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The article presents a study of higher education teachers' view of student participation. The aim of the study is to describe and understand perceptions of student participation on teaching in relation to organisations, processes and contents through statements by a number of teachers. The theoretical framework consists of Foucault's view of power and Arnstein's participation model. The method is a qualitative textual analysis. The results show that student participation can be identified on the basis of the topics governance, activity and evaluation, and that there are six perspectives that show various levels of student participation and degrees of power:

Keywords: student participation · power · involvement · democracy · governance

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Student participation in higher education

A question of governance and power

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Since the end of the 1990s, students' right to participation has been enshrined in the Higher Education Act and the Higher Education Ordinance in Sweden. The work on the Bologna Process also means that matters of student participation are now of crucial interest and importance, and also that students are gaining participation both in the organisation and contents of the study programmes (Persson, 2003). However, research on student participation shows that students experience a lack of participation (Persson, 1998; Kamperin, 2004; Menon, 2005; Högskoleverket, 2004).

This article emphasises a number of higher education teachers' views of student participation. The aim of the study is to describe and understand perceptions of student participation in relation to learning, organisation and the processes and contents of teaching through a number of teacher statements. The starting point of the study is a power perspective, and the questions are focused on the nature of student participation in teaching. The teachers were asked to emphasise positive examples of student participation in relation to the processes and contents of their teaching.

What is student participation?

The concept *student participation* can be divided into formal and informal participation, which can be seen as examples of representative and direct democracy. *Formal participation* is collective, from the aspect that students exercise formal participation through representation on boards and committees. *Informal participation* is individual and concerns students' informal opportunities of influencing their own situation and education, e.g. through course evaluations and other forms of evaluation (Högskoleverket, 2000). Other words that occur in conjunction with descriptions of participation are *influence* and *cooperation*, which are often used as synonyms for participation. But neither involvement nor contribution does necessarily entail participation, and not necessarily is there a connection between participation and results (Swedish Government Official Reports 2000:1).

In this study, we define student participation as participation that entail a fair chance to influence the students' study situation and experience involvement, i.e. students who participate become involved in the decision-making process and find this meaningful. The keywords are negotiation, dialogue, cooperation and individual responsibility (cf. Arnstein, 1969; Foucault, 2002; Swedish Government Official Reports 2000:1). A positive effect of involvement means development of the democratic process, whilst a negative experience might lead to reduced involvement, which could result in experience of exclusion and various types of resistance (Swedish Government Official Reports 2000:1).

Students as co-players

At least three elements can be differentiated in the debate on student participation: (i) stu-

dent participation as part of educational organisations' quality enhancement work, (ii) individual students' learning and personal development, and (iii) education and implementation of democratic values whereby educational organisations are seen as players in a democratic society (Prop. 1999/2000:28; Persson, 2003; Astin, 1985; Menon, 2003; Boland, 2005; Englund, 2002; Molander, 2002). What is clear when perusing various writings on student participation is the emphasis on students as co-players in controlling activities (Högskoleverket, 2000; Persson, 2003).

Kamperin (2005, p. 49) speaks of «participation as learning», which means that students assume responsibility for their learning and that their teachers are responsible for facilitating this, and «participation as collaboration», which means that teachers and students collaborate to improve education and its quality. Molander (2002) discusses the university role of a democratic player. He makes a distinction between political and academic democracy. Political democracy is the practise of public democratic decision-making methods whilst academic democracy is the practise of argumentative and open knowledge-creating methods, i.e. a democracy in order to learn together. Academic democracy is a prerequisite for political democracy (Molander, 2002), and teachers play a crucial role in implementing academic democracy (Boland, 2005). From a student-participation perspective, we mean that political democracy can be attributed to more formal participation and academic democracy rather than informal participation and the view of students as co-players.

