



Research Paper

Student leadership and governance in public management development institutes of Uganda: Tokenism or effective participation?

Accepted 19th February, 2020

ABSTRACT

Globally, there are recurring debates on student participation in the echelons of higher educational institutions. The essence of student participation in institutional leadership and governance is mainly to foster decision-making. Indeed, many developing countries, Uganda inclusive, have over the years promoted student participation in leadership and governance following from the global Agenda. Higher educational institutions ensure student representation on the governing councils, senate, top management, Alumni Associations, Students' Guild, among others. These organs are constituted by a blend of representation, some of which have student representatives, while the Students' Guild is entirely constituted of student leaders with its main mandate being submission of student issues for consideration of management and supreme bodies. However, there is still ineffective student participation in leadership and governance of higher educational institutions in the world in general and specifically in Uganda. The study investigated the effectiveness of student participation in leadership and governance of higher educational institutions, taking a case of Uganda Management Institute, where the Ladder for Citizen Participation model was used to support deriving meanings and understandings from the participants' experiences and stories. The findings show that student participation in leadership and governance is still facing a lot of challenges including: not being allotted sufficient space to air out their views in the decision-making process; being overwhelmed by demands from their student constituents; facing and convincing more qualified and experienced leaders with whom they pursue leadership and governance in higher educational institutions. The study further found out that though emphasis has over the years been put on student participation in leadership and governance of higher education institutions, it is rather ineffective. However, the study found out that there is some level of participation by students in leadership and governance in higher education institutions; they therefore belong to higher strands on the Ladder for Citizens Participation. In conclusion therefore, though there is an attempt towards student participation in higher education leadership and governance in Uganda, it is rather ineffective. This implies that it is at the tokenism strand of the Ladders for Citizen Participation model.

Christopher S. Mayanja

Uganda Management Institute – Plot 44-52
Jinja Road, Kampala – P. O. Box 20131
Kampala, Uganda.

E-mail:
cmayanja@umi.ac.ug/chrimayanja@gmail.
com. Tel: +256 (0)77 2465428/ 70
2465428.

Key words: Student leadership, governance, participation, tokenism, higher education.

Abbreviations: ESU, European Students Union; IPA, Institute of Public Administration; MDI, Management Development Institute; MOE&S, Ministry of Education and Sports; UMI, Uganda Management Institute; UOTIA, Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act.

INTRODUCTION

Participation of students in decision making at higher education level has been considered a crucial element of governance since the Bologna process (ESU, 2018). Klemenčič (2012) defines student participation in

leadership and governance as the formal and actual ability to influence the decision making process in higher education sector. This implies that in order to count student participation as effective, it has to gain recognition by the

respective institutions but also ensuring that the students actually participate in the decision making process. The essence of such student participation in leadership and governance is mainly to foster the decision-making process at respective higher educational institutions. Popovic (2011) asserts that student participation in leadership and governance of higher education institutions got official recognition in the year 2001; however, it was a concept known especially to the developed world. Relatedly, Hossain (2015) advances that students are principal stakeholders in higher education institutions and as such, need to be involved in their leadership at the top level. Good governance in the higher education sector promotes the concept of shared governance, also referred to as distributed leadership, which among other things, requires the representation of the various stakeholders (including students) in the decision making processes of universities (Tamrat and Ababa, 2017).

Absolutely, many developing countries, Uganda inclusive have over the years promoted student participation in leadership and governance following from the global Agenda. There is a going concern that on graduation, students lack skills in leadership which works against their competitiveness in the global market (Kelly and Azaola, 2015). This also calls for effective participation of students in leadership especially at higher education level since this is where they may attain more experience as they would learn a lot from experienced leaders from different walks of life. Chen and Wu (2016) report that membership on university committees and boards are constituted of members from different occupational background and gender. This comes with a lot of diversity in terms of leadership experience which the student leaders may gain from and that may later be beneficial to them after school. According to Boland (2014), participation of students in governance of higher education institutions is rather a civic role which promotes general democratisation of countries due to participation of former student leaders in the social democratic process.

