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# THE RELEVANCE OF EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES FOR CITIZENSHIP: WHY CUTTING BUDGET FOR STUDENT ASSOCIATIONAL ACTIVITY IS A BAD POLICY

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## *ABSTRACT*

*Universities are tasked with providing rigorous education and training for successful entry into disciplinary and professional fields. Their instrumental roles are situated within broader commitments to political communities through cultural stewardship. As such, the process of socializing students with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of democratic citizenship is a complementary and acute obligation of institutions of higher education. Student Associations arguably serve as strategic enablers of this key responsibility through their unique identities as laboratories of shared governance. When students participate in co-creating their educational and community experiences, the dividends for learning and development escalate. The deliberative processes and activities of student associations resemble those ideal in the broader civil society and should be supported. We suggest that the respective aspirations and impact of universities and student associations are mutually bound though an experiential curriculum of democratic citizenship. Hence, we propose that it is in universities' interest to provide and protect funding for student associations and their activities.*

**Keywords:** university governance, student participation, student governance, student councils, student associations, civic education, functions of higher education

# L'IMPORTANZA DELLE ATTIVITÀ EXTRACURRICOLARI PER LA CITTADINANZA ATTIVA: PERCHÉ TAGLIARE IL BUDGET PER LE ATTIVITÀ DELLE ASSOCIAZIONI STUDENTESCHE È UNA POLITICA SBAGLIATA

## *SINTESI*

*Le università hanno il compito di provvedere a una rigorosa istruzione e formazione per consentire un ingresso efficace nel campo disciplinare e professionale. I loro ruoli fondamentali si collocano all'interno di impegni più ampi verso le comunità politiche mediante la gestione culturale. Essendo tali, il processo di avvicinare gli studenti al sapere, alle competenze e ai dispositivi di una cittadinanza democratica è un obbligo integrativo e critico delle istituzioni di istruzione superiore. Le associazioni studentesche possono fungere da abilitatori strategici di questa responsabilità cruciale grazie alla loro identità unica come laboratori di una governance condivisa. Quando gli studenti partecipano alla creazione delle loro esperienze educative e di comunità, i vantaggi per l'apprendimento e sviluppo aumentano. I processi e le attività deliberativi delle associazioni studentesche rassomigliano a quelli ideali nella società civile più ampia e dovrebbero essere sostenuti. Sarebbe vantaggioso se i rispettivi obiettivi e impatti delle università e delle associazioni studentesche fossero armonizzati e correlati attraverso un curriculum esperienziale di cittadinanza democratica. Pertanto, troviamo che sia nell'interesse delle università procurare e difendere i finanziamenti per le associazioni studentesche e le loro attività.*

**Parole chiave:** governance universitaria, partecipazione studentesca, governance studentesca, consigli studenteschi, associazioni studentesche, educazione civica, funzioni dell'istruzione superiore

## INTRODUCTION

Universities play an important role in the 'making' of citizens and there is extensive evidence and normative discussions about the importance of higher education institutions and processes on citizenship. There are various modes by which higher education institutions can influence citizenship, we can distinguish at least two general ways (see Annette and McLaughlin, 2005, 61): (1) education for citizenship – the process of making citizens – which consists of a multitude of possible influences universities may exert on students, and (2) a broad influence on citizenship beyond its specific and intentional social reproduction. Universities therefore contribute in both direct and indirect ways "*to the stock of social, political and cultural ideas and ideals prevalent in a society at any particular time, many of which are not only significant for citizenship but required by it*" (Annette and McLaughlin, 2005, 61).

The role of the university in Slovenian society has been very important and multifaceted throughout its existence. Under the former regime, with the imperative of building a socialist society it faced immense pressure in terms of designated participation in construction of the economic, education and cultural system (Modic, 1969, 8). Hence, the university was systemically integrated into broader planned societal development and its fundamental mission was the production of working and effective graduates and loyal citizens with a duty to contribute to the development of self-management (Jerovšek, 1987, 186). It lacked the necessary autonomy and was subjected to other goals and subsystems, mostly the economy and politics (Jerovšek, 1987, 181). While there were many calls to reform the university, most came from students even in that period. They mainly pursued the agenda of inclusion in terms of influencing organisational governance and made calls for greater university autonomy (Jovanović, 1970). Eventually, the shift towards greater autonomy, and its subsequent public scrutiny, coincided with the process of regime change when it was the student movements that played a pioneering role by launching the idea of a civil society within the new alternative (social) movements that started to be comprehended as civil society (Fink Hafner, 1992). To be precise, students played an important role in the system of organised youth in the former regime and were concentrated around the ideas of the liberalisation of society and reduction of communist party control (Tomc, 1989, 114) and acted within more or less autonomous organisations and were mainstreamed as part of the Union of Socialist Youth of Slovenia following the abolition of the student organisation as an autonomous structure in 1974. Students had a profound effect on the democratisation of society with its interventions and tangible reform propositions (Vurnik, 2003).

In the period after independence an era of realignment of the university in Slovenian society replaced the state's control over the university and the socialist pressures of indoctrination. Debates that had started in the late 1980s and were already being pushed forward by the university itself and some key intellectuals resulted in a normative framework that made universities and other higher education institutions autonomous. Accordingly, the university came to be perceived as an agent in the service of all of society (Zgaga, 1999, 31–32). Nevertheless, its public character and reliance on public funding makes the three biggest universities in the country susceptible to state influence, which also limits their activities through its para-state agencies as was mentioned earlier in this chapter. Nevertheless, one crucial decision seems to have fundamentally redefined the higher education system and revised the role of the university in contemporary Slovenian society – the Bologna reform. Zgaga (2009) stresses the importance of the Bologna reform in terms of citizenship education since the Bologna model seemingly shapes universities more in line with the requirements of the market economy and less in terms of the personal development and preparation of students for life as active citizens in a democratic society. We can thus say that, by being liberated from the state, especially in terms of totalitarian rule, Slovenian higher education became increasingly dependent on market forces (see, for example, Nadoh Bergoč and Kohont, 2007, 98; Zgaga, 2009, 184) through a political decision induced by globalisation and Europeanisation processes.

