

**PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENT COUNCIL MEMBERS
ON THEIR PARTICIPATION IN DECISION MAKING
IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

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ABSTRACT

PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES ON THEIR PARTICIPATION IN DECISION MAKING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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This study aims to investigate the perceptions of the student representatives in the student council at Bilkent University, in Turkey, as to how well the student council system in this university works in terms of enabling the participation of students in the decision making process of the university administration.

A qualitative research design was used to collect data from the ten members of the student council at Bilkent University. Standardised open ended interview questions that were prepared by the researcher were used to collect data through face to face interviews, which were recorded and transcribed by the researcher. The data were analysed through content analysis technique and the results were presented descriptively.

The results revealed that majority of the students are aware of the fact that the student council is necessary in order to enable the participation of the students in the decision making process. The council members generally think that the council has a meaningful involvement in the decisions made at the university only on student related issues. They think that they are not seen as one of the key decisions makers on issues related to other aspects of the university.

According to the results of the research, it is understood that there is a need to revise the system taking student opinions into account as well in a way that it represents the whole student body, the student council participates in the decisions made at all levels of the university, and on all issues concerning the university.

Keywords: Participation in decision making, higher education, student governments, student councils.

ÖZ

ÖĞRENCİ KONSEYİ ÜYELERİNİN YÜKSEK ÖĞRETİMDE KARAR VERMEYE KATILIMLARI HAKKINDAKİ ALGILAMALARI

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Bu araştırmanın amacı, yüksek öğretim kurumlarında öğrenci konseyi üyelerinin yönetim sürecinde alınan kararlara katılım açısından öğrenci konseyi sisteminin ne ölçüde etkili olduğuyla ilgili algılamalarını incelemektir.

Araştırmada, Bilkent Üniversitesi Öğrenci Konseyi'nin on üyesi veri toplamak için örneklem olarak kullanılmıştır. Veri toplamak için araştırmacı tarafından hazırlanan standart açık uçlu mülakat soruları kullanılmış ve yüz yüze gerçekleştirilip ses kaydı yapılan mülakatlar daha sonra araştırmacı tarafından deşifre edilmiştir. Elde edilen veriler içerik analizi tekniğiyle analiz edilmiş ve sonuçlar betimleyici bir şekilde sunulmuştur.

Bulgular, öğrenci konseyi üyelerinin çoğunun konseyin varlığının öğrencilerin karar verme aşamalarına katılımlarını sağladığı için gerekli olduğunun farkında olduklarını göstermiştir. Konsey üyelerinin konseyin sadece öğrencilerle ilgili konularda anlamlı bir katılımları olduğunu düşündükleri görülmüştür.

Araştırmanın sonuçlarına göre, sistemin öğrenci görüşlerine de yer vererek onların tüm kararlarda ve tüm karar verme basamaklarında temsilini sağlayacak şekilde yeniden düzenlenmesine ihtiyaç olduğu anlaşılmaktadır.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter includes information about the background of student participation in decision making in higher education, the purpose of the study, the context of the study, the significance of the study, and some key terms used in the study.

1.1 The background of student participation in decision making

The training and development of the human intellect is thought to be one of the most crucial roles of university education. However, it is not only the cognitive growth through gaining academic knowledge that is meant when the development of the human intellect is considered. The general view suggests that the moral growth and the general maturation of the person are other ultimate goals of university education.

Democracy is one of the most important values that intellectually mature person pertains to. Since values are caught rather than taught, the task of higher education must be to engage the students in the experience of democracy in order to advance the students' perception of the value, through enabling them to discover it themselves. In other words, knowledge of democracy does not guarantee that the student will develop an understanding of democracy. The student must be intellectually and emotionally connected to the real experience of it.

Student governments, the arenas which make participation of students in administrative issues possible, is the best way to enable the students to engage in the experience of democracy. Through student governments, students find their way to make themselves heard by the administrative bodies of the university. They go through the experience of an election process, and the council that is elected by them represents their ideas in front of the administration.

Democracy education is hardly the only reason why students must participate in the decision making process in higher education. In addition to that, it is also a necessity because of the need for wide democratisation of the university. It has been highly accepted that decision making in educational administration must be participatory. Goynes, et.al. (1990) summarise the probable advantages of participatory decision making as increased satisfaction, increased motivation, better communication, more efficient decision making and improved quality in educational settings.

1.2 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the perceptions of the student representatives in the student council at Bilkent University, in Turkey, as to how well the student council system in this university works in terms of enabling the participation of students in the decision making process of the university administration. The subsidiary aims are to investigate:

- a. How well do they think they represent the students in the administrative board?
- b. What do they view as their roles?
- c. What kind of advantages does the existence of the student council bring to the university?
- d. What are the areas of participation they think the most problematic?
- e. How do they think these problems could be resolved to enhance the student participation into university's decision making?

