8th ASEF Regional Conference on Higher Education (ARC8)

Outlook 2030: Inclusive and Diverse Higher Education in Asia and Europe

ARC8 EG1 Inclusive Learning and Teaching in a Digital World

Session 2 | Friday, 29 January 2021

Memo

Presentation by Mr Justin PATRICKS, President, International Association for Political Science Students (IAPSS)

Justin was asked to make a 10-minute presentation focusing on the following 3 questions to provide food for thought for the expert group:

1. What is your take, how inclusive are learning and teaching in the digital world? what is the status quo? Do you have any numbers to show?
2. What potential risks do you foresee that could jeopardize greater inclusion in learning and teaching in a digital world in the next 10 years?
3. What opportunities and leverage points do you see to promote inclusion in learning and teaching in a digital world the next 10 years?

Justin's presentation focused on student government and the extracurricular aspect of digital learning and how it can help student development. Justin started the presentation by sharing an overview from a standpoint of student governments. He drew a distinction between curricular and extra-curricular education. Wherein the former is seen as a societal prerequisite, providing necessary courses for an individual to fulfil their societal role in their specific capacity or chosen profession. On the other hand, the latter offers knowledge and skills to students that are not necessarily provided by the curriculum.

It is said that students pursue extracurricular activities on their own accord, create their own groups to focus learning on their own way and on their own pace. However, these student governments have finite resources. Student organizations and governments have to figure out how to allocate limited resources and ensure maximum benefits. In this sense there is "extracurricular autonomy", however, this autonomy varies depending on the given higher education community. Overall, he presented how digital learning and technologies can help facilitate the extracurricular aspect of education help rebuild students' governments.

Following this overview, Justin proceeded to share his thoughts on the **Status Quo:**

Student Input in Education: Status Quo

▶ ~1 billion students worldwide, little input in education decisions
▶ Roger Hart – 1992 UNICEF Report, "Children's Participation: Between Tokenism and Citizenship"
▶ Student government retrenchment and collapse
  ▶ International Union of Students
  ▶ 51% of Commonwealth countries have no national student government
  ▶ United States Student Association
  ▶ Division, lack of resources, detrimental policies
▶ Missed potential for extracurricular opportunities
▶ Risks – more collapse, fewer extracurricular possibilities
▶ How can digital technology improve extracurricular education?

- In many cases, student governments have been retrenching and collapsing. This is in part either due to university policies restricting civic space or challenges in relation to finances.

- According to a report published by the Commonwealth Student Association[1], more than half of the commonwealth countries do not have a national student government.

- There are instances wherein the student government is not united. This divides the community and makes more difficult resource generation and collaboration.

- In certain universities in Australia, New Zealand, and the United States, for example, there are instances where policies were enacted to limit the ability of student governments to collect fees from students. Consequently, it became more difficult to organize extracurricular opportunities.

- Lastly, there is lack of understanding about the potential of extracurricular activities for education.

Regarding **potential risks that could jeopardise greater inclusion efforts in the next decade**, Justin shared the following points:

- The inefficient funding model poses a great risk to the restoration and maintenance of student governments. Inefficient funding models have led to the collapse of student organizations before, and this is a growing trend.

- The lack of grassroot student engagement puts at risk the growth of student governments and extra-curricular activities.

- National and university policies that may exacerbate challenges towards strengthening student governments, extracurricular activities, and cross-university and cross-border collaborations. These policies may negatively impact the capacity of student governments and organizations to generate funds and/or participate in safe spaces to cultivate inclusivity, collaboration, and organizations.

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[1]Rebecca Maxwell-Stuart; The State of Student Governance in the Commonwealth. 2016.
https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Rebecca_Maxwell-Stuart/publication/312164862_The_State_of_Student_Governance_in_the_Commonwealth/links/5873952a08ae6eb871c64e0f/The-State-of-Student-Governance-in-the-Commonwealth.pdf

Regarding the **opportunities or leverage points that could lead to greater inclusion in digital learning and teaching in the next decade**, Justin shares the following thoughts with the expert group:

- Digital technology for cross-campus, cross-border extracurricular collaboration. Digital infrastructure can significantly contribute to enabling the university community to facilitate communication among stakeholders beyond the student body and across borders. Digital infrastructure has great potential to support student governments and this should be further leveraged to restore and maintain student government in and across Asia and Europe in the next decade.

- The knowledge and capacities of the Student Affairs Divisions of universities should be leveraged to benefit students in terms of service provision, resource generation for extracurricular activities, project management and activity implementation, among others.

- Student governments at the international level.

- Knowledge sharing, archiving, student newspapers.

- Building and rebuilding student governments around the world.

- Extracurricular development through student government.

- Student affairs – multi-stakeholder collaboration.

- Investment while maintaining extracurricular autonomy.

After Justin's presentation, members of the expert group shared their inputs, reflections related to the risks and opportunities presented.

Comments from Expert Group members:

- Digital learning, in a way, could even worsen the position of student bodies and organizations since community building requires social interaction. As we move to less and less formal approaches in education students are less and less together in one space and time.

- Quality assurance systems, at least in higher education, pushing institutions to perceive students as stakeholders, rather than just clients, and making institutions provide better options for students even without student organizations. This is a risk related to the decreasing significance of student organisations.

- Digital technologies would not significantly help rebuilding student organizations. The real reasons why existing student organizations have been very strong in the last couple of decades are not relevant anymore.

- In some cases, students are afraid of having a voice, because they are discouraged / or not encouraged by the institutions.

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