Lack of participation

The Council of Europe's study of student participation, which covered most of the European countries, showed that participa-

tion regarding educational issues was weak at a national level but grew stronger when one approached the institutional level. This was something that applied both to formal and informal participation (Persson, 2003). However, student representation was less regulated at the institutional level, which is where it was the hardest to find students willing to act as student representatives. The strongest areas for participation at institutional levels were social and pedagogic issues, matters concerning the work environment and content-related educational issues. The weakest were the budget and employment areas (Persson, 2003).

Kamperin's study (2005) showed that student participation functions with regards to being represented in committees and boards, although student cooperation in the bodies' preparatory and decision – making work varies in the faculties, departments and boards. However, there were limitations in student participation in the daily work. The Swedish National Agency for Higher Education's (Högskoleverket, 2004) evaluations of the country's educational programmes also showed a lack of student participation, which emphasises the issue of students' lack of commitment in contributing to course evaluations.

Being seen as an individual

The need for informal student participation and the need to be seen as an individual are discussed in a number of studies. Persson (1998) argues that the absence of student participation is a lack of informal participation in everyday issues and that the experience of insufficient participation can be seen as an alienating experience. Ideally, students would exert direct participation on their study situation and thus experience participation and mean something as an individual. The explanation for this can be found in the

strong competition experienced by students (Persson, 1998).

A collective organisation is perceived as the creation of individual invisibility, which conflicts with people's need to launch themselves as individuals. The wish to be seen and listened to and thus obtain confirmation is also mentioned in Kamperin's (2005) study. She calls it «participation as a motivating factor» (Kamperin, 2005), i.e. the teacher sees the individual students' circumstances and is interested in their education. Persson (1998) thinks that students' individualisation means that they see themselves as customers (cf. Menon, 2003, 2005; Boland 2005) and that they do not benefit from collaborating and collectively trying to increase student participation. There is a risk that the customer-based approach and knowledge consumption lead to increased student alienation through limiting it to an individual level.

The customer's role is individualistic and can also entail restricted assumption of responsibility, which might lead to students blaming the educational institution for their failures. Alienation can be prevented by creating pedagogic conditions that enable students to be active and responsible co-players in the learning process (Persson, 1998). He emphasises three words that describe various aspects of student alienation: object, instrument and atom. Object and instrument mean that the individual is objectified and to a certain extent alienated. Big student groups develop a kind of atomic existence where interaction between teacher and student is deficient.

Astin (1985) asserts that student involvement creates effective learning situations, and that both formal and informal student participation are of importance to this. The more involved students are in their studies and everything related to it, the greater their personal development will become and the more are they likely to learn (Astin, 1984).

The concepts motivation and involvement are also closely related to this, and service, assessment, feedback and supervision/teaching are important tools in maximising student involvement (Astin, 1985).

Depending on the roles that students adopt or are allowed to adopt, they can be seen as investors, consumers or products of the system (Boland, 2005). They invest in education and have the rights to participation, as they are the group most affected by decisions. This role also belongs to the view of students as consumers, and as consumers they will expect service. Problems can arise if the students do not think that there is any long-term interest in developing education and improving the quality of future 'consumers' but deem their own interests to be the crucial factor. Influenced by Molander's discussion of academic democracy, Boland writes about a more altruistic student role where students as members of an academic organisation and citizens of the society contribute to the quality enhancement work, e.g. by performing an end-of-course evaluation that is of direct significance, although it will not be to them but the next student group (Boland, 2005).

Student participation and power

According to Foucault (2002), power is everywhere in all human relationships and not something only exercised by dominant groups. Where there is power, there is also resistance. There are various forms of power: regulating, disciplinary and pastoral power (Foucault, 2002; see also Hermann, 2004; Huhtala, 2004; Lindgren, 2007; Bartley, 2007). Regulating power is totalising, targets individuals' way of life and is exemplified by various forms of governments. Hermann (2004) calls it remote control.

