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Student involvement in university quality enhancement

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Abstract

The quality of higher education has been gaining attention around the world, especially in view of "massification" and the rising cost of higher education. Massification, marketization and demands for accountability have brought student experience to the centre of quality assurance policies and practices in higher education. Accordingly, students' influence on – and involvement in – university structures and processes towards quality enhancement have become a more noticeable trend. Taking the theory of student agency as the starting point (Klemenčič, 2015), this chapter conceptualizes student involvement in quality enhancement as a combination of students' agentic possibilities for such involvement ('power') and student agentic orientations ('will'). The proposed framework presents a shift from the traditional focus on how institutions can assure educational quality to how students can be co-responsible for and contribute to the wellbeing and advancement of their university. The underlying prescriptive message is that

universities should develop institutional pathways for students' involvement in university, along with cultivating students' sense of collective belonging and collective university identity.

Keywords

Students, quality assurance, quality enhancement, university governance, university culture, university-student relationship, student agency, capability, freedom, belonging, collective belonging, collective identity, individualism versus collectivism

Introduction[1]

Calls to improve the quality of higher education have become more prominent in recent years everywhere. The quality of higher education has been gaining attention around the world, especially in view of 'massification' and the rising cost of higher education. An ever larger share of population in individual countries is enrolled in higher education. This situation offers immense opportunities for human capital development through quality higher education. Equally, poor educational conditions incur significant costs in terms of missed learning opportunities and unsatisfactory student experience. As higher education has increasingly become linked to economic progress and social well-being, governments demand accountability and evidence for quality in return for public money invested into higher education (Klemenčič, Ščukanec and Komljenovič, 2015). The increase in higher education enrolments puts pressure on the quality of higher education provisions as it becomes more difficult to give students the educational treatment that they tend to value most: personalized, with flexibility in terms of modes of learning and materials, and ample one-on-one time with teachers and advisers (McCormick, Kinzie, and Gonyea, 2013). The pressure is greater in mainstream, non-elite institutions that have often expanded beyond their capacities, and that cater for the majority of students within national higher education systems. The increased diversity of student populations, with different backgrounds, expectations and learning needs, present further challenges for institutions to develop conditions that enable quality higher education for all.

Massification, marketization and demands for accountability have brought student experience and student learning to the centre of quality assurance policies and practices in higher education. Accordingly, students' influence on – and involvement in – university[2] structures and processes towards quality enhancement have become a more noticeable trend. This chapter is specifically concerned with student involvement in quality enhancement of their universities. The key question here is what roles students play in university quality enhancement, and how these roles are conditioned by the institutional context. In other words, this chapter explores the institutional conditions and organizational culture that shape student agency in structures and processes towards university quality enhancement. The proposed framework presents a shift from the

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[1] The author would like to thank David Dill for his most helpful feedback on this chapter and guidance to additional literature.

[2] In the reminder of the chapter the term universities is used in generic form referring to all types of higher education institutions, not only research universities.

traditional focus on how institutions can assure educational quality to how students can be co-responsible for and contribute to the wellbeing and advancement of their university The discussion in this chapter contributes to the broader theme of how human agency – individual

and collective – shapes higher education policies (Marginson and Rhoades, 2002), and specifically how universities as organisations enable or hamper student agency in quality assurance as part of university governance.

The chapter consists of four sections. Taking the concept of student agency as the starting point (Klemenčič, 2015), and drawing from Sen's capability approach (Sen, 1999), Swidler's cultural kit (1986), March and Olsen's (2009) logic of appropriateness, and Hirschman's (1970) theory of exit, voice and loyalty, this chapter first conceptualizes student involvement in quality enhancement from the point of view of student capital, agentic possibilities and agentic orientations. The next section on students' power focuses on both the formal rules and procedures and the informal cultural schemas that have an influence on students' capabilities to be involved in and influence university quality. The third section turns to individual students and their willingness and motivation to be involved in university quality processes and structures. The focus here is on loyalty and the different underlying relational ties between students and their universities (belonging, mattering, and needs-fulfilment) and how these play out in students' agentic orientations. The concluding section discusses the different modes and practices of student involvement in university quality enhancement.