The extent to which universities and the higher education sector are positioned toward, against or apart from markets has been unpredictable, and will likely continue to be so. Their organizational peculiarities as so-called, "loosely coupled systems" (Orton and Weick, 1990) afford some level of autonomy – or at least capacity for mitigation – irrespective of the political moment and variations in tightness of state purse strings. Of course, the interplay between states and their universities are also loosely coupled systems in the sense that the pressures and resistances exerted by each can cause inordinately large or small reactions and consequences (Gilmore et al., 1999), making rationality an unsuitable tool for prediction. Universities and general citizenry have this in common, as do universities and their respective students. Accordingly, we will discuss student associations as particularly rich locations of citizenship education, integrating formal and non-formal elements of democratic community building. Our proposition is that the student association is the epicentre of preparation for engaged democratic citizenship after graduation, rendering them – and students' participation in them – «magnified moments" within the Academy, defined as

> *episodes of heightened importance, either epiphanies, moments of intense glee or unusual insight, or moments in which things go intensely but meaningfully wrong. In either case, the moment stands out as metaphorically rich* […] *[and] unusually elaborate* […] (Hochschild, 1994, 16).

While university administrators and policymakers may occasionally develop frustrations or resentments in the face of oppositional conduct by student leaders, they are just as likely to enjoy pride and excitement arising from student leaders' ambitious achievements. The state, its universities, and their students also have this in common.

## EDUCATION FOR CITIZENSHIP AND A GENERAL INFLUENCE OF HE ON CITIZENSHIP

The education for citizenship mode of HE's influence on citizenship generally seeks to promote the link between higher education and citizenship through experiential learning (Annette and McLaughlin, 2005, 63). The key question of this tradition concerns the construction of a curriculum that would enable the civic education of students through forms of active, problem-based and service learning. Integrating classroom instruction with work within the community by sending students out into the community-at-large enables experience to be transposed from service to academic work (Crittenden and Levine, 2013). The main idea is for teachers and students to go out into the community and become acquainted with the conditions there and use this information as a valuable educational resource while providing meaningful service to the community partners and their respective constituents. According to Dewey (1916), there is no better site for political or democratic action than the school itself, the students' own community, thus creating a democratic culture that prepares a person for democratic participation and fosters a democratic environment. In line with this tradition, students are supposed to engage in active inquiry and deliberation in vital community problems since traditional methods of instruction often prevent the active participation of students (Crittenden and Levine, 2013). At the core of such a process of making citizens is an experiential continuum, which also allows for the operations of the school to become a part of the curriculum. Hence, in this tradition students may be given an experience in making decisions that affect their lives in schools, which usually means giving them a voice in the institution's governance, assuring autonomous student-run media and promoting their active engagement and expression (Crittenden and Levine, 2013). Providing conditions for their associational activity also forms part of this approach, which is found to have a positive effect on voting (see Thomas and McFarland, 2010).

In terms of the broader influence of higher education institutions on citizenship, moving beyond the mere 'making' of citizens, we may note several points of influence. One of them is certainly the preservation and development of critical traditions of thought that produce resources for the flourishing and re-conceptualising of the notion of citizenship in any given society (Annette and McLaughlin, 2005, 61). This is consistent with Hillygus' (2005) results that directly indicate relevant disciplines, such as political science, political philosophy, sociology etc., as the most beneficial to creating a virtuous citizenry. However, other disciplines also contribute to citizenship as long as they cultivate the tradition of critical enquiry and maintain a forum for exploring unfashionable and unpopular ideas that fail to be labelled as mainstream. In this manner, the Slovenian university environment, primarily through its student associational activity, managed to have an immense influence on the liberalisation of society in the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s by providing fertile grounds for critical enquiry through perennial struggles for autonomy (see Jovanović, 1970; Jerovšek 1987, 178). For these reasons and others to be discussed, the life and activities of student associations should be reconceptualised as democratic experimentation and as competitive spaces for ideas to form and eventually become mainstream. Even when there are tensions and combative disputes between student leaders, or between them and the administration or governments, such periods and situations serve the valuable democratic function of clarifying what people ultimately want to become mainstream. In other words, either such experimentation generates social advancements, or it helps people to clarify and achieve consensus about what the collective isn't ready and/or willing to adopt as a normal.

Graham (2002) argues that universities also perform a role of cultural custodian by maintaining and revitalising cultural inheritances that are very significant for every citizenship regime due to its embedment in the cultural models of the political community, giving a society a cultural direction (see Delanty, 2001). In addition, the university is also frequently portrayed as a major contributor to civic virtues in terms of the diffusion of practical wisdom in society as well as an indicator of social justice, which is often related to questions of funding and its relationship with equality of opportunity (see Annette and McLaughlin, 2005, 62). We should not forget the important function of universities in educating and training professionals dealing with topics relevant to citizenship. These primarily include teachers who, albeit to a different degree, play perhaps the most important role in the social reproduction through various forms of citizenship curriculum (see the previous section). Finally, universities should (ideally) also exert an important influence on local communities by introducing and nurturing higher moral and ethical values and standards, be it in terms of their internal functioning or dealing with the external environment (demographic or natural). When sustainable development practices (social, political, environmental, economic) are achieved at the university, they have a significant influence on local communities and serve as good examples for other citizens and actors (see Gardner, 1996).

