



## Quality Assurance in Education

A model of student involvement in the quality assurance system at institutional level  
Noha Elassy

### Article information:

To cite this document:

Noha Elassy, (2013), "A model of student involvement in the quality assurance system at institutional level", Quality Assurance in Education, Vol. 21 Iss 2 pp. 162 - 198

Permanent link to this document:

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/09684881311310692>

Downloaded on: 15 July 2016, At: 01:41 (PT)

References: this document contains references to 99 other documents.

To copy this document: [permissions@emeraldinsight.com](mailto:permissions@emeraldinsight.com)

The fulltext of this document has been downloaded 1124 times since 2013\*

### Users who downloaded this article also downloaded:

(2015), "The concepts of quality, quality assurance and quality enhancement", Quality Assurance in Education, Vol. 23 Iss 3 pp. 250-261 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/QAE-11-2012-0046>

(2015), "Student involvement in the Egyptian quality assurance system", Quality Assurance in Education, Vol. 23 Iss 2 pp. 123-148 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/QAE-05-2013-0021>

(2014), "Rankings, accreditation, and the international quest for quality: Organizing an approach to value in higher education", Quality Assurance in Education, Vol. 22 Iss 1 pp. 88-104 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/QAE-07-2013-0031>

Access to this document was granted through an Emerald subscription provided by emerald-srm:514749 []

### For Authors

If you would like to write for this, or any other Emerald publication, then please use our Emerald for Authors service information about how to choose which publication to write for and submission guidelines are available for all. Please visit [www.emeraldinsight.com/authors](http://www.emeraldinsight.com/authors) for more information.

### About Emerald [www.emeraldinsight.com](http://www.emeraldinsight.com)

Emerald is a global publisher linking research and practice to the benefit of society. The company manages a portfolio of more than 290 journals and over 2,350 books and book series volumes, as well as providing an extensive range of online products and additional customer resources and services.

Emerald is both COUNTER 4 and TRANSFER compliant. The organization is a partner of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) and also works with Portico and the LOCKSS initiative for digital archive preservation.

\*Related content and download information correct at time of download.



# A model of student involvement in the quality assurance system at institutional level

Noha Elassy

*Suez Canal University, Ismailia, Egypt*

## Abstract

**Purpose** – This paper aims to create a theoretical model of student involvement in the institutional quality assurance process at their universities.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The model suggested in this paper was created and developed from a critical examination of relevant literature on stakeholder involvement in decision making and quality assurance processes, regarding different disciplines.

**Findings** – This paper presents a theoretical model of student involvement in the institutional quality assurance with its diminutions, categories and 20 rungs of student activities. It suggests a definition of student involvement term, regarding participating in the quality assurance process at higher education institutions. The importance of involving students in quality assurance procedures has been discussed. The paper provides some international experiences about student involvement in institutional QAP depending on the categories of student involvement activities that were suggested in the theoretical model.

**Originality/value** – The paper reveals a comprehensive model of student involvement that allows a full understanding of the extent and nature of the activities which higher education students undertake when they involve themselves in the quality assurance process at their institution.

**Keywords** Quality assurance, Student involvement, Model, Higher education institutions, Service quality assurance, Students

**Paper type** Conceptual paper

## Introduction

Student involvement in the quality assurance process (QAP) is an important topic and a widespread practice in many regions around the globe; and therefore educational leaders in many countries are considering how best to include students in their quality assurance (QA) system. Although there are many recommendations about the desirability of increasing student involvement in the QAP, very few existing studies have focused on the particular issue of student involvement in institutional QAP. Most of them are not sufficiently finely-grained to allow a precise understanding of the activities that students are allowed to undertake in the institutional QAP. Central to the reasons for this lack of understanding of the nature of student involvement is the absence of an adequate model of student involvement in the QAP. Therefore this research presents a model of student involvement in the QAP.

It should be mentioned that students could be involved in the QAP at national and/or institutional levels and at external and/or internal levels as well. In this study, “national” level refers to the QA agency level; for instance, students could be members of some committees of the QA agency and/or as members on the review panels which visit higher education institutions (HEIs) in order to evaluate them. In contrast, students could be involved in the QAP at “institutional” level. Here, students from an



HEI are participating in the evaluation process concerned with their own institution. In this kind of involvement, students could be involved in external and/or internal QAP in their institution. If they are involved in an “external” QAP, they could be, for example, interviewed by an external QA body/agency. Also, they could be involved in an “internal” QAP, which means that they are participating in the evaluation of their own school, department, or programme by a body internal to their own institution. Here, they could be involved, for instance, in meeting an internal QA panel.

In the literature, it is found that only a small number of studies focus on student involvement in a QAP at a “national” QA agency level. These include Helle (2009), Cadina (2006), Dearlove (2006), ENQA (2006), Wiberg (2006), and Froestad and Bakken (2004). These pieces of research were focused on student involvement at national level which is beyond the scope of the current study, because the researcher believes that focusing on studying student involvement in the “institutional” level should be given the priority, rather than national level. This is because the HEIs are the essential components in the higher education (HE) sector in any country, however not all countries have QA agencies, so focusing on the base should come first, and so involvement in QAP in the HEIs should be the first step then studying the national level comes next.

Comparatively, fewer studies have focused on student involvement in QAP at “institutional” level (Little *et al.*, 2009; Lizzio and Wilson, 2009; York Consulting, 2006; SPARQS, 2004). However, even those studies did not give details about the “activities” which students undertake when they involve themselves in the institutional QAP, which means there is a gap in the literature concerned with this topic.

Many studies in different countries, such as China (Liu, 2009), Cyprus (Menon, 2005), Ireland (Boland, 2005), EU countries (Persson, 2003), focused on student involvement in the decision-making and governance processes at HE institutional level. Although those studies are not directly concerned with the QAP, it is thought that the decision-making process is relevant to some extent to the QAP and they are considered as the two sides of the same coin. This is because, for example, if students had been involved in the decision-making process when attending a university committee, those decisions in most cases would be affecting the quality of that university.

This paper presents a theoretical model of student involvement in the institutional QAP that has been developed from a critical examination of relevant literature on involvement, it consists seven main points. Firstly, determining of student involvement term, in the quality assurance process is presented. Secondly, the paper discusses the importance of involving students in the quality assurance process at institutional level. Thirdly, the limitations regarding student involvement in QAP are highlighted. Fourthly, developing a model of the activities that students could undertake when they involve themselves in the QAP, at institutional level, from the relevant literature is presented. Fifthly, the dimensions of the model are highlighted. Sixthly, the categories of the theoretical model are proposed. Lastly, some international experiences about student involvement in institutional QAP are presented at the end of this paper depending on the categories of student involvement activities suggested in the theoretical model.

### **The concept of student involvement in institutional QAP**

As mentioned previously, student involvement in the institutional QAP, which is the key concept in this research, has not been studied widely in the literature. Most of the

existing literature agrees that student involvement in the quality system is very important, but without giving a clear definition of its meaning. However, similar concepts are used in areas of study other than that of education, such as “employee participation”. In the management discipline, for example, participation has long been of interest to managers and organizational scientists (Glew *et al.*, 1995, p. 396).

It is found that, in the literature, the term “student involvement” in QAP is used alternately with another term, which is “student engagement”. However, from the researcher’s point-of-view, the word “involvement” is maybe the best expression to be used when inquiring into the activities that students carry out when involving themselves in the QAP. The term “engagement” is not used in this way in the current study for two main reasons.

The first reason is that engagement is considered, in the present study as the deepest level within the different levels of “involvement”, as expressed by the Student Participation Quality Scotland (SPARQS) body (Cockburn, 2005, p. 4; SPARQS, 2004, p. 1). SPARQS suggested that “student involvement” in the QAP could be manifested at three different and ascending levels, which are: opportunity, i.e. students are presented with the chance to attend meetings and events; attendance, i.e. students use those opportunities to join meetings and events; and engagement, i.e. students are able to make an effective contribution during the meetings and events (Cockburn, 2005, p. 4; SPARQS, 2004, p. 1). At the deepest level of student involvement, which is engagement, students are more active than passive and able to be proactive not just reactive when engaging in some meetings and events. In this sense, the current study uses the term “involvement” to express the activities that students undertake when they participate in QAP, rather than the term “engagement” which refers in this study to the deepest activities that students carry out, necessitating more time, effort and commitment from the students to undertake.

In the literature, two studies were found supporting the previous view of regarding engagement as the deepest level of involvement (Gvaramadze, 2011; Cummings and Worley, 2009). The first one (Gvaramadze, 2011) confirms that “student engagement” with QAP has gone beyond “student involvement” in institutional structures at HEIs. According to that study, student engagement “takes into consideration quite a broad range of issues including design of the curriculum and the learning environment, approaches to teaching and learning, transformation of processes on the institutional level, changes at the level of the course and programme” (Gvaramadze, 2011, p. 33). The distinction between “involvement” and “engagement” is discussed in management literature focused on employee involvement (EI) in the organizational decision-making process. Cummings and Worley distinguished between involvement and engagement and stated that “engagement” refers to an organizational member’s work experience. Engaged employees are motivated, committed, and interested in their work. “Engagement” then is the outcome of EI interventions (Cummings and Worley, 2009, p. 350) and this refers to the opinion that the concept of “engagement” implies the deepest degree of involvement.

The second reason for using “involvement” rather than “engagement” is that student engagement has two different meanings, depending upon the particular contexts, which can sometimes cause misunderstanding and confusion. This study, argues that student engagement in QAP differs from student engagement with their learning, inside and outside the classroom. This opinion is supported by one report of

the Joint Quality Review Group (JQRG) (QAA, 2008a, pp. 5-6) which emphasized that student engagement with quality is not the same as students' engagement as learners in the learning process. "Student engagement as learners" in their education has been studied widely in the literature (Exeter *et al.*, 2010, p. 762; Krause and Coates, 2008, p. 493; Coates, 2005, p. 3; Ryan, 2005, p. 236; Dew and Nearing, 2004, p. 175; Zhao and Kuh, 2004, p. 115; Kuh and Umbach, 2004, p. 39; McInnis, 2003, p. 12). Student engagement in learning means that students are supposed to share in their learning experiences with others (Ryan, 2005, p. 236), which could emerge from the interaction with their educational environment. Therefore, this concept of "engagement" is based on "the constructivist assumption that learning is influenced by participation in educational activities purposefully" (Coates, 2005b, p. 26).

There is a range of student engagement activities (in their learning), which, of course, differ from the student involvement activities in the QAP that this study investigates. For example, engagement in learning includes: conducting discussions and putting questions to the instructors and/or other students inside and/or outside the classroom; engaging in creating their knowledge and understanding; preparing drafts of their work before submission, writing papers; and studying outside the class (QAA, 2008a, p. 6; Coates, 2005b, p. 33; Rush and Hart, 2005, p. 3; Ryan, 2005, p. 236). Therefore, whereas engagement "in learning" occurs where students feel they are part of a group of students and academics committed to learning (McInnis, 2003, p. 10), in the same sense engagement "in the QAP" occurs when students feel that they are fully involved in the QAP activities.

The definition of "student involvement" can refer to the roles that students should take and the power that they have to obtain to feel that their voice is heard. Therefore, for example, in management, the EI definition includes "four elements that can promote meaningful involvement in workplace decisions: power, information, knowledge and skills, and rewards" (Cummings and Worley, 2009, p. 350). Those four elements of EI are "interdependent and must be changed together to obtain positive results. For example, if organization members are given more power and authority to make decisions but do not have the information or knowledge and skills to make good decisions, then the value of involvement is likely to be negligible. Similarly, increasing employees' power, information, knowledge and skills but not linking rewards to the performance consequences of changes gives members little incentives to improve organizational performance" (Cummings and Worley, 2009, p. 351). Thus, the student voice is a very important term in understanding student involvement. Student voice "does not simply mean the words spoken by students but includes the many ways in which students choose to express their feelings or views about any aspect of their (university) experience" (Robinson and Taylor, 2007, p. 6). Student voice is defined as "listening to and valuing the views that students express regarding their learning experiences; communicating student views to people who are in a position to influence change; and treating students as equal partners in the evaluation of teaching and learning, thus empowering them to take a more active role in shaping or changing their education" (Walker and Logan, 2008).

Student involvement refers to the quantity and quality of the "physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience" (Astin, 1999, p. 11). Thus, "a highly involved student is one who, for example, devotes considerable energy to studying, spends much time on-campus, participates actively in

student organizations, and interacts frequently with faculty members and other students. Conversely, a typical uninvolved student neglects studies, spends little time on-campus, abstains from extracurricular activities, and has infrequent contact with faculty members or other students” (Astin, 1999, p. 1). These definitions are indicative of the behaviour aspects of involvement (the physical and psychological energy), which in this research are called the activities that students undertake to be involved in QAP in their institution. The current research sees student involvement in the institutional QAP as:

The student participation in evaluating and enhancing the quality of their HEI by carrying out specific activities, such as responding to QA-related questionnaires, participating in QA-related committees, and involving themselves in direct QAP procedures (Elassy, 2012, p. 26).