In Uganda, constitution of higher education institutions is guided by the Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act of 2001, as amended in 2006 which guides on the composition of the different public university organs such as the University Council, Committees of a University Council, University Senate, among others. University Councils should have representatives from local authorities, convocation, the public, two student representatives, among others (UOTIA, 2001). The composition implies that the student representatives would gain experience in leadership from more experienced people who form part of the organs and thus, this would contribute to better democratisation as may be provided after they graduate.

Uganda Management Institute (UMI) is the only public Management Development Institute in Uganda. It was established in 1969 as an Institute of Public Administration (IPA) as an Agency of the Ministry of Public Service (MPS)

responsible for providing in-service training to public servants in Uganda; UMI has greatly transformed (UMI, 2017). From the very beginning, the Institute was conceived as a critical component of the country's transformation and development, and was deemed responsible for strengthening the management capacities of managers of various institutions. The enactment of the UMI Statute in 1992 transformed IPA into UMI and granted it a semi-autonomous status to develop its own certificate, diploma and degree programmes. The Institute remained an agency under the Ministry of Public Service until 2001. The enactment of the 2001 University and Other Tertiary Institutions Act (UOTIA) repealed the UMI Statute of 1992 thereby placing the Institute under the Ministry of Education and Sports (MOE&S). The UOTIA as enacted did not quite capture the UMI mandate which was amended in 2006 allowing UMI to be classified as an "Other Degree Awarding Institution" (section 19). As such, UMI as a Management Development Institute (MDI) is mandated to award degrees without necessarily becoming a University (Universities and Institutions, 2006). Like all higher education institutions, UMI is regulated by the Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act of 2001, as amended in 2006. As such, it also has to ensure that students effectively participate in the leadership and governance of the Institute. Therefore, every year the Institute organises elections of student leaders including the Guild, student representatives on the Governing Council and its Committees. The student leaders should, ideally ensure effective representation of their constituents at the top leadership and governance level of the Institute especially to have student issues forwarded and considered. The question therefore is that do the student leaders effectively participate in the leadership and governance of the Institute, or it is mere tokenism? The paper attempts to present opinions and views from documents and the student leaders themselves.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Shanmuga et al. (2007) define leadership as the ability to directly or indirectly influence the way a group of people behave, think and act. Yet according to Appelbaum et al. (2015), leadership refers to a display of confidence to prevail over a given group of people in terms of behaviour and attitudes. According to Airini et al. (2011), student leadership is strategically important to the tertiary education sector, to each of its stakeholders; from students through to staff, and those who use the benefit from university services. In line with the aforementioned, Uganda's Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act (UOTIA), No 7 of 2001 as amended in 2003 and 2006, makes specific demands in Section 38 about who should be part of university councils in Uganda. As part of the members, the Act suggests that there should be two student representatives (Universities and Institutions, 2006). These

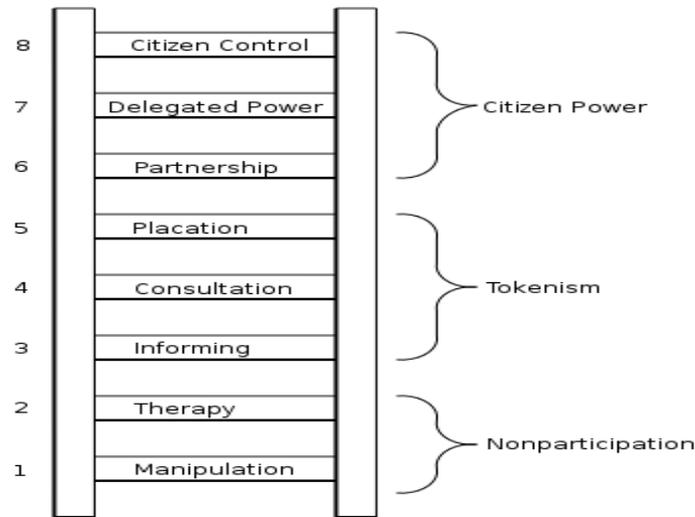


Figure 1: Ladder of Citizen Participation Source: Arnstein (2004).

student representatives, according to the UOTIA hold office for one year though eligible for re-election so long as they are students of the university.

