



## Student Democracy - Politics

Submitted to  
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Lecture  
Student Democracy - Cluj

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# A. Foundations

## 1) Students

### Role

- *The future of our communities:* our role in the communities is to get the knowledge we learned and practice it. The business students now will be the leaders of the companies in the future, the medicine students will be our doctors and engineering students are now the ones who will construct new buildings in our cities.
- *Problem solvers:* it's not to take the knowledge we get and practice it, but it's to add our new vision to bring a new and nontraditional solution of the problems we have, and we will get.
- *Passionate visionaries:* this generation may have a different vision and way of thinking than the previous generation which can give the motivation to change. The new ways of thinking will give us new understanding of the problems to find new solutions for them
- *Community educators:* In addition to practicing the knowledge in our jobs, we have another role which is to share it, not only use it. While sharing knowledge that will help to get more members of the society to get involved and get responsibility to be active citizens.

### Interests

Student interest in a topic holds so much power. When a topic connects to what students like to do, engagement deepens as they willingly spend time thinking, dialoging, and creating ideas in meaningful ways. Making learning contextual to real world experience is a way of learning technique with differentiating for student interests.

#### Short term: while studying

- Study life for students is not just about subjects, research and exams. The years of study, particularly during the university study period, are very special. Students love to have fun during their studies, to make friends, to enjoy educational programs and to have a fun, modern and unconventional study program.

#### Long term: after studying

- Career: One of the most important student interests can be profession. Some students may be recorded in colleges and universities in order to obtain the profession or job they always dream of, so one of their most important concerns is to get the profession they want.

Any focus here is on the result in which the student will receive his studies. Here we may address the end of the student to get this function specifically and for this is why the role of this profession may be in solving the problem of what is central to him and may be because of the social center of this post or may be for the high salary provided by this profession in other professions. Many students check the possible salary of a specific job. Utdanning.no

## Obligations

- Attending classes on time and regularly being prepared for classes with all necessary supplies taking good care of university property and completing all assignments and meeting deadlines.
- It's good to mention that students' obligations are not limited to the academic level, but they have obligations outside their universities. They have societal and moral obligations towards others in using what they have learned to help their communities solve dilemmas and achieve a better life for all.
- Obligations as a group: To collaborate with each other on group assignments.

## 2) Student inclusion in democratic processes

### Arguments for:

- A lot of students in today's society lack the **communication skills** required to function optimally in the real world. A lot of them don't know their own identity and don't have an opinion on important matters that affect us.

In the process of including students to participate in the democratic processes, they will indirectly be forced to think more open minded and creative to form their own opinion. To form your own opinion, it will require research on the cases that matter from multiple angles. Thereby they will be more informed and become stronger within themselves on what they stand for. To know yourselves is an important factor to communicate better, to express who you are as a person on multiple levels.

- The education will also be of **higher quality**. You will learn to interact and argue with others on a formal basis. Today job recruiters look for things on your CV that make you stand out of the crowd. To have been part of the student democracy tells that you have been part of group decisions making. A lot of job recruiters will think of you as a

more creative person and that you are not afraid to participate, be responsible and transparent if needed.

- Easier to know **what students want**. The university will benefit as well, because it would be easier to understand what the student wants in terms of the teaching possibilities. A by-product of this would be that the university would have higher grades among students and make it a highly recommended place to study.

### Arguments against:

- A sub point against is the **lack of competence** among students. Some may argue that students lack the wisdom of the elderly and the knowledge required to make good decisions from an early age. That we are not competent enough to form our own opinion and that school leaders should be responsible for us instead, because they in fact have more experience in life than us students.

Many students also have a biased worldview. Students think that their needs are the most important one and have little empathy for other social groups in many cases. The problem is that we tend to think we are the center of the universe, when we in the bigger picture actually are a small fraction of it and that the universe is so much bigger than us.

- **A lack of capabilities** to satisfy students' wishes at school is a point against student democracy for the University related to funding problems.