Conceptualizing student involvement in university quality enhancement

Conceptualizing student involvement in university quality enhancement can be built on the theory of student agency. Student agency is defined as students' self-reflective and intentional action and interaction with their environment (Klemenčič, 2015). This encompasses variable notions of agentic possibility ("*power*") and agentic orientation ("*will*") in a specific context – here university governance and specific policies, structures and processes towards university quality enhancement.

There are three distinct modes of student agency in university quality structures and processes, each of which is founded in students' beliefs that they can influence their environment by their actions: personal, proxy and collective (Klemenčič, 2015; cf. Bandura, 2001). Personal agency is students' solitary actions that can be directed at changing their own circumstances or also those of others. Students exert proxy agency when they ask their student representatives or student government to act on their behalf to solve a particular problem or secure a particular outcome (Klemenčič, 2015). This can happen for a number of reasons. Students would exercise proxy agency in areas in which they cannot exert direct influence, typically because they feel they do not have direct control over institutional conditions or practice. For example, if an individual student is provoked by the university's decision to discontinue a particular study programme, he or she may turn to the student government to try to overturn this decision (proxy agency). Also,

students who are worried about the possible risks associated with filing a complaint against a particular professor or administrator often prefer to file a complaint via student representatives. Students also exercise proxy agency when they do not wish to invest time and resources, or when they believe student representatives can tackle the problem more effectively (Klemenčič, 2015). Whereas student proxy agency relies heavily on the perceived efficacy of student government and elected student representatives, students exercise collective agency when they believe in their collective efficacy as a group to secure a mutually desired outcome (Klemenčič, 2015; cf. Bandura, 2001). Student protests and sit-ins are the most notable form of student collective agency, and there are ample examples of students protesting against poor study conditions.

The guiding question of this chapter revolves around students' agentic possibility and agentic orientation towards self-reflective and intentional action within university context towards quality enhancement. The emphasis here is not on students' behaviour to maximise their self-interests, which is indeed students' expected default behaviour, but rather on the questions when and under what conditions students can and are willing to act to contribute to university quality even if they do not have any immediate direct benefits from that action. In other words: how can universities enable and elicit in their students' intentional and conscientious responses to contribute to university quality. The implied desired outcome is thus the collective well-being of the university and quality education for all students. To illustrate: If a student complains that she does not receive sufficient advisory support in preparing her senior thesis and asks for more support, she is only trying to enhance the quality of her own educational experience and outcomes. If the same student would raise the issue with her student representative and alert that there might be a problem in how advising is administered at her department and the school, she would be trying to improve the situation also for her peers. Responding to student satisfaction surveys is one example of involvement where personal and communal interests overlap, since negative feedback may result in timely improvements. When students provide feedback on future curriculum planning, they are contributing to the university quality enhancement beyond their immediate self-interest.

Student capital

The starting point of this discussion is in recognising that students possess resources – *student capital* - that are salient for the purposes of enhancing university quality. Students have first-hand experience of, and thus valuable insights into, educational processes and learning environments. As such, students – individually, by proxies, or collectively – can bring to university administrators information and expertise for the purposes of quality enhancement. Individual students can be a source of raw data on experience, satisfaction or behaviour, which is collected through student surveys. Students can act as expert advisors to university administrators in advisory committees. They obtain such roles either by being elected student representatives, or by being handpicked by administrators to play this role, or simply by offering input even if they do not participate in student representation. Student representatives participate in university governing bodies in strategic planning and policy making.

The legitimation of policy processes and outcomes is another resource students possess. Regardless of whether students are considered an internal constituency, as in democratic collegiate governance regimes, or stakeholders or customers as in corporate universities, having students involved in decision processes is perceived to be important for the legitimation of decision processes and outcomes. This is so even when student involvement was only conceived as 'window dressing' and students had no effective influence.