1.3 The significance of the study

It has been widely accepted that the Turkish higher education system is in need of a reform especially for the last 20 years. One of the most commonly agreed deficiencies of the system is democratisation. Bursalioğlu (2000) explains the relationship between these by stating that the aim of democratic education is to prevent the isolation of social groups from each other through enabling their interaction with each other and the larger community both social and institutional.

Increased student participation in administration in higher education institutions in Turkey might improve the quality of administration. Higher quality of administration is more likely to result in higher quality in education than higher quality of books or teaching techniques the instructors use (Bursalıoğlu, 2000). Students have a great insight into the meaning of their educational experiences; and they could be very useful during the policy making processes.

Bilkent University is one of the pioneers of the student council system in Turkey. However, no research has been done on the effectiveness of these councils from the views of students who are actively involved in these councils.

This study is aimed at drawing attention to the importance of student participation in decision making in higher education, and, in the same way, contributing to a more participatory and democratic atmosphere in the administration of higher education institutions. Next, the study will be a starting point for further studies on what the best system for student governments should be like in the Turkish higher education system.

1.4 Definition of terms

Student government: The term “student government” was used in the study to refer to any kind of organisation within the educational institutions in which students represent other students in administrative boards. At some places the same concept might have been referred to as “student council”.

Participatory decision making: “Participatory decision making” is another key term, which was used to refer to the action of making decisions by the participation of the stakeholders, which are students in our case. Therefore, whenever this term was used in the study, it means the participation of students into the university governance.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter includes information and a number of different points of view that has been found in the literature about the history of student governments, the aims and functions of student governments, ways to make them really work, types of student governments, representation in student governments, the history and current practice of student governance in Turkey, and how to establish and organise a student government system from start.

2. 1 History of student governments

The idea of student governments and student participation in university administration is not quite a new concept in the world even though it is a relatively novel idea in Turkey. The practice of having students control their own activities extends over a period of many centuries. Klopff (1960) states that student governments in the middle ages were developed from a real need on the part of the students since they were oppressed by the foreign scholars and were forced to form guilds to protect themselves. In the second half of the 12th century, they acquired considerable prestige and power; and the idea of guilds later spread to Europe and England.

Student governments showed their most rapid development in Italy because of the suitability of the existing political situation then. There is a long history of student involvement in making decisions for colleges and universities, dating to the earliest beginnings of higher education and the formation of student nations at Bologna (Love and Miller, 2003).

Student government in the medieval university was different from our current view in that a social and economic need was the base of the medieval organisation, whereas a democratic ideal to education was the base of its rise in America (Klopff,

1960). There is another reason given by Klopff (1960) for the development of student governments, which is, the need for students a means of organising and channelling their opinions about programs, services, issues, fees, charges and other areas that affect student welfare.

Some form of a student government has been existing in American universities since the late 1700's. Many of these early attempts resulted in failure because a large amount of power was given to students with little administrative guidance and the students were unable to handle the powers. Some others failed because too little power was given or too close supervision was maintained. This situation somewhat continued until the foundation of National Student Federation of the United States of America in the 1930's. However, Klopff (1960) states that although after this the organisations evolved on most of the American campuses, their function has mainly been the supervision of student social activities. With the establishment of the National Student Association in 1946, student government in the American university was given great impetus. The students became interested in having a voice in the governing of their affairs (Klopff, 1960).

After the academic freedom movement of the early 1970's, student empowerment has steadily eroded and has been reshaped by the evolution of higher education as a business enterprise (Love and Miller, 2003).

Student participation in decision making has also been a growing trend in the 1980's in educational literature. In addition to the earlier mentioned rationale behind the progress of student governments, which is the effort to democratise the education, a new role started to be discussed. Educators started to argue that student participation in decision making provides the perfect opportunity for students to become personally and socially responsible adults. The findings of researchers who looked into short term effects of student participation indicated that students learn the value and skills of weighing opinions, negotiating and dissenting through participation in administration as decision makers (D'amico, 1980). From then on, it has been agreed that student participation is a way of preparing for and practising citizen participation in the real world.

In the 1990's, owing to the rise of the managerial and economic values in organisations around the world, universities were also suffering from a conflict between managerial and academic cultures. Some theoreticians recommended that universities reinvent themselves as corporations whereas others stated this would be a threat to academic interests of the university. However, as Waugh claims (1998, p. 61), "the managerial values were increasingly being accepted at the expense of core academic values." One of the highly accepted values of the world of management, quality management, has also affected university administration. According to Waugh (1998), quality management approach to university administration defined students as "customers", who are distanced from administration by just becoming another set of stakeholders.