At the end of the day, there is a general notion that, irrespective of any direct intervention of higher education in the process of making the citizenry, the university's influence on the general development of students as citizens is undeniable. Along these lines, Annette and McLaughlin (2005, 68) argue that, in terms of the university's formal curriculum, the study of any serious subject may lead to the development of critical understanding and sensibility as criticism will inevitably arise in the context of a general commitment to the pursuit of truth and freedom of enquiry. The literacy of students in a broad sense and the experience of university life as a whole, hold rich implications for citizenship, hence the question arises as to the need for the direct intervention of the university in the process of 'creating' citizens. As Graham (2002) points out, even though universities may not directly engage in this activity, it is not the case that they are not adding to the general enhancement of understanding that is contributing to the education for democratic citizenship in a broader sense. As a result, the process of learning within higher education institutions, without a direct approach to the making of citizens, is known to have positive effects on the exercise and experience of citizenship in terms of tolerance (see Schuller et al., 2008), civic association and participation (Preston, 2004), voting (Hoskins et al., 2008).

However, there is also a widespread belief that solely the broad and indirect involvement of the university in the creation of a virtuous citizenry is not enough. Hence, many argue for a more comprehensive role of the university. Nussbaum (1996) stresses that universities should build on the foundations of the ideal of liberal education and modify this ideal in order for it to cope with contemporary life. She believes universities should engage in a widespread curriculum reform so as to achieve the capacity for a critical examination of oneself and one's tradition, the development of students' capacity to see themselves as cosmopolitan citizens and the development of an ability to put oneself into the shoes of another (critical narrative imagination). According to her, civic education should reflect membership in the community of dialogue and concern that extends to all human beings.

## CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION, TYPES OF LEARNING AND 'THE' CURRICULUM

### HE citizenship education

Compared to the curriculums of primary and secondary education, the higher education curriculum functions within the classifications described above; however, it also has several distinct characteristics. Generally, the higher education curriculum draws content from a vast pool of subject-specific knowledge and is reconstructed in a format that is well established within each individual discipline (Coate, 2009). To be precise, syllabi normally include topics grouped in categories in a chronological or sequential manner.

Each higher education curriculum is a social force in itself and a product of the interplay of academic considerations, internal and external constraints, and power relations. However, despite the undeniable social significance of higher education curriculums, up until recently the process of their construction by academic institutions remained virtually uncontested. Primarily the state refrained itself from imposing the level of control typical of the primary and secondary levels of education, although there is a growing tendency across different systems to reverse that process. Coate (2009, 78) stresses that state control over the higher education curriculum varies according to the level of study. In this view, academic institutions are left with the greatest freedom over the curriculum at the postgraduate and doctoral levels, which is due to several reasons. First, the higher the level of study, the fewer the people who have the capacity to make specialist judgments about the appropriate content and pedagogical approaches. Second, graduate levels are typically determined by the foundations of the discipline, thus leaving less autonomy to individual institutions or curriculum drafters since core knowledge has proven to be very resilient to change within most disciplines. Consequently, the least specialised levels of the curriculum have the most stable content, whereby specialisation within research at higher levels of study allows for greater freedom over curriculum design. With the initiation into the production of academic knowledge through research at the postgraduate and doctoral levels of study, the curriculum becomes the least controlled – usually left to one (supervisor) or a small number of academics – although this is subject to change by various processes (e.g. the Bologna Process; see Coate 2009, 80; Biesta, 2011).

The higher education curriculum has therefore become increasingly influenced by a collage of different actors with diverse interests, thereby signifying an erosion of academic freedom to construct and implement study programmes. Coate (2009) notes the various orientations of these actors; from local, which aim to develop and shape local concerns – identities, structural barriers and opportunities and societal agendas – through to national and supra-/inter-national orientations. National orientations usually entail aspiration related to the nation-state and generally provide links to state- or nation-building processes (e.g. reference to a common cultural heritage, a common history, political narratives etc.). Conversely, national orientations may also provide curriculum restrictions as a consequence of the increasingly prevalent culture of quality. To be precise, the trend of setting up national quality assurance mechanisms and qualification frameworks – functioning as quality assurance, a confidence booster and a source of transparency – has significantly limited higher education institutions' ability to manipulate curriculums at will (see Coate, 2009, 81). However, national quality assurance frameworks can also influence curriculum construction via the function of promoting regional or national roles as was described in the introductory chapter of this volume. In terms of a supra-/inter-national orientation, the Slovenian higher education system, as is the case of tens of other higher education systems across Europe, has experienced the significant influence of a supra-national orientation by virtue of being part of the Bologna Process that has pushed for the increased standardisation of curricula outputs as well as programme comparability. Yet it should also be said that compliance with certain international standards existed before and has only been reinforced by the Bologna Process as a significant number of programmes and institutions from different systems have been inclined to look up to the reputable programmes of distinguished institutions around the world.

### Citizenship curriculum purposes

The character of the curriculum and consequently education processes are therefore critical agents of the development of individuals within society (Ross, 2002, 51). There are two primary groups of distinct views on these processes – reflective and transformative. The former builds on Durkheim's functionalist tradition that considers education the reflection of society, its imitation and reproduction. In essence, it is the way in which society prepares the essential conditions of its existence. The educational function of passing the knowledge and skills acquired on to the next generation ensures stability generated by the continuous self-replication of society. On the other hand, the transformative view of education advocates the developmental role of education and its ability to provide grounds for a person to overcome limitations posed at both the individual and societal level (see Dewey, 1916). This transformative view is presented in the works of authors focusing on educational effects on social mobility and social equality (e.g. Dewey, Rawls), whereby education has the function of liberation from limiting influences of the social group and environment as well as nurturing the will for personal growth. In line with Rawls (1971), education therefore should not only be judged on the grounds of its returns in production and training abilities – in accordance with the economic logic of a positive return on the investment in education – but also in terms of its general (civic, egalitarian) value for the citizen and society in general. In this context, it is vital to stress that a significant part of the academic community shares a negative view that regards education as one of the core mechanisms for maintaining the existing social structure (see Williams, 1961; Apple, 1990). Their rationale is that, by having control over the formulation and implementation of the curriculum, political and economic structures minimise the possibility of societal and economic change and replicate existing social and economic inequalities (see Ross, 2002, 52).