Disciplinary power targets individuals, who are seen as subordinate objects of pow-

er, and individuals are created in dominance-based relationships. Pastoral power makes individuals the subject of themselves, which means that they are given the opportunity for self-control and to take part in their own control (Öhman, 2007). In Foucault's power perspective, we mean that the latter form of power can be related to the student view in steering documents, in which students are seen as bearing joint responsibility as co-players (cf. Ds 1998:51).

This form of power demonstrates a shift in responsibility from those responsible for education to the individual. It is about individual responsibility and freedom, the emphasis being on students actively taking part in control. This also concerns exercising student participation at a formal and informal level as well as at a collective and individual level. The various stately and local reforms regarding student participation could be seen as examples of regulating power, as they regulate the relationships between teacher and student. Disciplinary power could mean that students do not exercise their rights to participation, for example due to fear of reprisals.

Another way of studying power structures and analyse who has the power in different situations is by using Arnstein's (1969) participation model, which we do in this article. Arnstein's participation model (below) uses the definitions non-participation, sham symbolic participation and participation. Stage 1 and Stage 2 entail non-participation, 3–5 symbolic participation and stages 6–8 citizen power. In the first two levels, manipulation and therapy, the ultimate goal is not to make it possible for people to take part in planning and implementing decisions but enable those with power to manipulate or arrange such conditions. In the next three stages, information, consultation and placation, the participants can make themselves heard but lack the power to ensure that their

opinions are taken into consideration. There is no follow-up of decisions, i.e. the decisions do not lead to a change in the situation, and it is those in power who have the rights to make the decisions. The final three levels, partnership, delegated power

and citizen control, are examples of increased degrees of participation and the rights to make decisions. Negotiation is an important factor in this context. Figure 1 (below) shows the various stages of Arnstein's participation model.

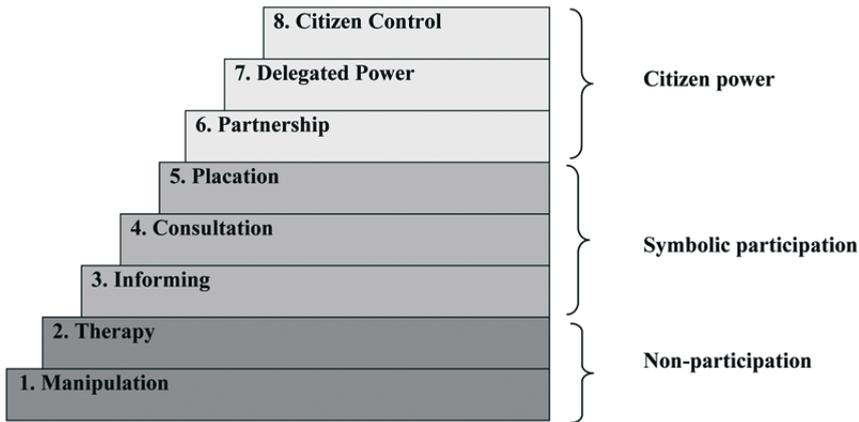


Figure 1. Sherry Arnstein's Participation Model (Arnstein, 1969, p. 4).

Method

In our analysis of the staff's statements, we have used what Esaiasson, Gilljam, Oscarsson and Wägnerud (2004) call qualitative textual analysis, i.e. a thorough reading of the parts of the text, the text in its entirety and of the context in which the text constitutes a part. Esaiasson et al. (2004) differentiate two main types of investigation based on textual analysis: systematising investigations and critically reviewing investigations. We have performed an inductive textual analysis, which includes a systematic investigation where we have emphasised the teachers' statements on the basis of the topics and categories derived from the material.

The qualitative approach of the study is based on the assumption that the constituent parts are interrelated and that the entirety of which these sections are part displays quali-

ties not exhibited by individual components. We have chosen to identify a clearly defined system as the focus of the investigation that aims to develop an understanding for what is being studied. We describe this as particularistic; the data comes from clearly defined discussions of student participation with a staff group over a period of two days. Thus, it becomes possible for knowledge to be in line with our own experiences, as we consider it a living and concrete entity that is related to a context rather than abstract and theoretical (Yin, 1994).