Another negative impact that is more recent compared to managerial threat is the culture of value added to students in terms of jobs, promotions and salaries. Students are more interested in career directedness these days rather than participating in the decisions made in university administration (Love and Miller, 2003, p.1). This explains the relative disinterest of students in both student activities in the campus and also in being a part of decision making to a certain extent.

2.2 The aims and functions of student governments

The personalities and wills of the individuals are most valued by democracy. However, as well as for individuals, democratic values are also important for the social life. Büyükkaragöz (1990) lists those democratic values that are substantially important for the social life as follows:

1. the peaceful negotiation of disputes
2. enabling of a peaceful change in a changing society
3. administrators using their initiatives according to democratic rules
4. very little difficulty in the decision making process
5. disputes existing in a large tolerance perspectives
6. the acceptance of the superiority of law

7. democratic education (p. 18)

We are not born with the knowledge of our rights and duties as citizens in a democracy (Soder, 1997). These are matters that must be learned if a person is supposed to govern itself properly. In order to enable the citizens to learn it, education is needed to help democracy continue and be permanent. Because of the incredibly fast developments in science and technology in our age, education has to change in a way that it continues during the whole life of the individual. These changes will only result in the permanency of the democracy if education is democratic, and students are given more responsibility.

The young population has a substantially important role on democracy education since they are suitable in terms of age to be the high qualified manpower that the society demands, and to use this power to search for solutions to the country's problems through science and technology. University, whose function as an institution is to turn the young population into high qualified manpower, is a place where democracy education has to take place.

Having said that, universities do not only use knowledge theoretically but also they make it practical. Moreover, they are supposed to produce knowledge as well as transferring it (Ozankaya, 1990). When these basic functions of the university such as training high qualified manpower and producing knowledge are taken into consideration, it becomes clear that some criteria are needed in order to make these functions work. The most crucial of these criteria is the existence of a clearly defined system of democracy (Bilgin, 1993).

Democracy is defined in its simplest way as voting for the people to govern you and voting for the decisions made about yourself. Bearing this definition in mind, which focuses on the individual more, it is necessary to look at what this means for university administration, from a more institutional point of view.

Participation in administration in universities can only be realised if academic and non-academic staff, students, and representatives from non- university organisations

such as chambers or unions have their places in the structure of the decision making organs of the university (Korkut, 2004). Nevertheless, Carol (1986) emphasises the importance of the functionality of this participation, and adds that taking part in the decisions needs to be real and meaningful for it to help solve the problems in the administration.

According to Korkut (2004), the benefits of participation in the decisions made at the university may be listed as follows:

1. It enhances the quality of the decisions made since the participants are knowledgeable about the practices in their fields.
2. It enables the individuals in the organisation to change their behaviours and habits because of identification with the group.
3. The subordinate participants, for instance students, gain substantial amount of administrative experience, enhance their knowledge and quality to develop a shared sense of responsibility, thanks to the opportunities they get to discuss face to face with more experienced administrators.
4. All these opportunities that cater for the realisation of the participants' full potential result in satisfaction on the part of the participant, which leads to more devotion to the organisation (p. 635).

In a study carried out by McCannon and Bennett (1996), students were found to be more likely to participate in student activities that are related to their academic major or future career plans. Although this might be true, this is not the only reason why students should participate in student governments in higher education. That is because participation in campus governance does not just offer important experience for students who are interested in political careers. "Participation in campus governance is linked to desirable outcomes for individual students as well as to positive contributions to the welfare of the campus community" (Kuh and Lund, 1994, p. 1). Kuh and Lund specify the skills that students gain from their experience in student governments as organisational, planning, managing and decision making skills.

Another set of skills that scholars think students gain from student governments is that of citizenship. Young people are usually regarded as having little knowledge of their social and political traditions, their political institutions and their constitutions. Many governments respond to this as including some knowledge of democracy and citizenship into their curricula. On the other hand, there is considerable amount of literature which suggests that “a more effective way of learning about democracy, citizenship and government is for young people to experience elements of democracy and citizenship within the parameters of everyday school life. Learning about democracy is achieved by students participating in democracy and schools need to provide environments which allow experiential learning about democracy and citizenship through student participation in schools” (Wilson, 2000, p. 1).

It might be very challenging to create a system where genuine participation occurs, though. Colin and Heaney (2001) argue that the challenge to create a participatory practice within higher education inevitably involves pushing the borders, anticipating and fighting against resistance. Unless this struggle is engaged in, genuine participation and democracy are not attained.