Ross (2002) discerns three distinct curriculum models which recur in the history of education and are based on their differences regarding their sets of aims, ambitions and pedagogic styles. The first and most dominant one is a content-driven curriculum designed via the construction of formally delimited zones of subjects and disciplines. The content-driven curriculum model builds on the revered academic tradition, adapted to teaching from a pool of factual knowledge and has clearly defined albeit often irrelevant subject boundaries (Ross, 2002, 53). The core idea of this model is that there exists a distinct and hierarchically arranged body of knowledge that needs to be absorbed in order to master a certain subject area. The objectives-driven curriculum differs in terms of its view of schooling since it is conceived in a utilitarian fashion. In line with this view, subjects are designed in order to demonstrate the highest level of utility for society or a certain social group. In essence, this model focuses on setting out specific learning objectives and the consequent construction of curricula rather than focusing on a detailed programme of study. As a result, a curriculum is an arrangement of elements that produce skills judged as necessary, thus adding relevance to the thesis that the individual can be moulded in a predetermined way. The process-driven curriculum, by contrast, focuses on the processes of learning contemporary problems, groups and subjects together and rejects formal teaching methods (Ross, 2002, 55). Hence, this curriculum model concentrates on how one should learn rather than what one should know, thereby making the process of knowledge acquisition more important than the knowledge itself.

It proves to be a real challenge to frame citizenship education within one of the three distinct curriculum models presented above. Further, Ross (2002, 56) argues that it can be framed variously, to meet every one and also all of them at the same time. Different states and educational regimes also offer different rationales for introducing or maintaining various forms of citizenship education: 1) to push for knowledge about and understanding of society and its institutions (a content-driven curriculum); 2) to determine national identity, establish a civic culture and pride, and establish the capacity to act as a good citizen (an objective-driven curriculum); or 3) to instil the ability to reflect societal processes and critically examine them (a process-driven curriculum). Which model best characterises Slovenian higher education shall be examined in the empirical part of this chapter.

### Citizenship curriculum types

In general, when we talk about a curriculum we must bear in mind that a curriculum is essentially:

> *the plans made for guiding learning in the schools, usually represented in retrievable documents of several levels of generality, and the actualization of those plans in the classroom, as experienced by the learners and as recorded by an observer; those experiences take place in a learning environment that also influences what is learned* (Glatthorn et al., 2012, 4).

Citizenship education may therefore be understood as an institutionalised form of acquiring political knowledge that takes place within formal educational frameworks such as schools and universities and informal frameworks of various associational activity and the like (Ichilov, 1994). In its specific or diffused form (see Ichilov, 2003), citizenship education encompasses the entire triad of learning experiences – formal, non-formal and informal. Formal learning experiences occur in an organised structured context – formal educational frameworks – that usually leads to some kind of formal certification and is intentional from the learner's perspective (see European Commission 2001). In contrast, despite also being intentional from the learner's point of view, non-formal learning experiences are embedded in activities that contain important learning elements but are not explicitly designed as learning. On the contrary, informal learning experiences are generally incidental, do not lead to certification and are a result of daily life activities. They are not structured through learning objectives, the organisation of time and learning support. Student government associations can arguably be described as hybrid configurations of formal, informal and non-formal education in the sense that they are a formal structural component of the university with many defined roles and activities; and yet also serendipitous, situational and fluid with various short-term personalities and activities. Traditions and current moments coexist in these organizations, and that dynamism resonates with the best of pedagogies.

In curricular terms, Birzea (2000) distinguishes three types of curriculum provisions that correspond to the abovementioned types of learning experiences. The author stresses that curriculum provisions for citizenship learning may take the form of a formal curriculum, a non-formal curriculum or an informal curriculum. Formal curriculum provisions involve separate or specialised courses, integrated programmes (part of a broader course) and cross-curricular themes (citizenship curricular contents woven into all specialised subjects of the formal curriculum). Non-formal curricular provisions are realised through extra-curricular, co-curricular, extra-mural or other out-of-school activities organised by the educational institution and connected to the formal curriculum. This includes participation in institutional decision-making, outdoor education (visits, excursions, exchanges), team memberships (clubs, associations, interest groups and pressure groups), community involvement (voluntary activities, meetings with elected representatives, awareness-raising campaigns) and practical placements involving work experience. The informal curriculum is, by contrast, carried out through incidental learning. This involves a set of daily, natural and spontaneous situations that occur in school life and are not organised by teachers. It needs to be said that the informal curriculum proved to be equally important as the formal and non-formal ones, although teaching staff usually do not sufficiently take it into account due to the formal curriculum being the criteria for financing and public accountability and formal curriculum-centred teacher training (Birzea, 2000, 45).