In the present study, we have analysed and reflected on the data after the initial data collection, which allowed us to be more specific in the second data collection (cf. Hammersley & Atkinson, 1990) by addressing more targeted questions at the staff group. Approximately 50 of the staff took part in the two data collections. In our study, we have

not focused on the number of people but rather took into consideration the probability of variation width in a so-called 'purpose sampling' in the form of about 50 peoples' group discussions, in which we have focused on finding different perceptions of student participation that can be categorised (cf. Alexandersson, 1998). Thus, the data comprises collected group documents in which the staff statements have constituted the basis for an overall thematic analysis that was described in qualitatively separate categories.

This has been continuous in the analytical work, and the constituent statements have been checked against the outcomes in topics and categories. Thus, we have been able to describe what can be interpreted as qualitative perceptions that are represented in the context of a staff meeting associated with educational issues regarding student participa-

tion on two separate days (Larsson 1986, Alexandersson 1998, Malmqvist 2007).

Results

Student participation is a complex issue that depends on a number of different factors that seem very tangibly linked to the work situation of teachers and students. You cannot merely focus on students and their situation; student participation has to be studied from a broader standpoint and take into consideration the situation of teachers as well as organisational aspects. The teachers' perceptions can be described on the basis of three overall topics – governance, activity and evaluation – and six perspectives. By governance, we mean external governing factors. Activity means the actual teaching situation, and evaluation means evaluating the activity.

Table 1. Different levels of student participation.

Governance	Activity	Evaluation
Conditional perspective	User perspective	Integrity perspective
Motivational perspective	Co-creator perspective	Quality perspective

Based on Foucault's (2002) view of power and Arnstein's (1969) participation model, in the following section we will discuss student participation and power, and present three models linked to the topics and perspectives found in the teachers' statements.

Different levels of student participation

The six perspectives can be seen as different levels of student participation and power. If we focus on the relationship between different levels, such as the university as an organisation (O), the teacher (T) and the student (S), the following subdivision is possible:

Table 2. Various levels of student participation and power from a teacher standpoint.

Topic	Perspective	Relationship
Governance	Conditions	O
	Motivation	T S
Activity	User	T
	Co-creator	S
Evaluation	Integrity	O
	Quality	T S

The arrows indicate that student participation is not a unidirectional, top down process, i.e. from organisational management to teachers and students, but also takes place bottom-up.

Governance: A question of condition and motivation

Within the topic *governance*, student participation is mainly based on external factors determined by other persons than teachers and students, and these factors affect the seat of learning as an organisation. So do educational policy, laws, ordinances, financial and staff resources and the labour market. In the conditional perspective, laws and regulations govern the framework within which student participation take place. Thus, it can simultaneously be linked to regulating power and what Hermann (2004) calls *remote control*. In the motivational perspective, teachers relate to students' wishes to participate and their thoughts about their future career as an ex-

ternal motivational factor in the implementation of educational programmes.

An overall condition for student participation is clarified in the teachers' statements, e.g. that:

they have knowledge about things such as the course budget, individual responsibility and the curriculum; students' teaching situation has its starting point in the governing documents, but on the other hand it means you must think about it when the curriculum is devised. (Anna)

Furthermore, it derives from the study that the size of student groups is significant. If the groups are too big, there will be less possibility of close contact between teachers and students. This is also linked to financial and staff resources clarified in statements such as:

an important question is if we have the time and money to give students the opportunity to exert

participation. Can we afford to be at hand and have smaller student groups? (Karin)

External factors are also important for students' chances of receiving confirmation as individuals. In one statement a teacher said that:

student participation is a matter of being seen in the study situation, which in turn requires more teaching in a greater variety of forms. Ultimately, student participation is a matter of resources. (Sven)

One of the cornerstones of Astin's theory of student involvement is that there must be an opportunity for teachers and students to meet in smaller groups. Therefore, he points to the importance of having more individualised teaching and supervision in order to strengthen the students' personal and intellectual development (Astin 1984, 1985).