However challenging it may be, education for democracy is the core of adult education for many philosophers of education. For Lindeman (1989), what distinguished adult education from other forms of education is the fact that its purpose is social and that it is integral to the democratic struggle.

As well as functioning as practical part of civic education of democracy and citizenship, participation in decision making can also help students in higher education develop individually in terms of social and collective skills. Learning about the importance of democracy and participatory decision making might instil independence of thought and feeling; whereas Portnykh (2001) suggests that student government can instil independence of action and behaviour: “As they participate in self-government, students independently map out the objectives of their collective, and organise efforts to accomplish these objectives”

(p. 54). As they do these, they form interpersonal relations, they monitor and evaluate the activities and behaviour of their comrades. In this way, students are both governing their collective and consequently themselves.

Student involvement in the governance of higher education institutions is closely linked with two rationales according to Love and Miller (2003). One is that students have the right to be involved in how they are treated and the activities of their institution. The second rationale is that there is a direct correlation between student involvement in outside class activities, and, learning and development. “Students who are actively involved in both academic and outside class activities gain more from the college experience than those who are not so involved” (Kuh et. al., 1991, p. xi).

There is another point of view in the literature as to the main aims and functions of student governments; that is, universities have to reinvent themselves as much as corporations have to do to keep up with the changes in the managerial culture. Although business management techniques may not always work with public or non-profit organisations due to difference of values, there is an assumption that business management approaches can solve the problems of higher education institutions. As a consequence of this assumption, students are regarded as “customers” of higher education. Waugh, Jr. defines this approach as quality management to university administration (1998). According to Waugh, Jr., this approach has some advantages as well as some drawbacks. Most importantly, the focus on students as customers is encouraging institutions to create courses and programs to meet specific student demands. However, customer satisfaction in higher education does not always mean effective and quality teaching. “The managerial metavalues are undermining the purposes of academic institutions and the roles of the faculty members in determining academic priorities and requirements” (Waugh, Jr., 1998, p. 66). In the long run, this may result in that the long term needs of society will not be well served by higher education.

Morison (1970) states that there is little doubt that inclusion of students in decision making will have good effects not only on the students but also on the decisions.

When a faculty member is faced with a situation which requires a policy decision to be made by the central administration, h/she usually knows whom to go for attention. H/she also has a certain amount of influence and bargaining power to deal with the administration due to his position because there are many informal ties between the faculty member and the administration. However, when a student encounters a similar situation, h/she has very little to do if there is no student government system. This is because then the student is left out of the system of informal relationships. H/she has little credit and influence on the administration and very poor or no bargaining power. Morison (1970) points out that as a result of this the students resort to violence and confrontation, as they see this as the only way to make the university recognise and consider their concerns.

Including this one, Morison summarises all the reasons that can be given for the inclusion of students in the formal decision making process under four categories (1970, p. 86):

- Students have a right to such participation because they are citizens of the university in the same sense that faculty members are.
- Students can contribute to better decisions by adding another perspective into the decision process.
- The participation would give them a chance to learn about policy making process and see the functions and operation of institutions in a community.
- For students, university is a place of learning and personal growth during the most critical years of their lives.

One of the many scholars who regard higher education as a laboratory for training in citizenship, Brouwer (1949) believes that student government should be educative in nature. For him, the best way to make students and faculty members work together as members of a single community is the lowering of the barriers between them because students may have something to offer in the development of curriculum and in the evaluation of instruction, as much as faculty members may have. Moreover, students need the experience of working and planning with people who have had more experience than they have had. This is essential because very few vocational fields in life are limited to one specific age group.

Klopf (1960, p. 57) groups the primary functions of a student government body within the higher education institution in four categories in which it performs its duties:

- Since the academic education of the student is considered to be the primary aim of higher education, the students should be vitally concerned with teaching methods, curriculum and the library. The role of the student in this area may vary from working at planning and policy levels to actual student services such as advising and tutoring.
- Developing student morale is a positive approach to student discipline. The student government can plan discussions, forums or other programs dealing with the social and behavioural norms on the campus. This will help constructing a higher student morale and decrease discipline related issues. Even, a student court, which may be a branch of student government where law students serve, can handle the disciplinary procedures.
- Representation of student opinion on faculty administration committees is also a very important function of the student government. Here, student representatives have the chance to express students' points of view. This is crucial because policies developed together with students are more readily accepted by the student body than those imposed. Furthermore, students might contribute to the administration through bringing out constructive criticism, which is not very likely to come out under ordinary administrative conditions.
- The last but not the least of the functions that a student government fulfils is to stimulate and coordinate all campus activities. This is essential to enhance the campus social life and improve the cultural facilities.

