In strive for partnership:

Student participation models in Norwegian Centres for Excellence in Education

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Abstract

This master thesis investigates student participation in Norwegian Centres for Excellence in Education. Student involvement at an institutional/course level leading to student partnership became an emerging topic in teaching and learning research literature. Yet, there is little research performed with an emphasis on the institutional setting where student participation (or partnership) practices are being developed. Therefore, this study seeks to look at partnership through an institutional lens.

The Norwegian Centres for Excellence in Education Initiative has been chosen as a context due to the *students as partners* rhetoric at the governance level of the Excellence initiative. Three Centres for Excellence in Education have been selected for the empirical study – Bioceed, Matric and Excited. The aim of the study was to explore and explain student participation and its development at the selected Centres. In order to provide explanation for student participation practices, the student role framework based on Olsen's (2007) four university ideas has been developed. The student role framework defines four "ideal" student participation models: student as an apprentice; student as a pawn in political agendas; student as a democratic participant; student as a customer/consumer. Student participation has been analysed based on the rationales, forms/areas of participation and way of evolving. The data for the empirical study were collected through document analysis, semi-structured interviews and focus groups.

The findings of the study revealed that all three Centres have developed their individual paths towards student participation based on their strengths and weaknesses. Four "ideal" student participation models have been reflected in one or many aspects of student participation at all the Centres. Political pressure could be understood as a starting point, the catalyst to start developing own individual institutional practices. The "*student as a customer/consumer*" model could be used to explain a part of student participation practices related to student input and feedback. The models "*student as a democratic participant*" and "*student as an apprentice*" have been most dominant in student participation practices at the Centres. Both models have strong traditions in Norway and they can result in successful partnership practices.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

The contemporary pursuit for quality in higher education as well as developments in teaching and learning research placed students and their involvement in education processes in a central position. The teaching and learning theory, especially student learning, is one of the most theorized areas in current higher education research (Tight, 2012). The sound body of literature has established links between student involvement in education processes and a number of positive outcomes for student success and development (Trowler, 2010). Student engagement in learning and teaching processes is considered to be a necessary condition for quality of education in both academic literature (Trowler, 2010) and policy documents (e.g. Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), 2015).

In addition to daily active participation in the classroom, student involvement at an institutional/course level became an emerging topic in teaching and learning research literature. (Healey, Flint, & Harrington, 2014) have recently created a famous framework of student engagement through partnership which elaborated on student engagement in learning, teaching and research as well as in quality enhancement processes. The authors aimed to define all the areas where partnership could happen (learning, teaching and assessment; subject-based research and inquiry; scholarship of teaching and learning; curriculum design and pedagogic consultancy), and to identify some tensions and challenges for creating partnership (Healey et al., 2014). This framework inspired a new academic journal, "International Journal for Students as Partners," and has been used in institutional and even national policies (mostly in Australia and UK) (Healey, Flint, & Harrington, 2016). Even before a dedicated academic journal was established, (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017) found 65 empirical studies regarding students as partners in years 2011-2015. Given the above, students as partners is still a very new though "hot" topic and it seeks establishment in both academic literature and higher education practices.

In spite of increasing popularity, partnership literature often lacks a more critical approach and deeper analysis about the premises of partnership. Mercer-Mapstone et al. (2017) claim in their analyses that most partnership case studies "*are small scale, extracurricular, and*

focused on teaching and learning enhancement". Mercer-Mapstone et al. (2017, p. 16). The outcomes from those projects are reported as mostly being positive to the learning process, student and staff relationships as well as the final result (e.g. teaching material) (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017). The students as partners concept is a biased concept (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017), presented as something to strive for (Healey et al., 2014). In the research literature the challenges are often reported as "lessons learned" and presented as nominal recommendations for all academic developers or administration (e.g. Sneddon et al., 2016). However, one of the authors of the previously mentioned partnership framework warns that "*the breadth and complexity of practices and policies surrounding SaP [students as partners] mean that it is often difficult to make generalizations*" (Healey & Healey, 2018, p. 1). He thus emphasizes the importance of the specific setting where partnership is taking place – the aim and structure of the partnership project, the rationales of the people taking part in that project and the ways the partnership is analyzed (Healey & Healey, 2018). In fact, Healey et al. (2014, p. 11) recognize that "*a partnership approach might not be right for everyone, nor is it possible in every context*". Mercer-Mapstone et al. (2017) invite more partnership studies to be context-specific (e.g. reflect how a partnership is translated across different institutions) and indicate it as one of the future partnership research directions.

Consequently, this study aims to be a contribution to the expanding student partnership literature body. Yet, it will have less focus on partnership as the ultimate goal but more emphasis on the setting where student participation (or partnership) happens. This study will seek to understand the rationales for the student partnership (or participation) as well as the evolvement of partnership practices in that particular setting.

1.2. The context of the study

The partnership (or student participation) discussion has to be put in a specific context for deeper analysis. This study has chosen Norwegian Centres for Excellence in Education (SFUs) as an empirical context for the further research/exploration.

Norway as a part of the Nordics has a unique higher education tradition with tuition-free education and a strong democratic focus. As elaborated above (see 1.1), the partnership concept has been developed and broadly accepted in the UK and Australia, which is a completely different context. Would the student partnership look the same way in Norway? Student partnership is not an object of national documents though student engagement got a

lot of emphasis in the most recent Norwegian white paper. The paper released in 2017 puts student engagement as one of the main factors to reach higher quality in higher education (next to good framework conditions, educational leadership & community, pedagogical competence and teaching, and assessment to encourage learning). It is notified that higher education institutions should formulate clearer expectations regarding student engagement (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017). As it was mentioned in chapter 1.1, engagement through partnership practices is an increasingly popular topic in research literature and higher education practices (Healey et al., 2016).

The institutional setting for this study (the Centres for Excellence in Education) has been chosen due to very clear "students as partners" rhetoric at the governance level of the Excellence initiative. The partnership was embedded in the expectations for the Excellence initiative and it indeed led to significant results. The initiative pioneered introducing the student partnership debate in the higher education sector. Yet, the variation in the results among different Centres for Excellence in Education supports the query of the study – the institutional setting is the key.

1.2.1. Norway

The Nordic region, of which Norway is a part, has a strong democratic tradition with the emphasis on equality and trust in the society (Haapakorpi & Saarinen, 2014). Nordic values in the higher education are expressed with a large sector of publicly funded universities and tuition-free education (Haapakorpi & Saarinen, 2014). Norway, together with Iceland, has remained the only country in the Nordics which has not introduced tuition fees for non-EU/EEA students (Haapakorpi & Saarinen, 2014). Currently, Norway has 10 public universities, 6 public university colleges and 5 public scientific colleges (Kunnskapsdepartementet, n.d.).

Despite the strong and continuous focus on the above-mentioned values in higher education, higher education governance has experienced a lot of changes. In the 1980s and 1990s the legal regulations on universities, university-level colleges and colleges were integrated in one comprehensive law (Gornitzka & Maassen, 2000). One of the influencing factors for the reform was the application of a "New Public Management," though it was performed in a very "mild" form, rather as an experiment than a large-scale reform (Gornitzka & Maassen, 2000). The second reason for that reform was a crisis which was felt in higher education,

particularly in the universities (Gornitzka & Maassen, 2000). The reform introduced some management instruments such as management by objectives and planning, providing more emphasis on university and college leadership (Gornitzka & Maassen, 2000).

These structural changes started in 2003 with a new law adopting a new degree structure with bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees (see more in the green paper (Rysdall et al., 2003). The new structure was related to the implementation of Bologna process requirements after Norway became a full member in 1999. Norway introduced a three-year bachelor's degree with 180 credits and a two-year master's degree with 120 credits (*Norway. Implementation of the elements of the Bologna Process*, 2003). The next stage of the changes in structure was performed at the institutional level. In 2014 the government released a white paper regarding the reform of the structure. The paper identified the problem of distributed scientific potential, which was a result of a lot of small higher education institutions spread out through the whole country (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2015). This document led to a large number of mergers in the higher education sector.

Recently in 2017 the Norwegian government released a new white paper entitled "Quality Culture in Higher Education" (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017) which seeks to create more competition among institutions in order to enhance education quality. This white paper seeks to promote high-quality education in order to better prepare students for a challenging and rapidly changing world. Among other means, the paper gives institutions more freedom to set their student intake criteria, set higher requirements for pedagogical competence of professors and encourage peer review across institutions (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017).

Little research exists on student roles in the Norwegian higher education system, but the existing ones confirm the democratic values and practices remaining important among the students. (Stensaker & Michelsen, 2011) reviewed the development of student roles in governance at various levels in Norwegian higher education. The authors agree that some opportunities for higher student influence in governance were provided by neo-liberalistic tendencies (such as enterprise universities and market-oriented government systems). However, the main perspective describing student roles remains democratic – implemented through representation of the students in decision-making bodies and influence to the decisions important to the students are made by bargaining and compromising (Stensaker & Michelsen, 2011). Another study performed in 2015 on student's views on quality – either they form their motivations and expectations based on Humboldtian or on consumeristic view

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on education – has shown that Norwegian students equally support both views on quality (Jungblut, Vukasovic, & Stensaker, 2015).

In brief, Norway has definitely not been isolated from international higher education trends. It is obvious that recent neo-liberalistic trends had some influence on Norway's higher education (Haapakorpi & Saarinen, 2014) and the student roles in it (Stensaker & Michelsen, 2011). Yet, despite the clearly declared goals in political agendas – to move towards efficiency, competition and better results –Nordic values play a huge role in higher education reforms and in the education itself.

1.2.2. The Norwegian Centres for Excellence in Education

The initiatives of rewarding excellent practices in education are widespread worldwide, at least in a majority of the world – North America, North-Western Europe, Australasia, Hong Kong and South Africa) (Land & Gordon, 2015). The Centers of Excellence in Teaching and Learning can be considered to be a novel strategy aimed at effecting change in higher education to increase the quality of learning and learning outcomes (Saunders et al., 2008). The Centers of Excellence in Teaching and Learning "*are 'nodes' of teaching- and learning-focused activities*" (Kottmann et al., p. 19). Some small case studies performed by Bélanger et al. and Nadler et al have provided some evidence that in fact the Centers of Excellence in Teaching and Learning led to positive results both in student learning outcomes and in change in teaching practices (as cited in Kottmann et al., 2016). In essence, the Centers of Excellence in Teaching and Learning are a political tool to foster quality and/or excellence of educational activities.

In Norway the implementation of the Centres of Excellence in Teaching and Learning has been proposed by the public committee appointed by the government in 2008. In the green paper, among other suggestions, there has been a recommendation to establish the Centres of Excellence in Education (Stjernø et al., 2008). It was suggested in the green paper that such Centres should be aimed at strengthening education quality as well as developing innovations and new learning methods. The authors reviewed other excellence initiatives in Sweden, Finland, England and Australia (Stjernø et al., 2008). This green paper gave the beginning for SFUs in Norway.

The SFU initiative as it was proposed by the above-mentioned proposal paper (see more in Stjernø et al., 2008) was managed by the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT) up to 2019. Further it was undertaken by The Norwegian Agency for International Cooperation and Quality Enhancement in Higher Education (DIKU). In the most recent white paper the Norwegian government notifies that the SFU initiative has contributed to increasing education quality and therefore indicates that more resources have to be assigned to the SFUs (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017). The Norwegian SFU initiative is aimed at promoting excellence in education (Nokut, 2016) and partnership with the students is one of the key topics within the initiative (Helseth et al., 2019).

The SFU initiative was piloted in Norway in 2010 with one centre for excellence in teacher education. Later, in 2013, three more SFUs were announced after an evaluation of the bids (Bråten, 2014), and they became operational at the beginning of 2014. The last four SFUs were established ("Utlysninger," n.d.) at the beginning of 2017. The SFU initiative "*implies a concentrated, focused and long-term commitment to stimulate the development of teaching and learning methods at the bachelor and masters levels of higher education*" (Nokut, 2016, p. 18). The applications for granting SFU status were evaluated based on current achievements in educational provision as well as future plans for development and dissemination of their educational practices (Nokut, 2016). Each of SFUs was provided with financial support in order to achieve their goals for a 5-year period with the possibility of prolonging the period for 5 additional years (Dahl Keller, Lid, & Helseth, 2015). See a table below:

Table 1. The list of SFUs.

Year	Name	Area
2011	ProTed	Centre for Professional Learning in Teacher Education
2014	MatRIC	Centre for Research, Innovation and Coordination of Mathematics Teaching
2014	bioCEED	Centre of Excellence in Biology Education
2014	CEMPE	Centre of Excellence in Music Performance
2017	CCSE	Centre for Computing in Science Education
2017	CEFIMA	Centre of Excellence in Film and Interactive Media
2017	Engage	Centre for Engaged Education through Entrepreneurship
2017	Excited	The Centre for Excellent Information Technology Education

Source: Prepared based on Nokut webpage[1]

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[1] https://www.nokut.no/om-nokut/

With regard to student role, students are aimed to be potential contributors to the SFUs, yet, the question of exact forms/models of their participation is left open. One of the main aims of the SFU initiative is "*to contribute to developing new forms of student involvement and partnership*" (Nokut, 2016, p.8). In the SFU guidelines the areas where cooperation with the students should take place are indicated: educational development and innovations and governance[2]. First, the criteria of "*how are students active in the development and innovation processes*" (Nokut, 2016, p.11) is included in the application requirements (to acquire SFU status). Second, regarding student roles in management and organization, it is clearly stated that "*Student participation at all levels is essential*" (Nokut, 2016, p. 9). On the other hand, the white paper notifies that the Norwegian SFU initiative has less specific goals in comparison to other Norwegian higher education financing programmes (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017). The official SFU guidelines identify the areas for student participation (governance and educational innovations) though the requirements do not specify exact forms of student involvement (or partnership), as they may be determined by the institutions themselves.

That led to very different results regarding student involvement and partnership among different SFUs. Nokut's SFU review revealed that the SFUs had great variety among implementation of student partnership – from very successful student-led learning initiatives to students acting as change agents (Helseth et al., 2019). Another analysis performed by external experts on three SFUs expressed concern regarding student roles in SFUs. According to the evaluators, there is "*still an underlying sense that things are done 'to' or 'for' students rather than 'in partnership with' students*" (Nokut, 2017, p.30).

To summarise, Norwegian SFUs are an interesting case to analyse student partnership (or participation) forms and models. First, the SFU initiative guidelines have set expectations towards student roles at least in two areas – educational development and innovation and governance. Second, the same guidelines led to very different institutional practices. That

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[2] There is also the third area - learning (classroom engagement) where students play an important part in. As it is mentioned in the goals of SFUs, they should "encourage student engagement and ownership of learning" (Nokut, 2016, p.8). Though acknowledging that this part of engagement is very important this study seeks not to take this area into the account because of two reasons: firstly, student learning has a very broad scope and solid literature body (Tight, 2012) therefore there is a risk that the scope will be too broad for the master thesis. Secondly, SFUs are integrated bodies within the institution (and, if relevant, partner institutions) and they should affect teaching and learning practices institutionally (as well as nationally and internationally) (Nokut, 2016). Therefore, it would be difficult to define which of the practices are contributions to a SFU development itself and learning happening within a SFU and which teaching and learning practices are supposed to be influenced by a SFU but not happening within it.

leads to the assumption that the partnership (or participation) is understood and implemented differently within the particular institutional settings. Therefore, there is a need to elaborate on institutional rationales for student partnerships (or participation) as well the evolvement of particular student partnership (or participation) practices.

1.3. Defining concepts for further usage: engagement, participation, partnership and involvement

In the literature, there are several concepts used to indicate a co-creation with the students. S*tudent involvement, student engagement, student participation* and *student partnership* are some of these concepts. They might mean different things, though they are very often used interchangeably. Bovill (2012) claims that the confusion regarding the concepts' usage is a challenge student co-creation literature has to face in the near future. In this chapter the usage of the concepts - S*tudent involvement, student engagement, student participation* and *student partnership* – will be shortly reviewed. One of the concepts will be chosen for posing research questions.

First and foremost, the concepts might indicate different intensity of co-creation with the students. For example, *involvement* could be understood as an intensity constituting a lower-level interaction than *partnership*. There has been found four models in the literature, indicating different levels of co-creation with the students:

a) A model of engagement levels developed by Ashwin and Mcvitty (2015);

b) A model of engagement levels developed by Healey et al., (2014);

c) A model of participation levels developed by Klemencic (2011);

d) A model of participation levels developed by Bovill and Bulley (2011).