Activity: User or co-creator?

Within the topic *activity*, statements arise about student participation both in the formal and informal sense, i.e. student representation in the formal organisation of a university or college and their more personal contacts with teachers outside ordinary teaching time. In the latter sense, teachers' availability constitutes a prerequisite. In the user perspective and the co-creator perspective, we see an increased degree of student participation and a chance for students to gain pastoral power and self-control.

However, the user perspective means that it is primarily the teacher's responsibility to create the conditions for this, and it is here that the teachers' view of students as consumers emerges. The teachers may facilitate participation, but it is up to the students to consume it. Or, as one teacher (Inger) puts it: «As teachers we have the power to exert participation or not.» Different forms of

teaching also provide different opportunities for student participation. In the co-creator perspective, student participation concerns mutual participation and the creation of relationships, which can be seen as examples of what Kamperin (2005) calls *participation as collaboration* and what Molander (2002) calls *academic democracy*.

One example of this is a teacher (Eva) who states that, «in the continuous discussions with the students, there is a big chance of receiving feedback on the course's content and structure». Furthermore, the co-creator perspective involves relationships that allow students the freedom to determine certain aspects of their everyday study situation. Words such as dialogue and consultation were mentioned as well as the importance of teachers listening to students' wishes, and that students are given the opportunity to decide on the focus of the contents of their education.

Another point that also was discussed is the importance of students' individual responsibility. These opinions are in line with what is criticised in the government proposition on student participation and quality development, which states that the prerequisite for actual student participation is for students to assume an active and committed role as individuals and as a collective. This is also included in the guidelines for the Bologna Process, where it is emphasised that students must participate both in the organisation and in the contents of their educational programmes.

Moreover, students are assumed to be skilled, active and creative in their studies (Persson, 2003). Persson (1998) also touches upon the importance of opportunities to create relationships between teachers and students. He believes that big student groups develop a kind of atomic existence that involves deficient interaction between teacher and student, and that this might lead to stu-

dent alienation. This also transpires in the various perspectives of our material, which is why we believe that the opportunities for student participation increase if the groups are smaller and if teachers and other decision-makers meet students on a continuous basis during their education.

Evaluation: A question of quality and integrity
Within the topic *evaluation*, student participation becomes even clearer. In this context, focus lies on the student in a participation-based relationship, which can be seen as pastoral power, but students' evaluations not only influence teachers and students but the university or college as an organisation. The word *evaluation* covers both valuation and evaluation, i.e. when valuing something, one's personal opinion is the referential framework, whilst evaluation implies that the individual's standpoint refers to the educational programme objectives.

This is expressed in statements such as, «it is easier to conduct evaluations at the end of the educational programme when the students have gained some distance and perspective» (Lena) and, «flexibility during the course equals being able to change things in accordance with students' needs» (Lars). This topic includes the integrity perspective and the quality perspective. Regarding the integrity perspective, the teachers in our study commented on the dilemma of students' rights to participation and the teachers' rights to integrity.

However, the Swedish National Agency for Education (Högskoleverket, 2004) believes that instead of focusing on individual teachers but on course evaluations as a broader tool for evaluating the learning environment and target attainment of a course, course evaluations may constitute data for quality improvements. The quality perspective in our study covers not only the quality of the educational programmes but also the

quality of the students who are awarded a degree, which can be seen as an expression of the view of students as a product of the system.

Various degrees of student participation

By applying Arnstein's (1969) model on the perspectives mentioned above, we can differentiate perceptions on various degrees of student participation. The figure below is based on Arnstein's model, but we have changed some of the concepts so as to more specifically concentrate on student participation.