## THE STUDENT ASSOCIATION: EPICENTRE AND FINISHING SCHOOL FOR ENGAGED CITIZENSHIP

### Location matters: The University, social capital, and the future of citizenship

There have been – and continue to be – countless research projects and scholarly publications focused on the respective and intersecting topics of youth work, social trust, citizenship education and democratic participation. All of these are appealing subjects for study and discussion among academics, policy makers and everyday people at the proverbial kitchen tables and cafes. They are also widely understood as essential for achieving instrumental goals for development and sustainability of emerging and long-standing democratic societies. Utterances about them in the public sphere take many forms, often including: romantic writings (essays, poems, songs); hollow platitudes and promises made by politicians, technocrats, and marketeers; abstract theorization by dispassionate academics; and fiery yet vague motivational speeches and demands by self-appointed activists. Occasionally however, the subjects are addressed in the form of thoughtful, inclusive and actionable verbal and written work products that elucidate goals, strategies, benchmarks and assessable outcomes informed by consultative and transparent processes that elicit the trust of whomever is being targeted for support.

The postsecondary (or "tertiary) educational sector is of primary importance in reproducing and building upon a nation's social capital. While debates may rage regarding what knowledge is worth knowing, and the extent to which market demands hold sway over disciplinary and aesthetic ones, it remains the case that a nation's universities are tasked with producing its stewards. Universities hold a distinct role in civil society through which official curricula and other socialization mechanisms are provided for successive generations of citizens. They are microcosms of democratic practice in that they are contested spaces simultaneously part of, and apart from their host communities. They are institutional citizens with concomitant civic obligations. As such, they have multiple, complex and interconnected missions and agendas involving political, economic and social interests fuelled by local, regional, national and global demands. These are additional reasons for our arguments about the importance of student associations. Disciplinary knowledge covered in the classrooms is generally stateless, but the places where students will apply it after graduation are local beneficiaries. During their time in university, the student association is thus simultaneously the laboratory of democratic participation and its finishing school. If universities and the Academy more generally is to ensure students complete their studies with the knowledge, skills and dispositions necessary to be effective professionals and productively engaged citizens, the student association is a key partner worthy of support in all forms, including budgetary.

### The relevance of student associations for citizenship education

Student Associations are the singular entities within the Academy situated at the nexus between leadership development and shared governance, essential qualities of engaged democratic citizenship. As such, we argue that they are especially potent strategic enablers for generating the knowledge, skills, values and dispositions which will animate their future participation as citizens. This is not to suggest that the theoretical and/or practical elements of the university curricula, pre-university activities, and/or additional areas of extra-curricular participation have no part in such socialization and preparation. Rather, we suggest that Student Associations are uniquely positioned as semi-autonomous "citizenship workspaces" within the bureaucratic educational institution, which is itself concentric to the broader local, regional, national and global civil society.

We further argue that the activities and lived experiences of students within these associations have not been given the attention and recognition they merit. Indeed, it is quite common for university students' actions and assertions to be dismissed by those outside the Academy with the preface, "when you get out in the real world…" Such reductionist sentiments imply that the student operates in a sanitized, privileged or otherwise disconnected bubble with no significant relationship to the broader society. In other words, there is a colloquial notion that the university milieu is not "real," and by extension the student association isn't either. This idea has been repeated countless times with little critique. While at face value it may seem to code for the student being younger than the person saying it, consider that professors of all ages often hear the same criticism of their own activities. As such, rhetorically positioning the University as something other than real is a political manoeuvre more so than a statement of fact. This is relevant here because the lived experiences of student associations are analogous to those of the many other locations – whether official or informal – where graduates will work, live, serve and play over the course of their adult lives, and how they will approach socializing their own prospective children as well. The decision processes for determining what issues to engage, what educational or even social activities to undertake, whether and/or how to participate in an action or conflict, or even what to do about a member's bad behaviour all serve to cultivate the very ingredients necessary for engaged democratic citizenship. Indeed, the problem of occasionally arrogant and brash student leaders enable one to learn the risks and remedies associated with the risk of autocratic leaders in the broader society. Indeed, the tensions that arise when student leaders and university administrators critique and challenge each other does the same.

## CASE EXAMPLE: THE BUDGETARY POLITICS OF CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LJUBLJANA

### The landscape and modes of financing of student organizational and associational activities at the University of Ljubljana

Students of the University of Ljubljana are one of the most organised and represented students in Europe according to the characteristics of institutional student structures (Cvikl, 2010, 51). There are two dominant pillars of institutional student activities that are of key relevance for citizenship and function as the main forums of non-formal citizenship education – the Student Council of the University of Ljubljana and the Student Organisation of University of Ljubljana with its affiliated and/or supported student organizations.

#### *The Student Council of the University of Ljubljana*

The Student Council of the University of Ljubljana is the only formal student representative body of the University of Ljubljana and is defined in the Higher Education Act (2017), Statute of the University of Ljubljana (University of Ljubljana, 2017a) and the Rules of procedure of the Student Council of the University of Ljubljana (University of Ljubljana, 2017b). Its basic role is to discuss, formulate and co-decide on all matters relating to the rights and duties of students, candidates for the rector and programs of student extracurricular activities in higher education institutions, in cooperation with academic community in the broader sense (Higher Education Act). Members of the student councils are annually democratically elected legal representatives of views and interests of all students at all levels of the University (university, faculty level). There are 26 faculty student councils and 52 student representatives in the university student council and student representatives sit in the university's management board, the Senate and senate commissions. The student councils' primary mission is to represent students on all levels of university governance. Student representatives at the faculty level are delegated to the university level and as at the faculty level, they represent students' interests in the Senate and the Senate Commissions. Student also councils discuss and provide student opinion on university or faculties' documents and procedures in all student-related matters. Student councils also draft opinions on candidacies for university and faculty leadership, elect student members of university governance bodies. In addition, student councils also implement different co-curricular programs and projects for students in co-operation with formal and non-formal groups of students.