### **The importance of student involvement in QA system at an institutional level**

Students as stakeholders are the main input to the educational system, and simultaneously they are the main output of that system. They are not only “inside the factory”, which is the HEI, but they also interact with the institutional processes for the several years of their studies (Brenders *et al.*, 1999, p. 668). Generally speaking, there is wide support for student involvement in QAP in policy reports. For example, in Europe, the commonly shared perception held by European quality agencies is that student involvement in QAP is crucial (Helle, 2009, p. 3), and also the Bologna process supports student involvement. Since the main result of a QA system should be an increase in the quality of education within each institution for students, the role of students in creating and maintaining such a system has become one of the main areas of concern within the Bologna process over the last decade (Abaspahic, 2005, pp. 11-12). Similarly, a report from the European Students’ Union (ESIB) confirmed that “as full stakeholders in the educational process, the participation of students (in the QAP) is critical to the success of the Bologna reforms” (ESU, 2008, p. 2). Also, the Standards and Guidelines for QA in the European HE Area (ESG) set out in 2005 clearly confirmed that “the participation of students in QA activities and external assessment is an expectation, and this is becoming standard practice among ENQA’s members” (QAA, 2009a, p. 5).

The reasons and the benefits that HE can gain from including students in the QAP could be grouped into two groups of benefits: for students and for QAP.

#### *The importance for students regarding their involvement in QAP*

Two main benefits could be identified from policy reports regarding the importance for students of their involvement in the QAP. These are: the development of students’ skills; and an increase in their awareness of their institution.

*Development of students’ skills.* It is proposed that participation in the QAP is important for students because it provides them with unique opportunities to develop their skills, such as communication, analytical, and leadership skills. In a report about the Finnish experience of student involvement in the QAP, it was confirmed that student involvement in the QAP in the Finnish experience, enhanced their individual and collective competences and skills (Moitus, 2004, p. 26). In the UK, the Quality

Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) information bulletin highlighted some of the benefits of student involvement, which included “an opportunity for students to develop their ability to analyse the quality of their programmes, creating a sense of ownership of these programmes” (QAA, 2009b, p. 2). However, one of the emerging limitations highlighted in one QAA’s (2008b) report is when students participated in the audit team in the QAA some of them felt that “they were not sufficiently experienced or confident enough to contribute sufficiently within the audit panel, during the whole time of the audit” (QAA, 2008b, p. 2). This may be due to a lack of student experience, which may be addressed by providing some prior training before involvement in such a process.

*Increase students’ awareness about their institution.* When students involve themselves, particularly in the institutional QAP, this can increase their understanding of the structure of their institution and the QA procedures in it. The QAA (2008c) highlighted that students who participate in the Internal Periodic Review teams “developed a clear understanding of the institutional processes and priorities and they also impact on individual schools and departments” (QAA, 2008c, p. 10). In the same vein, in another report (QAA, 2009d), it is mentioned that students who had participated in some capacity in the institution’s subject review process considered it to be a valuable and useful experience and the student panel members said that “the process had served to increase their own confidence in the quality of the university’s academic provision, and that they had been well integrated into the panel as a whole” (QAA, 2009d, p. 14). Involvement in the QAP gives the students a fuller understanding of the nature of their university, which improves their ability to make an effective contribution in wider discussions about the institutional policies and practice (QAA, 2008c, p. 10).

#### *The importance of student involvement for the QAP*

This section indicates the benefits of student involvement for the QAP itself. They could be grouped into three benefits, which are: informing QA teams about the students’ perspectives; providing validity to the information about quality; and enhancing the quality of HEIs. It could be argued that the most important reason is the first one, “informing the university about the students’ opinions”, since this reason is a first step in bringing about the other two benefits, which are providing validity to the information about quality; and enhancing it. For example, an HEI might inform itself about the students’ perceptions of the curriculum, in order to understand the main advantages and disadvantages of it, and the ways to improve it from the students’ perspectives. In this way it gives “validity” to the evidence it provides to an external or even internal evaluation team, and so it could “enhance” the quality of the curriculum, in the light of the students’ views.

*Informing the QA team about the students’ perspectives.* In some policy reports, the importance of student involvement in the QAP was highlighted, specifically in the “site visits” to HEIs by a QA agency, since students from the evaluated institution are one of the interviewee groups, and they have knowledge about problems that have not been identified in the self-evaluation report (Froestad and Bakken, 2004, p. 44), and they “can assess the coherence or lack of coherence of the study programme from the users’ perspective” (Froestad and Bakken, 2004, p. 44). The QAA Board confirmed that “meeting with student representatives is a benefit for the audit panel reviewer

members, because giving students the opportunity to give their direct opinions let the reviewers establish the student perspective on the issues being considered" (QAA, 2000, p. 51). However, on the other hand, it is argued that students' answers in these meetings may be "biased by a few very critical or positive views, and there were some obstacles about sufficient information and time for the students to prepare for the interviews, as well as motivation to invest that time from the students themselves can be a critical point" (Froestad and Bakken, 2004, p. 44).

Interestingly, students could be on the other side of the table, which means they could be included as members of the evaluation team; and other students from the evaluated institution could be involved as interviewees. If students were involved as a part of a QA panel, it was stated that because of their involvement in such panels the students' views about quality helped the panel to promote its work (Froestad and Bakken, 2004, p. 38). Further, their inclusion gives the boards of the evaluation agency clear views about the evaluation process, because students provided new topics and perspectives that could be added to the evaluation (Froestad and Bakken, 2004, p. 12). This is what the Scottish HE sector confirmed in some of the reports by the QAA. It was highlighted that "as students have been included as full members of the audit teams in Scotland for several years, this has enhanced the ability of the review teams to understand the learner experience and has made the whole process more accessible to the students that take part in it" (NUS, 2008, p. 1). Student panel members in the ELIR team brought a different perspective to the reviews (QAA, 2009c, p. 12).

Further, student involvement in the "institutional" QAP is seen as beneficial too. For example, in the UK, some HEIs highlighted the benefits of students contributing to the Self-Evaluation Document (SED) or in providing a Student Written Submission (SWS). These are: the deeper involvement of students in informing the agenda for the internal review and for future priorities of the school concerned; and increased school-based involvement with students on teaching and learning issues which can inform both local and institutional developments (QAA, 2009f, p. 16).

*Providing validity to the information about quality.* Student involvement in the QAP is recommended by the ENQA, because it is thought that "it gives greater credibility" to that process (Cadina, 2006, p. 18). Involving students in the audit process as members of the audit panels is recommended in several countries, such as in Finland (Moitus, 2004, p. 10), Norway (Haugland, 2006, p. 19), Scotland (QAA, 2006b, p. 8), and in the rest of the UK (QAA, 2008b, p. 1). This is seen as "adding to the validity and reliability of the audit process" and as giving "an important role for students to play in the review process" (QAA, 2006a, p. 3). In the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) survey's results on "quality procedures in the European HE area and beyond" (Helle, 2009), which looks at students' involvement, among other things, it is revealed that the stakeholder approach places student at the centre of learning in the field of QA, which contributes positively to transparency themes. The same conclusion was highlighted in a report commissioned by the Universities Scotland Teaching Quality Forum (USTQF) (QAA, 2009g), which advised that "asking students to draft relevant sections of the reflective analysis (RA) would help to ensure authenticity" (QAA, 2009g, p. 22).

In research about student involvement in the Nordic countries, it was confirmed that their involvement in the QAP "increases the legitimacy of the self-evaluation report in the eyes of the external evaluation panel" (Froestad and Bakken, 2004, p. 30) and "adds



legitimacy to the conclusions of the panel for the students at the evaluated institution” (Froestad and Bakken, 2004, p. 38). Also, the same report highlighted that interviewing students in the site visit to an institution by QA agency “validates the self-evaluation report”, and also gives the chance to “compare students’ answers with the answers from other groups” (Froestad and Bakken, 2004, p. 44).

Another interesting benefit of including students, specifically in the “national” QAP in the “site visits” to HEIs by a QA agency, is that “students on external panels can give the other students a feeling of being heard and of their views being seriously considered; they can put questions directed at the students’ real situation concerning the setting/atmosphere and the quality of the education or programme” (Froestad and Bakken, 2004, p. 40). Therefore, “meeting with students during the site visit is regarded as a very important way of gathering information” (Froestad and Bakken, 2004, p. 13), which is seen as a good approach to validating the self-evaluation report, because students pointed out their problems and raised new topics that were not actually included in the self-evaluation report.

*Enhancing the quality of HEIs.* Many policy documents have highlighted that student involvement in the QAP can contribute to enhancing the quality of an institution. For example, in the QAA report which analysed 15 reports of the Enhancement-Led Institutional Reviews (ELIRs) (QAA, 2007), it was asserted that most institutions reported that “student involvement at strategic level in QA is a very powerful driver for enhancement” (QAA, 2007, p. 10). However, those institutions indicated that there had been some difficulties in convincing students to participate in quality activities. Further, in a study of 12 Welsh HEIs (York Consulting, 2006), all institutions considered students to be “key agents in the quality improvement agenda, and acknowledged the role they could potentially play” (York Consulting, 2006, p. vii). Similarly, in a paper presented by the QAA (2009e), it was stated that “it is recognised that student representation is integral to the enhancement of academic quality, and to sustaining academic standards” (QAA, 2009e, p. 1). In Finland, experience has shown that the closer students are involved in the activities at the department level, the better the result for enhancement (Alaniska, 2006, p. 12). Therefore, it is thought that students can influence the development of the educational process by participating in the evaluation practice (Moitus, 2004, p. 29).

### **Limitations regarding student involvement in QAP**

It is important to point out to other arguments against student involvement in the QA and decision-making process in their institutions. For example, a debate has been found in the policy literature (NUS, 2009b) about including students as panel members on the Periodic Reviews, some of the arguments that are used against including students are:

Periodic Reviews are based on the principle of peer review and students are not peers; no students have sufficient experience or training to be a member of a review panel; students are unable to make the time commitment that participating in a review panel requires; and student members will not be fully part of the review team by treating students as full and equal members of the review panel (NUS, 2009b, p. 11).

Moreover, student involvement in the institutional QAP faces some obstacles which are highlighted in a few reports. For example, it “can be difficult to motivate students to participate; involving many students is not always possible and a few student

representatives must often speak for a very large group, student participation demands sufficient time and a suitable schedule” (Froestad and Bakken, 2004, p. 30). Also, some obstacles were mentioned, in some studies concerned with Nordic countries’ experiences, regarding student involvement in the “national” QAP. For example it was said that “it may be hard to find and select students fit for the task; regulations may restrict student participation; and evaluation traditions may restrict student participation” (Froestad and Bakken, 2004, p. 38). This is because there is a formal obstacle, in some countries’ legislation. For instance, according to the Act of the Danish Evaluation Institute, members of the external panels must have special professional expertise and must be independent of the institutions evaluated, but a student member can hardly fulfil these legal requirements (Froestad and Bakken, 2004, p. 39).

### **Developing a model of student involvement in QA system in HEIs**

This section aims to show the need to develop a model of the activities of student involvement in institutional QAP, since there is a lack in the literature about this issue, as will be explained next. The existing literature on student/stakeholder involvement will be reviewed in the present section. From a critical discussion of the relevant literature the theoretical model will be suggested, which builds on the strengths of the existing literature but seeks to avoid their weaknesses.

In the literature, it was found that few studies have focused on student involvement in QAP at institutional level. Even those studies did not present a comprehensive model of student involvement activities to allow a full understanding of the extent, nature, and quality of the “activities” which students undertake when they involve themselves in the institutional QAP.

One example of those studies on student involvement in the institutional QAP is the Student Participation in Quality Scotland (SPARQS, 2004) study that presented a model defining student involvement in the QAP, since SPARQS answered a key question, which is “what is student engagement?” (Cockburn, 2005, p. 32). That study used the term “engagement” instead of “involvement”. SPARQS described a three tiered model of student involvement in QA committees, which has, in ascending order:

- (1) opportunity, which is the lowest degree of involvement, where students have already been given the opportunity to sit in committees, meetings and/or events;
- (2) attendance, where students not only have the opportunities to sit on committees, but they take up these opportunities and join the committees, meetings and/or events; and
- (3) engagement, the highest degree of student involvement, where students not only attend committees, but also make considerable contributions in those committees, meetings and/or events (SPARQS 200b).