Finally, students can offer student services, such as tutoring, counselling, organising student events, and managing student groups, all of which complement the formal university operations and can help implement specific institutional quality objectives. While students thus have various *resources* that they can employ towards university quality enhancement, the question arises whether they have the *possibilities* and *motivations* to do so.

Student agentic possibilities (students' power) to influence university quality enhancement: Sen's (1999) capability approach and Swidler's (1986) cultural kit

Student agentic possibilities (students' power) to influence university quality enhancement can be explained by drawing from Amartya Sen's (1999) capability approach, which emphasizes persons' real opportunities and positive freedoms to intervene in and thus influence the environmental context. The capability approach is a theoretical framework that 'entails two core normative claims: first, the claim that the freedom to achieve well-being is of primary moral importance, and second, that freedom to achieve well-being is to be understood in terms of people's capabilities, that is, their real opportunities to do and be what they have reason to value' (Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, 2011, introduction). This framework can be transposed to the university quality context because universities care, or should care, about the wellbeing of students in a higher education context, and about the quality of the education experience of their students.

The capability approach highlights the effective freedoms, in the sense of what students are able to do and to be within their university, to achieve wellbeing. So it is not only the question of *what* resources students have that is important, but also the question of the opportunities the student has to *employ* whatever resources they have towards wellbeing and self-formation. A primary concern of students in a university is, of course, related to enjoying a rewarding academic experience and gain credential achievement. Their capability to control and influence their learning processes and environment is directly related, indeed an implicit condition, to achieve these objectives.

In applying the capability approach to student involvement in university quality enhancement, we should distinguish between (1) the equality of *outcomes* of student involvement, and (2) the equality of *opportunity* among students to influence university quality. The equality of outcomes, i.e. improvement of university quality to the benefit of all students, bridges the potentially self-interested – instrumentalist – involvement in university quality with the involvement based on principles of social justice – enhancing quality for all (Nussbaum, 2006). The emphasis here is thus on student involvement in institutional quality processes which may lead to the

improvement of conditions for all students (as opposed to improvements only oneself of a student's in-group). The equality of opportunity refers to the 'freedoms' of students, that is, their real opportunities to act – opportunities 'that do not exist only formally or legally but are also effectively available to the agents' (Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, 2011, section 2.7).

It is these freedoms that are in the centre of the discussion in the next section on students' power, which focuses on institutional pathways and institutional cultures of student involvement. Institutional pathways are directly linked to the legal status of students within a university and the specific structures, rules and procedures of decision-making within that university's governance arrangements. University cultures also influence students' behaviour – including engagement with matters of university quality - by shaping a repertoire or 'tool kit' of habits, skills, symbols, worldviews and styles from which students construct 'strategies of action' (Swidler, 1986, p.273). In other words, university culture defines among other things how students interact with their university. For example, these interactions could be underpinned by authoritarian-paternalistic, democratic-collegiate or managerial-corporate behaviour schemata, each of which invokes different conceptions (or metaphors) of students, such as students as pupils, as constituency, or as customers.

Student agentic orientations to influence university quality: March and Olsen's (2009) logic of appropriateness and Hirschman's (1970) exit, voice and loyalty

Student agentic orientations - or students' will - to intentionally contribute to university quality enhancement is another and equally important part of the discussion. In a university context, students face competing demands on their time from academic requirements, extracurricular opportunities, and the straightforward enjoyments of student life already celebrated in the 13th century *Carmina Burana*. The latter should not be underestimated. As Grigsby (2009, p.86) points out in her study of college life at an US university, '[h]aving fun is viewed…as an important responsibility that [students] must fulfil in order to claim the genuine college experience'. Furthermore, the cultural values in post-modern Western societies increasingly emphasize individualism and choice (Grigsby, 2009), which do not always align with altruistic motivations to engage with the university beyond the instrumental logic of action based on a cost-benefit analysis. There is obviously a difference if you ask students to comment on the library opening hours because university administration is planning to change these or if you ask them to comment on changes in the curricula that will be implemented only after they graduate.