In the case of the Student Council of the University of Ljubljana, all programs, projects, actions and other activities concerning student councils are financed through two main sources. The first one is an annual student contribution every student pays when enrolling into a programme and the second is the university-level Student Council budget. The central budget derives from the governmental financing of the University of Ljubljana, whereby the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport defines the size of the budget allocated for extracurricular activities of students. Within this given budget the university's management board, which also includes student representatives, defines total budget for Student Council of the University of Ljubljana. According to the Rules on financial operations of Student Council of the University of Ljubljana (University of Ljubljana, 2008) there are two parts of the total budget. First part is allocated to the faculty-level student councils according to the number of students per faculty, work programme, report for the past period and degree of participation of student representatives at the university level (60 % of total budget). The other part is used by the university student council for its operation and financing of different activities (40 % of total budget) (University of Ljubljana, 2017a; University of Ljubljana, 2017b).

### *The Student Organization of University of Ljubljana*

The Student Organization of the University of Ljubljana, the second main pillar of institutionalized student activities, is a sui generis organizational form established in 1990, regulated by the Students Association Act (1994) and Student Constitution (2011). The student organization was established during the process of democratization of the Republic of Slovenia. After Slovenia gained its independence from Yugoslavia, the student organization became a legal successor of Association of Socialist Youth of Slovenia, which was an official youth organization of the ruling communist party in Yugoslavia. The newly formed student parliament body passed the Act of Establishment of the Student Organization of the University of Ljubljana on 15th of May 1990, while the first Student Constitution, determining the structure and functioning of the organization, was passed on 27th of November 1990. On 20th of June 1994, the National Parliament of Republic of Slovenia passed the Students Association Act, determining the position, functioning and legal activities of the self-governed student community. The act has not been changed since. The Student constitution has been changed several times since it was first put in motion (Cvikl, 2010).

The student organization is an autonomously and democratically organized community composed of all active students, which represents the rights and interests of the students of the University of Ljubljana. Its main purpose is to care for the quality of study and quality and diversity of student life primarily focusing on educational policy, social and economic welfare of students and international cooperation. It is composed of 30 different faculty-level student organizations, with its 45-member Student Assembly as the highest representative body and elected board, and a director. The board has further powers to appoint managers of various bodies, while the judicial powers are vested in the electoral commission and other supervisory authorities (the Senate, the Tribunal and prosecutors). As such, the student organization is frequently portrayed as political incubator and "a state within a state" since it heavily resembles the organization of the state. The Student Organization is, as in the case of the Student Council, organized at the faculty and university levels. Generally, at faculty level smaller projects, programs and actions are implemented while larger and more complex activities, some of them permanent, are held at the university level (publishing, sports, forums for student welfare, international cooperation etc.) (Cvikl, 2010; Student organization of the University of Ljubljana, 2016).

Student organization of the University of Ljubljana is financed by the Slovenian Student Union, which gets it resources from a unique student work instrument – a concession fee for student work – representing a form of taxation of short-term student participation in the labour market. In essence, this means that the students managed to negotiate with the government to acquire a piece of the pie coming from taxation of student work for the representation of students' interests and extracurricular activities. The allocated share of the entire budget of the Slovenian Student Union to Student organization of the University of Ljubljana is set in the Student Constitution. Taking into account the size of the University of Ljubljana, this amounts to 34 per cent of the overall Slovenian Student Union's budget (Cvikl, 2010; Student Constitution, 2011).

### *Student Associations*

Less regulated part of the student associational activity present active student associations that operate within a broader frame of (student academic community). They take the form of relevant disciplinary and/or

***Table 1: Annual expenditure of the Student Council of the University of Ljubljana (Source: University of Ljubljana, 2018).***

| Year | Student councils at the faculty level | University Student Council | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2006 | 31.505,59 | 41.528,96 | 73.034,55 |
| 2008 | 43.634,30 | 29.089,54 | 72.723,84 |
| 2010 | 43.634,30 | 29.089,54 | 72.723,84 |
| 2012 | 43.634,30 | 29.089,54 | 72.723,84 |
| 2014 | 31.367,45 | 15.000,00 | 46.367,45 |
| 2016 | 34.125,90 | * | 34.125,90 |
| 2017 | 18.820,08 | 12.546,72 | 31.366,80 |

* Consequences of inactivity of the Student Council of the University of Ljubljana in this period.

interest-specific student associations and with its diversification significantly contribute to student organizing. Despite being completely autonomous in terms of their programmes, these organizations predominantly rely on the budget allocated for student organizing. As membership in student associations is not prescribed and rests on the association's policy and motivation of students, the membership numbers span from a few dozen to several hundred students. As some of the established associations are not active, a rough estimate is puts forward around one hundred and fifty active student associations (Vinko, 2016). Student associations operating within this university framework are mostly financed through the central student organization's annual open call for financing student associational activities. These associations generate additional income through other minor faculty-level or student body-specific calls as well as occasionally sponsorships and membership fees.

## Citizenship implications of the politics of financing student organizations

> *Don't tell me what you value, show me your budget, and I'll tell you what you value*
> (Joe Biden on the Budget as an Expression of Values, 23 July 2007)

As was colourfully indicated by a seasoned statesman, observing the budgetary patterns allows one to see a deeper image of preference, priorities and things that matter to the ones holding the power to decide. The indirect allocation of funds for student organizing may thus be a very indicative measure of relevance and commitment attributed to citizenship from university and state leadership. In addition, the allocation of budget across different dimensions of student organizing and participation in university governance also revels the less and more needed activities and the preferred vision of student engagement in the eyes of decision-makers.