No student participation

Neither manipulation nor censure constitutes student participation. Rather, it is to be seen as disciplinary power in Foucault's (2002) power view. Manipulation can also be perceived as sham democracy and censure as punishment. As an example, it could be mentioned that student representatives are invited to meetings where they have no legitimate power to affect decisions. Censure could be that students are invited to meetings which proper purpose is to rebuke them instead of raising questions that the students find important. Some of the teachers meant that certain factors of the conditional perspective can be perceived as the opposite of student participation.

Conditions and opportunities for student participation are often restricted by external parameters in the forms of steering documents and course plans. As some teachers (Ulla) mentioned: «After all, we have courses that are set right from the start of the course. We are locked into fixed curricula. So what is there to exert any joint participation over?» This statement shows that if you would invite students to affect course plans that are already approved, this could be seen as manipulation. Thoughts also emerged as, «why students do not take advantage of the oppor-

Table 3. Various degrees of student participation.

Name	Degree of Student Participation	Comments
1. Manipulation	No student participation	Cannot influence decisions. Students are invited but have no legitimate power to exert participation.
2. Censure	No student participation	Invited in order to be censured.
3. Information	Certain degree of student participation	In one-way communication there is no student participation.
4. Consultation	Certain degree of student participation	Apparent student participation but their opinions are not taken into consideration.
5. Neutralisation	A degree of student participation	Risk of neutralisation if hand-picked students on councils or committees are not representative of their group.
6. Joint participation	Student participation	Negotiations and discussions between those in power and student participants.
7. Legitimate student participation	Student participation	Negotiation, responsibilities and decision-making authority delegated.
8. Student-controlled activity or task	Student participation	Student-union activities or situations where students are given complete responsibility to design components of teaching etc.

tunities they are given to exert participation» (Emma).

Astin (1984) thinks the words *participation* and *motivation* are closely interrelated, which ought to mean that increased motivation increases the degree of student participation. The teachers also expressed the opinion that student participation must include an innate desire for participation and that institutions

have a responsibility to encourage and involve students. Moreover, Astin (1984) points out that the more involved students are in their studies, the more they will learn. Such an involvement simultaneously constitutes personal development. Of course, non-participating students can be the result of democratic fatigue (Boland, 2005). In such cases, students do not see that their involve-

ment leads to results, so it can also be used as a form of resistance.

Certain degree of student participation

Information, consultation and neutralisation might entail a certain degree of student participation, although Arnstein (1969) thinks that within these perspectives the participants can often make themselves heard, but that they lack the power to make sure that their opinions are taken into consideration. Dialogue is necessary if information is to be viewed as a component of participation. Components of teaching that might belong here are supervision and guidance.

A large amount of information occurs in verbal and written study situations. In order for student participation to exist, students must have the opportunity to comment on this information. Simultaneously, it emerges in our study that it is important to inform students of what they cannot influence. At best, consultation can constitute student participation, of which course evaluations can form an example, but students need feedback on the results of the course evaluation. Therefore, in this context time is important. In our study, we noted that there is a discussion of when students should be notified of the results of the evaluations. When course evaluations are thought to primarily be of benefit to teachers and the planning of subsequent courses, the process can be seen as a consultation but also as an expression of an altruistic student role.

Regarding evaluations, the study also shows that there is a risk that teachers might give evaluations a positive bent:

How you take criticism is a matter of honesty. Teachers have a big responsibility to emphasise a 'true' summary. There is a risk/possibility of giving evaluations a 'positive bent', especially if they are to be public documents. (Kerstin)

This could be seen as an example of neutralisation, as the teachers diminish the effect of what the students have said. Further examples of neutralisation could be teachers who select certain students whom the teacher knows have positive opinions of an issue for representation in various contexts. Thus, in this context there is a risk of symbolic participation.

Student participation

One important factor with regard to student participation is if students perceive their participation as meaningful. Joint participation is based on collaboration, i.e. a feeling of community and consultation. The difference between consultation and joint participation can sometimes be hard to determine. The latter is based on negotiations while the former is rather a matter of consultations. Joint participation can be formal or informal.