## 3) The clause of intention

All learning programs will be designed with the purpose of helping young people build twenty-first century competencies which focus on “what’s next” versus “what’s now”. These fall into four main categories:

**Critical thinking and problem-solving:** the students will develop the ability to use knowledge, facts, and data to effectively solve problems.

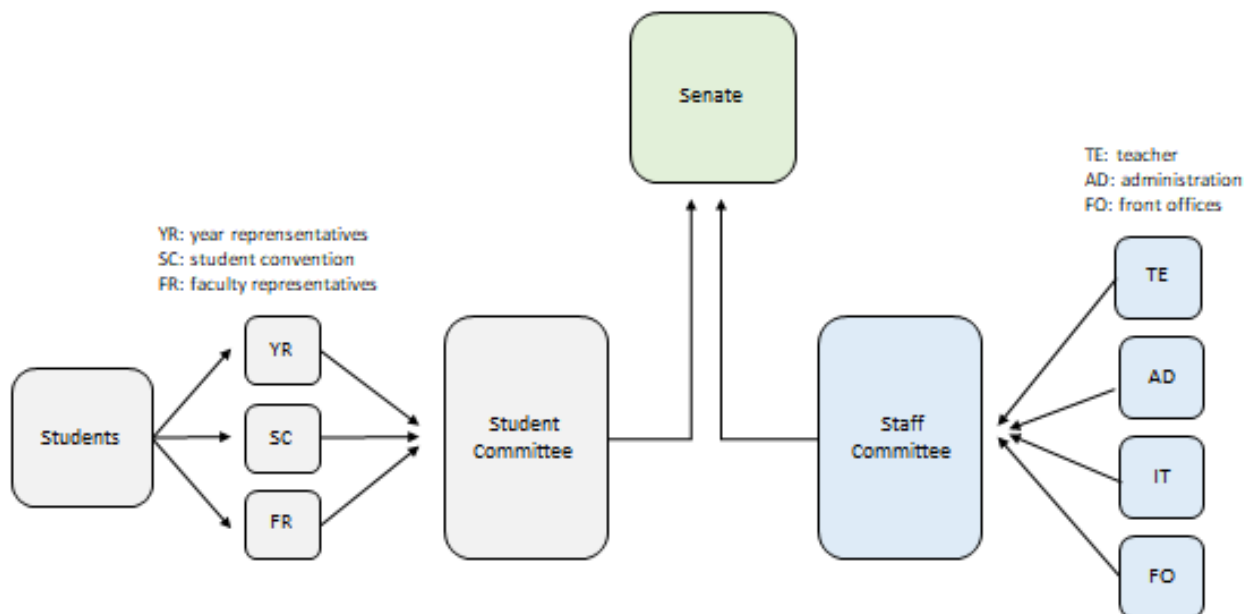
**Communication:** the students will gain presenting and public speaking abilities in at least one international language.

**Collaboration:** the students will acquire teamwork and leadership skills in diverse cultural groups.

**Creativity:** the students will be encouraged to produce independent thoughts, to use their imagination and natural talents to innovate and create authentic work.

## B. Propositions

### Structure of student democracy



The organization chart shows our thoughts of a good student democracy. In this case we kind of chose a hybrid system which is built up on the framework of an indirect democracy. The peculiarity is that you can swap between a direct and indirect democracy system. Every year students vote year representatives, faculty representatives and the student convention which collect all the information, thought, etc. from the students. All of these three ministries place people in the student committee which is the voice of all students. On the other side is the Staff Committee which contains employees from the IT, teachers, administration and front offices. These two committees meet up and work together in the senate where they make decisions together with the principal and other representatives. The distribution in the senate is 30% student committee, 30% staff committee and 40% of principal, vize principal, representatives, supervisors and others. For the decision making it's important to not just take the look from the students and the principals but also from the employees which often have a different point of view. Thereby we gain more input and better communication.

