formation of institutional structures better suited to the new requirements.”¹³⁰

Reform of higher education is highly influenced by a legal framework which prescribes a high level of student self-governance. More importantly, student organizations use the existing legal framework to establish strong student bodies, on both the national and institutional level, which recognize that the quality of higher education is not the sole responsibility of governments and higher education bodies, but students themselves are one of the most progressive forces in Hungarian society.

3.3.3.1. Students' formal rights to participate in higher education governance

In Hungary, the Higher Education Act and the act on institutional integration determine student participation in higher education decision-making. The basis of student participation in decision-making is as follows: “Students delegate their representatives to the faculty and university councils - the principal decision-making bodies of the institutions - in a democratic way. 25-33% of the voting members of these bodies must be students”.¹³¹

Student self-governance

Student self-governance is legally guaranteed by the Higher Education Act, which stipulates:

Section 66

- (1) Student self-governance shall operate as a part of the self-governance of a higher education institution. All students registered in a higher education institution are members of the student self-governing body, independently from the form of education he/she has undertaken.
- (2) The officials and representatives of the student self-governing body shall be elected by the students; all students can elect and be elected. The election shall be operative if at least one quarter of students participates.
- (3) In their Regulations, higher education institutions will establish those matters on which the student self-governing body shall decide, those in which mutual consent is necessary, and

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Puskas, P. “The system of student participation in decision-making processes in Higher Education in Hungary HÖÖK, The National Union of Students in Hungary”. Student Participation in Governance in Higher Education Oslo, 12 – 14th June 2003.

those matters in which the student self-governing body's opinion must be sought. Students shall exercise legal rights guaranteed by the student self-governing body by electing representatives, as described in the structural and operational regulations of student self-governance.

Section 67

- (1) The rights of students to self-governance are, in particular:
- a) to send representatives on the basis of election as it is laid down in the regulations to the institutional and faculty councils and to other leading bodies;
 - b) participation in the work of the admission committees;
 - c) drafting proposals for the introduction of optional subjects and seminars;
 - d) drafting proposals for the invitation of external teaching staff (lecturers);
 - e) participation in the organization of scientific and specialist student circles, and the publication of studies;
 - f) creating, forbidding and running cultural and social organizational units as is necessary;"

The type of the election (direct or indirect) is determined by the regulations of the institutions. The students of the institution are members of the student self-governing body of the institution. "Through elections they can delegate representatives to the institutional and faculty councils and they can participate in the work of admission committees; they form opinions on lecturers' work and participate in the handling of educational, scholarship and support matters for the students".¹³² National representation of students in higher education institutions is organized by the National Conference of Student Self-Governance, while its delegates are also involved in the work of the other national bodies of higher education, the work of the Hungarian Accreditation Committee, the Hungarian Scholarship Board, the Higher Education and Scientific Council, the Hungarian Rectors' Conference and the National Bologna Committee.¹³³

Student organizations: HOOK

"HÖÖK (National Union of Students in Hungary), as the national representative federation of student self-governance in Hungarian higher education institutions, established through legislative reform for tasks to be performed in higher education and youth policy that could not be solved on the institutional or regional level, so as to achieve overall development in the field of higher education in Hungary".¹³⁴

¹³² Ibid,

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

Members of HÖOK are student self-governing bodies in Hungary working in state institutions or in institutions acknowledged by the state, which “aim to improve the standards of Hungarian higher education and to ensure a high level of educational and social services provided to the students.”¹³⁵ The main decision-making organization of HÖOK is the General Assembly. In the intervals when the General Assembly is not assembled, the main representative and decision-making authority of HÖOK is the regionally-based and balanced Committee.¹³⁶ The main executive organization of HÖOK is its ten-member presidium (executive committee). The presidium, directed by the chairman, co-ordinates the operations of the organizations of HÖOK, the secretariat, the expert Boards and organizations subordinated to HÖOK.