One example attributed to the user perspective is when students in certain courses present their wishes in a direct dialogue with the course management, even though it has been pointed out that this works well in small courses but not in classes with hundreds of students. Another factor that emerges and is significant to joint participation and consultation is opinions of teacher participation. It is also important that teachers have the mandate to make the requisite decisions and be in control of their own situation. Teachers' availability also plays a role here.

The relationship between teachers and students is important in order to enable joint participation. Other examples of joint participation are when students select literature in consultation with teachers or are involved in selecting places for their internships. Joint participation is not merely about the relationship between teacher and student but also concerns how students and representatives from the rest of society, e.g. companies

and the industry can collaborate with the student, which could be seen as examples of professional association.

Legitimate student participation refers to delegation of responsibilities and tasks. In this context, formal participation and student representatives are examples of this. So are the co-creator perspective and the user perspective, given that responsibilities and decision-making authority are delegated. One example of the co-creator perspective is when students determine the focus of the course content and teachers formulate the questions to be raised. Another example is student involvement when drawing up course objectives. The co-creator perspective involves the aspect that it is important for students to see that their participation leads to effects. One example of this is course evaluations where students see that their objects of criticism are rectified and that they have the opportunity to experience the changes implemented.

As mentioned before, course evaluations that only affect subsequent student groups should rather be called consultations. But linking back to Boland's (2005) discussion of the different student roles, the former can also be seen as an expression of the view of students as consumers instead of the altruistic student role. Another example of legitimate participation is mentor groups, where students can influence both content and process. Meetings with mentors are based on the issues and examples that the students wish to discuss but the form is determined by the mentor: «The idea is that the students host the mentor groups.» (Inga)

Student-controlled activity or task is the highest degree of student participation. This can take place both at a formal and informal level. If implemented to the fully, student-union activities can be a good example of student-controlled activities. The organisation is controlled and financed by the stu-

dents themselves but the interaction with other parties determines their independence. Inherent in the concept student-union activities is that the students are in charge. But in discussions with university or colleges, it is unclear to which degree of student-control the activities can maintain. In such instances, the activities can be referred to other levels in our model. One example of a student-controlled task, seen from the basis of our study, is students who have created their own exam questions and corrected the answers, and thus have influenced their own learning.

Continuous work on student participation

In the model below, different teaching and education situations can be put in relation to the three aspects *governance*, *activity* and *evaluation* described in our study. Depending on how much the three respective concepts are emphasised in different educations, they will be more or less apparent in relation to each other. This means that various questions about student participation can be applied to the model: What is the general perception of student participation at the seats of learning? What is the nature of representation at various levels? How is the idea of student participation discussed at the various levels? How are activities such as individual courses, lectures and seminars constructed? Where can student influence be found at the planning stages in preparing programmes or courses? Where is student participation found with regards to evaluation and quality-assurance issues? What is the student union's perception of student participation?

In Figure 2 below, four possible starting-points have been positioned for a discussion of student participation. If you are planning for student participation at an organisational level, before any decisions are made you ought to take into consideration the three

factors *governance*, *activity* and *evaluation* and adopt a position on the basis of the situation that might occur. The model can contribute to increased identification and clarification of risks such as educational planning, which tends to focus on governance, and toward clarifying the risk of not paying sufficient attention to how the relationships between normal teaching activities and evaluation work are related to control.

Another example is a teacher who plans a teaching component of a course. What does this teacher think of student participa-

tion, not just in teaching but with regards to its relationship to governance and evaluation? One further example is when student representatives plan the evaluation of an educational programme. Do they merely think about course evaluation or can they relate the educational programme to an explanation of the programme, its activities and state control through ordinances that regard student participation at an educational level? Finally, how would an ideal student-participation situation be, compare to the model?