However, clearly, this model needs to be expanded because it simply considers what the students do when they join a QA-related committee. The researcher would argue that there are other activities that students carry out when involving themselves in institutional QAP, notably: involvement in responding to QA-related questionnaires, and involvement in direct internal and external QA procedures. Therefore, there is a need for a more comprehensive model of student involvement in the institutional QAP, and, in the current study, the proposed model may be considered as an expanded typology that builds upon and refines the SPARQS’s model. This is because the

proposed model uses the three degrees of involvement (opportunities, attendance and engagement) that suggested in the SPARQS model, see Figure 1, but has expanded them significantly.

Additionally, in the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) study (Little *et al.*, 2009), all HEIs and Further Education Colleges (FECs) in England were studied. This was to determine the extent and the nature of student engagement in HE

		The rungs of activities	Degrees of Involvement	Categories of activities	
Influence Direct More Time/Effort More Commitment More Degree of involvement More Student Numbers Less Indirect Less Less Less More		20- Sharing in writing the self-evaluation report at university level <sup>g</sup>	Engagement	Involving in direct QAP procedures	
		19- Sharing in reviewing the self-evaluation report at university level <sup>g</sup>			
		18- Meeting with external reviewer in the site visit	Attendance		
		17- Having opportunities to share in external QA procedures	Opportunity		
		16- Sharing in writing the self-evaluation report at school level	Engagement		
		15- Sharing in reviewing the self-evaluation report at school level			
		14- Meeting with internal reviewers	Attendance		
		13- Having opportunities to share in internal QA procedures	Opportunity		
		12- Having leading decision-making roles within the committee <sup>b</sup>	Engagement		Involving in QA-related Committees <sup>d, f</sup>
		11- Adding to committees' decisions <sup>c</sup>			
		10- Consulting with committee members <sup>b, c</sup>			
		9- Giving feedback from committees' meetings to other students			
		8- Investigating what the committee has done about issues raised by students			
		7- Informing the committee meetings about students' opinions <sup>b, c</sup>			
		6- Attending committee meetings	Attendance		
		5- Having opportunities to attend committees	Opportunity		
		4- Follow up the feedback from the questionnaires	Engagement <sup>a</sup>	Involving in QA-related Questionnaires <sup>d, f</sup>	
		3- Answering questionnaires carefully			
		2- Answering questionnaires apathetically	Attendance <sup>a</sup>		
		1- Having opportunities to answer questionnaires	Opportunity <sup>a</sup>		

Sources: <sup>a</sup> SPARQS (2004b); <sup>b</sup> Arnstein (1969); <sup>c</sup> Widemann and Femers (1993); <sup>d</sup> Cumming (2001); <sup>e</sup> Hart (2008); <sup>f</sup> Little *et al.* (2009, p. 15); <sup>g</sup> QAA (2009f, pp. 15, 17)

**Figure 1.**  
The model of student involvement activities in the institutional QAP

(that study used the term “engagement” instead of the term “involvement”) and to explore the models of formal and informal student engagement. It was concluded that the basic model, across different HE providers in England, of formal student engagement for QA purposes comprises two main elements, which are: student feedback questionnaires and student representation systems. However, the HEFCE’s study did not provide a precise understanding of student involvement in institutional QAP. In addition, it did not present enough details about the “activities” that students undertake or what the student representatives should carry out in terms of involvement in the institutional QAP. Also, this study did not investigate the “factors” that may influence student which encourage or hinder them to be involved in the QAP in their HEI. However, it did provide some insights related to designing an adequate model of the student involvement activities, to be explored in the present research. For example, the HEFCE’s model gave some thoughts of developing the first category of the proposed model (involving in QA-related questionnaire), specifically adding rung No. 4 about “following up the feedback from the questionnaire”, see Figure 1.

Moreover, in a recent study, a research of the consequences of student participation in QA (Palomares, 2011) presented a model of different levels of student involvement in the QAP in order to show the consequences of including them in different levels of involvement. Three levels of student involvement were suggested in that model, each of which has a number of sub-levels describing the student involvement activities in the QAP:

- (1) The “internal level” included three sub-levels of involvement: providing information; preparation of self-assessment reports; and bodies responsible for QAP.
- (2) The “external level” contained two sub-levels: providing information in consultation during external reviews; and students as members of an external review panel of HEIs and/or programmes.
- (3) The “governance of QA agencies level” consisted of three sub-levels: students as planners of the evaluation/accreditation programmes; as members of the consultative bodies; and as members of the governance bodies (Palomares, 2011, p. 10).

It could be suggested that the main strength of Palomares’s (2011) model was that it tried to combine the activities that students may undertake when they involve themselves at “institutional” and “national” levels in the QAP. The institutional QAP is reflected in both the first “internal” and the second “external” levels, but in the third level of the “governance of QA agencies” presented the national QAP. However, a significant weakness in Palomares’s (2011) model was that it did not provide much detail about the activities that students undertake to involve themselves in the QAP. For example, the three sub-levels of (1) the “internal level” did not highlight how students would be involved through “providing information” or “preparing the self-assessment report” or even telling us what the activities that the “student bodies” would carry out in order to be involved in the institutional QAP. Therefore, the proposed model in this study avoids this weakness by, for example, suggesting how students could participate in “preparing the self-assessment report” in the internal QAP through proposing four rungs No. 13-16, see Figure 1. The same argument could be stated in the other two levels (2) and (3) of the Palomares’s model, since the

sub-levels were not detailed enough in a comprehensive way. The suggested model, in this study, focuses on the activities of student involvement in “institutional” QAP in order to give many details about how exactly student could involve themselves in this process. Another significant weakness found in the Palomares’s (2011) model, is that it only depended on reports and papers related to student involvement in QAP and did not test the model through an empirical study.

As discussed previously, not enough studies of student involvement in institutional QAP have been published to present an adequate model of the “activities” that students undertake when they involve themselves in the QAP in their institution to provide a comprehensive understanding of the nature of student involvement to illustrate “how” students are involved in that process. Some of those pieces of research (Lizzio and Wilson, 2009; Little *et al.*, 2009; Miller and Nadler, 2009; York Consulting, 2006) were only focused, specifically, on the involvement of formal student representatives, one study presented a model of the activities of student involvement in both “institutional” and “national” QAP generally (Palomares, 2011), and other studies (Cockburn, 2005; SPARQS, 2004) were concerned only with particular activities that students undertake when they join QA-related committees.

Broadly speaking, the model suggested in this study is derived from other typologies, ladders, and models that are found in the literature concerned with student involvement in QAP (such as Palomares, 2011; Little *et al.*, 2009; Cockburn, 2005; SPARQS, 2004), as discussed previously, and also models suggested in a wide body of literature from various disciplines that study stakeholder involvement. Examples of these different areas are: sociology, environmental sustainability, business, medicine, rural development planning, administration and management and young children participation areas (see for instance, Hart, 2008; Bailey and Grossardt, 2007; Lawrence, 2006; Tritter and McCallum, 2006; Videira *et al.*, 2006; Green and Clarke, 2003; Cumming, 2001; Jackson, 2001; Michener, 1998; Brandon *et al.*, 1994; Wilcox, 1994; Widemann and Femers, 1993; Duke *et al.*, 1980; Arnstein, 1969; Bridges, 1967). The most important common theme in these studies is that they are all concerned with stakeholder involvement. The term stakeholder means “those who have an interest in, an impact on or are users of” (Shanahan and Gelber, 2004, p. 166) the function of an organization. In the cited studies, stakeholders could be citizens, children, customers, patients, public, volunteers, voters, or taxpayers, but in the current study, the stakeholders are specifically the university’s students. In previous studies, the providers could be a company, party, governmental organization, management planner body, health service institution, or even the whole society, whereas the university as a HEI is the provider, in this research.

Additionally, when considering stakeholder participation literature, it can be seen that most of the studies (Henriksen *et al.*, 2009; Bailey and Grossardt, 2007; Videira *et al.*, 2006; Cumming, 2001; Wilcox, 1994), have been located in relation to one widely-cited piece of research, possibly, due to its clarity and simplicity, which is Arnstein’s (1969) study. Arnstein’s ladder of citizen participation in decision-making processes presented a gradation of eight rungs. The bottom rungs of the ladder are (1) manipulation and (2) therapy, which describe levels of “non-participation” that have been contrived by some as a substitute for genuine participation. Arnstein suggested that the providers “institutions” objective for these rungs is not to enable people to participate in planning or conducting programs, but to enable power-holders to educate

or cure the participants. However, rungs (3) informing and (4) consulting progress to levels of “tokenism” that allow the “have-nots” to hear and to have a voice. When they are proffered by power-holders as the total extent of participation, citizens may indeed hear and be heard. Rung (5) placation is a higher level tokenism because the ground rules allow “have-nots” to advise, but retain for the power-holders the continued right to decide. Further up the ladder are levels of citizen power with increasing degrees of decision-making authority. In rung (6) partnership, enables citizens to negotiate and engage in trade-offs with traditional power-holders. At the topmost rungs, (7) delegated power and (8) citizen control; the “have-not” citizens obtain the majority of decision-making seats, or full managerial power (Arnstein, 1969, p. 217). Some literature criticized, developed and/or used the Arnstein’s ladder, (Videira *et al.*, 2006; Lawrence, 2006; Green and Clarke, 2003; Cumming, 2001; Michener, 1998), in order to design new models or ladders. In the proposed research, Arnstein’s study is incorporated into the design of the current model, particularly, as regards students’ activity rungs No. 7, 10 and 12 (see Figure 1).

Although the literature referred to above is considered to be a useful source for building the proposed model and in understanding the potential degrees of stakeholder participation in decision-making processes, it must be borne in mind that there are differences between most of these scholars’ models and the one being proposed in this study. The most notable difference is that other studies have presented the activities that the “providers”, such as a company, a hospital, a society, etc., should carry out to involve their stakeholders. However, the present model focuses on the activities that students could undertake, as the main “stakeholder”, when involving themselves in the QAP at institutional level rather than the opportunities which are created by the institution itself. Therefore, for example, when some studies, such as Hart (2008, p. 1), Jackson (2001, p. 141), Wilcox (1994, p. 8), Widemann and Femers (1993, p. 357), Arnstein (1969, p. 219), included “informing” as one of the activities, they meant that the institution should inform its stakeholders about something relevant to them, such as their rights, responsibilities, or legal rules, in order to make a proclamation of the institution’s plans (Arnstein, 1969, p. 219; Wilcox, 1994, p. 8). However, “informing” in the model being suggested here (rung No. 7 in Figure 1) means that when student representatives attend committees, they may inform the committees’ members about the students’ perceptions.

In this paper, a spectrum model, in the form of a ladder comprising 20 rungs is presented which describes the activities of student involvement. The word “rung”, in this context, describes the activities that students may carry out and the ways in which students behave in order to be involved in the institutional QAP. The term “model” is used here in the sense that “in social science research, a model is a tentative description of what a social process or system might be like” (Watson and Hill, 1993, p. 119). The suggested model aims to specify the activities for which students may be responsible when involving themselves in the institutional QAP at HEIs in their institution. A taxonomy of various activities that students theoretically, may carry out in order to be involved in QAP, is presented in this suggested model, see Figure 1.

### **The dimensions of the model**

In the light of reading through the literature about stakeholder involvement (Palomares, 2011; Hart, 2008; Bailey and Grossardt, 2007; Lawrence, 2006; Tritter and

---

McCallum, 2006; Green and Clarke, 2003; Cumming, 2001; Brandon *et al.*, 1994; Duke *et al.*, 1980; Arnstein, 1969), five dimensions that can define the model could be suggested. These are: students' numbers; degree of involvement; student commitment, time and effort; and direct/indirect involvement (see Figure 1).

### *The students' numbers*

It is assumed that the numbers of students who are involved in the QAP activities would decrease gradually when moving towards the top of the model. This means that the highest number of students would be involved in the lowest levels, which may be due to the nature of the activities themselves. For example, the number of students who expected to meet the audit team in the external QAP (rung No. 18) could be limited, however nearly all students could be offered the chance to respond to questionnaires and surveys (rung No. 1).

### *Degree of involvement*

At the higher rungs of the proposed model, it is expected that the degree of student involvement would be increased. This is because in the higher activities, students not only have the opportunity, for example, to join committees (rung No. 6), but also to engage in these committees and affect the decision-making process (rung No. 12). This model suggests three categories of activities that students could be undertaking when they involve themselves in the institutional QAP, which are: responding to questionnaires; involvement in QA committees; and involvement in the direct QA procedures. The model suggests that each category of activities has three degrees of involvement, these are: opportunities (which mean having some chance to be involved), attendance (which means using the given chances) and engagement (which means involving themselves deeply in the activities and making a considerable contribution).

### *Student commitment*

It is suggested that the higher the rung in the model, the more commitment students seem to have. This could reflect the possibility that they may become, if they undertake the top activities, more motivated and confident about their involvement in institutional QAP.