They present different student interaction levels – from no participation to having control over the whole process. The models have been summarized in the table in appendix A. Involvement is indicated as one of the lowest levels of interaction with the students (Healey et al., 2014). Partnership, on the other hand, is a high level interaction with the students (Ashwin & Mcvitty, 2015; Bovill & Bulley, 2011; Healey et al., 2014; Klemencic, 2011).

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Consequently, both concepts will not be used in the research questions in order to leave the study open for a wide range of student interaction levels in the SFUs.

Both concepts *engagement* and *participation* could be used as neutral terms to indicate various levels of student interaction. The concept of *engagement* is mostly used in teaching and learning literature (e.g. Healey et al., 2014; Ashwin & Mcvitty, 2015) while *participation* is used as an indication of interaction levels in governance (Klemencic, 2011). Discussing levels of student interaction in curriculum design (obviously teaching and learning topic), Bovill and Bulley (2011) used *participation levels* because they adapted a model from political science literature. Undoubtedly, the concepts related to different student roles are not straightforward. This study is not being positioned within teaching and learning literature, but rather within organizational/institutional higher education literature, as the institutional setting and its effects on partnership practices are the main focus of the study. Consequently, the concept of *participation* is going to be used to pose the research questions.

1.4. Research problem, research questions and relevance

In recent years, partnerships with students have become a desired practice in many higher education institutions and systems. In spite of its novelty, the topic of student partnership has attracted a lot of attention in higher education research (see 1.1). This study is also a contribution to this field. On the other hand, there are few studies exploring why and how one or another partnership or participation practice evolved in different institutions (see 1.1). Consequently, this study is aimed to contribute to that literature gap.

The context of Norwegian SFUs is a fruitful environment to analyze these concepts (see 0). The SFUs have to involve students in educational development, innovation and governance according to the stated requirements, but it is little systematic knowledge (except for some success stories) how they perform it. Furthermore, SFUs that have the same official requirements for student participation (partnership) still end up in very different student participation models. Therefore, the institutional setting has to be taken into account.

Hence, the research problem of this study is: "**How do students participate in Norwegian SFUs and how could this participation be explained?**"

The following research questions will be addressed:

RQ1: What is the student role in Norwegian SFUs?

RQ2: How did the model of student participation evolve in Norwegian SFUs?

RQ3: How could the student participation in Norwegian SFUs be explained?

This study will focus on (but not limited to) the areas of educational development/innovations and governance to describe the student role. These areas are indicated in SFU requirements (Nokut, 2016) (see more in 1.2.2). Due to the limited resources not all the Norwegian SFUs will be included into the study. The selection of cases will be explained in **Error! Reference source not found.**.

The reasons why this research is relevant are twofold: First, it aims to fill the identified literature gap by explaining how one or another form of student participation (whether a partnership or not) evolves within an institution. Second, it gives insights into student roles within Norwegian SFUs. That is important because the development of new student involvement and partnership forms was one of the goals of the initiative.

1.5. Thesis outline

The thesis comprises of six chapters that have sub-divisions in them. Chapter one establishes the rationale of the thesis, provides description of the context and poses a research problem and research questions.

Chapter two goes in depth into relevant literature and provides the analytical framework for the study. It begins by reviewing student roles in higher education and by breaking down the concept of student partnership. Then it continues to the literature on institutional dynamics and reviews Olsen's 4 visions of the university. Finally, it presents the analytical framework for further usage in the study.

Chapter three outlines the methodological choices in the study and presents the research methods used while collecting the data. Ethical considerations and quality of data are also discussed in the chapter.

Chapter four presents the findings of the empirical study. The description of the results is organized separately for each of the selected SFUs.

Chapter five provides an analysis of the findings in relation to the analytical framework presented in chapter two. The findings are also discussed in relation to the partnership concept. The relation between developed student role framework and partnership concept will be established.

Chapter six draws conclusions from the study and offers suggestions for future research and developments of the SFU initiative.

2. Literature review and analytical framework

This chapter will review the literature from two different higher education research fields and connect them to form a conceptual framework. First, it will analyze the student roles in from historical perspective ending up with a partnership concept. Second, it will look for the model explaining institutional dynamics and development of institutional practices. Consequently, the student role framework will be developed based on the model of institutional dynamics. The analytical framework will reflect the rationale for the study – student role and its evolvement in institutional settings.

2.1. Literature review

2.1.1.   Student roles in higher education: a historical perspective

Contemporary universities can hardly be imagined without students playing a part in them. Yet, the role of students within higher education systems and institutions has been and still is in a constant change (Tight, 2013). In his article on metaphors for the students, Tight (2013) makes a distinction among eleven students (more or less broadly) used in the literature: student as a consumer, student as a customer, student as a client, student as a labor contributor, student as a co-producer, student as a child, student as an employer, student as an apprentice, student as a learner, student as a junior partner, student as a pawn. Some of them are very similar in their meaning (e.g. student as a junior partner and student as an apprentice), others, though, can be used as opposites (e.g. student as employer and student as labor contributor). The aim of this chapter is to review the contemporary universities' main historical periods with relation to student roles in them.

The Humboldtian/German university model – the one from which current Western research university was derived – had emphasized three unities: the unity of research and teaching, the unity of knowledge and the unity of teachers and learners (Pritchard, 2004). In the Humboldtian university, a student was seen as a member of shared inquiry, together with the professors seeking to develop knowledge (Karseth & Solbrekke, 2016). In the Humboldtian university, the students together with the professors were supposed to be parts of an academic community. The bond between students and their university was very tight (Pritchard, 2004).

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The ultimate goal for the Humboldtian university was scholarship, "the pursuit of truth" (Anderson, 2004). And both students and teachers played a role in developing knowledge by participating in shared inquiry. Another crucial aim for the Humboldtian university was the individual *Bildung* – holistic academic education and self-development. Individual *Bildung* was a journey in itself, as the student entering university had to abandon blind beliefs and learn to make their own judgments (Anderson, 2004). In essence, at the Humboldtian university students were not a separate group within academia but rather part of an academic community which shared the same goals. On the other hand, the actual power in the universities was concentrated in the hands of professors – neither the student nor other academic staff had any say (Anderson, 2004). The students also were valued only as much as they contributed to knowledge and inquiry (where professors, as more experienced members of academic community, still played the main role), meaning that, if the student preferred specialization over holistic education, he was considered unfit for the universities (Anderson, 2004).

Significant changes in student role started in the 1960s due to student protests around the world as well as continuous critique of formal and traditional schooling (Bovill, 2012). There were some student protests in the 1700s and 1800s (mostly due to poor living conditions) but the one in the 1960-1970s had the most influence on student roles at universities (Kuh, 2001). The reasons for protests varied depending on the country (Boer & Stensaker, 2007). In the US, next to significant increase in student number, the civil rights movements and Vietnam War inspired student activism (Kuh, 2001). The students fought for greater democracy inside the university (against professors as the main "rulers" at universities) as well as against universities being used as an instrument for national political agendas (Boer & Stensaker, 2007). They were driven by (neo) Marxist ideas and wanted to make the world a better place (Boer & Stensaker, 2007). Though it might be considered that the University as a representative of democracy fell (see more in Boer & Stensaker, 2007), the democratization movements made a huge impact on student roles at universities. For instance, at most universities students elect their representatives, they are consulted on the implementation of significant changes, and are included in decision-making processes (Boer & Stensaker, 2007). The second element creating more a democratic approach to education was the critics against traditional schooling. Bovill (2012) presented a short review of the democratization process in education, from Dewey's work suggesting more progressive education based on democratic principles to influential works in 1980s and 1990s arguing students to share responsibility for

curriculum planning. The main replies to the critics of traditional schooling were "*freedom for students to make choices; that the student-tutor relationship is facilitatory, collaborative and based on dialogue; and that the learner is viewed as a knowledgeable and critical partner in learning*" (Bovill, 2012, p. 4). Both tendencies from the 20th century (student protests and rethinking of traditional schooling) had an effect on the role of students at universities. Student protests led to greater democracy and student representation in governance. On the other hand, the developments in the teaching field gave student a more central place in education.

In the last decades, neoliberalism and the concept of 'new public management' gave students a different place, positioning them as the customers or clients of universities (Meek, 2003). At the policy level, 'new public management' in higher education is associated with creating free market for competition between the universities and opening up contractual relations between governments and universities. And, of course, empowering students as 'users' of higher education to determine the destiny of higher education institutions, they can decide either bring their study fees/grants to the institution or not (Dill, 2014). Following this approach, the increase of competition among institutions should guarantee better productivity, accountability, control and quality in the system (Peters, 2005).

New public management, together with a consumeristic approach to the students, have been influencing higher education policies in the last decades (Dill, 2014; Meek, 2003)[3]. And yet the consumeristic approach to the students received a lot of critique in academic literature. First, the critique is based on economic assumptions related to the consumer/customer concept. In order for the market to be efficient, the consumer should operate within perfect information. Dill (2014) argues that such is not the case within higher education, as current indicators of study quality are insufficient. Second, the student as a customer concept is criticized as having negative effects on educational processes (Cheney, 1996; Tight, 2013). Tight (2013) argues that the metaphor of student as a consumer (or customer) refers to the student as a passive party in the education process which encourages undesirable student behavior, such as acting as a recipient, being unengaged and passive.

To conclude, student role in higher education history has been in constant change. Yet, student role did not change in a vacuum. As universities changed, so did the role of students.

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[3] Critical perspective on change in European higher education policy and it's effects on academic profession and institutions is presented in (Musselin, 2005)

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Therefore, student role has to be analyzed keeping in mind broader institutional contexts, meaning the way institutions have changed themselves.

2.1.2. Student partnership

As a response to the critics toward "student as a customer/consumer" concept, the student partnership and co-creation concept became a new trend in teaching and learning research literature. As previously mentioned (see 1.1), the "student as partner" concept derived from the developments in the teaching and learning literature, the same developments which started as a critique to traditional schooling (see 2.1.1). Matthews, Dwyer, Russell and Enright (2018, p. 960) claim that "*SaP [students as partners] practice lies at the core of the mutual learning model and was viewed by practitioners as a powerful counter-narrative to the traditional teacher-student and consumer models*". As was mentioned, the student as consumer perspective implies that students play a passive role in education, while student partnership emphasizes active participation of the students. A neo-liberalistic paradigm together with the new public management emphasize predefined outcomes while the partnership concept cannot promise pre-defined results (see **Error! Reference source not found.**). Matthews et a l. (2018) problematize the implementation of student partnerships as universities performing based on neo-liberal values. He identifies that a neo-liberal focus shapes the understanding of partnerships in those universities (Matthews et al., 2018).

"Students as partners" (or student partnership) became a strong trend in teaching and learning literature in the last decades (see 1.1). But what can be qualified as a student partnership? Healey et al (2014, p. 7) claims that "*All partnership is student engagement, but not all student engagement is partnership*". In this chapter, the main definitions of partnership will be reviewed and the main characteristics (ideas) of a partnership will be identified for further usage in this study. On the other hand, it is important to keep an open mind on what can be classified as a partnership or not because, as Bovill (2017, p. 3) claims, *"all SaP projects will look different and involve different actors*".

Cook-Sather, Bovill, and Felten have provided one of the most frequently used definitions of students as partners*: "a collaborative, reciprocal process through which all participants have the opportunity to contribute equally, although not necessarily in the same ways, to curricular or pedagogical conceptualization, decision-making, implementation, investigation, or analysis"* (as cited in Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017, p. 2). In the description of their

partnership model (mentioned in 1.1.), Healey et al. (2014, p. 12) emphasize that they understand partnership as "*a way of doing things, rather than an outcome in itself*" and that partnership is "*about the relationship in which all involved – students, academics, professional services staff, senior managers, students' unions, and so on – are actively engaged in and stand to gain from the process of learning and working together*". SPARQS, an organization aimed to achieve greater engagement of students in quality assurance and quality enhancement processes in Scotland's higher education institutions (Lewis, Millar, Todorovsk, & Kažoka, 2013), defines a partnership in higher education institutions as "*an effective working relationship between an institution and its students, as individuals and through its collective representative body, working towards an educational institution of the highest quality possible*" (Williamson, 2013, p. 8).

Following the definitions above, the main characteristics of partnerships will be identified below:

1. A partnership is a process, not a product. This indicates that a "*partnership*" cannot be the end goal, but is rather either embedded into process or not. Furthermore, a partnership "*does not guarantee any particular outcomes*" (Matthews et al., 2018, p.3.). The partnership *is about being (radically) open to and creating possibilities for discovering and learning something that cannot be known beforehand* (Healey et al, 2014, p. 9). A partnership is about doing, as opposed to about the result of this work.

2. The relationship between the staff and the students during the process is special – all participants are actively engaged and have equal opportunities (though according to individual possibilities) to contribute. As such, it is an effective relationship. It might be easier to look at what a partnership is not. As identified above (see **Error! Reference s ource not found.**), the partnership is a more intensive form of cooperation than involvement and consultation. The partnership is more than identifying the problem though "*leaving the process of fixing the problem to academic staff*" ((Carey, 2013, p.257). The main difference between a "*partnership*" from "*not partnership*" is *active* participation in co-producing versus receiving education *passively* (Williamson, 2013).

In conclusion, student and staff partnerships can be understood as a process performed in a very special way, where all contributors are enabled to actively participate in that process according to their possibilities, in a process of co-creation. This open-ended idea of

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partnership will be further used in this study analyzing evolved student participation practices in SFUs.

2.1.3.   Institutional dynamics

University dynamics as a field of study has received a lot attention from higher education researchers. Burton Clark, who pioneered higher education research from an organizational perspective (see more in Fumasoli & Stensaker, 2013), identified a paradox in higher education and change: "*How can it be that the university, and indeed the higher education system at large, is sluggish, even heavily resistant to change, but somehow also produces virtually revolutionary change?*" (Clark, 1983, p. 182). He identified that change in higher education can be caused by both external and internal forces, and that change in higher education is mostly incremental, sometimes difficult to be noticed, requiring a lot support from lower levels (Clark, 1983). And yet, change is consistently happening in higher education, especially in the last 50 years as the relationship between universities and society started to change due to massive expansion of higher education (Maassen & Stensaker, 2011). The analytical approach to the change in higher education may help to understand institutional responses to it, such as different student participation models developed at different SFUs.

Historically, student role has been very much dependent on the development of universities as institutions, including their missions and values (see 2.1). There have been at least several tries to develop a model explaining how higher education institutions function in the literature. American higher education institutions have been reflected by Robert Birnbaum (1988) in his book *How Colleges Work: The Cybernetics of Academic Organization and Leadership*. In the book, four models or idealized visions of higher education institutions are represented, each of them having different implications for effective leadership. According to the author, "*no model illuminates all aspects of any institution all the time, and every model illuminates some aspects of every institution some of the time.*" (Birnbaum, 1988, p. 85). Almost 20 years later, Olsen (2007) has presented a framework based on four visions or ideas of European universities. They reflect different historical stages of university development. As in the Birnbaum model, Olsen's (2007) four ideas are not exclusive models; rather, these ideas exist next to each other. They are based on four ideal state models developed by Olsen in 1988: the sovereign state, the institutional state, the corporate-pluralist state, and the classical liberal (Gornitzka, 1999). All four visions have different constitutive logic, one of

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them sees the university as an autonomous institution and three of them see it as an instrument for the state, internal interest groups and external shareholders or customers (Olsen, 2007).

1. The university as a rule-governed community of scholars. The first vision emphasizes the Humboldtian idea of the university whereby its identity is understood through its commitment to scholarship, learning and basic research. In this vision, the actors have shared norms and objectives and change is internally driven, incremental and often caused by academic developments. This vision is linked to Humboldt University (1810), where institutional autonomy and individual freedom were protected (Olsen, 2007).

2. The university as an instrument for shifting national political agendas. The university is seen as a tool to implement specific policies. The university is an administrative organization, responsible for implementing political objectives. The university's aim depends on political priorities more than on scholarly values. The reflection of this vision is found in American universities at the beginning of the 20th century. The university was then seen as a tool for ensuring the country's economic and technological advantage (Olsen, 2007).

3. The university as a representative democracy. The third vision emphasizes the university as an instrument for internal individuals and groups. The actors in this vision have conflicting norms and objectives. Decision-making is a process of aligning the stakeholders' interests, relying on bargaining and conflict resolution. This idea of university became visible during democratic movements in the 60s (Olsen, 2007).

4. The university as a service enterprise embedded in competitive markets. The university in this vision is seen as an enterprise which provides services to regional or global markets. Research and higher education are considered to be goods that can be sold for profit. The processes of gaining profit and winning in competition are the core preferences of the university in its vision. The change is such a university vision is based on entrepreneurship and adaptation to changing circumstances. This vision is strongly related to current neo-liberalistic tendencies (Olsen, 2007).

