

Why would students contribute to collective well-being and university quality enhancement? The role of student belonging (0311)

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This paper explores conceptually the role of students' sense of belonging in students' involvement in quality enhancement. The quality of higher education has been gaining attention around the world, especially in view of massification and the rising cost of higher education. These have brought student experience to the centre of QA policies and practices. Accordingly, students' influence on – and involvement in – university structures and processes towards quality enhancement have become a noticeable trend. The paper shifts the attention from the traditional focus on how institutions can assure educational quality to how students can be co-responsible for the wellbeing and advancement of their universities. Student involvement in quality enhancement is conceptualised as a combination of students' agentic possibilities ('power') and student agentic orientations ('will'). The paper investigates the different underlying relational ties between students and their universities (belonging, mattering, and needs-fulfilment) and how these play out in students' agentic orientations.

Taking the theory of student agency as the starting point (Klemenčič, 2015), this paper conceptualizes student involvement in quality enhancement as a combination of students' agentic possibilities for such involvement ('power') and student agentic orientations ('will'). The conceptualisation of students' agentic possibilities rests on Sen's capability approach (Sen, 1999) and Swidler's cultural kit (1986) and focuses on both the formal rules and procedures and the informal cultural schemas that have an influence on students' capabilities to be involved in and influence university quality. Student agentic orientations refer to individual students and their willingness and motivation to be involved in university quality processes and structures. This section draws on March and Olsen's (2009) logic of appropriateness, and Hirschman's (1970) theory of exit, voice and loyalty focusing on the different underlying relational ties between students and their universities (belonging, mattering, and needs-fulfilment) and how these play out in students' agentic orientations.

The proposed framework presents a shift from the traditional focus on how institutions can assure educational quality to how students can be co-responsible for and contribute to the wellbeing and advancement of their university. The underlying prescriptive message is that universities should develop institutional pathways for students' involvement in university, along with cultivating students' sense of collective belonging and collective university identity. Universities need to actively manage 'meanings' implicit in its structures, procedures and instruments in view of the implications these have on students' and their relationship to the university.

Keywords: Students, quality assurance, quality enhancement, university governance, university culture, university-student relationship, student agency, capability, freedom, belonging, collective belonging, collective identity, individualism versus collectivism