Further to the above argument, Luescher et al. (2015) state that as long as students, as members of the academic community, are engaged in academic activities, the protection accorded by the principle of academic freedom applies and thus, justification for student participation in higher education leadership. This implies that it is prudent for students to engage in higher education leadership in order to ensure that their issues are forwarded to higher authorities for consideration and solving. Pincho and Brown (2009) argue that when leaders recognise themselves as belonging to some specific social groupings, they tend to attach a lot of importance to those particular groups. The argument implies that in order for student issues to be effectively handled, they would require their own voices to reach high level organs in higher education institutions through their own leaders who identify easily with them. Relatedly, Hogg and Reid (2006) postulate that leaders are always motivated to successfully pursue concerns of their constituents in their respective in-group fit.

Leaders always make an effort to communicate something about themselves and in so doing, one would appreciate concerns of the people that they lead (Hogg and Smith, 2007). The argument promotes that without having representatives in the leadership circles, students' concerns and challenges may not easily reach top decision making organs and as such, may not be resolved. Klemenčič (2012) promotes that when students participate in decision making within higher education institutions, they tend to make a very big contribution which may not be achieved without this kind of engagement. This also implies that the higher education sector needs to prioritise effective engagement of students in leadership of their respective

institutions at the top level. However, Boland (2014) advances that participation of students in higher education leadership has not featured prominently in the governance arena. This implies that though there is some effort to ensure student participation in higher education leadership, their actual participation leaves a lot to be desired.

Tamrat and Ababa (2017) advance that when students are involved in higher education institution leadership and governance; it creates improved trust and understanding among the university community. The argument implies that participation of students in higher education leadership and governance promotes effective decision making since issues that may pertain academic excellence and institutional growth may easily be articulated and solved. Relatedly, Planas et al. (2011) acknowledge that in the field of university leadership and governance, student participation promotes functioning of their respective institutions.

To underpin this study, the Ladder of Citizen Participation model was used in order to understand the levels of student participation in leadership and governance of Uganda Management Institute. The Ladder of Citizen Participation model was developed by Arnstein (2004) to provide guidance about the process of drawing clearer understanding of students' levels of participation and meanings they attached to that process. Arnstein (2004) asserts that empowering people enables submission of their views to higher authorities, but only through ensuring effective participation in leadership. The student leaders require empowerment in order to execute their leadership mandate.

In Figure 1, Arnstein (2004) postulates that if leaders are to participate effectively, the ladder gives a three-strand pattern with eight rungs where the first strand of non-participation comes with manipulation and need for

therapy. Therefore, in a nutshell, the first strand is characterised by non-participation.

The second strand is tokenism, and comes with leaders accessing some information; undertaking consultations; and placation. Therefore, participation in the second strand shows some improved level of participation where stakeholders (student leaders in the context of the study) have access to some information and are consulted on some important issues affecting the institution. The third strand is citizen power, and is characterised by full empowerment of stakeholders and comes with leading through partnerships, exercising full delegated power and having a lot of control. The Ladder of Citizen Participation helped the study to get an understanding regarding the magnitude of empowerment of female student leaders that enabled them to execute their leadership mandate.

The model gave the study chance to draw meanings and understandings on whether the promoted student participation in leadership and governance at Uganda Management Institute belongs to the highest strand of citizen power unlike the second strand of tokenism. The study found out that student participation in leadership and governance of higher educational institutions does not belong to the first two strands of non-participation; manipulation and therapy. It was rather found to belong to the tokenism strand with informing, consultation and placation strands. Tokenism is where student leaders get information on leadership and governance; they are consulted; while they would just be appeased (placation) by feeling the sense of involvement without necessarily participating effectively in leadership and governance.