As mentioned above, the models are not exclusive. Olsen (2007) recognizes that, in order to explain university dynamics, it is important look at all the visions or ideals and consider how each of them may explain a small aspect of institutional practices.

The object of this study is student roles in SFUs. The development and change of this role is a part of institutional practice. And as indicated above (see 1.1.), the institutional setting is key to understanding the dynamics of that practice. Therefore, based on Olsen's (2007) four university visions, the model (framework) of 4 different possible student roles within the university will be developed. The model developed by Olsen has been chosen because it is based on European universities and it reflects different historical stages in university development. As indicated in 2.1.1, student roles have changed together with the universities; therefore, it might be useful to develop possible student roles in relation to historical institutional developments.

2.2. Analytical framework

The analytical framework builds on different university ideas or visions linked to presumably different student roles. As indicated above, these ideas are not exclusive but exist next to each other. All of them are driving university dynamics as well as student role dynamics, yet all of them presumably do that in a different way.

In order to develop the analytical framework for this study, the 4 university ideas or visions created by Olsen (2007) will be used. The ideas or visions are based on two contradictions – external pressure vs. internal pressure and consensus vs. conflict. Based on these contradictions, 4 different student role ideas or visions will be developed. Subsequently, the main drivers for student role evolvement as well as the nature of that evolvement itself will be conceptualized.

2.2.1. The framework of the student role

The student role framework is developed based on two axes: external vs. internal pressure (toward student participation) and consensus vs. conflict. Internal pressure towards student participation derives from the university core itself, from academics and the students. External pressure, on the other hand, comes from the state or the market. Consensus means that both students and academics have common objectives and visions regarding student role development. Conflict, on the other hand, implies that the student role is being developed based on compromises and power struggle. Four student role ideas or student participation models are pictured in Figure *1*.
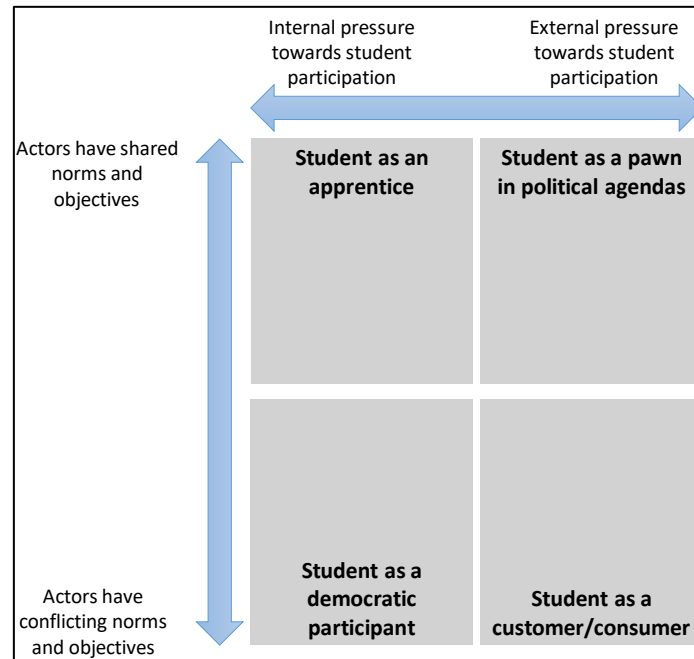
Figure 1. The framework of the student role. Based on Olsen (2007)

Student as an apprentice: This ideal type is based on the Humboldtian university model (see more in 2.1). Students as well as the professors have shared goals: the pursuit of knowledge, or self-development ("*die Bildung*"). The student as an apprentice metaphor has been used for centuries but is still relevant today (Tight, 2013). Tight (2013) distinguishes between two meanings of this metaphor. First, at the undergraduate level, the student as an apprentice type might indicate the way students are prepared for the labor market, especially in some specific vocations, like medicine, law, engineering. Secondly, at the Ph.D. level (in some cases already at the graduate level), this student as an apprentice type might mean preparing students for an academic career, working together with the professors in their field of research (Tight, 2013). The first meaning is not compatible with the principles of the Humboldtian university, as the preparation for narrow specialization was contradicted to the generic knowledge (Anderson, 2004). The latter meaning of the metaphor, on the other hand, corresponds to the Humboldtian university ideal.

The development of the student role in this vision should occur in the same way all the changes happen in this ideal or vision developed by Olsen (2007). The development of student participation forms should happen gradually, in mutual agreement, not as a consequence of conflict between students and academic staff. Student participation should be linked to common work in research or at least aimed at enhancing student understanding of the science and teaching them to develop inquiry skills. Most likely, targeted students would be at the graduate level or at least at the end of their undergraduate degree. On the other hand,

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in practice, power was concentrated in the hands of full professors in Humboldtian universities (Anderson, 2004) Therefore, it could be assumed that student participation (in co-creation) would be initiated by the academic staff and students, as younger colleagues would follow in consensus.

Student as a democratic participant: This student participation model is based on Olsen's (2007) university as a representative democracy vision. As Olsen (2007) claims in this vision, "*students are also significant participants in university governance*" (Olsen, 2007, p. 32). This vision of student role is related to the democratization processes started in the universities in 1960s (see more in 2.1) and could be understood as "student voice." As Taylor and Robinson (2009) claim, "*Student voice is a normative project and it has its basis in an ethical and moral practice which aims to give students the right of democratic participation in school processes*" (Taylor & Robinson, 2009, p. 161). They claim that "student voice" literature has a strong commitment to empowerment and liberation ideas. (Taylor & Robinson, 2009). Hence, a student's role as a democratic participant is driven by democratic ideals, by the wish to empower the students. As Olsen (2007) claims in the description of this university vision, "*focus* [of student participation] *is upon formal arrangements of organization and governance, more than on the special characteristics of work processes in the University*" (Olsen, 2007, p 32). Examples of these formal arrangements and governance bodies in today's university could be various quality assurance bodies (e.g. programme committees) and representation in university governance.

Organizational change is this university vision is based on conflict, decisions are made "*around elections, bargaining, voting and coalition-building among the organized groups*" (Olsen, 2007, p. 32). Therefore, student participation forms would evolve as a result of student pressure. Student representation bodies would presumably play a big role in student role development. Their demands met in compromise could form new forms of student participation.

Student as a pawn in political agendas: This student participation model is based on Olsen's (2007) vision of the university as an instrument for shifting national political agendas. This vision emphasizes that the university is dependent on the support and funding from the government which directly depends on the university's effectiveness and efficiency in achieving political purposes (Olsen, 2007). In this vision, students and academics have a common goal – to correspond to political decisions. Therefore, a possible metaphor for the

student role in this university vision could be a pawn. Tight (2013) proposes the metaphor of a student as a pawn to describe students as being a small and insignificant party used for another's purposes. Karseth and Solbrekke (2016) use this metaphor to describe students with regard to the Bologna process. They claim that current European higher education policy leaves no room for individual freedom for students in higher education and sees them as pawns in political agendas (Karseth & Solbrekke, 2016).

In this student participation model, students would have no "real" power. They participate only as much as it is deemed needed by the national or transnational government. Therefore, student participation in this idea or vision would be aimed to comply with external requirements (e.g. study programme evaluation) or to acquire funding. Students would be invited to committees or meetings but they would have no real decision power. Their participation forms would be developed by the appointed leaders based on political decisions according to the official requirements regarding student participation. Internal need for student participation (expressed by the students or academics) would have no influence on new student participation forms or models.

Student as a customer/consumer: The last student participation model is based on Olsen's (2007) vision of the university as a service enterprise embedded in competitive markets. Students are viewed as customers or consumers of higher education. The metaphor of the student as consumer emphasizes that the university delivers study programmes and courses as its services and that students "consume them" while being enrolled in these courses/programmes (Tight, 2013). The metaphor of student as a customer has similar meaning, yet leaves a little bit more agency to the students (Tight, 2013). Such an understanding of student role despite continuous criticism of it is still used to a great extent in higher education (see more in 2.1).

In this vision students are understood as an external part of the university and the development of student participation is based on conflict. That implies that the university, managed according to public management principles, is basically reacting to market needs. If students (or prospective students) see their participation as a value, the university reacts to that need and creats new student participation forms. Student participation has predefined outcomes and is mainly implemented to increase student satisfaction. The forms of this participation could be a feedback regarding student perceptions on study quality, such as student satisfaction surveys.

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The 4 student participation models are not exclusive of each other and neither are Olsen's (2007) university visions; they co-exist. Yet, presumably different student participation models should have different rationales and behavior models.

2.2.2.   Student role indicators

Based on the framework of the student role, the indicators for each student participation model have been developed:

Table 2. The indicators of the student role

Student as an apprentice	Student as a pawn in political agendas
The main areas of student participation: - Work with the professors on their research - Courses/seminars where students develop inquiry skills The rationales for student participation: - To develop researcher skills - To contribute to (disciplinary) knowledge The evolvement of student participation: - Initiated by academics - No previously defined outcomes - Unmanaged, decentralized practice - Incremental change, based on history of student participation within the institution - No conflict in the process	The main areas of student participation: - External evaluations - Other areas prescribed by formal requirements The rationales for student participation: - To comply with external requirements - To acquire funding The evolvement of student participation: - Initiated by the appointed leaders without discussions with academics or the students - Strictly documented - The change is performed fast in case of new political requirements regarding student role
Student as a democratic participant	**Student as a consumer/customer**
The main areas of student participation: - Quality assurance procedures - Governance	The main areas of student participation: - Feedback regarding the quality of studies

	- Student satisfaction surveys
The rationales for student participation:	
- To ensure democracy	The rationales for student participation:
- To include all stakeholders in the decision making process	- To meet the expectations of students, their satisfaction
	- To gain prestige/awards/better position in rankings
The evolvement of student participation:	
- Initiated by students	The evolvement of student participation:
- Evolved as a compromise	- Initiated by administrators, e.g. administrative managers
- Student participation gets more intense as students face problems	- Strictly predefined outcomes
- Organized by student representative bodies	- Managed, centralized practice

3. Methodology

3.1. Initial approach

It is important to mention that the initial approach and conceptual framework had a slightly different focus. Originally, student participation in Norwegian SFUs had to be studied in relation to quality culture in the SFU. Student participation has been conceptualized by two extremes or ideal types – *active participation (partnership)* and *passive involvement*. The conceptual framework was modified during the data collection (and interpretation) phase, specifically during document analysis and arranging first interviews. As pointed out by Halcolm: "*always be suspicious of data collection that goes according to plan*" (cit. in (Patton, 2002, p. 207), meaning that data collection should not follow the plan. Moreover, the iterations between the collection, interpretation of data and conceptual work is a part of qualitative research (Bryman, 2016). These were the main reasons for changing the conceptual framework:

- As indicated in the literature (Bendermacher, Egbrink, Wolfhagen, & Dolmans, 2016; European University Association, 2006; Kottmann, Huisman, Brockerhoff, Cremonini, & Mampaey, 2016), the role of leadership is crucial in quality culture development. Unfortunately, while arranging the first interviews it became clear that accessing the leaders of all investigated SFUs for an interview would be an impossible task for a master's student.

- The analysis of SFU documents revealed that the student role in SFUs has been in a lot of dynamics (at least in some of SFUs) and there is a value to investigate that dynamics, the change or development itself.

- The first interviews with the students revealed a broad spectrum of student participation forms and models – from representation to ownership of the processes. Therefore, the range from *active participation (partnership)* to *passive involvement* did not sufficiently reflect the actual data.

The changes in conceptual framework could have influenced the data from the interviews (especially the first ones), though the main focus of the interviews remained closely related to

the research questions (What is the student role in the SFUs? How it developed/evolved?). The difference was in explaining the student role or their participation.

3.2. Research design

This study relies on a qualitative research strategy and a multiple case study design. The qualitative research strategy has been selected due to the nature of the research object and consequently the research questions. The object of research – student role in Norwegian SFUs – has not been researched before. The literature describing student role (or partnership) is growing but still relatively new (see 1.1). The focus of this study is on the organizational setting where student participation (or partnership) is happening. Consequently, the research questions are open-ended and broad, allowing new discoveries to shape the conceptual and theoretical work. Therefore, this study employs the qualitative research strategy where the emphasis is put on the contextual understanding of the phenomena and providing the flexibility a newly researched phenomenon needs (Bryman, 2016).

Multiple case study design could be referred either as a different methodology from a simple case study or as a part of the same methodology. Bryman (2016) considers multiple case study as a part of comparative design, while Yin (2009) refers to the single and multiple case studies as a part of the same case methodology. The latter claims that a multiple case study should establish a rationale in the same way as a single case study (Yin, 2009). In this study, a case study research design has been chosen due to the explanatory nature of the research questions (*What is the student role in Norwegian SFUs? How did the model of student participation evolve in Norwegian SFUs? How could the student participation in Norwegian SFUs be explained?*) and the constraints of the study. Yin (2009) claims that the "how", "why" and in some cases "what" (if it is not quantifiable) qualify for three research designs: a case study, an experiment and a history (longitudinal) analysis. The experimental and longitudinal designs were rejected due to the following constraints. First, an experiment requires that a manipulation on a research object (or conditions) be possible (Yin, 2009; Bryman, 2016). Neither student role nor organizational setting in SFU is an object to the manipulation for this research. Second, a history (longitudinal) design requires the study of an object over a long time and repetitive data collection (Yin, 2009; Bryman, 2016). This study has a focus on the evolvement of student role and this evolvement has been happening over a longer period of time. Yet, the master's thesis has time constraints and therefore the data was

collected at a single point in time. Consequently, this study cannot be considered history (longitudinal) analysis. Given the above, a case study design has been chosen for this study.

After establishing the rationale for the case study design, it is important to return to the multiple cases. Yin's (2009) approach to the multiple case study as a modification of a case study design rather than comparative design has been chosen. According to Yin, the inner logic of performing the multiple case study is to achieve replications: both literal (studying similar cases) and theoretical (studying contrasting cases) (Yin, 2009). The goal of this study is not to compare the different SFUs and their student participation models but rather to explore student participation forms and the ways in which they were developed. Yin (2009) argues that multiple case design is especially useful for studying the institutional adoption of innovations. This study indeed examines different institutional reactions/responses to the same political requirement/innovation, which is student participation. The multiple case design might provide a more comprehensive and robust theory building in comparison to a single case because single case study puts *"all your eggs in one basket"* (Yin, 2009, p. 61). In this study, the theoretical framework is quite complex, as it consists of four ideas or models of student roles (co-existing next to each other). A single case analysis would have too high a risk of not being able to track all (or at least some) of the ideas/models and therefore not being able to either confirm or reject if theory holds.

3.3. Selection of cases

In order to perform a multiple case study, the cases for analysis had to be selected. The number of cases was selected aiming to balance the depth and breadth of the study (Yin, 2009). The aim of this study is to find out how students participate in Norwegian SFUs and to explain differences in their participation. Therefore, at least two different cases had to be selected to tackle at least two participation models. Initially, four cases had been selected out of 7 existing SFUs, yet, at the final stages one of the SFUs wasn't able to accommodate interviews at the time the empirical study was performed. Consequently, the interviews were performed at 3 out of 7 SFUs (all the SFUs are shown in Table *1*). The selection of the cases was used combining two purposeful sampling strategies: heterogeneity sampling and criterion sampling. According to Yin (2009) heterogeneity sampling aims to describe cases which are different from each other while criterion sampling seeks to study the cases which meet certain criteria. This study aims to select cases which differ based on these certain criteria:

1. The first criterion is an institution. The analysed SFUs should belong to different institutions. As this study is aimed at investigating institutional differences, SFUs from different institutions were selected.

2. The level within the institution where an SFU is established. Some of the SFUs are established at the departmental level while others are more centralized at an institutional level. Clark (1984, p. 33) indicated that "*each disciplinary unit within the enterprise has self-evident and acclaimed primacy in a front-line task*". That is the place where education is provided and study programmes assigned. Therefore, it was decided to observe student participation models in both the main educational cell (department) and at an institutional level.

3. The last criterion was the cohort of SFUs. The SFUs established in 2014 and in 2017 had slightly different requirements regarding student role. First, the requirements for student role in governance from 2016 defined that "*Student participation at all levels is essential.*" (Nokut, 2016, p. 3). Meanwhile, the requirements of 2013 indicated that *"student participation must be ensured*" ((Nokut, 2013, p. 3). Second, the requirements from 2016 indicated that SFUs should plan how to involve students in educational developments and innovations while this is not mentioned in the previous requirements. Therefore, it was expected that possibly different requirements could explain different student participation models or, alternatively, confirm that different political requirements had no influence on student participation models developed by institutions.

