

CHALLENGES OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' PARTICIPATION IN THE LIFE OF SOUTHERN AND WESTERN EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES

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Abstract

Our presentation gives an outlook on the differences between the participation of students in the life of Higher Education Institutions in Western Europe and in Southern Europe. Hence, we examine the relevance and efficacy of internationalization in structuring the management system in universities in an international context, where international students are encouraged to participate in the university life through different student bodies and management staff.

With the Erasmus program launched in 1987, European students started exploring student life within the 33 participating nations. Nevertheless, multiple initiatives were taken by universities to ease the mobility of international students as they find their way to study in Europe.

Throughout our research, a fundamental issue of discrepancies was found by some academics, like Paul Trowler and his co-authors (2002), which reside in the creation part of Higher Education policies in parallel to the implementation at the institutional level. Multiple communities play a role as policymakers when it comes to social norms and connections between Higher Education policies and institutional reforms that also includes the roles, rights, obligations, and well-being of students. However, the participation of international students seems different from local students.

Therefore, we explore international students' opportunities in contribution and development their abilities as leaders, and from another side, we investigate the gaps affecting the participation of students in the university life.

Our starting point to this research is that education has changed over the years and in the last vicennial, the education reforms started affecting educational institutions and changing the participation of students in the institutional life, not only on a pedagogical level, but also on an institutional and managerial level. (Németh & Pukánszky, 2020) Consequently, we navigate the current literature that deals with the student participation in the life of HEI, whether it is in Western Europe or Southern Europe.

Our research's theoretical framework is the constructivism and the socio-constructivism theory which, along with the 21st century reforms, support our research since they place an emphasis on the continuity of personal and professional fulfillment for both students and institutional personnel; thus, they raise the standard of Higher Education by developing effective actors within the institutions. (Kálmán, 2016; Laal & Salamati, 2012; Garwe, 2015)

Therefore, we would want to present how our research on the students' involvement in Higher Education Institutions can be useful in an international context from an international perspective and how could it improve with the challenges faced.

Keywords: *Higher education institutions, internationalization, participation, Western Europe, Southern Europe.*

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