Bergan (2003) advances that though student participation in higher education leadership has been emphasised over the years, there are scant facts on positive results. This study therefore attempts to bring out empirical evidence on whether there is effective representation of students in higher education leadership and governance. Otherwise, the study also points at facts on this kind of representation being tokenism unlike effective representation.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study deployed two major data generation methods; document review and a thorough literature review and analysis as well as key informant interviews. Key informants that were targeted in the study included 19 former Guild Executive members of which data were generated from 16 using unstructured interviews held in May 2019. The researcher also utilised his experience in student leadership at Uganda Management Institute to critique the generated data. Analysis of the qualitative findings involved content analysis following the stories captured from the data generation methods. This allowed interpretation as well as drawing meanings and

understanding from the stories captured, thus enabling conclusions on whether student participation in leadership and governance of public Management Development Institutions is rather tokenism or effective participation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study found that the concept of student participation in leadership and governance of higher education institutions has been at the forefront of governance in the sector. Literature indicates that following from the Bologna process (ESU, 2018), participation of students in leadership is rather promoted in order to make these institutions more functional. It also promotes the democratisation of countries since through participation; students' capacity in leadership and governance is built thus creating a pool of leaders in the future (Boland, 2014). It therefore implies that students in public management development institutes need to participate in the leadership and governance arena in order to gain experience and capacity in the field, as well as to promote student issues for consideration. This would lead to promotion of these public management development institutions' functionality and growth (Klemenčič, 2012).

Is student participation in leadership and governance effective?

Bergan (2003) asserts that student participation in leadership and governance of higher education institutions is a necessary evil since they are key partners in development of the sector. Participants in the study advanced that student participation in leadership and governance at Uganda Management Institute was to some extent effective. Most of them attested to the fact that students are given chance to execute their leadership mandate, yet at the same time they get opportunity to gain experience in the leadership and governance arena. This is in support of Acharya (2015)'s assertion that in general there is student participation in higher education leadership and governance since they form membership on Senate and other organs. This was also promoted by participants in this study, where one of them observed:

"In my view, student participation in leadership at UMI has been fine. We are given a platform to express our views alongside other non-student leaders at the Institute. We can easily contact the Director for Programs and Students' Affairs in order to forward student issues. Student issues are actually handled; for instance in my tenure, internet bandwidth was increased, which allowed more access; the timeframe to conduct examinations was also adjusted on the request of students through

their leaders; set timeframe to pay graduation fees was also extended on request. Top management is generally open- minded and supportive of student leaders”.

The argument implies that Uganda Management Institute provides students with an opportunity to participate in leadership and governance. This further gives them chance to participate in the decision making process. Another study participant noted:

“On the whole arrangement, it’s good for UMI’s mode of engagement, where students are given chance to make a contribution in the decision making process”. Another participant noted: *participation of students in leadership and governance at UMI is to some extent effective. Students are given a platform to exercise their leadership skills and issues can easily be channelled to respective Institute organs”.*

Relatedly, Acharya (2015) reports that by allowing effective student participation in leadership and governance, their skills are enhanced. This implies that student participation in leadership would be more effective if they are given an open platform towards growth of their leadership skills. In this study, it was also found that student leaders access all information required during pursuance of leadership and governance.

The study further found that to an extent, student participation in leadership and governance is rather effective. This is due to the fact that some student leaders submit student issues and views during decision making and they are actually considered. One study participant observed:

“It is true that UMI students are being effectively represented in leadership and governance. In Council, issues forwarded are actually handled. I was a representative on the Joint Quality Assurance Committee and feedback on student end of module evaluation is given. Timing of the end of module evaluations was also adjusted to earlier before conducting tests unlike a few minutes to the tests”.

The argument implies that for the active student leaders, there is always room to contribute ideas at the top level, which ideas are actually listened to and to some extent considered. In support of this assertion, one participant explained: *“issues like complaints on poor facilitators regarding dissemination of knowledge are responded to by management”.* For such response to student issues, the students get the satisfaction in their leaders, like the participant reiterated: *“students are generally happy with their participation in leadership and governance at the Institute”.* This is supported by Acharya (2015), who promotes that student participation in leadership and

governance promotes a democratic culture of shared authority and interdependent responsibility in higher education institutions to the satisfaction of the student body.

Uganda Management Institute Management has in general supported student leadership and governance. Students are supported to participate in leadership and governance in several ways. One participant observed: *“Management guided the election of student leaders and there was no interference. It was basically a student activity with only the Director for Programs coming in to guide the process”.* Management also allows student voices to reach the top most organs of the Institute. The participant explained: *“Student voices reach top levels. The Director has organised meetings with student leaders several times to capture student issues. At some point we interacted with the Public Relations Officer and the Director General – their offices are easily approachable”.* Another study participant explained: *“...actually, leadership and governance has been very effective, though with some constraints regarding financial management”.*

Is student leadership and governance mere tokenism?