Consequently, the empirical research was performed in three SFUs:

1. **Bioceed**: This SFU is hosted by the University of Bergen; it is established within the department of Biology, and it started its activities at the beginning of 2014.

2. **Matric:** This SFU is hosted by the University of Agder and is established at the institutional level. This SFU started its activities at the beginning of 2014.

3. **Excited:** This SFU is hosted by the Norwegian University of Science and Technology and is established at the Department of Computer Science. This SFU started its activities at the beginning of 2017.

It is important to stress out that the cases in this study serve rather as the context for exploration rather than objects of study. The unit of analysis in this study is the student participation models in selected SFUs. According to Patton (2002, p. 22), "*the key issue in*

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selecting and making decisions about the appropriate unit of analysis is to decide what it is you want to be able to say something about at the end of the study". In this study, the intention is not to evaluate the selected SFUs (or compare which one is a better one) but to discover a model which would allow one to understand some of the student participation practices based on institutional differences.

3.4. Data collection and analysis

In order to be able to answer the research questions, several sources of evidence have been used. First and foremost an analysis of documents related to the SFU status was performed, such as applications, yearly reports and midterm self-evaluations. Moreover, semi-structured interviews with staff members and student representatives were conducted. Finally, focus groups with students participating in SFUs activities were organized. Accordingly, the three methods mostly (but not exclusively) revealed three layers of data: top-level data (the intentions, the main student participation channels) were obtained from the documents; operational information (mostly regarding structures and their development) was gained from individual interviews; and individual experiences (motivations, relationships, perceived role) were gathered during the focus group.

Documents

The official documents from organizations or companies are very often used in case studies (Bryman, 2016). The documents in this study were downloaded from the official Nokut website documenting the SFU initiative, except for midterm self-evaluation reports, which were accessed through the SFUs' official webpages. All the documents are publicly accessible. The quality of the documents could be discussed using Scott's four criteria: authenticity, credibility, representativeness and meaning (as cited in Bryman, 2016, p. 546). The authenticity and meaningfulness are usually not an issue for documents deriving from organizations (Bryman, 2016). In the case of SFU documents, it is clear that documents have been provided by these specific SFUs and the information is clear and comprehensive. In terms of representativeness, the documents from 3 selected SFUs definitely differ in content from the documents of remaining SFUs. However, in a qualitative study the case representativeness is not even an issue (Bryman, 2016). In terms of form and the type of information provided, they are relatively similar as they are prepared based on Nokut's guidelines. The most difficult issue related to the quality of documents is credibility. The

documents are aimed at getting (and keeping) funding; therefore, there is a risk that documents might be biased. They might show a slightly different reality. This is one of the reasons why document analysis is not the only method used in this study.

The list of the documents used for analysis is provided below (the documents for each of the SFUs are listed chronologically):

Table 3. The list of the documents used for document analysis.

The SFU	Original name of the document	Date	Code (the refence for further usage in the study)
Bioceed	[Application]	2013	Application, Bioceed
	Annual Report 2014	n.d.	Annual Report 2014, Bioceed
	Annual Report 2015	n.d.	Annual Report 2015, Bioceed
	Annual Report 2016	n.d.	Annual Report 2016, Bioceed
	Interim evaluation – Centre for Excellence in Education (SFU) 2017: bioCEED self-evaluation	n.d.	Midterm self-evaluation, Bioceed
	Annual Report 2017	n.d.	Annual Report 2017, Bioceed
Matric	[Application]	2013	Application, Matric
	Report to NOKUT 1 February 2015	2015	Annual Report 2014, Matric
	MatRIC Centre for Research, Innovation and Coordination of Mathematics Teaching Annual Report for 2015 for The Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education	n.d.	Annual Report 2015, Matric
	MatRIC Annual Report for 2016	n.d.	Annual Report 2016, Matric

	MatRIC, Centre for Research, Innovation and Coordination of Mathematics Teaching Mid-term Self-Evaluation.	2017	Midterm self-evaluation, Matric
	Annual Report for 2017	n.d.	Annual Repost 2017, Matric
Excited	[Application]	n.d.	Application, Excited
	Annual report 2017	n.d.	Annual Report, Excited

The document analysis was performed using the first and the second research questions as well as the categories of student role indicators (rationale, area of student participation, and the process of evolvement). In addition, the document analysis contributed to individual modifications of the interview guides (e.g. if student participation form was declared in SFU documents, the question regarding this form was addressed to the specific respondent).

Semi-structured interviews

Interviews are a widely employed method in qualitative research, allowing for flexible, rich and detailed answers and interviewees' points of view (Bryman, 2016). The flexibility and possibility to ask follow-up questions in the interview makes this method attractive for the exploration of student roles in SFUs (as there is limited prior knowledge about this phenomenon). The possibility to get an interviewee's point of view contributes to the discovery of rationales for student role and individual perceptions on the issue.

The initial relation to a contact person from each SFU was established in the Matric conference "Students as partners" in September 2018. Afterwards, the details of interviews were sorted out by email. Consequently, visits to the SFU were arranged and interview schedules agreed on. Prospective interviewees were selected using snowball sampling, meaning that some of the respondents were suggested by the other respondents (Bryman, 2016). The interviewees were suggested by the contact person and other respondents in the schedule arrangement process. The suggestions were based on the person's ability to contribute to the first and second research questions (*What is the student role in Norwegian*

SFUs? How did the model of student participation evolve in Norwegian SFUs?). All the interviews were held face-to-face except one phone interview because the person was away at the time of the visit. All face-to-face interviewees agreed to be recorded and the interviews lasted between 30 to 60 minutes. All interviews were completely anonymized according to the Norwegian Social Science Data Services. The interviews were transcribed into 38 pages of text for analysis. The list of anonymized interviewees is shown below. Due to the small number of interviewees for each of the SFU, additional information is not provided (e.g. position, gender). It is only indicated if the person was a student representative or a staff member.

Table 4. The list of interviewees.

No.	The SFU	Staff member/student representative	Code (the refence for further usage in the study)
1	Bioceed	Staff member	Staff1, Bioceed
2	Bioceed	Student representative	Studentrep1, Bioceed
3	Bioceed	Student representative	Studentrep2, Bioceed
4	Matric	Staff member	Staff1, Matric
5	Matric	Student representative	Studentrep1, Matric
6	Excited	Staff member	Staff1, Excited
7	Excited	Staff member	Staff2, Excited

Semi-structured interviews were organized with SFU staff members and student representatives. In total there were 7 interviews conducted. Some SFUs had more staff member interviews while others had more student representative interviews. The composition of respondents mostly depends on the student participation model developed in the particular SFU (see more in 4). The main goal of the interviews was to find out what forms of student participation were developed in the SFU and how it happened. Therefore, a fixed number of interviews with staff members or student representatives was not defined. The interviews were arranged with the persons having the knowledge about these issues.

The interview guide approach was chosen for the interviews. It allows the issues or topics to be prepared in advance but wording and sequence can be decided during the conversation (Patton, 2002). The advantage of this approach is that is the logic gaps in information are closed (Patton, 2002). This is crucial in this study, as the data about student participation were

selected from various sources (documents, interviews, focus groups) and the interviews were extremely useful to see a comprehensive view regarding student participation. The disadvantage of the free wording choice could lead to reduced comparability among respondents (Patton, 2002). In this study it is less dangerous for the results, as the goal of the study is not to compare different SFUs but to discover different student participation types. In fact, the interview guide was slightly modified before each interview according to the data gained from document analysis as well as from previous interviews in the same SFU.

The interview guide was developed based on both the first and the second research questions (*What is the student role in Norwegian SFUs? How did the model of student participation evolve in Norwegian SFUs?*) as well as the categories of student role indicators (rationale, area of student participation, the process of evolvement). The full interview guide is shown in Appendix B and Appendix C.

Focus groups

Focus groups are commonly used in situations where the emphasis has to be put on a particular defined topic and where the interaction of participants is important (Bryman, 2016). Bryman (2016) draws a clear distinction between focus groups and group interviews: group interviews are a faster way to perform interviews with multiple respondents while focus groups aim to benefit from the interaction of respondents, adding to one another's answers. In this study, the focus group was performed in order to understand the experiences of the students in their participation within SFUs: to understand their motivations, the power distance between them and SFU/its employees, perceived benefits and perceived roles in SFUs. The discussion groups method stresses that "the process of coming to terms with (that is, understanding) social phenomena is not undertaken by individuals in isolation from each other" (Bryman, 2016, p. 504). A good example was a question regarding the perceived role within an SFU. The students (especially in Bioceed, see more in 4.1) were able to name their everyday participation/work with SFU activities and give it a new meaning. Therefore, the focus group method was helpful as they were able to add on to each other's points of view and discuss the ideas the other student raised. In addition, a part of the interview was about the structure and responsibilities of the students in SFU activities. Consequently, this part was performed mostly using the group interview logic. The group discussion interview guide is shown in Appendix D.

The respondents for the interview were selected using the same contact person from each SFU. The persons for the focus groups were selected using snowball sampling, meaning that focus group members were suggested by the other respondents, usually by the student representatives. The focus groups were performed at each of the selected interviews with 4-5 respondents who participate in some SFU-related projects/programmes/structures. The focus groups lasted between 50 to 70 minutes. All focus group members were completely anonymized according to the Norwegian Social Science Data Services. The interviews were transcribed into 21 pages of text for analysis. The list of anonymized focus group is shown below. Due to the small number of interviewees for each of the SFU, additional information is not provided (e.g. study programme, gender).

Table 5. The list of the focus group members

No.	The SFU	Code (the refence for further usage in the study)
1	Bioceed	StudentI, Bioceed
2	Bioceed	StudentII, Bioceed
3	Bioceed	StudentIII, Bioceed
4	Bioceed	StudentIV, Bioceed
5	Matric	StudentI, Matric
6	Matric	StudentII, Matric
7	Matric	StudentIII, Matric
8	Matric	StudentIV, Matric
9	Matric	StudentV, Matric
10	Excited	StudentI, Excited
11	Excited	StudentII, Excited
12	Excited	StudentIII, Excited
13	Excited	StudentIV, Excited

3.5. Ethics and Quality of Data

Ethics

There are a number of ethical considerations to pay attention to in this study. Diener and Crandall divided the possible ethical considerations into four groups: harm to participants; lack of informed consent; invasion of privacy; and deception (as cited in Bryman, 2016). In this study the main ethical consideration was related to harming the reputation of the SFUs. As required for a master's thesis, this study will have an open access with indicated names of SFUs and the student participation models in them. The main issue was to avoid the comparison of the SFUs and naming one or another as "better" in terms of student participation. Therefore, some decisions have been made regarding the study design. The student participation model has been chosen as a unit of analysis and the study was placed in a case study design, not in a comparative design.

Secondly, the study has been performed according to the requirements of the Norwegian Social Science Data Services and the forms of consent has been were signed. In order to ensure that the respondents had enough information about their consent, the forms were handed out at the start of the interviews along with an oral summary. The recorder was not started until all the forms of consent have had been signed. An additional copy of the form of consent (with the interview and the study's goals, along with a short research design description) was provided to each respondent and focus group member.

The last concern was an invasion of privacy during focus groups. Complete confidentiality cannot be ensured as it is a group of people who previously know each other. The focus group members might say too personal things on the spot or things that can harm them (Smith, 1995). In this study the discussed issues had not a very sensitive nature (as e.g. income, religious beliefs, etc.; see more in Bryman, 2016). Yet, in one of the focus groups it was noticed that the focus group members were not comfortable discussing their relation to and/or role in the SFU and with its staff. In order to avoid ethical issues, small changes in wording have been made in further focus groups. Additional ethical concerns are related to the quality of the research (Bryman, 2016). The quality of the research is discussed below.

Quality of research

The nature of qualitative research is very different from quantitative research. Instead of measuring values and calculating probabilities, qualitative research aims to explore the social world based on the interpretations of its participants. As qualitative research does not use probability sampling, statistical generalizations cannot be made. (Bryman, 2016). Therefore, a

number of authors suggest different quality criteria for qualitative research in comparison to quantitative strategy (Bryman, 2016). Guba and Lincoln (1994) have suggested that reliability and validity could be replaced by trustworthiness and authenticity (as cited in Bryman, 2016). Trustworthiness is divided into four criteria – credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Guba and Lincoln as cited in Bryman, 2016).

Credibility parallels internal validity and identifies the risk of not understanding the social reality correctly (Guba and Lincoln, as cited in Bryman, 2016). The analysis of phenomena of student participation in SFUs poses a high risk. The student participation is a very complex process, the knowledge about this phenomenon is divided among the data sources (e.g. student representatives might know one side of student participation and staff members – a different one). In this study there were three methods used and that helped to achieve triangulation (at least for parts of the data). For example, if a student participation form was only indicated in the documents as a plan but neither interviewed staff members nor students were able to say anything about it (or why it was changed), it was not included in the described student participation model.

Transferability parallels external validity and it is related to an ability to generalize the findings (Guba and Lincoln, 1994 as cited in Bryman, 2016). Yet, in qualitative research the direct generalization of findings is not possible due to a lack of probability sampling (Bryman, 2016). Therefore, transferability is focused on a context. Guba and Lincoln (as cited in Bryman, 2016) suggest to have detailed descriptions of the context where the qualitative findings "hold". In this study the context is twofold – Norwegian SFUs and each of the SFUs separately. The context of Norwegian SFUs was already presented in the introduction (see 0) and each of the SFUs with their student participation model is described below (see 4).

Dependability parallels reliability and is reflecting trustfulness (Guba and Lincoln, as cited in Bryman, 2016). Guba and Lincoln suggest that a researcher "*should adopt an 'auditing' approach*" (as cited in Bryman, 2016, p. 215) to keep the research transparent and trustful. The records of the research have been kept. First, the transcriptions of the interviews have been made and can be made available at any time. Second, the decisions related to the research design have been described in detail in the methodology chapter (especially in 3.1 and **Error! Reference source not found.**).

The last criterion of trustworthiness is conformability – avoiding personal biases (Guba and Lincoln, as cited in Bryman, 2016). This was not easy, as the analysis of the literature has been made at the time of empirical research and the picture of "possible student participation models, forms" had been drawn. Yet, the Norwegian SFUs were a very special context and, after the first visit, the biases were replaced with curiosity as there were no pre-prepared answers. In addition, it was very helpful to be led by the first and the second research questions (*What is the student role in Norwegian SFUs? How did the model of student participation evolve in Norwegian SFUs?*).

The final criterion developed by Guba and Lincoln (1994 as cited in Bryman, 2016) is authenticity. This criterion is related to the research impact and it is mostly suitable for action research (Bryman, 2016). Yet, student participation is a "hot" topic in SFUs, meaning they were interested in it; thus, it is important for them to understand this phenomenon better. At the time of the empirical research, the invitations to present the results had been received. In addition, a very positive feedback from one of the focus group was received. The students claimed that, after the focus group, they got a better understanding of their role in the SFUs.

3.6. Trade-offs

There is no research design or strategy without its trade-offs (Patton, 2002). Due to the snowball sampling of the interviewees and the pre-planned visit schedules, some issues have been faced. Mostly the interview schedules were made before the site visit with the respondents maintaining information about student participation. It led to situations where the interviews were handled without enough prior information. For example, one of the focus groups was scheduled before the interview with the staff member (due to busy schedules). This resulted in the need to spend valuable focus group time on understanding what functions the students were involved in. And that information was repeated the next day in the staff interview. In addition, it was discovered during the interviews that a few more people had information about student involvement. Yet, as the visits were pre-planned, the interviews with busier staff members did not happen.

4.   Findings

This chapter will present the findings from the empirical study. The data used for the analysis were derived from official documents, interviews and focus group discussions (see more in 3). Three student participation models in three SFUs will be presented; student participation practices in them will be reviewed. It is important to stress out a distinction between student participation model and student participation practice. Each SFU has developed a distinct student participation model which consists of many different student participation practices. An example of student participation practice could be meetings with reference groups in Excited. Finally, the evolvement of each student participation model (starting new student participation practices or continuing the same ones) will be described.

4.1.   Bioceed

Bioceed is the Center of Excellence in Biology Education. It was established in partnership between two departments of the University of Bergen (the Department of Biology and the Higher Education Research unit) as well as the Department of Arctic Biology in University Centre at Svalbard and the Institute of Marine Research. The host institution for Bioceed is the Department of Biology in University of Bergen (application, Bioceed). Therefore, the empirical study took place within this department.