### *Time/effort*

At the lower rungs in the model, less time and effort is needed for involvement in QAP activities. That could explain the vertical arrow of the student number, which indicates the opposite direction, since smaller numbers of students are expected to be involved in the institutional QAP at the higher rungs. This is maybe due to the fact that full engagement needs more effort and a longer time to be spent on involvement in the QAP activities.

### *Direct/indirect influence*

At the higher rungs of QAP activities, it is expected that students would deal directly with people who are responsible for QAP issues and the decision-takers within the university. Therefore, the activities that students could undertake may directly affect changes in the HEI's policy about the QA aspects.

**The categories of the model**

This model suggests that students could be involved in the institutional QAP to different extents through three categories, which are: responding to questionnaires; involvement in QA committees; and involvement in the direct QA procedures. This will be presented next in detail; each category is presented with the rungs relating to it.

*Involvement in responding to QA-related questionnaires*

Students are often requested to complete different kinds of surveys to give their perspectives about their educational experiences, the performance of teaching staff, specific aspects of their institution, and their courses. For example “many institutions have mandatory Student Feedback Questionnaires (SFQ) as summative evaluations at the end of each course, using standard questions across all courses, where the lecture is assumed to be the norm” (Biggs, 2001, p. 231). Also, one of the widespread tools used to collect student feedback to measure their views about their courses is the “course experience questionnaire (CEQ)”, which is used as a performance indicator of teaching quality by an HEI. This survey aims to monitor teaching quality at the course level through identification of the students’ opinions of the curriculum, teaching and assessment, all of which are reflected on the students’ learning approaches and the quality of their learning outcomes (Byrne and Flood, 2003, p. 136). Another survey that is used widely to measure the quality of the teaching process from the students’ opinions is the “student evaluations of teaching (SETs)” (Bastick, 2001, pp. 1-2), which is used widely in the US as a part of the QA cycle to help in decisions about the promotion, the payment and the tenure of the teachers (Kanagaretnam *et al.*, 2003, p. 1).

This method of collecting student views about quality of teaching and learning process has some advantages which are expressed in the literature. It is believed that the main benefit of using these results of questionnaires is to place student opinion at the centre of the dialogue on quality (NUS, 2009a, p. 27). Thus, results from student surveys “are playing a critical role in many of the QA and improvement activities, that have become embedded within contemporary HE” (Coates, 2005, p. 1). Student surveys have become an increasingly established way for students and graduates to have their voices factored into conversations that determine the strategies, policies and practices that shape HE (Coates, 2005, p. 3).

Other advantages of using questionnaires in collecting students’ views could also include: it ensures inclusivity in that all students are given the chance to provide feedback; it is relatively inexpensive to administer, process and analyse; it provides real evidence in that they document evidence in a relatively systematic way; it allows comparisons and analysis of trends; it provides confirmation about what is already known; it could be used as a measure of the effectiveness of teaching in terms of monitoring and improving the quality of teaching; the results could provide information to current and potential students in the selection of units and courses; and it plays a major role in the survival and success of universities in the HE market place (Nair *et al.*, 2008, p. 225; Brennan and Williams, 2003, p. 61; McInnis, 1997, p. 63).

However, there are a number of limitations in using student questionnaires. For example, it has been found that surveys are generally “ex-post” in that students are often asked for their views at the end of a module or programme, so students themselves rarely get to know the results and also a low response rate could happen. This could affect the extent to which actions and decisions can legitimately be based on



them (Brennan and Williams, 2003, p. 62). Therefore, “the questionnaires alone cannot capture all aspects of students’ views” (Rush and Hart, 2005, p. 6), and there are some concerns and cautions about the validity and the accuracy of the questionnaires’ results. Nevertheless, some of these limitations could be overcome easily. For example, the low response level could be improved if students recognised the importance to the university and to the student body. Some studies suggested that students were more likely to participate in QA-related questionnaires if they felt that their feedback made a meaningful contribution (Nair *et al.*, 2008, p. 226); and was acted upon by an institution.

Returning to the model, it is suggested that there are four activities that students might undertake at this group of rungs (No. 1-4), namely: having opportunities to answer questionnaires; answering questionnaires apathetically; answering questionnaires carefully; and following up the feedback from the questionnaires. Regarding the suggested model’s indicators, it is expected that this set of activities has the involvement of the highest numbers of students, since it is often the case that all students have opportunities to answer questionnaires. In contrast, the degree of involvement, commitment, and time/effort spent in carrying out these four activities are most likely increasing when ascending within the four rungs. For example, if students follow up feedback from the questionnaires, they could be seen as being more involved in the QAP compared with simply answering questionnaires. This, perhaps, means that students have, if they do follow up the responses, more commitment to the QAP and spend more time and effort searching for that feedback. The explanation of these four rungs is as follows.

*Having opportunities to answer questionnaires.* This rung relates to students being offered opportunities to respond to questionnaires and surveys that are used to assure and enhance the quality of a university, school, programme or course. These questionnaires may be internal university-wide surveys, with publication of the results internally. Also, they could be external surveys, prepared nationally and distributed across HEIs as nation-wide questionnaires. These results might be published nationally, or alternatively each institution could be sent its results individually, so that it may publish its own results.

It is expected that all students might have opportunities to respond to internal and external surveys about their university’s experiences. Some questionnaires could be only sent to a particular group of students, such as postgraduate, international or first/final year students, such as the UK’s National Student Survey (NSS) and the Australian CEQ, which aim to collect views only from final year students.

To increase the extent of student involvement in QAP, the HEIs should give much opportunity for students to respond to different kinds of questionnaires. Therefore, the staff and practitioners involved in QA units in HEIs, who are responsible of distributing students’ questionnaires, should think about suitable time of the year to distribute the QA-related questionnaires. For example, choosing the time before the exam might be not the perfect time, as the students do not have time or interest for answering questions. Also, the questionnaires should be widely distributed throughout using different and interesting ways, for example, by using students’ e-mails, students’ groups in the Face book and/or distributing them by the classic ways such as by class representatives. Additionally, two or three reminders for completing of the questionnaires should be sent to students. These procedures are aiming to increase

the response rate of the questionnaires and to give the students the feeling of the importance of their views.

*Answering questionnaires apathetically.* This rung suggests that students maybe take the opportunity of responding to surveys to provide their views about the educational provision. This may include their experience about some aspects, such as the learning and teaching process; the support facilities (libraries and the computing facilities) for learning and teaching; other support facilities (student accommodation, health care facilities and student services); the learning environment (lecture rooms, laboratories, social space and university buildings); and the external aspects of being a student (finance and transport) (Harvey, 2003, p. 3).

However, this rung refers to an apathetic way of answering questionnaires, in which students simply tick the boxes without giving too much thought to what they are doing and may not even provide comments or suggestions in the open-ended questions, if there were any.

To avoid the apathetic way of responding to QA-related questionnaires, it could be suggested that class representatives and/or staff working in QA units in HEIs, who are responsible of analyzing the students' questionnaires should work on persuading students about the importance of their views. This could be conducted by, for example, showing students that the results from questionnaires are taken seriously by the HEI and giving students real examples of responding to students' perceptions that are expressed in questionnaires to show them that their feedback is effective in decision making process.

*Answering questionnaires carefully.* In this rung, it is suggested that students could be aware about the importance of their views. In this case, it is supposed that they answer questionnaires as carefully and honestly as they can. The reason for taking care with the answers could be that some of the questionnaire items are directly related to the students' experience and, at the same time, students may understand the importance of their responses. This rung defines the first real step towards true "engagement" in the institutional QAP (see Figure 1).

*Follow up the feedback from questionnaires.* This action is considered to be the highest degree of engagement in this group of activities, which is concerned with involvement in responding to questionnaires. This is because, at this rung, students not only answer surveys carefully and honestly, but also follow up the findings and enquire about the actions taken by their university as a result of their expressed opinions. This action reflects a real interest by students in the QAP. The meaning of the concept of "feedback" is worth highlighting in this context. Harvey (2003) defined student feedback as "the expressed views of the students in the educational services" (Harvey, 2003, p. 3). Student feedback in this sense differs from two other terms. The first one is about giving the students "feedback about their performance" in exams and other educational performance, which is a different process from Harvey's definition of the student feedback. The second concept is about giving students "feedback about how their views have been responded" to. When the university, for example, collects students' opinions about courses they have studied, this is called student feedback. However, when the university announces what they have done to respond to the students' views and how they have treated the negative points that the students expressed about their course, this operation is referred to as giving feedback to the students.

Some researchers stated that “listening to student voice alone is not sufficient”, what happens to the information that the university gathered from its student and “what is done with it is also of great importance” (Walker and Logan, 2008, p. 5). It is believed that “the challenge for universities is not to gather feedback from students, but rather communicating the actions/improvement to them” (Shah and Nair, 2006, p. 2). This poor communication situation led students to believe that nothing would be changed in response to their concerns, which may decrease the level of involvement in the institutional QAP. To increase student involvement in QAP a HEI should have a systematic way of giving the opportunity for all students to follow up the feedback from the questionnaires they answered and in an adequate time. For example, on the student association website, there could be a web-link to follow up the analysis of results of all the previous questionnaires and presenting the decisions that the university or school or department had taken in order to respond to questionnaires’ results.

#### *Involvement in QA-related committees*

Student representatives might participate in a number of formal committees concerned with the QAP. This may be considered as a good way to collect qualitative information about students’ experiences and could help to “explain why something is going well or not so well” (Brennan and Williams, 2004, p. 17). It is thought that student representatives’ attendance at QA committees “provides the opportunity for direct student input into decision-making, and discussions about programme and institutional development” (Little *et al.*, 2009, p. 16). This is because it is considered a good opportunity to hear about students’ vision about the future, not just their opinion about past events. Student representatives can make interactive (two-way) communications (Brennan and Williams, 2004) compared with the first category of activities, which is answering questionnaires. For the institutions, students’ attendance at its meetings is considered the cheapest way of collecting feedback from them; and for the student representatives, there are personal advantages, such as increasing their confidence, improving their own skills in communications and negotiations, as well as improving their CVs (Brennan and Williams, 2004; Brennan and Williams, 2003).

With involvement in QA-related committees as with involvement with questionnaires, there are three degrees of involvement. These are: opportunities, which refer to the student representatives possibly being given the chance to join a QA committee (rung No. 5); attendance, when student representatives may take such opportunities and attend committee meetings (rung No. 6); and engagement, where student representatives might be involved deeply in these meetings and have an effect on the decision-making process (rungs No. 7-12).

It might be suggested that only student representatives, not the whole student community, would be eligible to participate in committee meetings. It is thought that the student number indicator arrow, in the Figure 1 reflects the fact that larger numbers of student representatives would be offered the opportunities to join QA committees. While some of them may take those opportunities and attend committees, it is likely that a smaller number would undertake the higher level, such as having a leading decision-making role. Concerning the other indicators, student commitment, time/ effort, and influence may increase when moving towards the top. It is suggested that this group of activities consists of eight ascending rungs, which are rungs from No. 5 to 12 (see Figure 1).

*Having opportunities to attend committees.* This rung reflects involvement in QA-related committees, where students have the opportunity to attend committee meetings. Students may be offered the chance to attend committees, but they might or might not take up these opportunities. It is expected that students, at this rung and above, are student representatives, who may be class (course) representatives and/or have posts in the students' association. These committees might take place at three levels, which are school (or department); college (or faculty); and university (or institutional) levels. At each level there are a number of committees, some of which may offer a place for one or more student representatives to join in, depending on the committee's remit.

However, it is expected that in some HEIs, negative attitudes towards student involvement in QA-related committees could be found. Specially, students' attendance at policy committees in HEIs (such as school council and/or university council) could be resisted by staff. These kinds of committees, in most cases, are the ones responsible of drawing the strategy and the policy of the institution. Therefore, staff resistance is expected as they may think that it is not the students' job to participate in drawing the strategy of the institution and they do not have the skills and the knowledge to be in a position of decision making. If that is the case, people working in QA units should be working to improve awareness of staff to improve their attitudes towards student involvement and to show them the importance of student participation in decision making and QA processes.

*Attending committee meeting.* At this rung, students take opportunities that a university offers to attend QA-related committees. It is assumed that, at this rung, although student representatives might attend committee meetings, they still do not engage themselves in these meetings. This means that they may physically attend the committee but they might not undertake anything beyond that and may not contribute to discussions with the committee members.

The question here could be why do students not engage in QA committees? One of the possible answers could be because they do not have the required experience and skills to be engaged in QA-related committees. In this case, it is recommended that HEIs should give attention to students' training issue. The researcher thinks that giving opportunities to students to attend QA-related committees does not mean effective contribution from students' side. Therefore, training is a crucial aspect as it affects how effective the student representatives would be when attending QA-related committees. Many studies have explored the student training issue.