In its well-organized structure, HÖOK consists of expert boards to develop its position on and the actions to be taken in, several significant issues related to higher education. The boards currently at work are:

- the accommodation support board,
- the foreign affairs board,
- the PR board,
- the QA board,
- other ad hoc boards (board on the change of the Act on HE)¹³⁷

3.3.3.2 Actual participation of students in higher education governance and a quality assurance system

Self-governing student bodies and HÖOK are very active in many areas related to higher education. The following is a list of areas of concern and activities that demonstrate a very high level of involvement in matters of higher education:

- Representation of interests in the field of higher education

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

- Participation in legislation concerning higher education and the situation of students, commenting on the application of the relevant acts and initiating procedures. Key places of representation of HÖOK: Science Council of Higher Education (FTT), Hungarian Accreditation Committee (MAB), Conference of Hungarian Rectors (MRK), Hungarian Bologna Committee, Educational Council of the Hungarian Parliament, Negotiating Council of Higher Education
- Co-operation with other organizations promoting students' interests, for example: National organizations of PhD students (DOSZ), Dormitories (FEKOSZ), Student Enterprises (DIÁKÉSZ), students' science associations (OTDK), students' sport clubs (MEFS), student newspapers (DUE)
- Participation in European and international student movements and international projects: ESIB, Socrates, Ceepus programs, CSN
- Participation in legislation concerning higher education and the situation of students, commenting on the application of relevant acts
- Co-operation with other organizations promoting students' interests
- Participation in European and international student movements
- Maintaining contact with Hungarian higher education institutions and students outside Hungary
- Providing managerial training and regular information on issues of higher education and educational policy-making for those participating in the running of the student self-governing bodies
- Supporting institutional, regional and national student initiatives
- Participating in the reform of student identity cards
- Informing student organizations and students on issues (scholarships, financial aid, legal matters) via its own publication (HÖOK Tükör)
- Participation in exploring possibilities for advantageous positions in the labor market for students

HÖOK is a strong national student union organization whose influence is ever-growing and of crucial importance for the reform of higher education in accordance with the European Higher Education Area. It is a good example of a proactive stance that students

should take in a post-communist country of transition, in which governments and higher education institutions, deliberately or because of incapacity and a lack of resources, tend to obstruct or slow down the process of higher education reforms which are meant to bring about high quality higher education.

3.3.4. Concluding remarks

As has been seen, each of the models presented has highly developed student participation. These models mostly differ in the area where this participation is at its highest. While the Swedish model is the most developed model of student participation in a quality assurance system, the German one has more developed student participation in decision-making bodies. The Hungarian model, moreover, is a very good model of student self-organization, as a kind of starting point for a more comprehensive role for students in the educational process.

4. Recommended model of student participation for the University of Sarajevo

In the process of aiming to create a suitable model of student participation in decision-making processes and quality assurance and control at the University of Sarajevo, it should be borne in mind that over the next few years higher education in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and also educational and governing processes at the University of Sarajevo, are going to be drastically reformed. The expected outcomes of the reforms have been considered during the development of a suitable policy for student participation and are as follows:

- Higher education reforms will create a basic framework for the centralization of higher education on the State level.
- Instead of the current weak confederation of departments, universities will become more centralized institutions.
- A system of quality assurance in higher education in BiH will be introduced. This system will introduce external and internal mechanisms and institutions for quality assurance and control on the national, university and departmental levels.

Higher education at the University of Sarajevo is currently characterized by the non-existence of standardized norms, rules and procedures in almost every area of the university's and the departments' operations (for example: there is no examination policy, there is no standardized lecturing policy, there is no policy related to support to student unions/associations etc). Overall, there is no culture of standardizing and creating transparent and efficient policies in the University of Sarajevo and this has been considered during the development of the most suitable model for student participation presented below.

The model presented identifies principles, legal acts, internal mechanisms and basic procedures needed to be introduced and practiced on the national, university and departmental level with the aim of providing a formal framework and to ensure optimal student participation and involvement in the process of higher education governance within the University of Sarajevo.