To sum up, the basic aims of student governments can be listed as, students' social involvement in the development of their organisation, responsibility and other moral qualities. In the long run, the purpose is to develop the community, to reinforce its moral foundations, and to foster the moral and civic education of the individual; whereas as a short term objective it increases the quality of the decisions taken.

2.3 How can student governments really work?

In order to achieve a successful and more importantly meaningful form of student participation in decision making, there are certain key issues that need to be understood and internalised. Holdsworth (1996) argues that some forms of participation are more valuable than others. Valuable participation occurs through an active sharing by students in decisions of education policies and implementation of educational practices. Active sharing implies that participation must meet genuine needs, have an impact on matters in and outside classroom, and be challenging to participants.

Wilson (2000) uses the concept of “deep participation” in the same sense that Holdsworth uses “active participation.” In Wilson’s point of view, participation is deep when it has a meaning for each student. If students do not feel they are participating in a meaningful way, it is questionable whether they will consider themselves to be participating in a democratic context. “Therefore, deep participation has a psychological dimension where the participant feels satisfied through the act of participation” (Wilson, 2000, p. 2).

Adding to the psychological dimension, Wilson (2000) suggests that there is another condition for deep participation, which is appropriate action. Participation becomes superficial if students only discuss issues but no action follows as a result of discussion. Appropriate action, either facilitated by the student government body having the power to act or through the collaboration of students and administrators, should present a solution to the issues that have been discussed.

If the aim is to achieve meaningful participation as opposed to superficial, students must also be able to discuss issues related to teaching and learning. “Putting curriculum and curriculum development on the student agenda of the student government” (Wilson, 2000, p. 3) is very fruitful because students have a lot of views about curriculum, teaching and learning; and they deeply think about the impact of particular approaches to teaching and learning, and possible solutions to the problems they face.

The role of the faculty and the administration is also a very important factor which determines the extent of real participation by students. Klopff (1960) states that the actual role students play in the administration depends highly on the educational philosophy of the faculty, the administration, and the trustees. This philosophy indicates the degree to which they are given responsibility, and the amount of authority they are granted with.

The administrators who have a deep commitment to the concept can educate the other administrators or faculty members and also the students. There must at least be a basic belief in everybody concerned that student not only has a right but also real contribution to make in the development of policy and programs. If the administrators do not have a deep respect for the students and their contribution, students may choose to express their opinions in other forms than the authority granted to them, such as riots or demonstrations.

Students cannot be automatically given the responsibility to make decisions and contribute to administration since this will not result in educating experiences for them. According to Klopff (1960), students need help in attaining the values that are necessary to work more efficiently in their groups. They need some professional assistance, which should be the responsibility of the faculty and the administration.

Portnykh (2001) too underlines the importance of professional assistance to and supervision of the student government. "Student government can function properly only in collaboration with the administration and under the administration's pedagogical supervision" (Portnykh, 2001, p. 60). This supervision must also provide help to apply the functions of student government through ways like recommending relevant literature or organising training sessions.

Klopff (1960) also points out the importance of effective communication if the student government is to function properly. Careful planning needs to take place during the preparation stage of student government as to how communication will occur within the government, between the government and the administrators, and

the community of students. How and what should the government report back to the student body is a very important issue. Second, how they should bring information or express opinion in an organised way to the central committee also needs consideration.

2. 4 Types of student governments

There are three forms of student governing groups found in literature, although in real practice this number can be a lot higher since every institution adopts their own most suitable form according to the situation on its campus.

The first is called community government by Klopff (1960), which is the closest of all forms to the practical idea of democracy. This type gives the greatest number of direct share in the formation of policy because it is composed of representatives from each group on the campus: administration, faculty, students and sometimes clerical and maintenance staff. In this type of governance, there are committees of all aspects of university life; such as orientation committee, scholarship committee, curriculum committee, housing committee, etc. Klopff (1960) believes that students should be represented in all of these committees.

Next comes the student council, which is representative of the student body as a whole. Each member of this council is elected by all the students, and responsible to all of them. This system is good according to Klopff (1960), as student representatives can have a broader and more objective point of view in their work. However, it might also mean that each representative is removed from the individual student because he is responsible to a large group.

Organisational council (Klopff, 1960, p. 52) is made up of the representatives of all student organisations or groups on the campus. Usually these groups are student clubs or societies. This system is a result of a natural election and representation system, that of student clubs; however, this means not each and every student is represented on the organisational council.

Another student group that comes together to form the organisational council is academic groups. This means all first year students make up a group, and so on. In addition, the council may be based on geographical areas where students live. What Klopf (1960) suggests as the best type of organisational councils is a combined system of council on which students are represented both as classes, living groups, clubs, and by representatives elected by the whole student group.