Because student representative training is a very important issue, from those few studies concerned with student involvement in the QAP, most of them paid attention to the training issue (Miller and Nadler, 2009; Lizzio and Wilson, 2009; Cadina, 2006; Saunders *et al.*, 2004; Froestad and Bakken, 2004). Also, many countries give attention to this aspect of training. For example, the FINHEEC in Finland is concerned with the provision of training for students to be prepared for involvement in QAP. So, in all universities around Finland, there are training courses provided to student representatives (Alaniska, 2006, pp. 13-15).

The previous example, from Finland, refers to training sessions given to students in order to involve them in QAP at university committees, another example of student training to prepare them for involvement in agency committees at national level can be seen from the Catalanian experience. In Catalonia, the Agència per a la Qualitat del

---

Sistema Universitari de Catalunya (AQU), which is the Catalan QA agency, started a project called “Promoting Students Involvement in Programme Evaluations, Training Course” in 2004 (Cadina, 2006, p. 18). That project offered training for students to help them to be ready for involvement in the AQU activities. It has two main aims, which are to enrol students, after training, as external evaluators of AQU in external assessment committees (CAE), as a short term aim; and to promote the active involvement of students in the university QA policies, as well as to promote a culture of student involvement in the Catalan university system, as a long term aim (Cadina, 2006, p. 18).

*Informing the committee meetings about students’ opinions.* It is suggested that, the main, and perhaps the only, aim of the student representatives, is to “inform” committee members of students’ perceptions, concerns and/or requirements. This means that they maybe do not go beyond that rung of informing to investigate issues raised previously or to take any role in the decision-making process. This rung suggests that student representatives have no role in shaping the meeting’s agenda or even presenting any additional ideas to solve or deal with the students’ issues.

The staff responsible for QA in HEIs should advise student representatives about the proper ways of informing committee members about students’ perspectives. This is because student representatives may not know how to collect students’ opinions or do not know how to communicate with other students they represent. In a QAA report that studied 76 HE institutional audit (QAA, 2011), it highlighted issues relating to the effectiveness of the student representatives. One factor in reducing the effectiveness of representation was considered to be the difficulties experience by student representatives in identifying the views of the student body, and they did not feel able to raise issues themselves (QAA, 2011, p. 8), which reflected a lack of skills and experience of the student representatives. This aspect led to the provision of training for the representatives (QAA, 2011, p. 2)

Student representatives, at this rung, operate as an upward communication channel. This refers to “systematic methods of helping (their peers) to pass on their views and ideas” (Boddy and Paton, 1998, p. 234). That means they should inform the committee about the issues that may concern their student group. Therefore, student representatives who allowed participating in QA-related committees should be aware of the ways they can collect their peer perspectives and the appropriate ways of introducing students’ feedback in the committee meetings. This can be achieved by providing suitable training sessions to student representatives with cooperation between staff responsible for QA units and student association bodies in HEIs.

*Investigating what the committee has done about issues raised by students.* This action suggests that, if student representatives do investigate, they would be more involved in QAP, compared with the previous rung (informing the committee about peers’ views). This is because students are seen, in this sense, as more proactive and more concerned with following up the responses from the committees to students’ concerns which had been raised previously. QA-related committee members, from their side, should encourage student representatives to investigate about issues raised by students in a safe environment. It is important to make student representatives feel that they have the power and the freedom to ask about the actions regarding solving students’ problems.

*Giving feedback from committees' meetings to other students.* This level suggests that students are committed to communicating with the student groups which they represent, to inform them about the actions that have been taken by the university's side, in response to their views. Therefore, the student representatives' intention here is not only to "inform" the committee members about student opinions, or to "investigate" what the committee has done, but also to convey "feedback" to their student groups about the committee's decisions and responses.

This action reflects one of the important roles of student representative as a vital communication channel between the university and the student body. This is because student representatives should operate as a downward channel in order to "send message to people below in the hierarchy" (Boddy and Paton, 1998, p. 235), which means they should feedback to their peers decisions and issues that they learn about from committees and events they attend. Simultaneously, they should communicate horizontally to "connect people at broadly similar levels" (Boddy and Paton, 1998, p. 236). That is, with other student representatives, in order to exchange experiences and learn from each other about how to distribute the feedback from committees' meetings they attend to other students. The student association should facilitate ways of communication by a variety of different means.

*Consulting with committee members.* This rung suggests a deeper involvement by students than the previous ones. This is because student representatives, if they perform this activity, would be involved in the decision-making process, to some extent. "Consulting", in this context, refers to a situation where "the committee offers a number of options and students can choose from them" (Wilcox, 1994). In this case, students might be "asked for oral or written feedback and advice" (Henriksen *et al.*, 2009, p. 2540). In this activity, it is expected that student representatives give the committee students' views, as in the previous rung No. 7, but in addition can select suitable solutions or suggestions from options offered by the committee members. However, at this level they still do not have the opportunity to make suggestions of their own.

*Adding to committees' decisions.* In contrast to the previous rung, it is expected that student representatives not only consult and choose from committee's options about some solutions, but also provide additional ideas and suggestions. This could only happen if the committee allows and supports student representatives to participate fully in the decision-making process, and at the same time, the student representatives themselves have the ability and skills to do so. It is believed that the ones who face problems are the ones who can give suggestions for solving them. Therefore, flexible legislation in HEIs is needed in order to allow student representatives to be a part of decision making processes.

*Having leading decision-making roles.* This rung is considered to be the highest level of involvement in the decision-making process when attending QA committees. At this rung, students could be given "a dominant decision-making role by the committee" (Arnstein, 1969, p. 222) and given the power to take a decision about what they think is suitable to solve their problem and to develop the quality of their study. It is expected that this kind of activity is not widely used but might be seen, sometimes, in certain QA committees and in certain circumstances.

If an HEI gives students the opportunity to engage themselves in decision making process, this may inculcate the attitude of seeing students as partners. It is argued that

being partners gives the students the chance to change the organization from the inside, providing motivation but also making them accountable for the functioning of the university (Abaspahic, 2005, p. 13). In this sense, they should participate in the planning and governance process (NAAC, 2007, p. 1). From this point-of-view, it is necessary to involve students positively with the QAP in their universities, so that they may make a significant contribution in those decision-making processes that are related to their learning and their life at the university. Other literature on organizational decision-making suggests that stakeholders should be involved in decisions that they view as important (Brandon *et al.*, 1994; Duke *et al.*, 1980; Bridges, 1967). However, others argued that “students did not have enough experiences or the organizational insights that are needed to fulfil this role as partners” (Wiberg, 2006, p. 9).

#### *Involvement in direct QAP procedures*

It is suggested that this category of activities (rungs No. 13-20) is considered to represent the highest level of involvement, because student representatives could be involved here in a set of activities that require a high level of commitment and a high level of knowledge about the institutional QAP. Referring to the dimensional arrows on the Figure 1, it might be expected that students who participate in these activities would spend more time and effort in terms of involving themselves in the QAP. However, the numbers of student representatives who may undertake this group of activities might be less than those who are involved in the QA-related committees, in the previous set of activities (from rungs No. 5 to 12). In this context, “direct QA procedures” refer to the internal and the external QAP procedures of a school or a university, which only happen periodically, say every 4, 5 or 6 years. “Internal QAP” refers to the situation when the university carries out an evaluation of its own quality; however “external QAP” means that there is an external body responsible for evaluating the university’s quality. In both cases, the audit team may invite small numbers of student representatives to a meeting. It is anticipated that students can exert a direct influence when they participate in direct QA procedures.

At this level of involvement there are two sets of activities. The first one concerns the actions that student could carry out when involving themselves in the internal QAP. So in this case, they may meet with an internal reviewer and they could share in reviewing and writing up the self-evaluation document that a school has to submit to an evaluation team (from rungs No. 13 to 16). The second set of activities refers to what students may undertake when involving themselves in an external QAP. Here students might meet with an external panel to evaluate their university and they may participate in reviewing and writing up the self-evaluation report about their institution to provide it to an audit team (from rungs No. 17 to 20).

*Having opportunities to share in internal QA procedures.* This rung indicates that student representatives have the chance to participate in the internal QAP. The internal QAP could be carried out at a school/department/faculty/college level, since the name of the academic unit could be different from one country to another or even from one university to another within the same country. Similarly, the internal QAP has different names referring to the same process. For example, it is called the “internal teaching review” (ITR) or the “internal review” (IR) in some Scottish universities, but it called the “internal periodic review” in some English universities. However, in most cases the procedures are very similar. The important point in this context is that it is

expected that student representatives might be offered opportunities to share in evaluating their school, but they might or might not share in the process.

The researcher believes that HEIs should give students opportunities to share in internal QAP. This is because such involvement provide validity and credibility to the information about quality (Helle, 2009; Cadina, 2006, p. 18; Froestad and Bakken, 2004, p. 30) and also it contribute to enhance the quality of an institution (QAA, 2009e; QAA, 2007; Alaniska, 2006, p. 12; York Consulting, 2006). However, before allowing student involvement in internal QAP, staff working in QA units should think about the requirements for such involvement. For example, students need to be aware of the structure of the institution and the QA procedures that it follows. Therefore, it is suggested that QA awareness sessions could be organized, by staff working in a QA unit, in order to increase the awareness about the QAP of the institution, the importance of student involvement in internal OAP, and the direct benefits for the students if they participate in such a process. This kind of awareness may increase students' knowledge about the quality issues, which in turn may motivate them to participate in internal QAP.

*Meeting with internal reviewers.* If student representatives are invited to meet the internal reviewer panel, they might participate in such a meeting to discuss their teaching and learning experiences. Here the reviewers may ask students about some of the points mentioned in the self-evaluation report. It is expected that very few student representatives would be involved at this rung. Also, it is assumed that one or two student representatives might sit on both sides at the meeting, as one of the reviewers could be a student, investigating specifically into students' matters, and, at the same time, some student representatives could be interviewees. Staff working in QA units at HEIs should prepare student representative to be interviewed by conducting orientation sessions before the meeting with internal reviewers.

*Sharing in reviewing the self-evaluation report at school level.* When a school prepares itself to be evaluated, it usually prepares a self-evaluation report about the QAP that a school follows to be sent to the evaluation team before their visit to the school. This rung suggests that student representatives may participate in this process, but only by reviewing those parts of that report, which relate to the student experience. At this rung, students would not share in writing their own report or even a section that might be attached to the report; rather their involvement may be confined to revision of what the school has already written.

Staff working in QA units who are responsible for writing up the self-evaluation report should value students' revisions and to be ready to change the parts related to students' experiences, if students said so. This is an important point because if student representatives criticized what the school has written in the self-evaluation report, their perspectives should be respected; if not, then there is no point of involving them in this process. Lots of discussions are expected between students and staff regarding the information in those parts of student experience. Both sides should be flexible in accepting the criticism and they should think about the main aims of the internal review, one of them is to increase the quality of the institution and to be ready for the external assessment.

*Sharing in writing the self-evaluation report at school level.* This rung suggests that student representatives from a school would write part/s of the self-evaluation report or would attach a separate document of their own about students' experience, to be



---

submitted to the internal evaluation team. This rung assumes that student representatives, if they undertake this activity, have the experience and the skills to write or share in writing the self-evaluation document. Therefore, student representatives should be trained about writing parts in the self-evaluation report. This kind of training could be provided by staff working in QA unit in co-operation with student association.

*Having opportunities to share in external QA procedures.* “External” QA procedures refer to the evaluation undertaken in a university by an external body, which, in most cases, is a national QA agency. This process is called, the “Enhancement-Led Institutional Review” (ELIR) in Scotland, but in England, Wales and Northern Ireland it is called the “Audit Review”. This rung suggests that student representatives could have the chance to be involved in the process to evaluate their HEI.

Awareness sessions should be given to students by staff working in QA units, in order to inform them about the procedures followed in the external QAP and the importance of their involvement in that. In many countries around the globe, QA agencies insist on involving students in the external QAP. This is because the QA agency’s staff, on the site-visit, want to know about the quality of the institution from students themselves. In fact, involving students in external QAP is more common, in many countries, than involving them in internal QAP. However, from the researcher’s point-of-view, students should share in both external and internal QAP.

*Meeting with external reviewers in the site-visit.* This rung assumes that students might meet an external reviewer team in order to reflect their perspectives about specific aspects that the team wants to investigate during their site visit to an institution. The choice of student representatives to meet the audit panel may be made by the QA persons in the university, by Student Association members, or by both.

It is worth mentioning that the meeting between the review panel and students can take various forms. It may be “a single meeting between the panel and all students or the meeting may be held with different student groups such as undergraduate, postgraduate, distance- learning students or student representatives” (QAA, 2009f, p. 17).

Student representatives’ orientations are required, in order to inform students about the aim of the interview with the external audit members and to guide them to be neutral and avoid being biased, as far as possible. Student representatives should be told that they should see not only the negative points in their institution, but also the good performance of the teaching and learning processes that the institution introduces. Without conducting such orientation two extreme behaviours, from the students’ side, could be expected. Firstly, students who are invited to meet the reviewers may feel intimidated, so they may feel that they have to highlight only the positive perspectives. Students may think that telling the truth will put them in trouble, which may reflect negatively on their grades, especially if internal staff from the university are attending such meetings.