4.1 National Level

4.1.1. Formal provisions for student participation in higher education governance, according to national legislation

Significant differences exist within legal frameworks that support student participation among European Countries. In some of the examples given legislation provides for, in a small number of acts, student participation on different levels of governance or just on the national level. Since a culture of highly developed regulations and standardization does not exist, or does not produce the expected effects in the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina (particularly the University of Sarajevo), a strong legal framework (on the state level) to guarantee adequate student participation in higher education, is strongly recommended.

National legislation on student participation in higher education should regulate the following areas:

1. **Student Participation in all higher education governing bodies.** The law should prescribe that three student representatives actively participate (and have a right to vote) in the work of a Higher Education Group established within the Ministry of Civil Affairs. The law should establish that a reasonable number of student representatives participate in the work of university Senates, Boards of Directors/Treasuries, Supervisory Boards and Rectorates. The law should prescribe that representatives on university governing bodies are appointed by the university's student union, and that they have the right to vote. Moreover, the voting system in these bodies should be such that student representatives are not a weak minority. The same principles should apply to student representation in the departmental governing bodies, particularly on the Scientific Council. The student representative on these bodies appoints the departments' student union.

2. **System of Student Unions.** The law should define the basic principles of student organizations on the national, university and departmental level. A National Student Union (or federation of entities' student unions) should be established. The members of that union should be members of university unions. The National Student Union should represent student interests in BiH. The National Student Union should delegate three representatives to the Ministry of Civil Affairs who will participate in the work of the Higher Education Group established within the Ministry. The basic operational costs of the union should be covered by the Ministry of Civil Affairs. The law should prescribe the basic principles of the functioning of the universities' student unions which stipulates that: (a) the university's student union represents the interests of the universities' students; (b) the president of the union is directly elected by all students on an annual basis; (c) half of the general union assembly members are directly elected and the other half are appointed by departmental unions; and (d) universities' student unions are financed by membership fees and from university budgets. The law should also define the basic rules of student organizations on the departmental level as follows: (a) students are required by law to be members of the student union in

their departments; (b) the president and general assembly are directly elected on an annual basis by all students from the respective department; and (c) university student unions are financed by membership fees and from departmental budgets.

- 3. A Quality Assurance System and External Accreditation Agency.** The establishment of the National Higher Education Quality Assurance System is an important precondition for the introduction of other Bologna Standards, and consequently the integration of BiH's higher education into the European Higher Education Area. The creation of a National Accreditation Agency as the highest authority in a quality assurance and control system will take place in BiH soon. Different models of such an agency exist in European countries (in some cases the agency is established as a fully independent body, in other cases the agency is a part of the Ministry for Education). However, the main role of the Agency is to externally evaluate the quality of higher education institutions, and to provide an accreditation for those who fulfill the quality standards. The National Law on a quality assurance and control system in higher education in BiH that should be adopted as part of broader higher education reforms in BiH, should prescribe the establishment of a National Accreditation Agency. The same law should ensure adequate participation of students in the work of the Agency and in the whole system of quality assurance and control. This law should stipulate that as a part of the National Accreditation Agency, a student council should be established. The Student Council should be composed of a representative of the National Student Union and of a representative from each university student union. The Student Council delegates their representative to the bodies that are responsible for evaluation planning and implementation of self-evaluation. All the strategic decisions of the Accreditation Agency should be accepted in consultation with the Student Council. The Student Council is responsible for the establishment of mechanisms that should ensure adequate student participation (not only of union representatives' participation, but broader student involvement) in external panels and in the follow-up of evaluations.

4.1.2. Informal student participation in higher education governance on the national level

Thus formal provisions for student participation in higher education governance according to the national legislation presented above, and mechanisms for informal participation in higher education affairs within the Ministry of Civil Affairs and the State Agency for Accreditation, should be put into practice. Mechanisms for broader student participation in the work of the Group for Education and Accreditation should include student debates, student focus-groups, and periodically conducted surveys, related to all the major decisions of the Ministry and the Agency.