From a comparative perspective, primarily if we take into account the budget of the Student organization of the University of Ljubljana, the budget of the Student Council of the University of Ljubljana presents a miniscule part of financial resources available for student organizing and associational activities. Putting this aside, the student council's budget reveals substantial changes throughout the years. Koudela (2018), the president of the Student Council of the University of Ljubljana, indicated the main reason for the budget reduction was the global financial crisis and the subsequent austerity measures by the state leadership which cut financing of the public higher education system in Slovenia. This was translated to financial reduction for the Student Council of the University of Ljubljana and in the last few years, students lost excessive amount of resources. Students stress that budgetary negotiations with the university's management board are always narrated by the reduction of the financing of the public higher education system (Koudela, 2018). To support students' perceptions, according to an overview of annual expenditures of university and faculty-level student councils, a rapid decrease is demonstrated after 2008 (see Table 1). This amount has been more than halved in the years following the financial crisis, a pattern that importantly cut public funding of higher education across Europe (Ritzen, 2015, 2).

As mentioned above, the budget for the Student organization of the University of Ljubljana reveals a more complete picture of the support for student associational activity as it is up to hundred times the size of the Student Council's budget (see Table 2). Even a brief scan of the student organization's budget reveals that it was on a substantial rise, peaking at 6,3 million Euros at 2010, and then plummeted for more than a third and stayed at that level ever since. If we take a look at its distribution to different areas/clusters of activities, there are some interesting patterns. While the amount of financial resources for research remained virtually the same, support to international cooperation – activities nurturing

***Table 2: Student organization of the University of Ljubljana: annual expenditure by areas (Source: Student organization of the University of Ljubljana, 2018).***

| | 2006 | 2008 | 2010 | 2012 | 2014 | 2016 | 2017 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **research and education** | 214.779,20 | 207.760,45 | 364.011,40 | 179.218,87 | 204.348,16 | 174.471,50 | 190.985,53 |
| **social and health affairs** | 425.439,60 | 564.379,24 | 750.570,49 | 590.944,48 | 1.012.061,22 | 895.588,13 | 1.028.473,61 |
| **international cooperation** | 55.572,74 | 77.176,45 | 144.102,52 | 142.466,74 | 82.369,06 | 150.181,20 | 149.742,37 |
| **culture** | 449.829,88 | 307.363,21 | 492.549,64 | 333.511,05 | 601.428,41 | 264.045,82 | 366.575,62 |
| **media** | 174.789,95 | 287.085,29 | 639.012,26 | 355.169,95 | 280.832,21 | 236.442,74 | 250.506,01 |
| **student associations** | 132.362,27 | 107.379,51 | 399.741,67 | 248.870,57 | 127.571,79 | 127.409,17 | 149.499,60 |
| **student organisations on faculty level** | 388.759,73 | 439.241,83 | 641.406,12 | 394.623,18 | 231.991,70 | 334.860,44 | 331.813,59 |
| **representatives and student bodies** | 330.187,37 | 356.874,20 | 420.055,33 | 294.520,19 | 277.522,81 | 235.426,23 | 262.691,25 |
| **sport, social events, extracurricular projects** | 309.200,65 | 477.916,91 | 605.076,62 | 196.121,05 | 263.729,97 | 394.433,92 | 752.992,40 |
| **support and operating expenditures** | 2.004.370,57 | 2.189.356,62 | 1.875.966,23 | 1.424.156,03 | 923.187,12 | 847.304,57 | 840.080,98 |
| **TOTAL** | **4.485.291,96** | **5.014.533,71** | **6.332.492,28** | **4.159.602,11** | **4.005.042,45** | **3.660.163,72** | **4.323.360,94** |

mobility and acquisition of intercultural competences – went down to one half of the 2010 budget in the year 2014. Likewise, the resources to support media, i.e. expenditures for operation of student radio station, student TV and student newspaper, decreased by almost two thirds from 2010 to 2014. As student-led media proved to be an important element of various non-formal educational activities, instrument of public agenda-framing beneficial to students and a tool to involve students as individuals and engage them in public affairs (see LSE, 2013), this budget cut may have serious damaging effects on citizenship of students.

A similar situation may be observed for support to student associations that also dropped by almost two thirds from 2010 and amounted only to 127 thousand Euros in 2014. This drop of support effectively meant a decimated budget for the student associations' annual funding call and decrease of continuous support for key activities of student associations. This went hand in hand with a two-third budget cut for student organizations at the faculty level as well as for support to sport, social events and extracurricular projects. Further indication that the key laboratories of citizenship in higher education did not prove important enough for the decision makers to keep them immune from the budget cuts is the allocation of financial resources to support sport, social events and extracurricular projects. This area of activities lost two thirds of resources from 2010 to 2012, although the curve for 2014 has increased to 43 % of the 2010 value.

On the other hand, the budget for social and health affairs did increase during the times of crisis and immediately after it, thus hinting that the welfare of students was prioritized over internationalization, student involvement in university governance and broader citizenship practice at the level of university as well as individual member institutions. At the same time, we have to note that the budget for culture varies severely between periods with increases and decreases of almost 100 % from one period to another. According to a seasoned associate of the Student organization of the University of Ljubljana, there are two main reasons for that; the first is the increased taxation of student work by the state that consequently brought the reduction of student work in the labour market and lower resources for the Slovenian Student Union and its organisational forms, while the second rests in the decisions of student democratic bodies, i.e. student budget is prepared by the elected board and passed by the 45-member Student Assembly that prioritize budgetary areas according to their preferences (Vinko, 2018).