The second extreme behaviour that may be expected from the students, if no orientations are conducted, is the opposite of the previous one. In the meeting with the external reviewers, students may indicate only the negative experiences and complain about nearly everything. This could happen if students’ voice is ignored by the HEI and when students ask for changes of unchangeable issues, then no feedback is given to them. In such situations, students may feel that meeting with the external reviewers

is the way to be listened to. Therefore, the researcher suggests that students' orientation should be conducted by QA staff before the meeting with the audit team. Therefore, in China, for example, it is thought that making students ready to be interviewed by the external evaluators' team in the site visit is an important practice. Training provides students with the basic knowledge of the quality assessment, which is equal to the QAP in China; the information about their university such as its history, its structure; and basic skills for students. Then, after having the training courses, students have to pass related examinations to be ready for the interview (Liu, 2009, p. 10).

*Sharing in reviewing the self-evaluation report at university level.* This rung indicates that students might share in reviewing the self-evaluation report, which will be provided to the external audit team as a first step in the external review process. This report is called, in the Scottish universities, the "reflective analysis" (RA) and in England, Wales and Northern Ireland it is known as the "self-evaluation document" (SED) (QAA, 2006b, p. 8). It is expected that, at this rung, students only have the chance to "review the report and consulted on a draft of it" (QAA, 2009f, p. 15); rather than writing it, as with the next rung. Again, as mentioned in rung No. 15, lots of discussions between students and staff who write the self-evaluation report is expected and students' opinions should be respected.

*Sharing in writing the self-evaluation report at university level.* Student representatives might share in the writing up process about their own perceptions of their learning experiences. They may write a separate document or one attached to the self-evaluation report. The separate document is called a "student written submission" (SWS) (QAA, 2009f, p. 16) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, but in Scotland the SWS practice is not implemented. It is thought that the student representatives, who might share in this activity, may be from the Students' Association's leaders as they should have professional skills and knowledge to write their own report.

### **The international experiences of student involvement in the institutional QAP**

This section focuses on the practice of student involvement in the institutional QAP followed in some countries around the world, as found in the literature. These countries' experiences will be presented based on the model suggested. Although there is a shortage of studies concerned with student involvement in the "institutional" QAP level, most of the materials, in the literature, focused on student involvement at "national" QAP level. The following section reviews as many countries as possible to give an overview of the activities that students are involved in, in different countries, consistent with the three main categories of activities set out in the proposed model: responding to QA questionnaires; involvement in QA committees; and involvement in direct QAP.

#### *The international experiences of student involvement in responding to QA-related questionnaires*

In the literature about some countries' experience, it is found that students are involved in the institutional QAP by giving their feedback by means of responding to different kinds of internal and/or external surveys which focus on evaluating the quality of

---

some aspects in their institutions, or focus on their satisfaction with the institution, as a whole. For example, in the UK, “the types of feedback mechanisms in use are: unit/module evaluation questionnaires (the most commonly used); course/programme evaluation questionnaires; student assessment of course and teaching questionnaires; teaching performance questionnaires; stage questionnaires (which seek student body opinion on the year just completed); graduate/leaver questionnaires of student satisfaction with all aspects of student experience” (Leckey and Neill, 2001, p. 23). These questionnaires are often designed to gather data at a variety of levels, from a whole HEI down to a course level, or from particular groups of students including undergraduate, postgraduate and international students (QAA, 2011).

Some questionnaires could be concerned with the students’ perceptions about the “courses” they studied, such as in some HEIs in Scotland, the Student Course Evaluation Form, which is an internal questionnaire, or in Australia, where the course experience questionnaires (CEQ) (Rush and Hart, 2005) are implemented. In the US, students give their opinions through questionnaires about the quality of “teaching staff”. The most widespread survey of this kind is the Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET) (Simpson and Sigauw, 2000, p. 199).

Furthermore, an innovative method of collecting students’ perspectives of the quality of staff and courses by using questionnaires is found in some HEIs in India. That method, called the “24X7” feedback system” (NAAC, 2007, p. 7), is one where students are asked to rate the staff performance and to give their comments on how the staff member could improve his/her performance. Similarly, they are asked to rate their course on five parameters and give comments on ways of improvement. The innovative point here is that this feedback is collected continuously, which is why it is called “24X7”. Then the responses are automatically analysed and, subsequently, the feedback sent every week to the teacher concerned. At the end of the semester, total responses are analysed as well (NAAC, 2007, p. 7).

It seems that this way of considering “continuous” evaluation of the quality is better than the “summative” ways that depend on collecting students’ views at the end of a semester or a programme. This is maybe because, in the latter case, any improvement that may happen to a course, for example, would not be felt by the group of student, who gave their views in those questionnaires; rather the “prospective” students will have the benefits of the improvement. This means that the students who answered the questionnaires, in the first place, will not experience the changes and this means they will not feel that giving their opinions are beneficial to themselves. This, in turn, may lead to less involvement. However, this conclusion is not yet supported by research evidence.

Additionally, in many countries, questionnaires are used in order to collect students’ feedback about the institution as a whole. For example, in the UK, the National Student Survey (NSS), which is an external questionnaire, was implemented from 2005 (QAA, 2011, p. 11). This survey is an annual survey that asks final year full-time and fourth year part-time undergraduate students in England, Wales and Northern Ireland about their experiences on the courses; some Scottish institutions are also included (NUS, 2009a, p. 26). The results are often analysed and used to compile an annual comparison of data which is intended to help future student to make an informed selections of where and what to study. It also enables the HEIs to increase the quality of some areas and to facilitate identification of best practice and enhancement of student learning

experience (IPSOS MORI, 2011). However, there are many objections to this survey. Specifically, Williams (Williams and Ansfield, 2007, p. 170) doubted the honesty of it, because, in the author's opinion, the final year students may give favourable scores if they want their degree from their institution to be valued. Similarly, Harvey (2003) doubted the honesty and the accuracy of reporting the students' feedback. His reason is because, if the institution thinks that its reputation could be harmed by publishing the results, they will not reveal the results, which makes the student feedback collection pointless.

As it can be seen from the above, student involvement in the institutional QAP through using questionnaires to collect their feedback about the quality of their institution, or some particular aspects in the institution, is a widespread procedure that many countries around the world are implementing.

#### *The international experiences of student involvement in QA-related committees*

In the literature, some examples of the committees that students are allowed to attend in their institutions in some countries were mentioned. It was found that, in some countries, students are participating in institutional committees or Boards, such as university /college /faculty /school /department committees. For example, in the Finnish HEIs, at the highest level in an institution, which is the "University Board", there were student representatives. This came as a response to the Finnish Universities Act, which deals with the composition of university administration. It specified that "the board should consist of students beside university professors and teachers" (Moitus, 2004, p. 7). Also, in Finland, the "Internal Steering Group" at all universities and polytechnics has student members on them (Moitus, 2004, p. 10). Similarly, the Danish University Act, in Denmark, gave students the right to participate in the "staff-student committees" (Froestad and Bakken, 2004, p. 19), at school level.

#### *The international experiences of student involvement in direct QAP procedures*

According to the proposed model and the experience of some countries discussed in the literature, it was found that students are directly involved in the QAP at their institution. In this case, students from an HEI are participating in an external and/or internal institutional evaluation process. In the "external" institutional QAP, students could be, for example, interviewed by an external body, which is called, in some countries the "audit panel" from the QA agency, and/or share in the preparation process of the audit review by participating in writing the university evaluation report, which is sometimes called the "reflective analysis". Simultaneously, students could be involved in an "internal" institutional QAP, when they are participating in the evaluation process of their own college/school/department/or programme by an internal body derived from their own institution. For instance, they may be interviewed by an internal review panel and/or share in writing the evaluation report about the unit or the programme under assessment, which is sometimes called a "self-evaluation document".

These practices are implemented in many European countries, such as in the UK (QAA, 2010; QAA, 2009f; Switzerland (OAQ, 2007), Norway (Haakstad, 2005), Iceland (Froestad and Bakken, 2004, p. 21), and Finland (Froestad and Bakken, 2004, p. 16). Results of the ENQA survey on "Quality procedures in the European higher education area and beyond" (Helle, 2009, p. 3) had 51 agency respondents, and showed that in 71.7

---

per cent of cases students were considered to be part of the “self-evaluation” teams at their institutions, and in 93.3 per cent of the cases students were interviewed during the site-visits.

Although many countries have student involvement in direct institutional QAP in practice, various innovative ways of implementing that process have been found. For example, in Finland, in a number of HEIs after the self-evaluation report has been prepared and before it is sent to the FINHEEC, it was given to student representatives to let them comment on it. These representatives also have the opportunity to add any further points or add their own views. In other Finnish institutions, students could write a separate section to present their own opinions, which was usually associated with the original report as a separate attachment (Moitus, 2004, p. 18). Further, a new method has been initiated by the “Evaluation of Student Guidance and Consulting Project” of student involvement in the Finnish institutional QAP, which necessitated a dialogue between staff and students. This method consists of four phases:

- (1) Firstly, before the external evaluation team from FINHEEC visit an institution, two groups of staff and students have to write, separately, their own perspectives on their institution in a self-evaluation report.
- (2) The next step is to exchange these two reports between staff and students, and write comments on each other’s report.
- (3) Then, when the external evaluation panel visits the institution, a forum discussion is conducted with both groups of staff and students.
- (4) Finally, the external team from the FINHEEC presents the evaluation report based on the evaluation materials that were collected from both groups (student and staff) (Moitus, 2004, p. 18).

This approach is different, to some extent, from the “student written submission” (SWS) that is conducted in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland. In these areas, students have the opportunity to present their own views separately about their university to the audit team (QAA, 2002, p. 22). The difference between the Finnish experience and the UK (except Scotland) experience is that the SWS document could be presented to the auditors with or without consulting the university (QAA, 2002, p. 22). However, the Finnish approach gives an opportunity for students to work together closely with the staff in a way that sees students as “partners” who can give comments about staff views. Instead the UK approach may see students as “evaluators” sometimes, and most of the time as “customers”, more than partners.

In the Scottish context, the SWS practice is not implemented. However students are involved, in most Scottish HEIs, in the “internal subject review” which is a review at the subject level (QAA, 2009f, p. 1). The involvement of students in this case, may take place prior to the review or during it and after the review activity is completed, as well. The institutions have different approaches to involve students in subject review, such as: briefing students about the review; meeting between the panel and students from the area under review; students contribute to the development of the self-evaluation document; and students from the subject to be reviewed may provide a student submission (QAA, 2009f, p. 15).

**Conclusion**

Very few studies are concerned with studying student involvement in institutional QAP in order to present a model of the activities that students may undertake when involving themselves in the QAP. Additionally, even though studying the activities of different kinds of stakeholders' involvement, such as public, citizens, customers, patients, is commonly carried out by presenting models or typologies of stakeholder activities; a model of the activities of student involvement in the institutional QAP is not addressed widely. Therefore, this research sought to address a gap in the literature by focusing on suggesting a detailed model for the activities of student involvement in the QAP.

This paper suggests that the usage of the proposed model is aiming to examine the HEIs' practice regarding student involvement in the QAP at institutional level, which should be the first step of increasing the extent and the degree of student involvement. Therefore, the model could be considered as a tool of diagnosing the present situation of student involvement in QAP, which is in turn aiming to clarify the ways of treatment and increasing the quality of HEIs. To increase the extent and the degree of student involvement in the QAP at their institutions many aspects should be considered by the staff working in QA units in HEIs. For example, training sessions should be provided to student representatives who are attending the QA-related committee meetings. It is believed that knowledge and skills should be given to students in order to prepare them for involvement in institutional QAP. That could increase their awareness about the importance of their involvement, which in turn could increase their interest in being involved in the QAP.

Ideally, student representatives are supposed to have certain skills and knowledge about the QAP and committees' remit that could support their involvement in the QA-related committees, but this is not usually the case in reality. A study about "female student government presidents" found that student representatives "needed to learn about the organizational structure of their institution, as well as their student government" (Miles, 2010, p. 8). Student representatives require "a complex set of skills and attitudes to effectively manage their environment and tasks" (Lizzio and Wilson, 2009, p. 82), which suggests, generally, "a responsibility for universities to provide student representatives with preparatory training programs and structured support and debriefing mechanisms to enhance their effectiveness, satisfaction and retention" (Lizzio and Wilson, 2009, p. 82). In the UK, some HEIs experienced some demand for students' training, as seen in a research report which studied 19 HEIs in Scotland (Saunders *et al.*, 2004). It mentioned that "staff felt that most students are ill-equipped to deal with the formal settings of the larger committees at the university level" (Saunders *et al.*, 2004, p. 19). Therefore, it was thought that student representatives need "some form of training in order to overcome their inhibitions and enable them to make a more effective contribution" (Saunders *et al.*, 2004, p. 20).