4.2. University level

Taking into account that the university is at present a very weak institution and that major reforms of the higher education system (including the introduction of a system of adequate student participation) will be initiated at the national level, the recommendations put forward focus on preparation of the university's structures for their more powerful future position in higher educational processes and in particular in the quality assurance and control system; and on the more active role of students in these processes. The university's internal acts should closely regulate the following areas:

- 1. Student participation in university governing bodies.** The national legal regulations will require that a reasonable number of student representatives participate in the work of the university Senates, Boards of Directors/Treasuries, Supervisory Boards and Rectorates. Moreover, the same law will not allow student representatives to act only as observers of decision-making process within the university. Based on national legislation, the university's internal acts should more precisely develop mechanisms to avoid marginalization of student representatives in decision-making process within these bodies. These mechanisms should identify the percentages of votes allocated to student representatives per university body and each area of the university's work. These mechanisms should be developed by the Senate in partnership with the university's student union and be incorporated into the university's formal acts. A

model for the participation of departmental union representatives in departmental governing bodies should be prescribed by the university's internal regulations including: (a) the number of student representatives in each departmental body; and (b) a voting system within departmental governing bodies that provides optimal influence for the student representatives.

2. Student Unions. National legislation will prescribe the basic principles for the functioning of university student unions and departmental unions such as:

- The president of the university's union and half of the union's general assembly members are directly elected; and the other half of assembly members are appointed by departmental unions.
- The president and the general assembly of each departmental union are directly elected.
- University student unions are financed by membership fees and by university budgets.
- Departmental unions are financed by membership fees and by departmental budgets.

Internal university regulations should develop more detailed procedures related to the election of student representatives within the system of student unions. Elections should take a place on an annual basis and be organized by departmental unions. The voting and appointing system should be developed with special attention to the strengthening of democratic principles within the union. The system should be developed and adopted by the university's student union and the Rectorate/Senate and be integrated into the internal regulations of the university and the departments. Moreover, the annual financial plan for the unions' work should be proposed by the union and adopted by the Rectorate. Major sources for financing the unions (to be defined by national law) are partly through student membership fees collected by departmental unions, and partly from the university budget (the exact portion of the budget allocated for basic operational costs should be defined in the university's Statute). The student union has the right to propose other income-generation activities directly related to the

university's work such as management of the university's library, the university's internet centers, the university's cafeteria etc. Internal regulations in the university should also prescribe that departmental unions are financed from their membership fees and the departmental budget. Departmental governing bodies should provide other income-generation opportunities for their union. The university union is obliged by internal organization acts to periodically conduct student opinion polls, organize regular student debates, and regularly inform the whole student population about their work.

3. **Quality Assurance System and Self-Evaluation.** An important part of the quality assurance system is the university's self-evaluation and a follow-up of that process. Implementation of the quality assurance system requires student participation in the self-evaluation, including periodic evaluation of teaching staff, courses etc. The University of Sarajevo has already established a team for self-evaluation, but students are not adequately represented on that team. The university's internal regulations that cover the establishment and control of quality assurance within the University of Sarajevo should incorporate mechanisms for adequate student participation in these processes including: (a) an adequate number of students participating in the work of the quality assurance team, delegated by the university's student union; (b) the development of mechanisms and procedures which will ensure that the student influence in decision-making processes within that team is evident; and (c) the introduction of a practice of broader student participation (student debates, forums, student opinion polls, etc) related to major decisions of the quality assurance team within the university.

4.3 *Departmental level*

Currently, departments are the most powerful decision-making bodies within the higher education system in BiH and in the University of Sarajevo as well. Moreover, there is a clear lack of standardized practice of student participation in departmental affairs. As a result, the level of student participation in governance varies dramatically between

departments, and the overall level of student participation and their influence on departmental affairs are far from ideal.

National legislation and the university's internal regulations clearly set out principles and mechanisms for: student participation in governance, how the student union system functions, and the role of students in the system of quality assurance and control. Therefore the role of departmental bodies and internal departmental regulations is to make these principles and mechanisms fully operational.

4.3.1. Student participation in departmental governance

National regulations and the university's internal acts have set out in detail mechanisms covering the number of student representatives (delegated by departmental student unions) that participate in the work of departments governing bodies (particularly the Scientific Council) and voting mechanisms that grant enough influence to student representatives in those bodies. These principles and mechanisms should be incorporated and more developed (as is needed) in the departments' internal acts. Moreover, departments are responsible for ensuring that these mechanisms are applied and carried out to the full.