There are two ways to go about answering the question of students' willingness and motivation to influence institutional quality beyond their own immediate self-interest. One lies in the 'logic of appropriateness' as defined by March and Olsen (2009, p.2):

> 'The logic of appropriateness is a perspective that sees human action as driven by rules of appropriate or exemplary behaviour, organized into institutions. Rules are followed because they are seen as natural, rightful, expected, and legitimate. Actors seek to fulfil the obligations encapsulated in a role, an identity, a membership in a political community

or group, and the ethos, practices and expectations of its institutions. Embedded in a social collectivity, they do what they see as appropriate for themselves in a specific type of situation.'

The willingness of students to be actively involved in institutional quality depends on whether such involvement is considered 'appropriate', that is, natural, expected and legitimate for each and every student. Universities can communicate to their students that by being part of the university community and 'a good citizen of the university' it is natural (and expected) that they respond to surveys, participate in planning committees, volunteer for tutoring, etc. The logic of appropriateness effectively presents a conceptual bridge between the notions of students' agentic possibilities and agentic orientations. It means that students have effectively internalized the university culture and the formal rules (agentic possibilities) described above, and use them as personalized normative prescriptions. However, whether university culture and rules become students' 'internalized prescriptions of what is socially defined as normal, true, right or good, *without, or in spite of,* calculation of consequences and expected utility' (March and Olsen, 2009, p.3 [*emphasis added*]), requires more than mere structural possibilities for action and the sense of duty. The norms of appropriate behaviour lead to dutiful observance of rules and norms to avoid sanctions or shaming, but do not necessarily motivate students to act beyond their self-interest.

For genuine, conscientious students' involvement, students need to feel a certain degree of 'loyalty', defined as a strong feeling of allegiance and attachment to one's university or indeed to a collectivity or group of people within that university. The concept of loyalty within organizations has been developed in relation to a person's action to address dissatisfactions by Hirschman (1970) in his classic work on "Exit, Voice, and Loyalty". Hirschman argues that in organizations employees react to dissatisfaction with either exit or voice. Which of the two is chosen depends to some extent on loyalty. Loyalty, according to Hirschman, may drive a dissatisfied employee to voice complaints because he or she would wish to change the organisation from within, rather than simply quit and look for job opportunities elsewhere. At the same time, as emphasized by Leck and Saunders (1992), loyalty may also mean that employees simply persist in an organisation, passively waiting for conditions to improve by themselves. Thus, loyalty may have active and passive behavioural dimension depending on which interpretation is considered.

While recognising that students are not employees of universities and that their time span with the university is much shorter than employees' tenure, the concept of loyalty is relevant to conceptualising students' investment in university quality matters. Like employees, students too are tied to the university, and their exit option is fairly costly considering time, effort, financial cost of transfer to another program or institution. Developing Hirschman's concept, there are basically two alternative ways that students can react to dissatisfaction with university quality: 'exit' means withdrawal from the university or switching to another program within the same university, and 'voice' means that they agitate and try to influence positive changes. However, this chapter seeks to pursue the matter further by exploring not only how students react to

dissatisfaction, but also under which conditions students voluntarily seek to make a positive impact on their university, not only for their own personal benefit but for the benefit of the entire academic community. This leads us to the various relational ties between universities and students that comprise the concept of loyalty and thus influence students' motivations for involvement in university matters: belonging, mattering and psychological ownership. These will be addressed in the section on student' will to influence university quality enhancement.

Students' power in students' legal status and university governance arrangements

The formal rules, procedures and norms that regulate student involvement in university governance in general, and in quality assurance in particular, are derived from the legal position of students in the university and the particular university governance model.

The legal position of students differs significantly across higher education systems. There are two overarching approaches, each of which provides a variety of national and institutional interpretations. One approach suggests that there exists an implied contract between the student and the university of which the implication is that the university has obligated itself to provide a certain standard of quality of education provision to which student has been admitted upon payment of necessary fees (Buchter, 1973). Even if no specific contract document is signed at the time of admission of the student to the university, the admission itself can be regarded as a formation of contractual relationship between an individual student and the university as a corporate body. This contractual relationship is implied in the various university publications, such as course catalogues, policies and promotional material used for recruitment. These publications include disclaimers of obligations of university towards students and also the terms describing the process leading to conferral of degrees. This approach also implies that access to higher education is not granted to all in the sense that a student may not be accepted to a university without the institution having to give any reason (Farrington, 2000). Common initially to the Anglo-American context and to the private higher education sector worldwide, this model is slowly diffusing also into public higher education sector elsewhere.