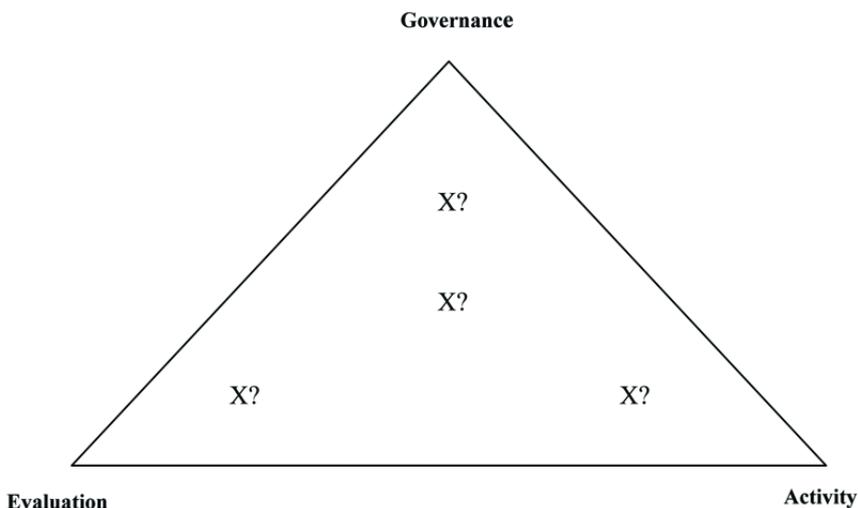


Figure 2. Possible positions for discussions of student participation in a model that include the factors governance, activity and evaluation.

Discussion

In the light of the present study, we wish to assert the fact that data can be found for a more nuanced, complex and problematising picture of the actual meaning of the expression student participation. The regulatory framework that has been developed points toward an increasing qualitative component of meaning in terms of process and content (Ds 1998:51; Prop. 1999/2000:28; Högsko-

leverket, 2004, p. 14 f.). The study also provides a basis for the discussion of using conceptions that are related to student participation. Various expressions are used for similar meanings, which can hamper the discussion but simultaneously give rise to a discussion of these very expressions (Arnstein, 1969; Ds 1998:51; Swedish Government Official Reports; 2000:1). The study also confirms the existence of one form of student participation that students seem to desire, namely

direct participation in their study situation (Kamperin, 2005; Persson 1998). This is also obvious from the teachers' statements and described through the co-creator and co-player perspective. This can lead to real participation in a study situation and thus a power shift to the benefit of the students. In turn, this could lead toward an intensification of teaching (Dimenäs, 2001, 2007; Marton & Booth, 1997; Säljö, 2000; Zuniga, Williams & Berger, 2005). The motivational perspective of the study also includes descriptions that clarify student participation as meta-learning in terms of democracy and involvement, and it is assumed that student participation provides insights to a democratic society (see also Astin 1985; Persson 2003; Menon, 2003, 2005; Boland, 2005). However, in this context one must also link this to the relationship of participation and power (Foucault, 2002). The teacher statements and the perspectives described in the study show us the possibility that those involved in educational issues use the three models presented in order to problematise student participation and learning in relation to organisation, process and content. Furthermore, the study shows that student participation can be understood in a more complex way than merely viewing it as to allow students to sit on committees and decision-making bodies. We can see that participation is crucial with regards to learning: as an intellectual process in terms of subject content, as the learning of an ideological process in regarding socially accepted values, and in developing the quality of educational programmes.

To conclude, by virtue of our study we wish to assert the fact that student participation in an educational context should be illustrated from a wider perspective than normally seems to be the case. When the expression student participation is coined and used in texts, it might be that one is over-

looking the considerations that teachers have brought up in this study. This can lead to a focus on student participation that is chiefly attributable to the conditional and formal perspectives, and one might even think that this is what student participation is about. Therefore, we wish to point out the problem with a concept as *being* something. This entails the risk of using the expression student participation in an almost positivist spirit. Instead, the teachers' statements show that there is every reason to problematise the expression student participation constantly in every new situation on the basis of various thought models and conquer it in every possible way, as Molander puts it: «Democracy is always in the making.» (Molander, 2002)

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