Findings from a study also advance that though there is promotion of student participation in leadership and governance of higher education institutions, it is rather not sufficient (Boland, 2014). Similarly, according to Acharya (2015), in the developing world, even though higher education institutions have guiding legal framework on student participation in leadership and governance, there is scanty evidence that the practice is effective. This implies that the kind of student participation in leadership and governance is tokenism as opposed to effective participation. With this kind of practice, though students may be seen as participating in leadership and governance of public management development Institutes such as Uganda Management Institute, they may not actually contribute effectively to the decision-making process. One study participant observed:

In my opinion, a lot is lacking regarding student leadership and governance. Student leadership is actually pursued as if UMI is not a Management Development Institute. Student Leaders at UMI are made rather submissive, which limits their ability to pursue leadership and governance effectively.

Another study participant also advanced:

“In some instances, participation of students in leadership and governance at UMI is not

very effective. There is general lack of institutionalized mandate of especially Class Presidents, who mainly exercise their leadership mandate on social media unlike interaction with other Institute leaders”.

Without avenues for student leaders' interaction with other leaders in any higher educational institution, there may not be full and effective participation in leaders. This also means that students may not be empowered to participate in the decision making process, most especially on issues that affect them. This also implies that student issues may not adequately be handled which impacts negatively on the functioning of these institutions. According to Planas et al. (2011), students argue that their lack of interest in participating in leadership and governance is premised under the fact that they perceive themselves as lacking in ownership of the higher education institutions. Students argue that they just 'pass through' these institutions and therefore may have no role to play in their leadership and governance since they attend the institution programs as mere consumers of public services (Planas et al., 2011). At Uganda Management Institute, students do not pick a lot of interest to participate in leadership and governance of the Institute, leaving it to a few colleagues to take up leadership positions which who at times come out unopposed. This may be attributed to the fact that those who participate experience abandonment in one way or the other as indicated by one of the study participants:

On joining the Student Guild, I consulted one of the predecessors of UMI Guild and she never had fond memories about her leadership since in her tenure the student leaders were not given any platform whatsoever to exercise their leadership mandate. In our term of office, I realized that this was partly true since I learnt that there are things that we could do and those that we could not do. This limited our effort to pursue student issues.

The low participation of students in leadership and governance of public management development institutions may also be attributed to ignorance on the structures, which stipulate representation of students on the different organs. Planas et al. (2011) advances that students claim having limited information and communication on governance of their respective institutions and thus ignorance on actual organizational structures, as well as on their representation on governing bodies. About linkage of UMI Guild leaders with Top Management and the Governing Council, one former Guild Executive observed: *“The Council has student representatives; so if you are not a Council member, what would you want from them?”* This implies that student leadership may still have a gap to do with communication and sharing ideas among different student leader

categories, yet it is presumed that they would be working together for a common cause.

According to Planas et al. (2011), one of the leading reasons for low student participation in leadership and governance of higher education institutions is the fact that many of them work and study. In the affirmative to the argument, Uganda Management Institute runs postgraduate programs which are attended by a majority of students who actually work (UMI, 2017). This is also because UMI programs mainly run in the evening and over weekends to allow effective attendance since it would rather be difficult for working students to attend sessions during weekdays when they have to work. This is also in support of the argument that student participation in leadership and governance of public management development institutions is rather tokenism unlike effective participation. This is due to the fact that though the UOTIA (2001) promotes student participation in higher education institution leadership and governance (Universities and Institutions, 2006), chances are that their actual participation is ineffective. This may probably be due to them having insufficient time to pursue their leadership mandate. One participant observed: *“the nature of students at UMI is for the working class, who may not have sufficient time to pursue leadership mandate”.* This implies that though an olive branch may be extended to students to participate in leadership and governance in public management development institutes, their nature of being working class, may lead to ineffectiveness of their leadership mandate. Acharya (2015) promotes that though student leadership and governance is provided for in higher education legal framework, their actual participation is rather minimal. The understanding from this assertion is still drawn from the Ladder of Citizen Participation which again promotes an argument that such participation in leadership is tokenism, unlike effective participation which comes with full empowerment in the decision making process.