In the application, the need for an SFU is rationalized by the continuously expanding role of biology and qualified biologists in society. The graduates are featured as:

> "to be competent in the theoretical and practical aspects of biology, but also build the professional confidence and integrity necessary to maneuver among conflicting pressures and demands in their professional lives" (application, Bioceed, p. 9).

In order to reach that, new learning methods and approaches have to be developed. The application refers to a change called "*our educational reform*" (application, Bioceed, p. 10). The document divides this change into two parts: the shift in education towards learner-focused education and the shift in teaching culture enabling the application of strengths from the research culture (shared responsibly, creativity, exchange of ideas, and excellence).

Bioceed was established at the beginning of 2014 and, at the time of the empirical study, the center had been operational for 4.5 years.

4.1.1.   Student participation model in Bioceed

<u>Rationales for student participation</u>

Bioceed documents do not give a detailed explanation as to why student participation is relevant to the SFU, but there are some indications. First, it is claimed in a mid-term self-evaluation that student input is important to reach their goals primarily as a feedback mechanism and as monitoring tool for their activities:

> "Student representatives, student meetings, student feedback, and student data provide the most important and continuous evaluation of our standing, results, and impacts (Midterm self-evaluation, Bioceed, p. 15)".

Second, the importance of involving students is mentioned in reference to creating a new education model. Bioceed seeks "*to establish a model for an integrated biology education at program-level.*" *(Annual report 2017, Bioceed, p. 8)* In order to achieve that, student participation is required:

> "A key success criterion is involving students as partners in educational development and assessment of success. (Annual report 2017, Bioceed, p. 8)."

Finally, the idea of having a specific culture based on the Science in Teaching and Learning including students, staff, and institutional leadership was mentioned as a goal for general involvement and inclusion within the SFU. (Midterm self-evaluation, Bioceed).

While discussing the rationales regarding student role within Bioceed with the staff member students' position as the customers of education was mentioned:

> "For Bioceed… as well it is necessary to work. because they are our main target and basically our customers, we have to work for them, we have to work well for them, and that they are with us, it means they are happy to work for themselves." (Staff1, Bioceed).

One of the interviewed students supported the view of students as valuable contributors to Bioceed activities. The respondent emphasized the importance of student feedback:

> "We are very much appreciated and they value our views around the table when we have these meetings. Because it is very important to them to actually hear student perspective and not just do things what they think are good." (Studentrep2, Bioceed).

<u>Student participation structure and responsibilities</u>

Student participation in Bioceed is mainly organized through a structure of student representatives. At the time of interviews (in autumn 2018), there were four student

representatives (two from the Department of Biology in Bergen and two from of the Department of Arctic Biology in Svalbard) assigned. The student representatives do that as volunteers; hence they are not getting paid. Student representatives at Bioceed are selected by Bioceed staff. They accept applications from individual students as well as student unions. The representation agenda is very important and one of the selection criteria is based on how many students the candidate has contact with and how many views he/she can represent. The candidate receives an advantage if he/she is related to the student union. The second criterion is the ideas the candidate brings to the table (Staff1, Bioceed).

The student representatives have two main areas of responsibility: to provide students' perspectives to organizational decisions (participation in daily management and governance) and to organize student-led projects (participation in educational development/innovation).

The student representatives participate in governance through involvement in governance bodies (Steering Committee and the Centre Board (Midterm self-evaluation, Bioceed)). In addition, the interviewed students and staff emphasized the Monday meetings where student representatives at Bioceed participate on a regular basis. According to the respondents, students mainly contribute to those meetings by delivering the students' perspective on the matters discussed and raising their own issues:

> "Basically, we have meetings every week with Bioceed group. Is not like you have to, but if you can attend you mostly attend and then we skype with Svalbard team and keep in touch with them also. It is not always that it is much relevant for us students but it's nice. We get coffee Monday morning so it is nice. And then.. it is usually one hour. If they have anything, they would like us to do they ask us of course and we are always welcome to say what we are thinking during the meeting." (Studentrep1, Bioceed)

> "There would always be a section where... if we had something, we wanted to say we could put that there" (Studentrep2, Bioceed).

It was emphasized by the staff member that their expectations with regard to student representatives is to perform *"their job in terms of representing the students, we expect to hear not only their voice as representatives but to hear how students feel about the world of biology locally in Bergen (if they have more contact it is even better)" (Staff1, Bioceed).* Yet, it was mentioned by the interviewed student representatives that there is always a possibility that they represent only active students (like themselves) but they put a lot of efforts in representing all the students. There is no formal mechanism for gathering "students' voice"; instead, it is based on personal connections as well as connections within the student union.

The second part of student representatives' responsibilities at Bioceed is student-led projects. At the time of the interview (fall 2018), the main one was Biorakel. This project was about sharing experiences and knowledge among students. More experienced students (mostly at the master's level) meet younger students and help them with theoretical and social questions.

The project is organized and managed exclusively by the students. The student representatives find 9 other students who could be the "oracles" and be able to share their own experiences and knowledge one time per week. Biorakel is organized as a learning environment where the students can study and immediately get help from "the oracles" if needed. "The oracles" are paid by the hour.

According to both student representatives and staff at Bioceed, student projects are completely student-driven ("*it is more like… you give them the chance and they will go and do it" (Staff1, Bioceed)*) but both parties (student representatives and Bioceed) exchange feedback on each other's projects. The initiation of new student-driven projects is mainly an informal process (often discussed on Monday meetings) where both students and Bioceed staff offer their ideas. Usually, student representatives have to provide a written description of the project if they need Bioceed resources. Bioceed staff decides whether resources should be allocated based on their availability (e.g. some personnel hours to help students) based on project goals (it has to support educational purposes at Bioceed) (Staff1, studentrep1, studentrep2, Bioceed). Mostly, the students have very few guidelines for project development, and the process is open-ended: "*But if we see that there is an idea which can support educational purposes at Bioceed then we try to gather during the meetings and see if there is a chance to help them*" (staff1, Bioceed).

All the respondents were satisfied with the current structure of student representatives at Bioceed. According to the Bioceed staff member: *"working with student rep is definitely the right channel, without them we wouldn't reach our goals" (Staff1, Bioceed).*

Experiences of students participating

This part of the findings is based on the subjective experiences of the students participating in the Biorakel project and the experiences of student representatives. As it was mentioned above, Biorakel is a student-driven project where more experienced students share their subject-related knowledge as well as social aspects of the studies with younger colleagues.

This chapter will shortly present the students' background, motivation, benefits and a relation to the SFU.

Most of the focus group participants were active students before the project, involved either in the student union or other organizations. Half of them received information about the project from personal connections while others found it on Facebook.

The main rationales for participating in Bioceed's activities were the wish to help others/to teach others, and the motivation to contribute to their own learning. Some respondents mentioned that it is a useful record to include in their CV. The main benefits for the Biorakel project participants were related to their own understanding and learning. The students mentioned that they learned to provide feedback, they repeated class material, they learned to work as a team and to be spontaneous. The student representatives mentioned the joy of creation, as they were the main creators and organizers of Biorakel:

> "I had a lot of crating joy with Biooracle, beeing creator and thinking how can you do things in these projects which has been so successful. It is my baby." (Studentrep1, Bioceed).

> "Since I have been in the Biooracle from the start it is my little baby." (Studentrep2, Bioceed)

The respondents revealed that the power distance between students and staff at Bioceed is very low, especially between student representatives and Bioceed staff. They use a lot of informal communication and are flexible in organizing the meetings.

> "It is very free doing there. We just say there is a meeting next week and we ask do you have chance? and they say, yes, of course. And then they come onboard" (Staff1, Bioceed).

> "I usually just go there and ask them and I can also send them mails" (Studentrep1, Bioceed).

The students participating in Biorakel project mainly communicate with the student representatives, as they are the organizers. Yet, they understand themselves as a part of Bioceed, as "their face to the students" (StudentIII, Bioceed).

Perceptions on student roles

In Bioceed's 2017 annual report, the expression of "students as partners" is mentioned for the first time. The interviewed staff member confirmed that Bioceed indeed sees students as partners. Students as partners are understood in terms of equal possibilities to express their opinion:

> "It is definitely a partnership. We definitely see them as equal. In fact then they are. The Norwegians already canceled those big titles of the professors. Then you meet them, you see them at the same level. The students here have a vocal voice and they use it." (Staff1, Bioceed).

A student representative describing student roles in Bioceed emphasized the control students have over their projects and the presence of mutual help among both parties rather than partnership: *"I wouldn't say. We have our projects but we get help." (Studentrep1, Bioceed)*

Finally, the student participants in Biorakel found a different description regarding their role. They call themselves the representatives of Bioceed (and the Biology institute) towards the students:

> "And working as Biooracle I represent Bioceed in a way so. And I represent the work of the institute. <…> We work for Bioceed and Bioceed works for the institute. So, it's all the chain" (StudentII, Bioceed)

> "We work as the representatives of Bioceed as their face to the students" (StudentIII Bioceed).

4.1.2.   The dynamics of student role

<u>Student role before the establishment of the SFU</u>

The data regarding student roles before the establishment of the SFUs were collected using several sources, including the analysis of application and the interviews. Unfortunately, none of the respondents were tightly related to the development of applications, but they shared some knowledge regarding the student role at the department of Biology prior to Bioceed.

Student roles in governance of Bioceed were defined by student participation in decision-making bodies and by the student representative union. According to the information gained from interviews and the document analysis, student organizations (unions) in the Biology department BFU (for bachelor's students) and STIM (for master's students) played an important role in the department. The application is even calling student (representative) organizations "the key" in many functions:

> "Our students are active and involved. They are represented in decision-making bodies, and in all processes concerning education, and contribute to recruitment and social activities. Student organisations are key in these functions" (application, Bioceed, p. 12).

The organizations (unions) were involved in various social activities for the students (e.g. movie night, start of the semester activities) as well as extra-curricular education activities (e.g. BFU has organized "speed dates" with potential supervisors) (Staff1, Studentrep2, Bioceed)

Senior students were involved in extra-curricular education activities in the Biology department as teaching assistants. One of the students claimed that working as a teaching assistant helped her to get in touch with a lot of students from later cohorts and get a good understanding of their needs and problems (Studentrep2, Bioceed).

The main changes in student role after the establishment of Bioceed

There were no radical changes in the student representative structure in Bioceed since the establishment of the SFU. Yet, there were several smaller changes in their functions, size and student-led projects.

First, the number of student representatives increased from one to two in 2016. According to the interviewed staff member

> "we had one originally because we thought that one voice would be enough in such a small meeting but eventually, we got two candidates with slightly different background. And it was difficult to decide which one is better <…> They had good profiles and it was hard to decide and kind of... we thought... okay... do we really have to choose?" (Staff1, Bioceed).

The student representative remembered that the change (from 1 student representative to 2) occurred gradually. In the beginning, the second student was there in case the first one was absent, but in time the student representative structure increased to two participating students (Student2, Bioceed).

Second, according to the respondents, the functions of the students have slightly changed since the establishment of Bioceed. In the beginning, a student representative was not that visible for the community of students in the Biology department; instead, the student representative was mostly involved in internal Bioceed activities (like writing plans) as opposed to the management of student projects (Studentrep1, Bioceed). The staff member confirmed that "*students were way more active in building the things while now there is a bit more, they are here for running things*" (Staff1, Bioceed). In the first years of Bioceed, students were more occupied with *"finding ideas, finding how to define things how to write things or how to communicate" (Staff1, Bioceed)* while later still having the same tasks but focus is on *"maintaining, organizing, promoting" (Staff1, Bioceed)*. One of the reasons for the change in activities were the increase in capacity after introducing the second student representative (Studentrep2, Bioceed).

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Third, there was a transfer between different student-led projects. According to the Bioceed documents there were many changes in student-led projects (especially launching new ones). Yet, the respondents emphasized that the main change in student-led projects was when Biorakel replaced open student thematic meetings. According to the staff respondent, the change was incremental:

> "It wasn't a clear transfer between that and Biooracle. The first one went silent for a while and Biooracle was coming and had a slightly different function. <…> And it was not decided that it would stop. It was more like... the open student meetings were organized upon the ideas of student representatives, so in a way a change of student representatives brings a change, brings a new dynamic." (staff, Bioceed).

In conclusion, the changes in student representative structure, their role and student-led projects were mostly gradual changes, defined by the available resources or rather students they had at the moment.

The dissemination/institutionalization of student role

The main form of dissemination related to student role in Bioceed was student-led project Biorakel. First, Biorakel won a prize for the best learning environment in the University of Bergen. It was very important that the university "*itself is acknowledging that these students are something good and positive*" *(Staff1, Bioceed)*. Second, the idea was adopted by the Geophysical Institute. According to the same guidelines, they are establishing their own student-driven project (Staff1, Bioceed).

4.2. Matric

Matric is the Center for Research, Innovation and Coordination of Mathematics Teaching. Matric was established by the University of Agder (host institution) in cooperation with Norwegian University of Science and Technology and Norwegian University of Life Science. The SFU is focused "*on mathematics teaching and learning within the study programmes of other subjects such as engineering, natural sciences, economics and teacher education*" *(application, Matric)*. The empirical part was performed in the host institution, the University of Agder. The SFU is established on the institutional level, not within the specific department.

In the application, the need for an SFU is rationalized by the fact that mathematics is required in many other study fields (like engineers, economists, teachers, etc.). Yet, the studies show lacking skills in mathematics for many high school graduates. Therefore, the vision for Matric

is to *"lead innovation, research and excellence in mathematics teaching and learning within higher education 'user programmes'"* (application, Matric, p. 4). It is indicated that this will be done by using four main core activities: by networking (mathematic teachers with users of mathematics – engineers, scientists, economists), performing research and innovation in mathematics education, developing teaching resources as well as disseminating the innovations performed by the SFU in mathematics teaching and learning.

Matric was established at the beginning of 2014 and at the time of the empirical study the center has been operational for 4.5 years.

4.2.1. Student participation model in Matric

<u>Rationales for student participation</u>

There is some evidence about the rationales for student participation in Matric documents as well as in some of the interviews. The Matric Annual Report for 2017 refers to the engagement of all the students as partners. The emphasis is put on engagement in teaching, learning and assessment. "*Such engagement may help to address the challenges*" (Annual Report, 2017, Matric, p. 6) Matric faces. In the documents, active collaboration between teachers and students is presented as a tool to achieve student engagement (in teaching, learning and assessment). It is interesting that the documents clarify the main focus towards teachers not students while improving students' learning experience:

> "Sustainable transformation of teaching will impact generations of students, whereas working directly with students may impact only the cohort involved" (Midterm self-evaluation, Matric, p. 5)

The interviewed staff member emphasized the role of students in terms of feedback: we receive "*very good suggestions how we can be better*" (Staff1, Matric). The interviewed student emphasized the importance of student voice to be heard.

<u>Student participation structure and responsibilities</u>

Student participation in Matric is organized through several channels: student perspective is presented in governance bodies (the board and student advisory groups) and students participated in projects or programmes (e.g. student teaching assistants).

First, the student role in governance bodies will be presented. At the time of the empirical data collection (at the end of 2018), there were 3 student representatives in the board out of 14 members. The board meets three times a year and student representatives are present in those meetings. One student representative is from Grimstad, one from Kristiansand and one is the member of student organization (union) at the university (Staff1, Matric). The last representative (member of the student organization (union) at the university (STA)) is a paid full-time position to represent students at various governing bodies (studentrep1, Matric). Referring to the role of the students in the board meetings, the staff member explained:

> "their role is depending on who is sitting here. If you have a student who really wants to be seen and do something and be active…. We are talking English and we are sitting with a lot of documents; it is not so easy for the students to see all these documents. But if we ask them, we can get very serious answers. So, it's more this way." (Staff1, Matric).

In the interview with the student representative, it was explained that students indeed might lack competence in the board meeting:

> "it would be nice to be prepared better. On the other hand, maybe they shouldn't ask – what the students want? Be more precise, present what is possible, explain what can you want?" (Student1, Matric).

The student representative revealed that the goal of having the students in the board meetings is to hear the "student perspective." There is a formal structure at the University of Agder in terms of receiving and sharing student perspectives at the institutional level. The information about the needs of the students at the university ("student voice") is gathered through a student union office (free entry for all students who would like to address problems/issues), a student parliament, via direct contact with the student representatives, and through organized workshops with the students, mostly delivered by the STA member (Studentrep1, Matric). Besides the board meetings, the student representatives are invited to ad-hoc meetings if a student perspective is needed. They were participating while Matrix created a new "students as partners" concept (students went to the workshop in Canada and participated at follow-up local workshops regarding student involvement) (Studentrep1, staff1, Matric).