2.5 Representation in student governments

There are many theories of what the ideal system of representation is to be in a democratic higher education institution. Just like stated in the previous section, there is no set structure for better representation, but each institution must develop its own structure. The students might be represented by elected representatives from their geographical living area, which enables each student to be represented, and a closer relationship between the representative and the student's group.

Class representatives, elected from each of students who are on the same year of their education, can be very effective in drawing out the interests of students since students on the same year usually have similar concerns and interests. In a large university, departments can be the means for determining representation. This enables a more proper functioning of the government according to Klopf (1960) because there are common aims and a certain degree of unity of thought among the members of each department.

The most controversial type of representation is the political party system. Through this system, more attention can be focused on student issues and questions of concern if parties are formed on a foundation of real issues. However, there is always the danger that the parties can be controlled by special class or other interest groups. "They should not become the smaller versions of the parties in the national political life" (Klopf, 1960, p. 57).

2.6 How to establish and organise student government system

Klopf (1960) summarises very valuable information as to what steps and actions need to be taken if one is to initiate a successful student government. Those interested and convinced of the need for student government should:

- Know whether a history of it has ever existed in their country and university.
- Have an idea of the attitude of their administration to student government.
- Have interviews with students and conferences with student groups in order to include them in the planning process.
- Write a constitution, which should also be discussed in conference with members from all aspects of the campus community (p. 63).

2.7 History and current practice of student governance in Turkey

The first examples of student governance in Turkey are found in 1960's in the form of student associations. These organisations were legitimised by the 1961 constitution, which was put into practice after the 1960 military intervention. Student associations were based on the principle that university students have the legal right and freedom to establish associations. The students established these organisations in order to solve some academic problems and to make the universities more democratic places. The associations did not have a place in the organisational structure of the university administration. Therefore, the students did not actively participate in the decision making process; but they voiced the opinions and concerns of the student body. A national federation of all student associations was also founded and it represented Turkey in an international student organisation established by European students (Tanilli, 1994, p. 129).

As a result of another military intervention in 1980, there were some changes to the rules and regulations concerning associations, which also meant a less democratic organisational structure for student associations. For example, the new law which was legislated in 1983 required a student association to have at least fifty-one percent of the students in the entire university as members, which was almost

impossible. Thus, in the course of about twenty years, student governance deteriorated in the country due to the influences of military takeovers.

In 1984, the first private university in Turkey, Bilkent University, was founded, which is important in the history of student governance in Turkey because the first example of contemporary student governments started at Bilkent University in 1994. The first student council, which was a part of the administrative structure of the university had its own budget and had the right to attend administrative meetings of the university, as it is still the case.

The practice at Bilkent University constituted an excellent example for other public or private universities in the country. In 1996, a draft proposal for student councils was prepared by the Higher Education Council (HEC); and it was discussed at the meeting of The Rectors of Turkish Universities on October 24th 1996. The decision was that universities were recommended to form student councils. From then on, councils have been established and there are 55 student councils in different universities of Turkey (HEC, 2005). At the moment, the national board which consists of the presidents of all student councils in higher education in Turkey, is the only public institution with the right to represent Turkish universities internationally.

New bylaws were adopted in April 2003 by the Interuniversity Council to govern student representation as well as the structure and organisation of student councils in all universities in Turkey. Accordingly, elections take place every academic year and the elected council can only govern for that year. When we look at the rights and the power the councils have, we see that they have the right to attend meetings of the university senate in the case that they are invited; and it is only the president of the council who has a right to vote at these meetings (HEC, 2005).

Bilkent University, which was the pioneer of the system in Turkey also passed new student council regulations to conform with the bylaws. Accordingly, each class of each department elects one student as the class representative in each of the two- or four-year programs. The class representatives of a department in turn elects one department representative among themselves. The department representatives in a

faculty or a school elects among themselves the faculty/school representative. These representatives form the University Student Council. The council elects five of its members (one president, one general secretary and three vice presidents) to form the executive committee of the student council. The president calls the executive committee for a meetings when necessary. The committee is responsible for:

1. communicating student problems, views and opinions to the university administrative organs via the Dean of Students
2. representing student opinions in the university senate or administrative board when invited by the rector without the right to vote
3. coordinating the social and cultural life at the university
4. coordinating the voluntary social service works of the students
5. representing the students in interuniversity or international social and cultural activities
6. coordinating the activities of the student clubs and societies (see Appendix B).