Meanings and understandings from participants' stories support the arguments in the Ladder for Citizen Participation model that though there is room to participate in leadership and governance, students may not effectively pursue it due to their own engagements. This again leads such leadership in to being tokenism other than being effective participation, thus meaning that students may remain with low empowerment in the decision making process. On the other hand, tokenism in student leadership at UMI was also attributed to the short term of office for student leaders. One participant observed:

“Guild is just a formality; it is very hard for guild to do their work due to the short term in office of one year – even before office bearers settle to pursue their mandate, their term would be ending; and elections would be underway”.

The student leaders that participated in the study pointed out that though Uganda Management Institute put in place a platform for students to participate in leadership and governance, they do not effectively participate to desired levels. This is supported by Acharya (2015) who advances that since students as clients in higher education institutions are affected by the decisions taken, they have full right to participate in the entire decision making process in order to safeguard their interests. However, from this study, student leaders face several constraints during the pursuance of leadership and governance and thus affecting effective participation in the decision making process. One common constraint that was advanced had to do with financial management, where the Students' Guild never had a separate bank account to allow them effectively undertake their activities. Instead accessing funding for their transactions was also required to go through the Institute processes and approvals. This, to them was a major hindrance towards undertaking their planned activities. One respondent observed: *"Guild fees paid under the central financing administration suffocates student guild activities"*. Another participant also argued:

"It is difficult to get facilitation to travel to the branches due to over reliance on Institute funding basket, where on several occasions, the Student Guild would be given excuses of insufficient liquidity at the Institute".

Student leaders also noted that at times their constituents, the students, exert a lot of pressure when they have issues yet it may often times be beyond the student leaders' control. Students always turn to their leaders in order to have such issues handled. A study participant, in reference to some major issues that student leaders submitted to top level leadership which were not responded to, indicate dissatisfaction of fellow students. She explained:

"There is always a lot of pressure from students to have their issues handled. However, financial constraints may not allow student issues to be handled; for example erecting a fly-over at the busy Jinja Road, where some students have been involved in accidents due to over-speeding vehicles and motorcycles".

The Ladder of Citizen Participation as promoted by Arnstein (2004) advances that the only way to empower people is to grant them sufficient space to participate in effective leadership and governance. This implies that without having students effectively participate in leadership and governance of higher education institutions, they may not be sufficiently empowered to allow participation in decision making. Participants in the study

argued that in some instances they could not effectively participate in leadership and governance. One participant explained:

"You have complaints as people; when you over complain, the managers would not receive the complaints in good faith. As a leader you end up withdrawing since at times you are not involved in some decisions – for example when planning for graduation ceremonies, some modalities were changed without student leaders' knowledge – the new arrangement to buy gowns from the Institute, which led to more students' complaints. When you inquire from some staff members, they feign ignorance on such developments; so they keep tossing leaders around".

The argument above implies that though Uganda Management Institute promotes student participation in leadership and governance, in some instances it remains tokenism where student leaders may be left out while making key decisions. Study participants further indicated that student leadership and governance at the Institute is rather tokenism unlike being effective. They argue that on several instances, some student leaders do not get sufficient platform to air out their views and student issues during meetings. Where such issues are received, they may at times be ignored since management may not consider them key priorities. One study participant noted: *"the feedback we get from student representatives at the Governing Council is that even if a good issue has come up, it becomes difficult to implement it"*. Yet according to Popovic (2011), student representatives need to give sufficient feedback to the student community especially about issues that concern them. However still, participants in the study indicated that they do not effectively contribute ideas and issues during meeting deliberations. One of the participants vividly observed: *"we do not participate a lot when we go for meetings since our views are not listened to. The whole arrangement is just a formality!"* This nature of tokenism is against the submission by Acharya (2015), who advances that the major role of student leaders is to represent fellow students and forward their voices to the top leadership in order for their concerns to be handled.