## Common culture and identity

In our opinion the three most important traits everyone should keep in mind and live are equality, respect and tolerance. Equality is important because in the discussions and conversations everyone is on the same level, there is no hierarchy. Everyone has the right to say something without exceptions. No one is excluded. For us respect is essential to lead healthy and friendly discussions. Everyone can say something without getting blamed and offended and even more important, everyone has the right to be listened to. Our last trait is tolerance which is closely related to respect. To tolerate other people's opinions even if they do not match with yours is important to keep the politeness up.

All these three traits aim to implement a good climate for discussions and conversations. If we are able to follow these we are able to fully enroll our potential and thereby decisions will be made faster and better reflected which benefits the whole organisation.

## Inclusiveness

Starting from the new role of the students that we envision: **to teach what you learn**, we propose a strategy for creating inclusiveness through **workshops, conferences and meetings** organised by students for other social groups that are interested in one specific subject but don't have the resources or ability to study it. For example workers, parents, retirees, or other young people who don't study this subject or don't study at all. This way, the students will benefit because teachers learn the most. Other actors of the society will benefit by engaging in a **continuous learning process** that will enrich their lives and also bring them together, building **social capital** and a **more inclusive community**.

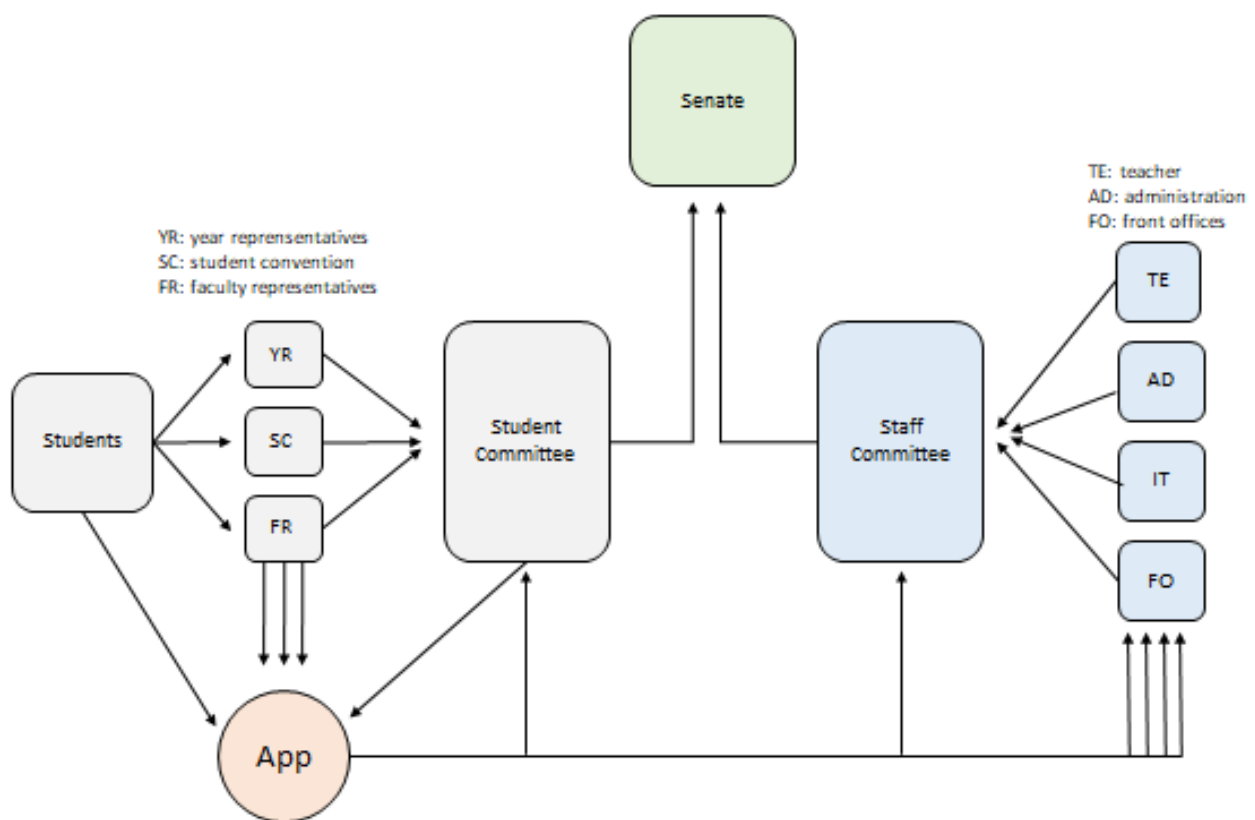
This strategy will also contribute to the **“widening of participation”** by increasing the level of information and then creating opportunities for new population groups to share their informed opinion, to debate and to participate in the community building process.