In another example, İstanbul University (IU), the first student council was founded in 1998, which is a relatively early date compared to many universities. Although the aims and functions of the council is common with Bilkent University, the council of İstanbul University has a different structure. The students elect two students in each class as class representatives. These two students from each class form the department student council. This council works for the problems and issues of the students at the departmental level. The department student council chooses a president and a vice president, who come together with other presidents and vice presidents of other departments of the faculty to form the faculty student council. Different from Bilkent University, the president of faculty student council attends the faculty executive board meetings when there are student issues to be discussed on the agenda to express student opinions although h/she is not entitled to vote. Finally, the presidents of all the faculty student councils form the university student council (IU, 2005).

2.8 Research on student governance

Most of the recent literature that has been reviewed by the researcher mentions similar research to this one in the sense that they study the participation of students in decision making in education. However, their focus is on secondary education. Since this study focuses on higher education and the students governments in higher education, the following studies are more of the concern of this study.

One study by Miller, et al. (2004) explores whether women are underrepresented in leadership roles in college student governments in 21 universities in the United States. They looked into how many women were elected as representatives, and how many of them practised the roles of president or vice-president in the government. The findings showed that woman are elected as representatives, but are underrepresented in presidential or vice-presidential positions. The factors leading to this were found to be structural and/or institutional.

Another study done on the U.S. universities tried to find out whether the perceptions of graduate students are different from those of undergraduate students about their roles as decision making participants (Love and Miller, 2003). Data were collected at one case study institution through a survey instrument. According to the results, undergraduate students were found to be inconsistent in their responses whereas graduate students were more consistent. On the other hand, there was a similarity between their perceptions of the experience. Both groups' answers suggested that they see it as a fun and enjoyable experience not as a right or opportunity to participate in democracy. The suggestion of the researcher for this is the need for administrators, faculty and students come together to outline and identify a public rationale for the existence of student governance, stressing the body as the protector of student rights.

One study from the U.S. examined all kinds of student organisations including student governments in two universities in Georgia. The aim of the study was to examine reasons that influence students to join or not to join a student organisation (McCannon and Bennett, 1996, p. 312). Both demographic characteristics and the

preferences of students involved in the study were analysed, and it turned out that the majority of the students in the study did not belong to a student organisation. Two major reasons for this were found to be having no time and not being aware of such an opportunity. For the ones who participated in any form of student organisation, the reasons were to have membership listed on their resume and to meet people. This research revealed that a challenge for universities to increase student participation is to compete against their job related responsibilities or career oriented worries (McCannon and Bennett, 1996).

There have also been some studies in other countries focusing on either the effectiveness of the student participation systems in decision making or the reasons for students to take part in the process. A very large and comprehensive study which took 4 years in the UK looked at the effectiveness of the structures that involved students in decision making. “As a result of the study, a link was suggested between student councils and improved academic attainment” (Bell, 2003, p. 29). Therefore, findings by Bell indicated a strong impact of citizenship education on academic progress.

Another longitudinal study was done to see the improvements that the student government’s efforts caused in university administration. The student government of the university was requested to participate in a long-range planning process by formulating the planning documents. The proposal of the students was discussed, reviewed, amended and finally approved by the university senate. Many of the student government’s recommendations were adopted by the university, which demonstrated the students’ ability to give responsible input on important issues of university governance. “By demonstrating this ability, the documents illustrated a belief that administrators and students can work together to build a better university” (Bambenek, 2003, p. 63).

A study from Holland more generally aimed at assessing the adequacy of the Dutch system for university governance. One of the research questions was to assess to what extent student councils performed democratically. In order to find this out, they looked into how the council members perceive their role in the university decision

making processes. What is worth mentioning related to the findings is that council members think that university policies should be determined in close cooperation between the student council and the executive board. As to the actual situation, according to the participants, the policies are actually determined by the executive board. This dominance was explained by the late involvement of student council members in the decision making, and the deficient information supplied by executive board. Since the findings indicated a gap between the actual and desired levels of influence by the student council, a call for institutional reform in the governance of Dutch universities was made (De Boer, et al., 1998).

There have also been some studies in our country concerning the participation of students in decision making in higher education institutions to a certain extent. One research by Büyükkaragöz (1995) tried to find out the attitudes of higher education students towards democracy. His sample included students from different faculties which he later compared looking at their attitudes. According to the study, the students were mostly found to be agreeing on the idea that people should be able to state their opinions under any circumstance. When compared, female students were found to be more sensitive towards democracy. This study was important to see how students perceive democracy and how deep their understanding is of democracy.

Another study by Korkut (2004) investigated not only student perceptions but also the perceptions of the university administrators and academic and non-academic staff about who should participate in the decisions made at the university. Almost all of the groups that were used in the study left the students out of the ones to participate in the decisions. They agreed that the knowledge, experience and abilities of students cannot be sufficient enough for the university to make efficient decisions; therefore, it should be the academic staff who makes the decisions. As a result, Korkut suggests that the students' participation in decision making is an opportunity to prepare them to participate in the governance of the country. In addition, their participation is necessary to ensure a more dynamic and democratic university system.