The study found that student representatives on the Governing Council do not give sufficient feedback to other student leaders and to the entire student community. They often times give excuses that Council deliberations are rather confidential and as such they may not share at free-will. This makes it very difficult for student leaders to exercise their leadership mandate due to the fact that the different categories of leaders may not liaise for effective leadership pursuance. One study participant observed: *"Guild is not empowered enough since we miss interaction with our Council representatives – we may meet only once in the whole term of office, at handover!"* Another

participant lamented: *“there is little time for Guild to meet leading to failure to handle many issues raised”*.

Relatedly, the study found out that student leaders find it difficult to approach members of Top Management, which affects the pursuance of their leadership mandate. Popovic (2011) reports that in order to have effective student participation in leadership and governance of higher education institutions, there is need for top leadership to allocate the student leaders' body sufficient support and resources including financial and logistical support. They also need to put across a conducive environment to enable student leaders to exercise their mandate. This, according to the study is still lacking at UMI as a participant noted: *“our engagement as leaders with management of UMI is rather very minimal making feedback very difficult”*. Yet according to Acharya (2015), the main interest of students is to get feedback for efficient and effective leadership and governance. However, having minimal feedback makes it very difficult for the student leaders to forward student issues to the top level and to ensure that the concerns of students are actually handled. Another participant explained:

“Forwarding issues to top management and council has not been very effective. We rely on end of module evaluations yet they are not very effective since little time is given to have the forms filled, thus no effective feedback! Representatives at Senate and Council find a challenge since they find an already drawn agenda”

Without sufficient upstream and downstream feedback, student leadership may not be effective, but rather tokenism. Related to the argument, another participant observed that the mode of student elections through Electoral Colleges also affects their leadership and governance mandate. This is basically because the Student Guild leadership is constituted by a few students who may have been nominated to represent others in different classes, while also the election of the Student Guild leaders is done in earlier days of joining Uganda Management Institute before students even appreciate each other's capabilities. The participants observed:

“Management seems to be having an upper hand due to the Electoral College system. Secondly, elections of student leaders are held during the very first days of student reporting when they are not yet acclimatized to the environment”.

Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to investigate the effectiveness of student participation in leadership and

governance of higher educational institutions, taking Uganda Management Institute as a case. The study found that to a large extent, there is regulation on ensuring that students participate in higher education leadership and governance all over the world. In the case of Uganda, such participation is premised under the Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act of 2001, where all such Institutions should have student bodies like the Guild and they should have representation at Governing Council level (UOTIA, 2006). The Act points out that the students should have two representatives on the Council, at least one of whom should be female. Uganda Management Institute constitutes a Student Guild every year, while still two student representatives with at least one of them being a female student, are selected to represent students on the Governing Council. This implies that the Institute actually promotes participation of students in its leadership and governance. This was also attested to by some participants in this study. Arnstein (2004)'s Ladder of Citizen Participation facilitates getting meanings and understandings from the study findings that at the very least, student leadership and governance does not belong to the lowest strands of manipulation and mere therapy, which is non-participation. Since the study found that there is some level of participation by students in leadership and governance in higher education institutions, then they belong to higher strands on the Ladder for Citizens Participation.

However, the study further found that though emphasis has over the years been put on student participation in leadership and governance of higher education institutions, it is rather ineffective. In several cases where these institutions have representation of students at top level leadership and governance, it is rather tokenism since they do not get enough space to exercise their leadership mandate. Participants in the study further observed that student participation in leadership and governance at Uganda Management Institute is ineffective. This was attributed to several reasons; insufficient room for student leaders to contribute during meetings, inadequate feedback, short term of office, insufficient resources to undertake student leaders' activities, unresolved student issues, among others.

In conclusion therefore, though there is an attempt towards student participation in higher education leadership and governance in Uganda, it is rather ineffective. This implies that it is at the tokenism strand of the Ladders for Citizen Participation model as promoted by Arnstein (2004). It further implies that there is a possibility that students are not empowered enough to pursue effective leadership and governance in public Management Development Institutes in Uganda. It was observed that student leadership has traces of placation, where they are in some way recognised as top level leaders. There is also an indication that the student leaders are usually consulted during meetings, while still they are kept informed of what

is going on at the Institute. However, it is evident that student leaders are often times not taken to be partners in leadership and governance with other top level leaders. There was no trace of student leaders having full delegated authority, while the participants in the study also displayed lack of control in their leadership and governance mandate. This, according to Arnstein (2004) would illustrate that they are rather empowered to pursue leadership and governance, which is not the case.