The second body where the student perspective has been listened to is the student advisory groups. At the moment of interviews this advisory body needed to gather new members (as many of them graduated) and was not very active. The main function of the advisory board is the feedback from students to the Matric team: *"how can Matric have a success, so we can be*

better" (Staff1, Matric). According to the documents, student advisory groups report straight to the project manager and there are around 3-4 students in every meeting (Midterm self-evaluation, Matric). The staff member revealed that students from the advisory groups have implemented student-led projects in the past. For example, they proposed the idea of blue Matric jackets and set up a stand about Matric activities (Staff1, Matric).

Second, students within Matric participate in projects and programmes. The main projects the respondents mentioned were a drop-in center, student internships and a student assistant programme. The drop-in center was built to help the students with various mathematics-related problems and there are several Ph.D. and master's students employed at the center. Student internships are aimed at demonstrating *"the potential of students as contributors to their education"* (Matric annual report for 2017, p. 20). Last but not least, there is the teaching assistant programme, which was an example of a very successful programme within Matric. The programme itself was not newly developed but Matric developed a preparation programme for mathematics teaching assistants (Staff1, Matric). The report details that

> MatRIC piloted a two-day, residential training camp for student teaching assistants. The training camp covered such issues as mathematics didactics, communication skills, and approaches to learning and doing mathematics. (Matric Annual Report 2017, p. 5).

At the time of interviews, the programme had been running for two years. Teaching assistants help other (mostly first-year) students with mathematics while they prepare the assigned tasks in mathematics. According to both staff members and students involved in the teaching assistant programme, the programme has been very successful:

> "now the programme is so successful that the whole university is saying - we have to involve everyone in that!" (staff, Matric)

> "I thought it was very successful as there came way more people than expected" (StudentI, Matric)

> "so far we can consider that a success" (StudentII, Matric)

This teaching assistant programme is exclusively organized by the academic staff (with the help from administrative staff) and students apply to teach in it as a part time job. Teaching assistants as well as learning students get the pre-prepared tasks and teaching assistants gather once a week to help with those tasks. One of the students in this programme notified that some teaching assistants would like more contributions to the subject itself, to contribute to the preparation of tasks, yet, they not included into this process (StudentIII, Matric).

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Experiences of students participating

This part of the findings is mainly based on the subjective experiences of the students participating in the teaching assistant programme. Some information from the interview with the student representatives will be included as well. This chapter will shortly present students' background, motivation, benefits and the relation to the SFU.

The student group had a diverse background in terms of activeness. Some of them had not previously been involved in any extra-curricular activities while others were had taken part in some student groups. All the students in the focus group were invited by email from the Matric staff (as a consequence of good grades in mathematics).

The motivation to participate at the teaching assistant programme varied among the students. Some were driven by the motivation to help while others were interested in social benefits like getting to know other students. Quite a few claimed more pragmatic motives: the record on their CV and extra money. The main benefits from the programme mentioned by the students were the joy in helping others, building larger social networks and "*getting their mathematics brains working*." (StudentII, Matric)

In regard to their relation to the SFU itself, the respondents in the focus group revealed that they see their relationship somewhere between volunteering and being employed. It is interesting that they did not understand Matric as an organizational structure but rather thought of Matric is the same as Drop-in center. The same issue was confirmed by the staff member*: "I tell that Drop-in is just a small piece of everything but I don't think they really understand it" (Staff1, Matric).* That implies quite big power distance between the students (in teaching assistant programme) and the SFU as an organizational unit itself. The interviewed student representative indicated that communication between student representatives and the Matric staff has formal and less formal elements. The formal communication occurs during board meetings while informal communication happens at conferences or through informative emails. There is definitely closer collaboration with the student representatives than students participating in the teaching assistant programme. Yet, it would be inaccurate to claim that any of those students are an integral part of the SFU.

<u>Perceptions on student roles</u>

As mentioned above, "all students as partners in education" is one of Matric's aims. The interviewed staff member understands partnership as giving enough "weight" to the students: *"Then we have a partner we have a similar "weight", you are not just a student and I am a teacher. I think we take students more seriously" (Staff1, Matric).* The interviewed student representative emphasized that partnership among students and teachers should create situations where students learn from the professors and vice versa. Both the student representative and the staff member agreed that "students as partners" in education is referred to as an important goal within Matric but this phrase is not yet used in communication with the students.

The interesting point in this "students as partners" concept is that it is aimed at all the students at the University of Agder (learning mathematics). The student participation at Matric activities, such as the teaching assistants, is understood as a tool for partnership, while the relationship between them and Matric is not referred to as a partnership and are not the main focus of the SFU.

> "Students as partners in education means far more than a few internships or the development of student teaching assistants." (Matric Annual Report 2017, p. 5)

> "MatRIC's engagement in the provision of mathematics support through the Drop-in centres can easily mask the impact of the R&D based education that engages students as partners in teaching and learning which lie at the core of MatRIC's activity" (Matric Annual Report 2017, p. 8).

4.2.2. The dynamics of student role

<u>Student role before the establishment of the SFU</u>

In the application it was mentioned that the students at the University of Agder have been involved in the teaching and research activities (especially students at master's and PhD levels). Teaching assistant programme is an example of student involvement into teaching, yet it wasn't very successful before Matric (Staff1, Matric).

The student representative indicated that many students are passive. It has been difficult to involve students to the matters at the university level (like university governance), these matters are not very interesting to them. The respondent assumed that perhaps students have

less relation to the institutional level than the matters at their faculty. On the other hand, according to the student representative, some students were not very active in education either (Studentrep1, Matric).

The main changes in student role after the establishment of Matric

According to the documents and the information from respondents, the main change in terms of student role was initiated in the summer of 2017. At that time, Nokut (former manager of the SFU initiative) had invited Matric to participate in a workshop called "students as partners" in Canada. According to the interviewed staff member, they *"took the challenge and did it!" (Staff1, Matric).* The internal wish for participating in that workshop was "*to do our best*" in terms of student involvement (Staff1, Matric). There was a team of 6 (3 students and 3 staff members) who went to the workshop in Canada:

> "And there we were sitting with the <..> and the three leaders from student organization and struggling in four days to find out how we could collaborate. <..> I think we got a lot of solutions [in that workshop] and we really started engage students and with this mindset - that this is very important <..> We would sit at the table and we needed two students and that's okay; but now we really needed to involve students."(Staff1, Matric).

After this summer, Matric started their summer internships, developed the teaching assistant training programme and included an additional "professional" student representative in their governance structure (see more in 0). An additional student representative was added because *"Matric wanted closed cooperation with the students" (Student1, Matric).* The former student representatives changed very often and their participation was a little bit sporadic. As mentioned above, the STA member is a fully paid position not an engagement; therefore, having him/her at Matric governance structures ensures the continuity in student representation (Student1, Matric).

The dissemination/institutionalization of student role

The change described above might have been inspired by Matric, but according to the student representative it spread to the university as well. The student representative claimed that there is a demonstrated effort to better involve students in their own education (e.g. through teaching and learning methods). It has still been not completely clear from the empirical study if Matric was responsible for that change or if the change affected both the university and

Matric. On the other hand, one of the people who participated in the "students as partners" workshop in Canada belongs to the university's top management.

The teaching assistant training programme developed by Matric has proven to be successful. The success has been noticed by the university. As a consequence, the university is taking over the costs of the programme, developing plans to expand this programme and perform it at the institutional level. (Staff1, Matric). According to the student representative as well as the staff member, the information about Matric activities is easily distributed within the university as a lot of Matric people are sitting in various different committees at the institutional level (e.g. the student representative). The above-mentioned teaching assistant training programme received recognition at the institutional level after the involvement of PULS (Pedagogisk utviklingssenter) in the preparation of teaching assistants.

4.3. Excited

Excited is the Center for Excellent Information Technology Education. Excited was established by the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) in partnership with Nord University. Due to the fact that NTNU is a hosting institution for the SFU, the empirical study was performed there.

Excited tackles the issue of growing demand for IT professionals in Norway as well as worldwide. Yet, a lot of prospective students do not choose IT education due to lack of awareness or prejudice. The vision of this SFU is:

> "to put Norway in the forefront of innovative IT education and make IT an increasingly more attractive study choice for young people" (application, Excited).

In the application there are three main areas identified where Excited will work towards its vision: enhancing learning in the study programmes, increasing student motivation and career-readiness and attracting the best students from high school to apply to IT education.

Excited was established at the beginning of 2017 and at the time of the empirical study the center had been operational for 1.5 years.

4.3.1. Student participation model in Excited

Rationales for student participation

It is indicated in the Annual report 2017 that student involvement mechanisms (such as student assistants, mini-projects for students, etc.; see more below) has been used as a tool to increase student engagement in the end. The interviewed staff member referred to the student participants as changing agents in education:

> "I think they are the most important part of Excited in changing education. <..> And I also think that having them here in the long term can change a little bit of a culture." (Staff2, Excited)

Another external rationale for involving students in education was the requirement from Nokut:

> "One thing what came out from the previous round where we didn't succeed was that some student involved during application process as an important. <…> So, when starting to improve our application we took way more care about improving the involvement of the students like having dialog meetings with student representatives and using student survey data, and things like that to feed in ideas what to apply for in the next round." (Interview, staff1, Excited)

Finally, the student input was mentioned as a tool for feedback and a way to generate ideas: they "*have interesting ideas for mending those [student related] problems*" (Staff1, Excited).

Student participation structure and responsibilities

Student participation in Excited is mainly organized through four main channels: employing students as Excited assistants, meeting with reference groups, involving students into center-related research and education development activities, and supporting student led-projects (Annual report 2017, Excited). In addition, according to the application, student representatives have been planned to be included in the Steering Committee.

The respondents indicated **Excited assistants** as the main channel of involving students in Excited activities. According to the information from the respondents, Excited had employed 12 students as part-time assistants at the time of the interviews. Excited assistants participate in two main areas: teaching and research. According to an interviewed staff member: *"We give them money to do staff for us. And the way it works is that all the project leaders and anyone involved in Excited can bring tasks to the student assistants" (Staff2, Excited).* In addition, Excited student assistants are able to develop their own ideas*: "We also have them to come with their own ideas, guys - what do you guys want to work on?" (Staff2, Excited).* Students themselves identified two areas they work in: organizing "study days" and assisting professors with their research. The study day is a student-driven project happening once a

week and aimed at first-year students in order to guide them and to mentor them. The first-year students raise education related and/or social questions while Excited student assistants help them (focus group, Excited).

> "We try to be a place where they can come and just hang out one day and just get to know their peers. Yeah. that is the big part of their job, just be there and help them" (Staff2, Excited).

> "I think it is really important to create this learning environment, you have one place where you identify with your study programme. I think everyone would like to have some constant place but this is a middle ground where you have one place once a week. In ideal world you would have one place always so I feel that it is very important to have that kind of identity area where you can meet your classmates which is absent from the rest of the university and the rest of the student programmes." (StudentII, Excited).

The research part is mostly driven by the professors (professors prepare tasks for the students and guide them if needed) but students at the focus group have mentioned a couple of examples when research was performed by their own initiative.

Reference groups are implemented on an institutional level. *"They give feedback and it is supposed to work alongside of course; and you have meetings throughout the semester. They give feedback to the lecturer and the lecturer is supposed to change things"* (Staff2, Excited). According to another staff member, Excited uses reference groups (organizing meetings with them) as input for Excited activities (Staff1, Excited).

Involving other (besides 12 above-mentioned) **students** into center-related research is mostly performed via master's theses (Annual Report 2017). Students might also get involved with education-related projects if their teachers get the lump sum for interventions in their classrooms (Staff1, Excited).

An additional way support student engagement is financial contribution from Excited to some of the projects. For example, the online student association mentioned that they offered some informal programming classes to other struggling students and received funding (Staff1, Excited). According to the interviewed staff member, the project for which students could receive support have few guidelines, meaning they are very open:

> "...ideally. it should fit one of the projects Excited is doing already. But also anything what would indicate or solve the problem that the students had, learning related problem, of course. And it should identify the problem and propose the viable solution and be sort of trustworthy that given that amount of money it would come up with something." (staff1, Excited)

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Experiences of students participating

This part of the findings is based on the subjective experiences of the students employed as Excited assistants. As mentioned above, Excited assistants have two areas of responsibility – they organize student- led project called "the study day" and they assist professors with their research. This chapter will shortly present the students' background, motivation, benefits and their relation to the SFU.

All of the students in the focus group have participated in some extracurricular activities: sports, student unions or other student organizations. They have received information about the positions from personal connections (other students) or from teachers.

The main rationale for becoming Excited assistants included a wish to get more experience in performing research and to teach/help others. Some students mentioned more pragmatic reasons, such as extra pay and a flexible well-paid job.

The respondents indicated that they work in collaboration with both Excited (administrative) staff (in the study day project) and professors (in the research part). Students described freedom, such as having few guidelines, as one of the key features of their work. The students discussed the two sides of this feature:

> "The freedom - it is great to do what you want, to do new projects and make new things, at the same time makes it hard. You don't get any demands and set rules. You have to be very engaged to make projects forward, to kind of support." (StudentI, Excited)

> "both. For the research part it is bad. We don't know how to research. So, that is kind of hard."(StudentII, Excited)

It indicates that, at least in part, students feel a bit left to themselves. A staff member confirmed that sometimes it is not easy to get the professors to reply to students' emails (Staff2, Excited). On the other hand, students in the focus group claimed that, after starting their job, the power distance between them and academic staff decreased, it contributed to their better identification with the university.

Perceptions on student roles

The perception of student roles varied among respondents. One of the staff members named Excited student assistants as their change agents, enabling a change among students:

"I think they are the most important part of Excited in changing education. <..> They are the doers they are the activators, the people who actually change things. <…> Students are not that found of change and they... <…> The student culture is not very receptive to change. They I try [to change something], they ask... why we don't do it the way we did before?" (Staff2, Excited).

Another staff member referred to the Excited student assistants as helpers, he presented the expectations for their role in the future:

"These employed, since they are getting payed, they are doing work for us. <…> Those who are teaching assistance, if they finish it would be nice to have them as Phd students." (Staff1, Excited).

With regard to the reference group, the function of giving input was emphasised (Staff1, Excited).

Finally, Excited assistants considered their role "somewhere between work and engagement."

4.3.2. The dynamics of student role

Student role before the establishment of the SFU

The interviewed staff member revealed that students in Computer Science (and generally in NTNU) were always very active in extracurricular activities and NTNU has a great range of student organizations:

"Most of our students will be engaged in some kind of organization outside of their study programme. We have three CS specific student organizations, for different study programmes. So, the five-year master has one and then bachelor and masters have one, the engineering has one. They do initiation weeks, they do parties, they do trips, they do courses, they are the social glue of our students. It is very common to have a part in that. Either that or some kind of sports activities, sports team of NTNU or you are a part of local "samfunnet" [community]...<...> If you don't have any kind of activity you are seen as weird." (Staff2, Excited)

In terms of teaching, students participated via a teaching assistant programme which inspired Excited assistants' positions:

"We have a lot of tradition in employing students from before within the department. Because we tent to employ them as teaching assistants because we lots of huge classes in introductory year, like one course has 2000 students and 150 teaching assistants. So, we have a lot of good experiences employing teaching assistants. Though in Excited is a bit different because they are not assistants in

one particular course but more assistants doing Excited work. Though, in most ways it is similar because built on the same model." (Staff1, Excited).

The above-mentioned "reference groups" were a well-established practice at NTNU prior to Excited.

The main changes in student role after the establishment of Excited

There have not been a lot of changes in student roles since the SFU was established due to very little operation time. There are indications that Excited is satisfied with their developed student role model (the Excited student assistants as well as meetings with the reference group) and they are willing to expand it:

> "Intensify student involvement by more frequent meetings with student reference groups to discuss needs and interventions. We are also likely to spend more money on hiring students part-time, especially as teaching assistants, as we need to spend more money, and this has shown to be a valuable resource." (Annual Report Excited, 2017, p. 15).

The dissemination/institutionalization of student role

Excited is a relatively "young" SFU, operating for over a year. The dissemination about student's role and about the SFU itself is mainly performed by providing information about SFU activities in various conferences (formal and informal). In addition, it was mentioned that a lot of students relate their research (e.g. master's thesis) to the SFU.

5. Discussion

This chapter will be based on the findings from the empirical study (see 4) and will analyze them in relation to the conceptual framework (see 2.2). First, reviewing the student participation models and their evolvement in SFUs will help to answer the third research question on how the possible patterns of student participation and its evolvement can be explained. The unit of analysis is the student participation model, not the SFUs themselves. Yet, the student participation models are too complex to place them straight in the conceptual framework. Therefore, the discussion will be organized around separate practices from SFUs. The variety of student participation practices within an SFU reflects Olson's (2007) idea that his four visions are not exclusive; rather, they exist next to each other. Finally, the findings from the empirical study will be discussed in relation to the partnership concept (see 2.1.2). The partnership concept will be placed into the developed student role framework.