The researcher suggests that student representatives' training should provide students with the required skills to effectively represent their student groups. Staff and practitioners working in QA units should give special attention to this aspect because it seems to be a serious challenge facing many HEIs around the world. For example, a study about "communication apprehension levels of student governance leaders" which collected data from five US HEIs (Miller and Nadler, 2009) found that "few student government bodies provide meaningful training and orientation for senators,

or other leaders, about how to be a good representative of the interests of others". They should be "aware of the need to hone and refine public speaking as an element of being a successful advocate for other students" (Miller and Nadler, 2009, p. 8). Another study about student government presidents found that "the students would hear students complain and not know how to address all of their concerns" (Miles, 2010, p. 8). This indicates a lack of skills of representing others' concerns. Since student representative training is seen as an important issue, in some countries, a focus has been placed on providing suitable training for students to obtain the required skills in order to be involved in the QAP at national level. For example, in Catalonia the "Promoting Students Involvement in Programme Evaluations Training Course" project offered training courses for students to be ready for participation in the AQU at the national level (Cadina, 2006), as mentioned previously. Also, they encouraged students to participate in the training courses, by offering academic incentives to the trained students, such as added academic credit points. Similar experiences found in Switzerland led to students being trained to undertake their roles in institutional audit (Schneijderberg and Kuhn, 2009, p. 65). All these efforts from some governments concerning student representatives' training reflect the importance of that aspect.

The model presented in this study suggests that when students participate at higher level of QA activities, such as involvement in internal and/or external audit processes, they will need to be aware of the institutional QA procedures and to obtain different kinds of skills. This is because if they are involved in an audit process, they will approach complex terms of QA and will deal with different people of administrative and academic members of staff who have experience of QAP. Therefore training is an important aspect that the QA people in HEIs should pay some attention.

Moreover, the practitioners and staff working in QA units in HEIs should think about the ways of increasing the awareness of the importance of student involvement in QAP. The theoretical model proposed in this paper suggests that students could take the opportunity of responding to QA-related questionnaires to provide their perspectives about their educational experiences, but sometimes by an apathetical way of answering the questionnaires. This careless attitude may be due to students' feelings of disinterest in involvement. This could be also because students feel that their voices are not considered and they may doubt how seriously the university is dealing with their views. The literature suggests that disinterest in involvement among students is found, for example, in a study about the QEF (Saunders *et al.* 2004), it was suggested that students were felt to be "reluctant to engage in quality processes for the usual reasons, like lack of free time and lack of interest" (Saunders *et al.*, 2004, pp. 19-20). Similarly, it was found that, in terms of student participation in university governance, students were "characterized by a pervasive passivity bordering on indifference" (Plantan, 2002, p. 13). The findings in another study (Elassy, 2012, p. 226) suggests that students' disinterest about involvement in the QAP can come from many sources, such as a lack of student awareness about the procedures of the institutional QAP, and a lack of information about how to be involved in that process. This lack of knowledge may generate unwillingness among students to be involved.

The researcher recommends that the study's model could be used in different contexts, but it should be bone in mind that some slight changes to the model's rungs must be considered in order to use it in different fields. For example, the activities that are concerned with involvement in direct evaluation procedures, which were the third

category of the student involvement activities in the proposed model, (see Table1) definitely vary from one field to another. In this research, these procedures were concerned with the internal and external QAP. With students being given the opportunity to: “meet” with the audit panel reviewers, “review” the evaluation report, the self-evaluation report at school level and the RA at university level, and participate in “writing” the evaluation report. However, in a company, for example, customer involvement in direct evaluation procedures would be expected to be different.

Additionally, the suggested model could be implemented in studying student involvement in the QAP at higher levels, not only at an institutional level, but also at national and international level. This is an important point, since many QA agencies view the issue of student involvement in QAP as a good practice which should be followed, without providing enough details about the activities of involvement or even investigating the factors that may influence student involvement. Therefore, any QA agency in any country could adapt and implement the proposed student involvement model in order to reveal the different degrees of involvement, opportunities, attendance, and engagement, and the activities that their students undertake to involve themselves in the national QAP. This could help in increasing the degree and the quality of student involvement. Similarly, QA agencies at regional level, such as the ENQA in Europe or the ANQAHE in the Arab region, could develop the proposed model to identify the activities of student involvement in the QAP at an international level.

It could be suggested that future studies would be needed to address the applicability of that model in HEIs, because it could help to identify the available opportunities that HEIs provide to their students in order to participate in QAP. Such a model might be able to clarify and organize the chances that an institution offers to its stakeholders, and to students in particular, which may help to highlight the student involvement opportunities in the RA report, or similar.

### References

- Abaspahic, H. (2005), “Model of adequate student participation in the decision making process and in quality assurance at Sarajevo University”, Central European University, Center for Policy Studies, Open Society Fund, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, available at:<http://74.125.155.132/scholar?q=cach:31063G4fBuwj:scholar.google.com/&hl=en&> (accessed 22 February 2010).
- Alaniska, H. (2006), “Student participation in quality assurance in Finland”, in Alaniska, H., Cadina, E.A. and Bohrer, J. (Eds), *Student Involvement in the Processes of Quality Assurance Agencies*, European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, Helsinki, pp. 12-15.
- Arnstein, S.R. (1969), “A ladder of citizen participation”, *Journal of the American Planning Association*, Vol. 35 No. 4, pp. 216-24.
- Astin, A.W. (1999), “Student involvement: a developmental theory for higher education”, *Journal of College Student Development. Developmental Theory*, Vol. 40 No. 5, pp. 518-29.
- Bailey, K. and Grossardt, T. (2007), “Addressing the Arnstein gap: improving public confidence in transportation planning and design through structured public involvement (SPI)”, in Herausgeber, M.S. (Ed.), *Sustainable Solutions for the Information Society, 11th International Conference on Urban Planning and Spatial Development for the Information Society, Vienna, 13-16 February 2006*, CORP and Geo Multimedia 06, pp. 337-41.



- Bastick, T. (2001), "Improving the quality of tertiary education through student evaluation of teaching", *The Annual Meeting of the Joint Committee for Tertiary Education, April 2001*, Kingston, Jamaica, pp. 1-6.
- Biggs, J. (2001), "The reflective institution: assuring and enhancing the quality of teaching and learning", *Higher Education*, Vol. 41, pp. 221-38.
- Boddy, D. and Paton, R. (1998), *Management: An Introduction*, Prentice Hall Europe, London.
- Boland, J.A. (2005), "Student participation in shared governance: a means of advancing democratic values?", *Tertiary Education and Management*, Vol. 11, pp. 199-217.
- Brandon, P., Wang, Z. and Heck, R. (1994), "Teacher involvement in school-conducted needs assessments: issues of decision-making process and validity", *Evaluation Review*, Vol. 18, pp. 458-71.
- Brenders, D.A., Hope, P. and Ninnan, A. (1999), "A systematic, student-centered study of university service", *Research in Higher Education*, Vol. 40 No. 6, pp. 665-85.
- Brennan, J. and Williams, R. (2003), "Collecting and using student feedback on quality and standards of learning and teaching in higher education", *A Report to HEFCE by the Center for Higher Education Research and Information (Open University), NOP Research Group and SQW Led*, The Open University, NOP and SQW, London.
- Brennan, J. and Williams, R. (2004), *Collecting and Using Student Feedback: A Guide to Good Practice*, Learning and Teaching Support Network, York.
- Bridges, E. (1967), "A model for shared decision making in the school principalship", *Educational Administration Quarterly*, Vol. 3, pp. 49-57.
- Byrne, M. and Flood, B. (2003), "Assessing the teaching quality of accounting programme: an evaluation of the course experience questionnaire", *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, Vol. 28 No. 2, pp. 135-45.
- Cadina, E.A. (2006), "Student involvement in quality assurance agency processes: the Catalan experience", in Alaniska, H., Cadina, E.A. and Bohrer, J. (Eds), *Student Involvement in the Processes of Quality Assurance Agencies*, ENQA, Helsinki, pp. 16-22.
- Coates, H. (2005), "Managing survey engagement to improve quality assurance", pp. 1-14, paper presented at the Australian University Quality Forum.
- Cockburn, D. (2005), *Report of the Higher Education Mapping Exercise of Student Involvement in Quality Assurance and Enhancement Processes*, SPARQS, Edinburgh.
- Cumming, J.F. (2001), "Engaging stakeholders in corporate accountability programmes: a cross-sector analysis of UK and transnational experience", *Business Ethics: A European Review*, Vol. 10 No. 1, pp. 45-52.
- Cummings, T.J. and Worley, C.G. (2009), *Organization Development and Change*, 9th ed., South-Western Cengage Learning, Mason, OH.
- Dearlove, R. (2006), "Student involvement in external quality assurance: results of a preliminary survey", in Alaniska, H., Cadina, E.A. and Bohrer, J. (Eds), *Student Involvement in the Processes of Quality Assurance Agencies*, ENQA, Helsinki, pp. 32-40.
- Dew, J.R. and Nearing, M.M. (2004), *Continuous Quality Improvement in Higher Education*, 1st ed., Greenwood Publishing Group, Westport, CT.
- Duke, D., Showers, B. and Imber, M. (1980), "Teachers and shared decision making: the cost and benefits of involvement", *Educational Administration Quarterly*, Vol. 16, pp. 93-106.
- Elassy, N. (2012), "Student involvement in the quality assurance process in the higher education institutions", unpublished PhD, University of Aberdeen, Aberdeen.

- ENQA (2006), "ENQA questionnaire on student involvement", in Alaniska, H., Cadina, E.A. and Bohrer, J. (Eds), *Student Involvement in the Processes of Quality Assurance Agencies*, European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, Helsinki, pp. 45-7.
- ESU (2008), *Towards 2020: A Student-Centred Bologna Process*, European Students' Union, Bruxelles.
- Exeter, D.J., Ameratunga, S., Ratima, M., Morton, S., Dickson, M., Hus, D. and Jackson, R. (2010), "Student engagement in very large classes: the teachers' perspective", *Studies in Higher Education*, Vol. 35 No. 7, pp. 761-75.
- Froestad, W. and Bakken, P. (2004), *Student Involvement in Quality Assessments of Higher Education in the Nordic Countries*, Nordic Quality Assurance Network in Higher Education, Helsinki.
- Glew, D., O'Leary-Kelly, A., Griffin, R. and Van Fleet, D. (1995), "Participation in organizations: a preview of issues and proposed framework for future analysis", *Journal of Management*, Vol. 21 No. 3, pp. 395-421.
- Green, A.O. and Clarke, L.H. (2003), "A typology of stakeholder participation for company environmental decision-making", *Business Strategy and the Environment*, Vol. 12, pp. 292-9.
- Gvaramadze, I. (2011), "Student engagement in the Scottish Quality Enhancement Framework", *Quality in Higher Education*, Vol. 17 No. 1, pp. 19-36.
- Haakstad, J. (2005), "Quality audit in Norway", available at: [www.nokut.no/graphics/NOKUT/Artikkelbibotek/General/Foredrag/Haakstad\\_NOKUTs\\_quality\\_audits.pdf](http://www.nokut.no/graphics/NOKUT/Artikkelbibotek/General/Foredrag/Haakstad_NOKUTs_quality_audits.pdf) (accessed 17 August 2008).
- Hart, R. (2008), "Ladder of participation, the free-child project", available at: [www.freechild.org/ladder.htm](http://www.freechild.org/ladder.htm) (accessed 20 May 2009).
- Harvey, L. (2003), "Student feedback", *Quality in Higher Education*, Vol. 9 No. 1, pp. 3-20.
- Haugland, O. (2006), "The quality assurance system in higher education in Norway", *Handbuch Qualitat in Studium und Lehre*, NOKUT, Norway, pp. 1-24.
- Helle, E. (2009), "Student involvement in the work of ENQA and of its member agencies", *INQAAHE Conference in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, 30 March-2 April 2009*, The International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education, pp. 1-4.
- Henriksen, H.J., Refsgaard, J., Hojberg, A., Ferrand, N., Gijsbers, P. and Scholten, H. (2009), "Harmonised principles for public participation in quality assurance of integrated water resources modelling", *Water Resource Manage*, Vol. 23, pp. 2539-54.
- IPSOS MORI (2011), "The national student survey", available at: [www.thestudentsurvey.com](http://www.thestudentsurvey.com) (accessed 9 February 2011).
- Jackson, L.S. (2001), "Contemporary public involvement: toward a strategic approach", *Local Environment*, Vol. 6 No. 2, pp. 135-47.
- Kanagaretnam, K., Mathieu, R. and Thevaranjan, A. (2003), "An economic analysis of the use of student evaluation: implications for universities", *Managerial and Decision Economics*, Vol. 24 No. 1, pp. 1-13.
- Krause, K.L. and Coates, H. (2008), "Student engagement in first-year university", *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, Vol. 33 No. 5, pp. 493-505.
- Kuh, D. and Umbach, P. (2004), "College and character: insights from the national survey of student engagement", *New Directions for Institutional Research*, Vol. 122, pp. 37-54.
- Lawrence, A. (2006), "'No personal motive?' Volunteers, biodiversity, and the false dichotomies of participation", *Ethics, Place and Environment*, Vol. 9 No. 3, pp. 279-98.