The second approach is common to countries which conceive higher education as a public good and thus hold it a right (in some countries even constitutional right) for students to access it. There is an implicit social contract between state and students evident in higher education legislation, which stipulates that access is largely granted to all that are academically apt and aspire to higher education with expectation that these will upon graduation contribute to the economy and societies. The state thus establishes, owns and provides funding to public higher education institutions. Public universities are accountable for quality education not only to students, but also to the state and other interested stakeholders, such as employers. Accordingly, the state requests from the universities to show responsible use of public funds and of quality education provisions through various quality assurance frameworks, performance evaluations and participation of external stakeholders in governing bodies of universities. In European countries, student unions have played a prominent role in political processes instigating the

quality reforms in the framework of the intergovernmental Bologna Process. The resulting European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Europe essentially made student involvement in external and internal higher education quality assurance mandatory (ENQA, 2009) (Klemenčič, 2012a).

These two different approaches to state-student relationship are reflected also in the different university governance arrangements, which are a reflection of governmental steering and institutional autonomy. There are basically two main overarching university governance models which differ in terms of in whose hands power is located. The democratic governance model, which emerged from the 1960s protests, divides decision-making powers amongst academic staff and students as university's primary constituencies. Both groups are represented in, and typically also have voting rights, in governing bodies of universities. Autonomous student governments, whose primary aim is to organize, aggregate and mediate the interests of the collective student body (Klemenčič, 2012b; Klemenčič, 2014), play a prominent role in university politics.

At present, the most predominant model is the managerial-corporatist model in which all stakeholders are involved in the university decision-processes run by academic managers with considerable executive powers. The managerial-corporatist model tends to invoke conception of students as stakeholders and increasingly of students as customers. Regardless of the metaphor used, students are in this governance model also involved in decision-making, but tend to be invited through advisory and service roles, rather than political roles with decision-making powers as in the democratic model (Krücken and Meier, 2006).

The conceptualisation of students as consumers, and consumerist discourse in higher education in general, has been linked to the introduction or strengthening of competitive elements in higher education along with changes in funding arrangements (decrease in public funding, rising tuition fees, recruitment of foreign fee-paying students) and institutional governance (towards applying management principles from business to higher education governance structures and procedures) (Naidoo, Shankar, and Veer, 2011). The designation of students as customers in policy discourse has elicited significant debate in scholarly circles (Schwartzman, 1995; Riesman, 1998; Redding, 2005; Naidoo and Jamieson, 2005; McCulloch, 2009; Molesworth, Nixon and Scullion, 2009). The main point of controversy is whether students conceived as customers gain or lose influence in higher education processes and structures; a question that has so far not been adequately empirically explored in the literature (Van Andel, Botas, and Huisman, 2012).[3]

Market-driven reforms have certainly accelerated institutional attention to quality, thus creating new opportunity structures and processes for student involvement (Klemenčič, 2012b): in offering advice and feedback, performing student services, and managing student facilities. Student governments tend to adapt to these new opportunities and expectations, resulting in changes in their organizational structures, practices, priorities and orientations (Klemenčič,

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[3] A notable example is Van Andel, Botas, and Huisman (2012) who explore students' choice in curricular matters and their sense of empowerment through the exercising of their choice as customers in higher education.

2012b). As Stensaker and Michelsen (2012, p.29) report for the case of Norwegian students unions, '[s]tate reforms moving in the direction of a more integrated and marker-oriented higher education field have provided important conditions for a more encompassing student union and a stronger re-institutionalization of student interest', which indeed is characterized by the co-existence of democratic and consumer dimensions of student interests. Student unions are both invited to be involved and invent new pathways of involvement in quality assurance.