5.1. The student role and its evolvement according to Olsen's 4 university visions

5.1.1. Student as a pawn in political agendas

The student role model "Student as a pawn in political agendas" is based on Olsen's (2007) vision of the university as an instrument for shifting national political agendas. It is interesting that the whole SFU initiative was developed as a funding mechanism for higher education institutions. There is no doubt that Nokut, as a founder and administrator of this initiative for many years, has been an important change driver regarding student participation models. First, in the official requirements for the SFU title, student participation in both governance and educational development/innovation has been raised as a condition for funding (Nokut, 2016). Second, Nokut's interest in developing a greater number of new student participation models in SFUs (during Nokut's administration period) has been expressed by the respondents. The main question is: has this political "pressure" from initiative administrators affected institutional responses?

The analysis of the empirical findings reveals that the effect of this influence is indeed visible, yet quite limited. The number of examples from SFUs show the political influence towards student role. A respondent from Excited confirmed that students were involved in the

application process as a consequence of Nokut's requirements. According to the respondent, the center was rejected the first time due to insufficient student participation. Therefore, in a subsequent attempt, the application had more input from the students[4]. Matric took its biggest step in student role development as a consequence of the invitation to the workshop "Students as partners" received from Nokut. After the workshop, Matric developed a concept of "students as partners," which succeeded in introducing new student participation practices at an institutional level. At the same time, it is obvious that political pressure had an influence on the institutional practices without defining them. It could be argued that the student participation models (such as teaching assistants and the representative structure) were first and foremost a result of the historical development of student participation rather than a result of political pressure. To illustrate with some examples, Excited went from student input in the application process to employment of regular student assistants, while Matric developed teaching assistant training programme and Bioceed went from one student representative (as indicated by Nokut's requirements) to two (based on their institutional needs). In addition, the drivers for student participation have been way more complex than purely political, e.g. according to a staff member from Martic, all the SFUs have been invited to the workshop "students as partners," yet only Matric decided to participate.

The state was defined as one of the main forces in Burton Clark's model around 35 years ago (see more in Clark, 1983) and this study proves that the state's influence is indeed important for Norwegian SFUs. The political pressure definitely contributed to the rationales for student participation and students indeed participated in the areas where their participation is defined by political requirements (e.g. application process and evaluation). On the other hand, it would be a mistake to claim that political pressure was the main rationale for student participation or the chosen student participation forms. Political pressure could be understood as a starting point, the catalyst to start developing institutional practices, yet the variety of those practices still need further analysis.

5.1.2.   Student as a customer/consumer

The student role model "Student as a customer/consumer" is based on Olsen's (2007) vision of the university as a service enterprise embedded in competitive markets. All the SFUs had an element of this student role model either in their rationales, forms of student participation,

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[4] Additionally, the requirements for student role got stricter in 2016 in comparison to 2013 (see 1.2.2)

or in the evolvement of student participation models. And yet, it would be inaccurate to claim that "student as a costumer/consumer" model explains the main student participation practices in SFUs.

First, it is crucial to discuss the rationales for student participation. All researched SFUs have mentioned the importance of student input for solving their problems or overcoming challenges. It could be assumed that solving issues (with the help of the students) would increase the quality of education as well as the satisfaction of the students. One of the respondents even used a consumeristic rhetoric describing the goals for student participation within an SFU, claiming that, "*because they are our main target and basically our customers, we have to work for them, we have to work well for them*" (staff1, Bioceed). It is worth to notice that this rationale was mostly mentioned by the staff, not the students themselves. Consequently, the analysis of the forms or areas of student participation revealed that providing feedback is one of student participation forms (e.g. Bioceed documents identify a number of channels for gathering feedback; a respondent from Excited stressed the student role in providing input and feedback in application process). And yet, the feedback provision is just a small part of the student role "puzzle." Student feedback (especially on teaching practices) is typically gathered using student surveys (Mandouit, 2018). Hence, the main student participation forms in SFUs are the structure of student representatives, the student assistants, the teaching assistants, etc. As can be seen, feedback is just a small part of more complicated student participation models.

Second, considering the evolvement of student participation practices, the example of Matric has to be mentioned. The development of their "student as partners" concept, especially the teaching assistant training was performed using some of the managerial principles. First, it was initiated by the administrators or administrative managers. Second, it was a planned change performed at a high scale (involving many participants). Third, it has quickly become institutionalized, meaning it has become a centralized practice. Yet, despite the process following the above-mentioned principles, the practices developed (the teaching assistant training programme and a strengthening student representation function) were not in correspondence with the "student as a customer/consumer" model. At the same time, it can be observed that students are not considered to be an integral part of this SFU, rather the SFU is working towards the benefit of all the students. It is strongly emphasized by the SFU that the focus is not to work with a current cohort but rather for future cohorts. In addition, the

students from the focus group could not identify Matric as an organizational unit, since they confused it with one their projects (the Drop-in center). In that sense, the "student as a consumer/customer" model can explain the distance between participating students and the SFU. The forms of student participation, however, were mostly developed based on the historical practices rather than as a calculated managerial solution.

The consumeristic focus towards student role has indeed influenced higher education (Dill, 2014; Meek, 2003). There is no doubt that Norwegian SFUs are affected by this trend as well. Yet, it is important to remember the democratic tradition of Norwegian higher education with no study fees for the students and low competition (see more in 1.2.1). Those tendencies are reflected in Norwegian SFUs. Indeed, they have experienced more or less pressure towards student role development from a consumeristic perspective, especially to the SFUs (administrative) staff. The student feedback function in the SFUs could be explained with such consumeristic rationales as improving the quality of the services or increasing customer satisfaction. In one of the SFUs, the managerial features of student role development could be an explanation for a not that active student role in building some of their practices. On the other hand, the majority of student role practices within SFUs are left out of student as a customer/consumer model and require further exploration.

5.1.3. Student as an apprentice

The student role model "Student as an apprentice" is based on Olsen's (2007) vision of the university as a rule-governed community of scholars. It is obvious that this student role model could contribute to the explanation for at least some of the main student participation practices. All the main components of this model (the rationales, the forms or areas and nature of evolvement) could be found in one or in all of the SFUs.

The main forms of student participation within the SFUs (teaching assistants, student assistants) could be assigned to the "student as an apprentice" model or at least they have some features of this model. The separate SFU practices will be discussed one by one below.

The best reflection of this student role model could be found in Excited. A large part of the Excited student assistant's job is a contribution to research performed by the professors. One of the staff members expressed a future oriented goal towards those students – to have PhD candidates. This student participation practice is very flexible, it can be adjusted by both

students and professors, the close cooperation between both parts is a key to the success in this practice.

Matrix with a teaching assistant programme could possibly be assigned to the same student participation form. Some elements do not exactly match this model, like the central character of this programme and the fact that this student participation form was aimed at helping students with mathematics skills, not at pursuing research (which is a primary interest area of Humboldtian university type). Yet, this programme is organized by the mathematics teacher (in collaboration with the administrative staff in Matric but not as much with the students), and it is strongly based on hierarchy in academia (cognitive hierarchy is one of the features of the Humboldtian university model (Nybom, 2007). In the Matric teaching assistant programme, more knowledgeable students share their understanding about mathematics with the novices.

Bioceed's Biorakel project has some features of the "student as an apprentice" model. Just like Matric, it is based on cognitive hierarchy: more knowledgeable students share their experiences and teach "younger" colleagues and students are look for answers together. Yet, it is exclusively organized by the students and, even more interestingly, by the structure of student representatives. It was aimed at increasing biology skills and skills of "being a student." Therefore, the project itself couldn't be assigned to the "student as an apprentice" model. On the other hand, the change or rather evolvement of the student role model in Bioceed was very natural, incremental and "invisible" – no one remembered exact dates, there was no formal decision to start something or stop something, and someone suggested and others agreed. Both parties, students and staff were involved in initiating the change. Even the dissemination of their student role model was horizontal and sporadic – another department heard about their practice and tried to implement something similar. Given the above, it could be concluded that the change in Bioceed was mainly performed following the "student as an apprentice" model. The evolvement of student participation model in this way could have been a driver for shaping a very tight community in Bioceed where the students are an integral part of the SFU. The student representatives felt a part of Bioceed, while Biorakel participants felt like advocates or representatives of Bioceed. The power distance between students and staff is very low, communication is mostly informal. Yet, the student participation forms developed in this way did not exactly correspond to the "student as an apprentice" model.

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Finally, there were some common features for all above mentioned SFUs. First, many students in all focus groups mentioned "the wish to teach" and "to learn ourselves" as their participation rationales and main benefits. Second, all participation forms derived from existing institutional practices prior to the SFUs.

To conclude, the "student as an apprentice" model could, at least in part, describe student participation practices in SFUs. Some SFUs have developed better corresponding student participation practices while others have just some similar features. The rationales of this model as well as this way of developing practices are still very alive in academia even 200 years after Humboldt's research university. The important finding here is that the evolvement of student participation practices using the "student as an apprentice" model might have led to students being a more integral part of the organization. Nevertheless, the methodology of this study does not allow any establishment of a firm causal relationship.

5.1.4.   Student as a democratic participant

The student role model "Student as a democratic participant" is based on Olsen's (2007) vision of the university as a representative democracy. All of the SFUs ended up implementing one or another form of student representation. On the other hand, it is important to notice that the student representation in governance was one of the requirements for becoming an SFU. Therefore, the "student as a democratic participant" model might have been influenced by political pressure (see 5.1.1).

First, looking at the rationales for student participation, it is obvious that a democracy or "students' voice" agenda was not among the most frequently mentioned ones. One of the possible explanations is that Norway has a strong democratic tradition among students as well as well-established institutional student organizations participating in solving the most important questions for the students (Stensaker & Michelsen, 2011). It might be that the idea of representation and democracy is so obvious that the respondents took it for granted and discussed other, "new" rationales for the newly developed student participation forms.

Yet, it should not be assumed that the student representation function is unimportant to SFUs. On the contrary, the variety of established student representation forms indicate that it has been high on the agenda of the SFUs. For example, Bioceed has developed the student representatives structure holding the main responsibility for student-driven activities in the

SFU. The information from the interviews show that the representation function and representative structure is very important in their community. The student organizations played an important role within the department pre Bioceed, and they still play an important role (one of the selection criteria to become a student representative is the relation to student organizations). Further, even the students in the Biorakel project have described themselves as representatives for Bioceed in front of the other students. That leads to the conclusion that representation is an important part of the discourse in Bioceed. Another example is Matric's involvement of a professional student representative (employed, collecting information about student problems/issues through various channels) in their governance in order to achieve continuity in representation work. Both those examples show that the student representation function in SFUs is important and well regarded. It has been implemented at a level way above the threshold defined in the SFU requirements.

Finally, analysing the development of the student role according to the "student as a democratic participant" model, the component not observed in the interviews was conflict. On the contrary, it seemed that student participation development was driven by compromise or centralized decisions. Some separate components of the student role development were found at least in some of the SFUs: in Bioceed the students were the initiators of some changes while in Matric the changes (as well as the SFU itself) were driven by the need to solve problems/issues.

In conclusion, student representation is not a participation model newly developed by the SFUs – it has held a strong position in the Norwegian higher education system for years. It can be easily seen by the way some SFUs encourage student participation – through the representation structure or strengthening the function of representation. All three SFUs have implemented a student representation function in slightly different ways. Yet, the development of those structures was not a result of internal struggles, but rather a continuous evolvement of historically shaped institutional practices.

5.2. The partnership discussion

The student role framework does not encompass partnership. The partnership discussion will consist of two parts. First, the SFU initiative and student participation in SFUs will be shortly reviewed based on the partnership definition. Second, the student and staff partnership will be placed in regards to the developed student role framework (see 2.2.1).

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5.2.1. The partnership in SFUs

At least two of the selected SFUs have used a discourse of partnership in one way or another. Matric has developed a "student as partners" concept mentioned in both documents and the interviews. Yet, in the daily development of student participation practices students are scarcely included. A Bioceed staff member has claimed that students are definitely considered as partners in the SFU. The student representative, on the other hand, deliberately claimed that he/she would not call the students as partners: "*I wouldn't say. We have our projects but we get help*" (studentrep1, Bioceed). In that SFU students are rather in control of their projects than in partnership. Finally, Excited has developed assistants' positions where at least parts of their time students are working on various research tasks together with the professors. Yet, they do not call it a partnership.

Looking at the definitions (see more in 2.1.2), a partnership could be described using two criteria: it is a process rather than a product; and the relationship between the staff and the students during that process is special. First, a partnership *"does not guarantee any particular outcomes"* (Matthews et al., 2018, p.3) and *"is about being (radically) open"* (Healey et al, 2014, p. 9). Yet, the SFU initiative has its goals (see more in 1.2.2) and one of the recommendations for the SFUs in mid-term evaluation was *"to develop 'measures of success' rather than 'measures of activity'"* (Nokut, 2017). Therefore, there is the political pressure in favor of outcome orientation. In addition, the findings reveal that the "student as a consumer/customer" model has been contributing to the development of student participation models in all SFUs. At the same time, it was indicated in two of the SFUs that students are encouraged to create open-ended projects and most of their ideas have been accepted as long as they are related to the education. It leads to the suggestion that students can contribute to SFUs following a process approach without strictly predefined outcomes. Yet, the recommended outcomes approach might be a threat to limit student activity to the very restricted area "where they can play without making any harm to the expected SFUs results."

The second criterion for partnership is the relationship between the staff and the students. In a partnership, all participants are actively engaged and have equal opportunities (though according to individual possibilities) to contribute. As such, it is an effective relationship, a collaboration. In all three SFUs at least some of the students are actively engaged, some of them have equal opportunities to contribute to various SFU activities. The element some of the SFUs fail to comply with is collaboration, meaning an effective working relationship. In

Bioceed students are the ones running the projects with little help from the staff, while Matric has little student involvement in day-to-day SFU activities. Excited has implemented a long-term students-professors cooperation model, yet sometimes students feel a bit left to themselves and lack guidance and cooperation. On the other hand, in case of the tight student partnership, how many students could actually be partners in individual SFUs?

As can be seen, all analysed SFUs have gone a great way towards student partnerships and they have certain elements in favour of partnerships as well as some obstacles. As the findings show, tight cooperation and partnership is not built overnight; on the contrary, it requires engaged students and good staff and students' relations to build partnership practices upon.

5.2.2.   Partnership in student role framework

Partnerships have not been conceptualized in the developed student role framework. Nevertheless, since this study is aims to contribute to the partnership discussion, there is a need to place partnership in this model based on theoretical considerations as well as the findings of the study. As mentioned before (see **Error! Reference source not found.** and REF _Ref3739105 \r \h 1.1) the partnership could look very differently in different contexts and settings. And yet, a partnership can be characterized as a process, not a product; it is a special process where all parties (both academics and students) are engaged and have opportunities to contribute (see **Error! Reference source not found.**). The four student participation models will be reviewed below based on their relationship to the student partnership.

Student as a pawn in political agendas: First, this student participation model should not include the required engagement from academics and students which is a requirement for partnership. Second, this student participation type might be focused on partnership as a product which could be documented and delivered to the official institutions or policy makers. The findings reveal that political pressure has been a powerful incentive to actually start the student participation or partnership practices, ye, it does not define them.

Student as a customer/consumer: This student participation model has often been described as an opposite to student partnership in the literature (Cheney, 1996; Matthews et al., 2018; Tight, 2013; Williamson, 2013). According to the critics, it does not ensure the required engagement from the students. Second, as it has been mentioned above (see 5.2.2) the strictly

predefined outcomes could provide some restrictions for student partnership. The empirical data has indicated that the student participation forms according to the "student as a customer/consumer" model is mostly about student input or feedback. According to Carey (2013, p. 257), the partnership is more than identifying the problem but "*leaving the process of fixing the problem to academic staff*". Yet, the consumeristic mindset from the staff (e.g. in Bioceed) doesn't intervene to create other active student participation forms, which reflect partnership better.

Student as an apprentice: This student participation model is unique as the students and the staff work towards shared goals and student participation forms are evolving in consensus. On the other hand, the main power might be concentrated in the hands of professors as they are the initiators of this cooperation. The Excited example has shown that common contribution to research could develop a student participation model to being very close or even corresponding to the partnership. The issue with that model is the dominance of the professors. In Excited the students are welcome to suggest their own research ideas, yet they have raised an issue of professors not prioritizing cooperation, having little time for the students.