If we look at the faculty level and take an example of the Faculty of Social Sciences we may observe a similar kind of pattern. Despite having one of the most vibrant student communities with a very active Student Council, Student organization and twelve active student associations, mostly organized according to the disciplinary principle. The implementation of projects ranging from publishing activities, sport, tourism, education, international cooperation etc. makes them pivotal for retaining

***Table 3: Student organization of the Faculty of social sciences (FSS); annual expenditure (Source: Student organization of the University of Ljubljana, 2018; University of Ljubljana, 2018).***

| | 2006 | 2008 | 2010 | 2012 | 2014 | 2016 | 2017 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Student organization of the FSS** | 20.144,82 | 19.443,02 | 16.540,73 | 15.902,08 | 12.323,05 | 8.008,59 | 11.459,05 |
| **Studet council of the FSS** | 2.168,38 | 6.648,54 | 6.573,51 | 7.876,49 | 8.240,28 | 1.399,75 | 3.256,40 |

lively and critical student community. However, this is not reflected in the resources granted to the student organizations since Student organizations budget, among other things the source to cover annual call for student associations' activities, amounted to mere 12 thousand Euros. As a result, faculty student associations face severe difficulties in acquisition of funding to operate and implement activities and are thus granted annual budgets ranging from 400,00 to 8.000,00 Euros according to our survey questionnaire for student communities and interviews (Marinič et al., 2014).

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

We argue for substantial, increasing and sustainable investment in student governance systems and their constituent organizations. As has been discussed herein, student associations and their activities contribute powerfully to the academic mission of the university, especially in terms of experiential education and co-management of the institution. They are part and parcel of best practices in applied citizenship and democratic education within the university, providing key foundational preparation for engaged democratic participation and leadership after finishing their formal studies. This has important implications for the university and students alike, but also for students' future professions, communities, families and nations.

Perhaps technocrats and elected government leaders would be resistant to such a call on the grounds that student organizations are either non-academic or occasionally a disruptive headache through their protests and demands (aren't faculty and administrators also demanding at times?). The keepers of the purse strings might secretly or overtly assume that reducing or withholding funding is prudent in order to prevent students from being too troublesome, or perhaps genuinely see benefit in directing precious resources toward formal curricula. To this we say, be careful what you wish for. If students don't receive both the encouragement and opportunity to develop their agency within the rather benign yet dynamic environment of a university, then how would they possibly develop the knowledge, skills and dispositions necessary for engaged and productive citizenship after graduation? Indeed, people, communities and nations are messy. This is not a problem to solve; it is a business condition and should be accepted as such.

While there are likely many times when the student association is an enthusiastic and helpful partner to the university and government, the point here is that even when there is conflict between stakeholders, there is value to be found in service to democratic values. Michael Ignatieff, Canada's former Leader of the Official Opposition rightly noted this in a speech at Stanford University in 2010, remarking on the critical role of the Loyal Opposition:

> *the opposition performs an adversarial function critical to democracy itself. Governments have no right to question the loyalty of those who oppose them. Adversaries remain citizens of the same state, common subjects of the same sovereign, servants of the same law* (Ibbitson 2012).

In practice, the key is to make certain that people – in this case students and their association – have plenty of preparation, opportunities, material and dispositional support to become usefully messy; for the results of occasional fights to be worth the stress. Student organizations are superb training grounds for this principle. For these reasons, we argue that the activities and programs beyond university classrooms, whether student-run as in the case of Student Associations, or those managed by the university (dormitories, leadership training, student support services, community-service learning pedagogies, internships and co-ops, etc.) all hold massive potential as living laboratories for preparing their members and participants for active and effective democratic citizenship. Whether one is inclined toward critical theoretical frameworks or functionalist ones, we nonetheless benefit from examining how the schools we have can enable the democracies we want. In this sense, there is opportunity to be leveraged for those of any perspective to be found in studying and working with student-run associations and university-run student social and support programs. University leaders and politicians constantly speak about students as future citizens, waxing poetic about democracy and the future. It is always a good time to enact the colloquial expression and put the money where their mouth is.

# POMEN OBŠTUDIJSKIH DEJAVNOSTI ZA DRŽAVLJANSTVO: ZAKAJ JE ZMANJŠEVANJE PRORAČUNA ZA DRUŠTVENE DEJAVNOSTI SLABA POLITIKA

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## *POVZETEK*

*Poslanstvo univerz je zagotavljanje kakovostnega izobraževanja in usposabljanja za uspešen prehod na profesionalna in disciplinarna polja. Prav tako pa je omenjena, bolj instrumentalna funkcija univerz, vpeta v njihovo širše predajanje političnim skupnostim skozi različne oblike kulturnega skrbništva. Tako process socializacije študentov z znanjem in veščinami kakovostnega demokratičnega državljanstva lahko razumemo kot komplementarno in nujno dolžnost visokošolskih institucij. Študentsko organiziranje služi kot strateški fasilitator omenjene dolžnosti, saj so ravno ta okolja laboratoriji skupnega demokratičnega odločanja. Ko študenti participirajo pri soustvarjanju svojih izobraževalnih in skupnostnih izkušenj, se potencialni učinki na učenje in vsesplošen razvoj skokovito povečajo. Deliberativni procesi in aktivnosti študentskega združevanja hkrati močno spominjajo na procese demokratičnega udejstvovanja v širši družbi ter imajo lahko nanje tudi blagodejen učinek. V prispevku zagovarjamo stališče, da je procese študentskega udejstvovanja vredno zaščititi in podpirati, saj študentsko organiziranje predstavlja pomemben vidik izkustvenega kurikula državljanske vzgoje v visokem šolstvu ter tako pomembno prispeva tudi k izpolnjevanju demokratične funkcije univerze ter njenem doprinosu k izgradnji demokratične politične skupnosti.*

**Ključne besede:** upravljanje universe, participacija študentov, študentska politika, študentski sveti, študentska društva, državljanska vzgoja, visoko šolstvo

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