4.3.2. Departmental student unions

Departmental student unions represent the crucial level at which students organize themselves. They are responsible for articulating student interests and representing them directly on the departmental level and indirectly (through delegating student representatives) on higher levels of higher education (university and national levels). However, the framework for student organizations on the departmental level has been created by national legislation and the university's internal regulations (described above). The departmental governing bodies are obliged to incorporate and make fully operational those principles and mechanisms for students organizations in the department's internal acts. The following areas of the student union's work should be incorporated into the department's internal regulations: (a) the election process (election of the departments'

union president and general assembly; election of the university's union's president and the directly-elected university's union assembly members); (b) departmental union financing (membership fees, departmental budgets allocated to the union, other sources of possible financing such as managing the department's library, internet centers, and cafeterias etc.); and (c) the departmental governing structure should incorporate in the internal regulations support mechanisms to the department's student union for organizing student elections.

Student unions should incorporate in their internal acts mechanisms which will continuously ensure and broaden student participation in the unions' affairs such as: student debates, student information campaigns, presentations of the unions' work, periodically conducting student opinion polls, etc.

4.3.3. A quality assurance system and student participation on the departmental level

External evaluation of quality assurance and control is centered at the national level, and internal self-evaluation and quality assurance is centered and regulated at the university level. Therefore, student participation is regulated by national legislation and the university's internal acts, and is the responsibility of the national student union as well as the university's student unions.

However, the establishment of a quality assurance and control system within the University of Sarajevo has required the creation of self-evaluation teams for each department. The participation of student representatives in those teams should be regulated and incorporated into internal acts in the same way as has been done on the university level (described above).

4.4. Concluding Remarks

The proposed approach based on strong legal regulation of student participation covering all levels of the higher education system (national, university and departmental level) will ensure strong formal rights to students to become partners in the higher education process. The formal students' right to fully participate in all student unions in all higher

education governing bodies (including the bodies responsible for the establishment and control of the quality assurance system) will strengthen the influence of student unions. The right of the student unions to participate in the decision-making process together with the proposed model of the unions' financing (which will ensure financial sustainability and independence of the unions) will create an environment that will mobilize students to participate both directly and indirectly in the work of student unions. Direct student participation in the work of unions (holding different positions within unions and directly participating in the higher education decision-making process) will become very appealing and relevant both for the higher education institutions and the students. Therefore, providing that student unions are established as influential bodies, it is anticipated that students will participate in union activities with more interest and greater zeal. More and more students will be interested in holding positions within unions and the resultant competition between union representatives will increase the quality of the unions' work. Furthermore, it will improve the quality of unions' services and the overall quality of the university's performance. Interest in indirect participation (participation in elections, public debates etc.) in union affairs will increase participation of the entire student body in higher education affairs.

The active student participation described above will push the transition of higher education towards a system that is more student-oriented and more representative of real needs, resulting in an improvement in the overall quality of higher education. The creation of such a system ensures an increase of the student body's ownership over the higher education system, effecting ever more active participation in the learning process which will inevitably improve students' performances (lower average of exam failures, shorter average time needed to complete a degree etc.). This will lead to a more effective, viable and less costly higher education system. Such a system will weed out the inefficiencies and obstacles that teaching staff are faced with at the moment. The students will have more active role in the learning process, the number of exam failures will decrease, and the teaching staff will have a weight lifted from their shoulders. They will have more time for research and other developmental activities.

The development and implementation of the proposed model for adequate participation of students in higher education will nurture the future participatory citizen, who will be the pillar of a modern, pluralistic, democratic and developed society. Therefore, if all of the above-mentioned are disregarded then adequate student participation in the higher education system, as a part of the Bologna process, is questionable. Without a suitable model of student participation in place, the process of meeting the Bologna standards in higher education will be under threat, and the University of Sarajevo and BiH's higher education system as a whole, will not become a part of the European Higher Education Area.

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