Elsewhere, such as in the United Kingdom, the consumer orientation of students has been associated with the increases in the number of complaints raised by students to their universities.[4] The United Kingdom's political commitment to student charters[5] has been attributed both to a general concern about quality and standards in universities, but also to the emerging role of the student as a 'consumer' (Cooper-Hind and Taylor, 2012). Scholars critical of political discourse that casts students as customers point out that students who identify as customers change their expectations and relationships to teachers whom they see more as providers of educational services and credentials, and are expected to serve students in transactional relationships. Students as consumers are inclined to demand more vocationalist orientations in the curriculum, i.e. courses and topics that are directly relevant to employability. The notion of students as consumers arguably implies students' passivity in classroom: students increasingly expect to be provided with knowledge and to be assisted to develop competences rather than assume responsibility for own learning (Van Andel, Botas, and Huisman, 2012). The opposing view, promulgated also in policy initiative such as the United Kingdom's 'Students at the Heart of the System' (BIS, 2011), contests the assumption that conceptualising students as consumers leads to such consequences. The argument is that with more choice, clearly set standards to help students know what to expect from the institution, and clear procedures to complain when these expectations are not met, students are granted more control over their education, which in turn makes them more responsible for own learning and more engaged (Van Andel, Botas, and Huisman, 2012). The assumption here is that students will apply pressure on the institutions to strive towards high-quality provision, thus reinforcing the institutional attention to quality of teaching and learning, support service and overall learning environment (Naidoo, Shankar, and Veer, 2011).

An important implication of conceiving students as customers rather than as democratic constituents or stakeholders is in the role of student proxy agencies – representative student associations to which individual students turn to act on their behalf to solve a particular problem or secure a particular outcome (cf. Klemenčič, 2015). Universities that conceive students as internal constituency or stakeholders tend to be supportive of organised student interests and create formal channels of involving student representatives in institutional quality processes. In the consumer student conception, the stress is more on individual (rather than collective) student feedback on quality. Institutional complaint procedures are put in place as part of students'

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[4] See, for example, 'University complaints by students top 20,000' by Fran Abrams, BBC News, 3 June 2014
[5] https://www.gov.uk/government/news/student-charter-group-gets-down-to-work

contractual rights. Student satisfaction surveys are administered to collect responses from the student body. Given the transactional nature of student-university relationships, the emphasis is perhaps more on students' involvement in view of guaranteeing their individual (and thus collective) satisfaction rather than student involvement in a collective sense for the wellbeing and development of the entire academic community. This distinction lies at the centre of the discussion in the next section.

Students' will and mattering, needs fulfilment and the sense of collective belonging

The nature and context of the relationships between students and universities are in constant flux due to changes in government steering of higher education and overall market conditions in higher education, but also because student expectations towards higher education institutions are changing. In the context of these developments the university-student relationships are also changing. The previous section addressed the formal rules, procedures and informal cultural schemas of university-student relationship as depicted through students' capabilities to be involved in institutional processes and structures. This section turns to individual students and their willingness and motivation to be involved in university quality processes and structures.

Students' agentic orientations are developed in the context of multiple demands on their time derived from the academic requirements, extracurricular opportunities and social and economic circumstances, such as the family obligations, personal relationships and work arrangements. Students' decisions on 'strategies of action' (cf. Swidler, 1986) are also influenced by the broader societal values. The individualist versus collectivist societal value make-up, as depicted in Hofstede's (1997) cultural dimension theory, is inevitably present also in a higher education setting. The question here is whether and to what extent students are willing to act in the interests of the entire university community, when this means acting beyond or even despite of their immediate self-interests.

A university is built on strong interdependencies among its internal constituencies, and this naturally enables collective behaviour. However, the consumerist metaphors of students which have been evoked in corporatist universities may be seen as inhibiting a sense of civic commitment to ones' own university and to collective well-being. The expressive individualism in consumerist culture and choice-based values may indeed undermine the collective spirit which could be seen as inherent in educational establishments, and puts in question – or significantly alters – the pathways to social integration that have been for long held as essential for student retention and college success (Astin, 1985). So, the question here is not whether the university can change students' personal preferences towards self-formation. Rather the question is whether it can also instigate in students a sense of duty towards the university and a sense of belonging, indeed collective belonging, which will in turn lead to commitment to and involvement in university quality enhancement.