Student as a democratic participant: This student participation model is very close to the partnership. The change in this model should be initiated by the students and all parties are valued in this model. Bioceed has provided an example of a student participation model strongly representing "student as a democratic participant". Many projects in this model are initiated by students, and the latter are valued members of the SFU community. The only issue in their model is the amount of actual cooperation among students and the staff, especially professors. Despite that, this student participation model is very close or even corresponds to partnership.

In the student role framework, the student partnership could be framed around two student participation models: student as an apprentice and student as a democratic participant (see Figure *2*). The partnership means that the student voice is heard ("student as a representative" model) and the cooperation between students and academics is continuous ("student as an apprentice"). The other two models, student as a pawn in political agendas and student as a customer/consumer, do contribute to creating partnership as drivers towards student participation. Yet, these two models do not define student partnerships. To conclude, student partnerships as a practice can be implemented very differently. This study contributes to the

partnership discussion showing the range of the practices with their rationales and evolvement processes within the partnership scope or at least very close to it.
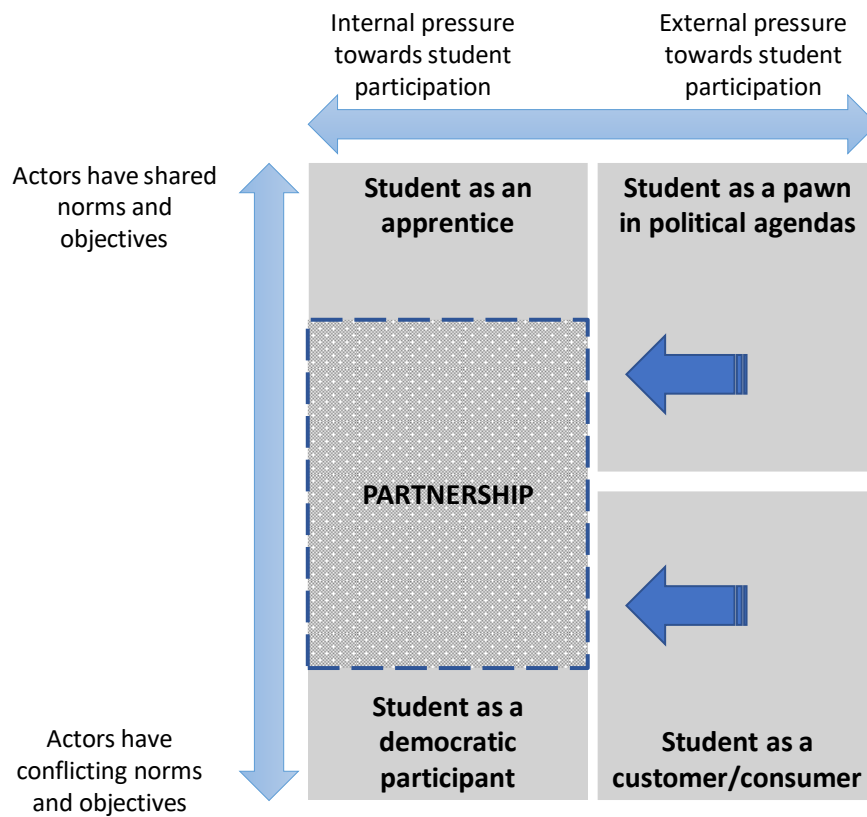

Figure 2. Partnership in the student role framework

6. Conclusion and recommendations

6.1. Conclusion

As stated in the introduction, this study was inspired by the new and increasingly popular student partnership discussion in literature and its impact on institutional practices. This study offers a contribution to that field with a focus on differences between those practices and an emphasis on the institutional setting. The study was set within the Norwegian Centres for Excellence in Education Initiative which has defined certain political expectations for student participation. The following research questions have been addressed:

RQ1: What is the student role in Norwegian SFUs?

RQ2: How did the model of student participation evolve in Norwegian SFUs?

RQ3: How could the student participation in Norwegian SFUs be explained?

In order to avoid using a charged word like *partnership* (indicating a desired status of student and staff interaction) (Bovill & Bulley, 2011; Healey et al., 2014), the neutral word *participation* was used. Whether the discovered student participation models correspond with the partnership concept has been discussed in 5.2.

The empirical study revealed three different student participation models in three very different SFUs. Bioceed has developed a strong cooperation with the students based on a student representative structure. This participation model has been built on a strong student organizational culture within the biology department. The evolvement of this model has been incremental, initiated by both students and the SFU staff. In contrast, Matric has managed to start a university-wide teaching assistant training programme aimed at changing education for the whole institution. Their starting point was lower student engagement (at least at the SFU level), yet high commitment from the leadership regarding the student participation issue. This student participation model has been planned and implemented centrally, rather as a reform than a continuation. Excited, a relatively "fresh" SFU, has chosen to implement the model of 12 part-time student assistants involved not only in teaching but also in research. They have built their model on active students and a previously successfully implemented

teaching assistant programme. All three analyzed SFUs are unique and they have developed individual paths towards student participation based on their strengths and weaknesses.

The student participation practices have been analyzed according to the developed student role framework based on Olsen's (2007) 4 visions of universities. The framework consists of four student role models: student as an apprentice; student as a pawn in political agendas; student as a democratic participant; and student as a customer/consumer. Student participation has been analysed based on the rationales, forms/areas of participation and way of evolving. The student role framework was a useful tool to discuss student participation practices and their differences. All three SFUs have chosen different student participation models, yet most of them have practices corresponding to the four student role models mentioned above.

Looking at the common tendencies for the selected Norwegian SFUs, it seems clear that the SFU initiative was a starting point, a catalyst for further development of their institutional student participation practices. The political pressure came in the form of requirements in order to be awarded the SFU tittle as well as other forms of cooperation with Nokut (e.g. invitation to "students as partners" workshop). The political pressure has been a driver but it would be inaccurate to say that the political pressure defined the actual student participation forms in SFUs. The other three student role models could be used to explain some of the student participation practices. The "student as a customer/consumer" model has explained a part of student participation practices related to student input and feedback. There is no doubt that SFUs (especially administrative staff) have experienced more or less pressure towards student role development from a consumeristic perspective. And it can explain their wish to get student input in order to deliver "a better product": high quality education. However, this student role model doesn't provide examples of partnership. On the other hand, the study reveales that in order to develop successful partnership practices (or at least being close to partnership), neoliberal thinking is not an obstacle. Gravett, Kinchin and Winstone (2019) claim that partnership is something being one step away from a typical neoliberal view and viewing students as being "more than customers". This study indicates that both are possible at the same time in Norwegian SFUs. It might be explained by the unique Norwegian higher education context. Despite an increasing importance of efficiency and competition, Norwegian education still relies on strong democratic traditions, trust and equality in the society. The importance of the "student as a democratic participant" model in Norwegian SFUs could be explained by the above-mentioned democratic traditions in Norwegian higher

education. This student role model has been reflected in all of the SFUs, all the three SFUs have implemented a student representation function. In one of them, student representatives played a key role in shaping the whole student participation model. The findings reveal that both models ("student as a democratic participant" and "student as an apprentice") have been more dominant in student participation practices. Both models have strong traditions[5] and, as mentioned above, the SFUs have developed their student participation models mostly based on previous institutional practices. And both these models can result in successful partnership practices.

There were interesting tendencies discovered regarding the evolvement of student participation models and students being or not being an integral part of the SFU. In one of the SFUs the evolvement of the student participation model has reflected the "student as an apprentice" model and students felt like an integral part of the SFU. In another SFU, the student participation model developed according to the "student as a consumer/customer" model, which may have made students feel less related to the SFU. Given the nature of the "student as an apprentice" model, the change is fostered from both students and staff. That could have resulted in participating students feeling like an integral part of the SFU. Yet, it is interesting to observe that strong commitment to the SFU not only from those students who contributed to the change but also other students.

According to Birnbaum (1991, p. 83), "*A model is an abstraction of reality, if it is good enough, allows us to understand (and sometimes predict) some of the dynamics of the system that it represents*". Not all student participation practices could be explained using the student role framework. Sometimes the rationales and evolvement process of a practice might belong to one of the 4 models but the form of participation – to another one. The first explanation has been presented by Olsen (2007): the ideas exist next to each other and different underlying rationales lead to practices which are considered common ground. As an example, the respondents in Excited have mentioned various rationales, yet the main student participation practice (involvement in research) could be explained by the rationales found in the "student as an apprentice" model.

The second possible explanation is that people are not consciously aware when they decide why and what kind of student participation form they need and how to develop it. The

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[5] The model "student as an apprentice" has strong tradition in research universities in general (see more in 2.1.1)

information about the rationale behind student participation in the SFU documentation was scarce. The student participation forms were mostly presented as an achievement without reasoning. In addition, the information received from the documents and from the interviews with staff members slightly differed. That suggests that student participation forms are mostly developed based on historical practices without detailed reflections regarding students' purpose and their role in the SFU.

Finally, the developed student participation model does not include the institutional resources upon which the student participation model is built. For example, one of the SFUs had a strong student organizational culture which was instrumental in building the particular student participation model. The findings reveal that the strengths of SFUs and the historically developed student participation practices within the universities were key to understanding the student participation models in SFUs seen today.

In brief, the developed student role framework was useful on two accounts. First, it helped to make distinctions among different student participation practices in individual SFUs and explain at least some of them. Second, it contributed to materializing the tendencies common to all selected Norwegian SFUs. Therefore, the developed student role framework fulfilled its purpose in spite of its deficiencies.

6.2. Recommendations

This study is relevant for two reasons. First, it contributes to the literature gap explaining how one or another form of student participation (whether it be partnership or not) evolves within the institution. Second, it gives insights into the student role within Norwegian SFUs. Therefore, the recommendations will be provided as suggestions to both further development of the initiative and future research.

6.2.1. Suggestions to the SFU initiative

This study revealed that political pressure towards student participation was a successful tool to foster student participation practices. In that context, the SFU initiative has reached its goal "*to contribute to developing new forms of student involvement and partnership*" ((Nokut, 2016, p.8). Yet, the requirements for the student role were quite open, allowing institutions to choose their individual paths. The results revealed that some SFUs have gone even further

with regard to student participation in comparison to the requirements. Would stricter requirements encourage even more student participation? The results revealed that institutions have built their student participation model and its practices based on their strengths and weaknesses. Stricter requirements for the student role could lead institutions to the "student as a pawn in political agendas" model where student participation is shown only on paper and addressed only in evaluations. Consequently, more detailed requirements regarding the student role are not recommended. However, it is recommended that the SFUs describe the student participation model in yearly reports and mid-term evaluations. As this study has shown, the SFUs are not necessarily conscious of student role choices and its rationales. Therefore, a detailed yearly reflection regarding the rationale behind a student role, the developed student participation forms and the process of development is recommended. It could even be suggested that this reflection happens as a joint effort between students and staff. This study has also found that such joint efforts could possibly increase student commitment to the SFU.

6.2.2. Suggestions for further research

The partnership discussion has derived from the teaching and learning literature (see 1.1 and 2.1.2). This study has shown that it is useful to look at partnership through an institutional lens. The partnership practices are set in institutional contexts which shape their forms and development. Therefore, it is suggested to develop more studies on partnership practices embedded in institutional settings. First, discussing the limitations of the student role framework (see 2.2.1), this study proposes that the organizational resources and historical practices should be considered. It suggests that new studies based on resource dependency theory[6] and/or institutional theory[7] should be encouraged. Second, it has been noticed that, in some of the SFUs, students feel more integral than in others. There is not enough proof to make solid conclusions without further analysis. Therefore, further analysis could be proposed to analyse a relation between student commitment to an SFU and the developed student participation model. Third, the study has been embedded in a Norwegian context and, as a consequence, the common features of the Norwegian higher education system have been reflected (e.g. democratic tradition in higher education). It would be beneficial to compare the Centres for Excellence from different countries having different higher education cultures.

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[6] E.g. Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978
[7] E.g. DiMaggio & Powell, 1983

Finally, this study only analysed three out of seven SFUs. All three SFUs were different and they have developed very different student participation models with different practices. It is likely that including all SFUs into the analysis even more student participation practices would be found and better explained.

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Appendices

A. Summary of four models of student interaction by its intensity

Authors of the model	(Ashwin & Mcvitty, 2015)	(Healey et al., 2014)	(Klemencic, 2011)	(Bovill & Bulley, 2011)
The name of the model	A model of engagement levels	A model of engagement levels	A model of participation levels	A model of participation levels
Object of the model	(Based on goal) -Engagement to form individual understanding; -Engagement to form curricula; -Engagement to form communities	-Learning, teaching and assessment; -subject-based research and inquiry; -scholarship of teaching and learning; -curriculum design and pedagogic consultancy	-Governance	-Curriculum design
Levels of student interaction in co-creation (lower than partnership)				No interaction.
			Access to information	Participation claimed but academics are in control.
	Consultation	Consultation	Consultation	
		Involvement	Dialogue	Limited choice from prescribed choices.
				Wide choice from prescribed choices.
		Participation		Student control of prescribed areas.
				Student control of some areas of choice.

Levels of student interaction in co-creation (partnership and beyond)	**Partnership**	**Partnership**	**Partnership**	**Partnership – a negotiated curriculum**
	Leadership			Students in control.

B.   Interview guide - staff

1. Brief presentation of the study and the interview

2. Information on the respondent (role in a SFU, responsibilities, time in a SFU)

3. Context before becoming a SFU (structures, committees)

4. Initiation (expectations for the student involvement and students; application phase)

5. Structures:

a) student participation forms in a SFU

b) student-driven projects (if any)

c) projects involving students (if any)

d) communication with the students

e) institutionalization/dissemination

f) changes in terms of these structures

6. The phenomenon of student participation

a) student role in an SFU

b) benefits and challenges regarding involvement of students

c) changes in terms of student role

7. Personal experience while working with students

C.   Interview guide – student representatives

1. Brief presentation of the study and the interview

2. Information on the respondent (role in a SFU, responsibilities, connection to student union; previous activities at the university/department; the entry path to the SFU)

3. Student involvement at the university/department

4. The participation in governance and daily management (decisions, project initiation, "voice of the students")

5. Other responsibilities (if any)

6. Relationship with the staff (communication channels, power distance)

7. The changes in the structure of student representatives

8. The phenomenon of student participation

a) student role in an SFU

b) changes in terms of the student role

9. Personal experience while working with students and staff in cooperation

a) personal expectations

b) benefits and challenges

c) the commitment to the institution

D. Interview guide – focus group

Introduction:

Hello everyone, my name is Rasa and I am conducting my master's thesis on student involvement at selected Norwegian Centers for Excellence in Education (I am myself a master student at the university of Oslo). Firstly, I want to thank you all for coming today, I really appreciate it. The goal of this focus group is to understand your involvement in … – **what is it, how does it look like and what does it mean to you**.

I will be recording the session because I won't be able to take notes on everything you say while also listening to what you're saying. I hope you are fine with that? I am not asking your names or any other personal details, but as your voice is your personal information, I will ask you to sign the forms of consent. There are more details in here. One copy for you and one for me.

The session will begin by me asking some questions and you are invited to talk freely and as much as you like. The only thing is, that I do ask that you speak one at a time, it can be difficult to hear you on the recording if there is some overlap. This is an open session, I value everyone's opinions and if you have opposing views to the rest of the group, great! This session should take approximately 45 minutes, but it depends on how much you have to say. Let's get started!

Introductory questions (background)
1. Can you tell a little bit how did you got involved into …? Was it someone who invited you? Just a short individual story.
2. Do you have some experience of being active before? Have you been a student representative or so?

Expectations:
3. Would you tell me why you have got involved in …. activities? Why to go through all this burden? Or… wasn't it a burden?

Process

Micro scale
4. Now let's be a bit more precise. Can you tell what kind of activities are you involved in? What is your role there?
5. What kind of interaction with the professors or administrative staff (as well as other students) do you have while doing your role? What is the nature of communication?
6. What decision power do you have while shaping your role? Would you share some examples?
7. Let's talk about responsibility. What are you responsible for in those activities? (result)

Mezzo\macro scale.

8. Let's imagine that you have a great idea (e.g. start a..). How would you implement it? Where would you start?

The concept of student involvement and partnership at …

9. How do you call your role in …? (As involvement, cooperation, partnership?)
10. What are the main characteristics of student partnership?
11. Are those concepts used in the informal communication at Matric? Among the students? Example…
12. Who are the students being involved? Is there a typical set of characteristics?

Reflections

13. What do you like about your role and what you don't like about your role?
14. What are the main benefits?
15. How does your role at Matric relate to your studies\your life at the university in general? Any examples?