Yes, University is a place where cultures meet and a good setting for acquiring transcultural skills, but we think it can also be a place where different **generations, interests, experiences and areas of expertise** meet for learning together and discussing about the world they want to live in.

## Student representation

All of us can agree that we've come a long way, especially here in Romania, to ensure student representation and student democracy. It is indeed a big progress for us to have so many boards and committees where the voice of the students is heard and has power. But, is it the voice of as many students as possible or merely of the majority of them? What happens to the needs and views and interests of the minorities? As you already may have guessed, we propose a new model of student representation, one that moves from majoritarian representation to **consensual representation**. To make this happen, it could

take organizing meetings, debates, information campaigns, to try to collect as many viewpoints as possible and then find solutions for how to reconcile them. And for this collection of data at the university level, we propose building an app where all the students could evaluate other propositions and share their opinions on important matters concerning their education.



## Student representation in climate and environment committees

All of this is about how we envision student representation taking place, but another major aspect is where it takes place. We tried to do some research in the short time we had, and could not identify any boards concerning climate and environment that will take the opinion of students, or young people in general into account. Of course there is the argument that we don't understand enough about this complex matter, or aren't mature enough for deciding about the future of all people on earth. But isn't it highly unfair? Because it is our future in the first place, and our stake in this is huge.

I personally have invested a great deal of time studying the cause of the environmental crisis we have now and what we need to do in order to address it and I'm convinced that many students, all around the world did the same or at least would be interested in climate science if they had the opportunity to learn. Maybe this should be a call for action to our universities and municipalities, to focus more on environmental education and to us, students, to demand from them relevant actions.

## What is most important here and why ?

While working together on this project we really came to realize the importance of having different perspectives and viewpoints. Although all of us are business students, it was valuable to have the Nils', Kareem's and Mohammad's experience of the nordic democracy, Marc's rationality who stopped us having too fantastic ideas and Daniela's passion and motivation to come up with something meaningful. So it was a beautiful experiment to see the results of creating inclusiveness - which we consider the most important element of our assignment, as well as of any university, organisation and community.

## Our reflection

Nils: This was a unique and fun experience to be a part of. To work with international students, we learned a lot of different viewpoints on how student democracy is practiced in other countries such as Moldova and Germany.

Mo Ghozlan: There were some differences in perspectives and basic importance of each one, which gave me the possibility to think in a more comprehensive way.

Karim: Through this assignment we got the opportunity to talk, discuss and share our ideas. This was a nice experience that you can learn a lot from.

Daniela: It was a great opportunity for me to learn about my colleagues' approach to such an assignment and to teamwork in general. We had some natural and expected cultural and language barriers but it also was the fun part and we overcame it with cheerfulness. I think we did a good collaboration by brainstorming, delegating and giving opinions and advice about each other's work.

Marc: It was a nice experience to finally work in an international group with different habits, approaches and ideas. Everyone knows about cultural differences but you just really learn how to handle it if you are in such a situation. Communication was the key to success and to overcome every hurdle. I have to say that it was really pleasant to work with these four people and that this brought a real benefit for my future.