There is therefore need to give students a bigger platform to pursue leadership and governance in the higher education sector and specifically, in public Management Development Institutes. This can probably be done through giving student leaders more autonomy in managing their mandate, through support with financial resources. Student may also be given more chance to present student issues for consideration during top level organ meetings where they are represented.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author hereby acknowledges various people who contributed during the undertaking of this study. The former Guild Executive members at UMI, who were key informants in the study are acknowledged for participating in the interviews.

REFERENCES

- Acharya SL (2015). Student Participation in University Governance: A Comparative Study between Tribhuvan University and Kathmandu University, Nepal. (Master's Thesis). Oslo: University of Oslo. Retrieved from <https://www.duo.uio.no/handle/10852/49835>
- Airini, Collings S, Conner L, McPherson K, Midson B, Wilson C (2011). Learning to be leaders in higher education: What helps or hinders women's advancement as leaders in universities. *Educ. Manag. Adm. Leadersh.* 39(1): 44–62.
- Appelbaum SH, Audet L, Miller JC (2015). Gender and Leadership? Leadership and Gender? A Journey through the landscape of theories (February 2003). <https://doi.org/10.1108/01437730310457320>
- Arnstein SR (2004). Citizen Participation is citizen power. *A Ladder of Citizen Participation.* 35(4): 216–224.
- Bergan S (2003). Student Participation in Higher Education Governance. https://www.coe.int/t/dg4/highereducation/Governance/SB_student_participation_EN.pdf
- Chen KD, Wu A (2016). The Structure of Board Committees. *Acad. Manag. Annu. Meet. Proc.* 1: 13306
- Boland J (2014). Student Participation in Shared Governance: A Means of Advancing Democratic Values? *Tertiary Educ. Manag.* 11(3): 199-217.
- European Students' Union [ESU] (2018). Bologna with student eyes 2018: The final countdown. Retrieved from: https://www.esu-online.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/BWSE-2018_web_Pages.pdf
- Hogg MA, Reid SA (2006). Social identity, self-categorization, and the communication of group norms. *Commun. Theory.* 16(1): 7–30.
- Hogg MA, Smith JR (2007). Attitudes in social context: A social identity perspective. *Eur. Rev. Soc. Psychol.* 18(1): 89–131.
- Kelly A, Azaola MC (2015). Student involvement in leadership. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/299428458_Student_involvement_in_leadership
- Klemenčič M (2012). The Changing Conceptions of Student Participation in HE Governance in the EHEA. http://scholar.harvard.edu/files/manja_klemencic/files/2012_klemencic_the_changing_conception.pdf
- Luescher TM, Klemenčič M, Jowi JO (2015). Student Power in African Higher Education. *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa.* 3: 1.
- Planas A, Soler P, Fullana J, Pallisera M (2011). Student participation in university governance . The opinions of professors and students. 38: 571–583.
- Popovic M (2011). Student Participation in Higher Education Governance. General Report. Aghveran, Armenia, 8-9 December 2011. http://www.aic.lv/bolona/2010_12/Sem_10_12/Armenia_Aghveran_Final%20report.pdf
- Shanmugam M, Amaratunga RDG, Haigh RP (2007). Leadership styles: gender similarities, differences and perceptions. <https://www.irbnet.de/daten/iconda/CIB16523.pdf>
- Tamrat W, Ababa A (2017). Student Participation in Higher Education Governance: Trends and Practices in Ethiopian Public Universities. (July 2016). 7(4): 2-7
- Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act (UOTIA) (2006). An Act to amend the Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act, 2001. 106(3): 1–14.

Cite this article as:

Mayanja CS (2020). Student leadership and governance in public management development institutes of Uganda: Tokenism or effective participation?. *Acad. J. Sci. Res.* 8(2): 072-080.

Submit your manuscript at

<http://www.academiapublishing.org/ajsr>