- Leckey, J. and Neill, N. (2001), "Quantifying quality: the importance of student feedback", *Quality in Higher Education*, Vol. 7 No. 1, pp. 19-32.
- Little, B., Locke, W., Scesa, A. and Williams, R. (2009), *Report to HEFCE on Student Engagement*, Center for Higher Education Research and Information, The Open University, London.
- Liu, S. (2009), "Study of the impacts of the quality assessment of undergraduate education policy in China: students' perceptions", *INQAAHE Conference in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, 30 March- 2 April 2009*, The International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education, pp. 1-17.
- Lizzio, A. and Wilson, K. (2009), "Student participation in university governance: the role conceptions and sense of efficacy of student representatives on departmental committees", *Studies in Higher Education*, Vol. 34 No. 1, pp. 69-84.
- McInnis, C. (1997), "Defining and assessing the student experience in the quality management process", *Tertiary Education and Management*, Vol. 3 No. 1, pp. 63-71.
- McInnis, C. (2003), "New realities of the student experience: how should universities respond?", *25th Annual Conference, European Association for Institutional Research, Limerick, 24-27 August 2003*, pp. 1-21.
- Menon, M.E. (2005), "Students' views regarding their participation in university governance: implications for distributed leadership in higher education", *Tertiary Education and Management*, Vol. 11 No. 2, pp. 167-82.
- Michener, V. (1998), "The participatory approach: contradiction and co-option in Burkina Faso", *World Development*, Vol. 26 No. 12, pp. 2105-18.
- Miles, J.M. (2010), "Why we lead: reflections of female student government presidents", available at: <http://eric.ed.gov/> (accessed 20 April 2011).
- Miller, M.T. and Nadler, D.P. (2009), "Communication apprehension levels of student governance leaders", available at: <http://eric.ed.gov/> (accessed 20 April 2011).
- Moitus, S. (2004), *Nordic Project on Student Involvement: The Finnish Report*, Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council, Helsinki.
- NAAC (2007), *Feedback and Participation Case Presentations*, The National Assessment and Accreditation Council, Bangalore.
- Nair, C.S., Adams, P. and Mertova, P. (2008), "Student engagement: the key to improving survey response rates", *Quality in Higher Education*, Vol. 14 No. 3, pp. 225-32.
- NUS (2008), "Institutional audits in England, Wales and Northern Ireland", *Quality Matters for Students*, pp. 1-18, (qm/08/01).
- NUS (2009a), *Higher Education Handbook*, National Union of Students and University and College Union, London.
- NUS (2009b), "Internal quality assurance: involving students in periodic review", *Quality Matters for Students*, pp. 1-14, (qms/09/01).
- OAQ (2007), "Annual report 2007", Center of Accreditation and Quality Assurance of the Swiss Universities.
- Palomares, F. (2011), "Consequences of the student participation in quality assurance", *Future of Higher Education Bologna Process Researchers' Conference, Bucharest (Romania), 18 October 2011*, European Students' Union, pp. 1-22.
- Persson, A. (2003), *Student Participation in the Governance of Higher Education in Europe, A Council of Europe Survey*, Steering Committee on Higher Education and Research, Working Party on the Bologna Process, Council of Europe, Strasbourg.

- Plantan, F. (2002), *Universities as Sites of Citizenship and Civic Responsibility, Final General Report, Steering Committee for Higher Education and Research*, CD-ESR, Council of Europe, Strasbourg.
- QAA (2000), *Handbook for Academic Review*, The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, Gloucester.
- QAA (2002), *Handbook for Institutional Audit: England*, The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, Nottinghamshire.
- QAA (2006a), *QAA Strategic Plan 2003-05: Report on Achievements*, The Quality Assurance Agency of Higher Education, Nottinghamshire.
- QAA (2006b), *Strategic Plan 2006-11*, The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, Gloucester.
- QAA (2007), *Learning from ELIR 2003-06, Managing Assurance and Enhancement: Evolution and Progression an Interim Report, Sharing Good Practice*, The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, Nottinghamshire.
- QAA (2008a), *Handbook for Enhancement-Led Institutional Review: Scotland*, 2nd ed., The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, Nottinghamshire.
- QAA (2008b), *Student Membership of Audit and Review Teams: Feedback from Student Observers and Audit Team Members*, The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, Nottinghamshire.
- QAA (2008c), *Student Membership of Audit and Review Teams: Learning from Periodic Review*, The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, Nottinghamshire.
- QAA (2009a), *Institutional Audit Consultation Proposed Changes to the Institutional Audit Process*, The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, Gloucester.
- QAA (2009b), *Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review: Student Engagement, Information Bulletin 2010*, The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, Gloucester.
- QAA (2009c), *Learning from ELIR 2003-07, Emerging Approaches to Institution-Led Quality Review at the Subject Level: Combining Assurance with Enhancement, Sharing Good Practice*, The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, Gloucester.
- QAA (2009d), *Learning from ELIR 2003-07: Emerging Approaches to Student Engagement in Quality Assurance and Enhancement*, The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, Gloucester.
- QAA (2009e), *Outcomes from Institutional Audit Student Representation and Feedback Arrangements, Sharing Good Practice*, The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, Gloucester.
- QAA (2009f), *Universities Scotland Teaching Quality Forum Project, Good Practice in Internal Subject Review, Sharing Good Practice*, The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, Gloucester.
- QAA (2009g), *Universities Scotland Teaching Quality Forum Project: Good Practice in Reflective Analysis when Preparing for Enhancement-Led Institutional Review, Sharing Good Practice*, The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, Gloucester.
- QAA (2010), "Enhancement-led institutional review: a student guide to getting involved", available at: [www.qaa.ac.uk/students/guides/elirstudentreguide.asp](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/students/guides/elirstudentreguide.asp) (accessed 17 December 2010).
- QAA (2011), *Outcomes from Institutional Audit: 2007-09*, The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, Gloucester.
- Robinson, C. and Taylor, C. (2007), "Theorizing student voice: values and perspectives", *Improving Schools*, Vol. 10 No. 1, pp. 5-17.

- Rush, D. and Hart, M. (2005), "Involving students more effectively in quality assurance processes: a literature review for the Quality in Business Education project", *Quality in Business Education*, pp. 1-10.
- Ryan, J.F. (2005), "Institutional expenditures and student engagement: a role for financial resources in enhancing student learning and development?", *Research in Higher Education*, Vol. 46 No. 2, pp. 235-49.
- Saunders, M., Trowler, P., Jones, C., Machell, J., Williams, S., Lent, N., Allaway, D. and Spencer, A. (2004), *First Annual Report of the Evaluation of the SHEFC Quality Enhancement Framework to its QEF Evaluation Steering Committee, Annex A*, Lancaster University and Open University, Lancaster.
- Schneijderberg, C. and Kuhn, M. (2009), "Training of students as experts for external quality assurance, the Swiss experience", in Bollaert, L., Carapinha, B. and Curvale, B. (Eds), *Trends in Quality Assurance, A Selection of Papers from the 3rd European Quality Assurance Forum, Corvinus University, Budapest, 20-22 Nov. 2008*, European University Association, pp. 62-71.
- Shah, M. and Nair, C.S. (2006), "Translating student voice into action: a case study at two Australian universities", paper presented at the 5th Annual AUQF Conference, Perth, Australia, 5-7 July 2006, available at: [www.auqa.edu.au/auqf/pastfora/2006/program/index.htm](http://www.auqa.edu.au/auqf/pastfora/2006/program/index.htm) (accessed 27 November 2010).
- Shanahan, P. and Gelber, R. (2004), "Quality in university student administration: stakeholder conceptions", *Quality Assurance in Education*, Vol. 12 No. 4, pp. 166-74.
- Simpson, P.M. and Siguaw, J.A. (2000), "Student evaluation of teaching: an exploratory study of the faculty response", *Journal of Marketing Education*, Vol. 22 No. 3, pp. 199-213.
- SPARQS (2004), "Briefing note 7: what is meant by student involvement?", available at: [www.sparqs.org.uk/upload/documents/HEBriefingNote7.pdf](http://www.sparqs.org.uk/upload/documents/HEBriefingNote7.pdf) (accessed 21 September 2008).
- Tritter, J.Q. and McCallum, A. (2006), "The snakes and ladders of user involvement: moving beyond Arnstein", *Health Policy*, Vol. 76, pp. 156-68.
- Videira, N., Antunes, P., Santos, R. and Lobo, G. (2006), "Public and stakeholder participation in European water policy: a critical review of project evaluation processes", *European Environment*, Vol. 16, pp. 19-31.
- Walker, L. and Logan, A. (2008), "Learner engagement: a review of learner voice initiatives across the UK's education sectors", available at: [www.futurelab.org.uk/resources/documents/other\\_research\\_reports/Learner\\_Engagement.pdf](http://www.futurelab.org.uk/resources/documents/other_research_reports/Learner_Engagement.pdf) (accessed 27 November 2010).
- Watson, J. and Hill, A. (1993), *A Dictionary of Communication and Media Studies*, 3rd ed., Edward Arnold, London.
- Wiberg, L.K. (2006), "The role of students in the external review of QA agencies: a comparative reflection with the external review of higher education institutions", in Alaniska, H., Cadina, E. and Bohrer, J. (Eds), *Student Involvement in the Processes of Quality Assurance Agencies*, European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), Helsinki, pp. 8-11.
- Widemann, P. and Femers, S. (1993), "Public participation in waste management decision making: analysis and management of conflicts", *Journal of Hazardous Materials*, Vol. 33, pp. 355-68.
- Wilcox, D. (1994), *The Guide to Effective Participation*, Delta Press, Brighton.

Williams, J. and Ansfield, G.C. (2007), "Fitness for purpose? National and institutional approaches to publicising the student voice", *Quality in Higher Education*, Vol. 13 No. 2, p. 159.

York Consulting (2006), *Study of the Extent and Effectiveness of Existing Student Representation Structures within Higher Education Institutions Across Wales*, Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW), Cardiff.

Zhao, C. and Kuh, G. (2004), "Adding value: learning communities and student engagement", *Research in Higher Education*, Vol. 45 No. 2, pp. 115-38.

**Corresponding author**

Noha Elassy can be contacted at: [nm\\_elassy@yahoo.com](mailto:nm_elassy@yahoo.com)

**This article has been cited by:**

1. Cecilie Haraldseid, Febe Friberg, Karina Aase. 2016. How can students contribute? A qualitative study of active student involvement in development of technological learning material for clinical skills training. *BMC Nursing* **15**:1. . [[CrossRef](#)]
2. K. Ceulemans, I. Molderez, L. Van Liedekerke. 2015. Sustainability reporting in higher education: a comprehensive review of the recent literature and paths for further research. *Journal of Cleaner Production* **106**, 127-143. [[CrossRef](#)]
3. Chenicheri Sid Nair Centre for Advancement of Teaching and Learning, The University of Western Australia, Perth, Australia Jinrui Li Applied Linguistics, University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand Li Kun Cai Foreign Language Department, North China University of Science and Technology, Tangshan, China . 2015. Academics' feedback on the quality of appraisal evidence. *Quality Assurance in Education* **23**:3, 279-294. [[Abstract](#)] [[Full Text](#)] [[PDF](#)]
4. Noha Elassy Suez Canal University, Ismailia, Egypt . 2015. The concepts of quality, quality assurance and quality enhancement. *Quality Assurance in Education* **23**:3, 250-261. [[Abstract](#)] [[Full Text](#)] [[PDF](#)]
5. Noha Elassy Suez Canal University, Ismailia, Egypt . 2015. Student involvement in the Egyptian quality assurance system. *Quality Assurance in Education* **23**:2, 123-148. [[Abstract](#)] [[Full Text](#)] [[PDF](#)]
6. Tonći Lazibat, Tomislav Baković, Ines Dužević. 2014. How perceived service quality influences students' satisfaction? Teachers' and students' perspectives. *Total Quality Management & Business Excellence* **25**:7-8, 923-934. [[CrossRef](#)]
7. Mahsood Shah, Kylee Hartman, Graham Hastings. 2014. Partners or opponents: the engagement of students in a compliance driven quality assessment. *Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education* **18**:1, 20-28. [[CrossRef](#)]