To answer this question, this section explores the normative side of the university-student relationship, exposing the variety of theoretically distinct relational ties that comprise the concept of loyalty as discussed earlier. In organisational theory, Materson and Stamper (2003) organised relational ties into three dimensions: need fulfilment, mattering and belonging, and these can be adapted to student-university relationships. Need fulfilment refers to students' perception that their university is providing important benefits to them, and that their individual expectations are compatible with the university's aims. In other words, the student feels that studying at this university is a good for him/her. Mattering refers to the student's perception that the university cares about the wellbeing of its students. Students' satisfaction with education provisions, learning environments and support services comes to the fore here, as do the institutional policies and practices to enhance student engagement in educationally purposeful activities which are seen a critical for students' success (McCormick, Kinzie, and Gonyea, 2013). Belonging refers to students' perceptions of intimate association with the university as demonstrated through perceived insider status, psychological ownership and organisational identification.

Students who have come to feel a strong sense of insider status perceive that they are a central and important part of the university ('I am an important part of my university') (cf. Stamper and Masterson, 2002). This sense fills human needs for inclusion, agency, and control, consequently increases students' sense of responsibility to be involved in and support university functions (cf. Stamper and Masterson, 2002). Psychological ownership is when students have come to feel a strong sense of ownership of their university and perceive it as 'my university' ('I own my university'), which fulfils their need for efficacy and the sense of place, and consequently leads to an expectation of having more voice in institutional processes and structures (cf. Stamper and Masterson, 2002). Organisational identification - when student define themselves in terms of their university ('I am defined by my university') (cf. Stamper and Masterson, 2002) - is especially strong when students perceive their university as distinct (fulfilling particular purpose) and/or prestigious. For example, the European Humanities University, which became 'university-in-exile' in Kaunas, Lithuania after the shutdown by Belarusian authorities in 2004, renders a distinct organisational identification. Collectively, these three concepts have been characterized as representing a sense of belonging in that individuals have invested themselves in the organization and consider it to be a personalized space (Masterson and Stamper, 2002).

Students' sense of belonging is essential for students' positive student experience and academic engagements (Thomas, 2012; Astin, 1985), student retention (Thomas, 2012; Reay et al.,2010; Tinto 1993), and – more generally – for a person's subjective sense of well-being, intellectual achievement, motivation and even health (Walton and Cohen, 2007). The sense of belonging may be challenged by a perceived mismatch between a student's background and the institution's culture, such as, for example, in cases when first-generation students or minority students join elite institutions and feel that their social and cultural practices are inappropriate to those of the university (Thomas, 2012; Reay et al., 2001).

Researchers have argued that higher education officials can intervene in the institutional "habitus" to create conditions that strengthen the sense of students' belonging to the institution, and consequently their integration and agency (Thomas, 2012; Strayhorn, 2012). As Thomas (2012, p.69) suggests: 'The commitment to a culture of belonging should be explicit through institutional leadership in internal and external discourses and documentation such as the strategic plan, website, prospectus and all policies' and 'Staff capacity to nurture a culture of belonging needs to be developed'. According to Thomas (2012) particular care should be devoted to first-year students, to the monitoring of students' behaviour and progress, and to a holistic approach to student engagement, including meaningful interactions between staff and students and supportive peer relations, which at least to some extent could be institutionally facilitated.

The interventions to strengthen students' sense of belonging are often closely linked to the institutional efforts to build a sense of collective identity. Universities use sports events, artefacts with university crests, university magazines, on-line news and student newspapers, graduation ceremonies, alumni events and more as instruments of collective identity building. The institutionally supported activities towards developing a sense of community are perhaps more pronounced in institutions that rely on philanthropic donations as a part of their funding model. If an institution expects alumni donations and other forms of in-kind alumni support (e.g. arranging internships or career advising for students), the administration tends to pay attention to students' sense of belonging to the university, as opposed to belonging to a particular peer group that facilitates social integration.

None of the existing literature on student belonging and university community building has specifically targeted the question of students' motivation to contribute to institutional quality. The argument here is that students' involvement in university quality is conditioned by the students' sense of belonging, mattering and need fulfilment to and by the university. However, this sense of belonging should not be based on individualistic and consumerist notions of higher education as a 'set of consumer choices' (Grigsby, 2009, p.88), but indeed as shared – communal – processes, in which students' self-formation is facilitated by their communal commitment in quality and advancement of the academic communities and the university to which they belong. Universities thus need to cultivate and communicate communal values and facilitate communal processes. There is a difference if students' sense of collective belonging rests on entertainment and private enjoyment – such as sports games as Grigsby (2009) observes at an American university - or when students volunteer to clear snow on campus or when they participate in town hall meetings to discuss future curricular reforms. Nathan (2005, p.56) observes that '[r]ather than being located in its shared symbols, meetings, activities, and rituals, the university for an undergraduate was more accurately a world of self-selected people and events'. To enable student agency in university quality assurance, the task for university is to offset the situation where the 'the ego-centred networks were the backbone of most students' social experience in the university' (Nathan, 2005, p.55).

Conclusion

Several principles emerge from the above discussion that can strengthen student agency in university quality assurance and enhancement. Student engagement in quality needs to be embedded in a sustainable culture of partnership between students – individual or as represented by proxy agencies – and university administration. This implies reciprocity in relationships, a sense of shared responsibilities, and collective commitments to mutually agreed goals. Such culture would not only *offer* students spaces and pathways of involvement, but also grant them a leadership role, in which they have the freedom to *invent* new spaces and pathways of involvement, as well as to redefine and introduce new parameters of institutional quality.

Some scholars, like MacFarlane (2012) perceive student inclusion in quality assurance as the 'domestication of the student voice'. He points to a number of incidents where universities, to protect their reputation, have implicitly and sometimes explicitly encouraged students to over score their perception of quality in national student surveys or favourably assess the university when interviewed by external review panels. Indeed, when student involvement in quality is used as a means of marketing and reputation building in rankings, this not only skews the validity of student feedback, but has potentially adverse effects on how students internalize their own role and relationship to the university: do students frame their relationship to the university mostly in terms of expectations as to what the university will provide them with or they also consider their own contribution, civic engagement within university community and indeed leadership for the purposes of improving the university quality for all? This personal contribution is valuable even if it is not genuinely altruistic, that is if students get involved to build their CV and social network. Even such involvement might yield positive outcomes.

Furthermore, student surveys have become one of the largest and most frequently used data source for quality assessment in higher education (Klemenčič and Chirikov, 2015). The student satisfaction and engagement surveys have been hailed as a driver of institutional reforms towards improvement in students' experience, for example through improvements in student support services, student facilities, and in teaching and assessment (Richardson, 2013). Student surveys and similar instruments signal to students what their university cares about and implicitly what aspects of quality students should be concerned about. Indeed, universities are 'value-based organizations' (Long, 1992) or 'culturally-loaded' organisations (Clark, 1983), in which values and norms guide their members' behaviour. Therefore, universities need to actively manage 'meanings' implicit in its structures, procedures and instruments (Dill, 1982; 2012) in view of the implications these have on students' and their relationship to the university. Building on Dill's, the proposition here is that universities need to attend to the language and symbols that help clarify and give meaning to student involvement in quality enhancement (cf. Dill, 2012).

This chapter has argued that one of the central students' capabilities in higher education includes influence over university quality in the sense of educational provisions, learning environments and support services. But the kind of involvement advocated here is one where students act to improve a certain aspect of university without, or even in spite of, personal self-interest. To elicit

students' will for such involvement, more is needed than formal pathways of involvement, and even more than a sense of duty or social pressure for involvement. A strong collective university identity and of collective belonging is a necessary condition for genuine and conscientious student involvement in university quality assurance and enhancement.

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