To summarise, the literature reviewed involves a history of student governments, why we need them in higher education, how they can meaningfully work, types of governments and representation, the ways to establish a system from scratch, the history and current situation of student councils in Turkey, and finally similar research into the area of interest.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

This chapter includes information related to qualitative research, the research problem, the overall design of the study, the participants of the study, data collection, operational definitions of terms, and the data analysis procedure.

3.1 Overall design of the study

The study tries to find out the perceptions of students about their experiences as members of the student council at Bilkent University. Therefore, qualitative research design is used to collect and analyse data. Data collected is analysed through content analysis and reported descriptively.

3.2 Qualitative research

Sometimes researchers are more interested in the quality of a particular activity than how often it occurs. Such studies that investigate the quality of relationships, activities, situations or materials are referred to as qualitative research. According to Fraenkel and Wallen, there is a greater emphasis on the holistic description of a particular situation in qualitative research (2000).

Patton (1987) points out the importance of the creativity of the researcher in the analysis of qualitative data:

There are no formulas as in statistics. It is a process demanding intellectual rigor and a great deal of hard, thoughtful work. Because different people manage their creativity, intellectual endeavors, and hard work in different ways, there is no one right to go about organising, analysing, and interpreting qualitative data (p.164).

Bogdan and Biklen (1998) also regard the researcher as a key instrument in qualitative research, which they list as one of the five features of qualitative research:

1. The natural setting is the direct source of data, and the researcher is the key instrument in qualitative research.
2. Qualitative data are collected in the form of words or pictures rather than numbers.
3. Qualitative researchers are concerned with process as well as product.
4. Qualitative researchers tend to analyse their data inductively.
5. How people make sense out of their lives is a major concern to qualitative researchers (p. 503).

3.3 Data collection methods in qualitative research

As there is no treatment nor any manipulation of subjects in a qualitative study, data are not collected at the end. The researcher continually collects data through mainly observations and interviews. A very important data collection method used by qualitative researchers is interviewing. The purpose of interviewing people is to find out what they have on their minds because we cannot observe what they think or how they feel about something. We cannot observe how people have organised the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world (Patton, 1987).

The interviewing task requires a high degree of intellectual and social interaction skills, as is described by Mason (1996):

At any one time you may be: listening to what the interviewee(s) is or are currently saying and trying to interpret what they mean; trying to work out whether what they are saying has any bearing on “what you really want to know”; trying to think in new and creative ways about “what you really want to know”; trying to pick up on any changes in your interviewees’ demeanor and interpret these (p. 45).

According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2000), there are four types of interviews that are largely used in educational research:

1. informal conversational interview: in this type of interviews, questions emerge from the immediate context and are asked in the natural course of things. There is no predetermination of question topics or wording.
2. interview guide approach: topics to be covered are specified in advance this time, in outline form; and the interviewer decides the sequence and the wording of the questions in the course of the interview.
3. standardised open ended format: in this format the exact wording and the sequence of the questions are determined in advance. Questions are worded in a completely open ended format. In this study this type of interview format is used (See app. A) in order to be able to increase the comparability of the responses of the participants.
4. closed fixed response interview: questions and response categories are determined in advance. Responses are fixed; and the respondent chooses among those fixed responses (p. 511).

3.4 Validity and reliability in qualitative research

In a qualitative study, validity and reliability both depend on the perspective of the researcher as different researchers might see things differently (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2000). Therefore, there are certain procedures to check on or enhance validity and reliability that qualitative researchers use. Some of them are listed as follows in Fraenkel and Wallen (2000, p. 506):

- Using a variety of instruments to collect data.
- Checking one participant's descriptions of something against another participant's descriptions of the same thing. Using the same standardised questions for each interviewee enabled the researcher in this particular study to check one participant's description against another.
- Recording personal thoughts while conducting observation and interviews.
- Interviewing individuals more than once. One of the interviewees were interviewed twice in this study to check the validity and reliability of the instrument; and some necessary changes were made to the interview guide after the first interview.
- Assessing the agreement between two or more categorisers.

3.5 Data analysis in qualitative research

One way to analyse qualitative data is using content analysis. “Content analysis is a technique that enables researchers to study human behaviour in an indirect way, through an analysis of their communications” (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2000, p. 469).

The most common variation of content analysis, which is used in this study is analysis in terms of frequency counts. In this approach, the units for coding are identified and coding categories are defined. Then, a careful count is made of the number of times the units that fit the categories are found in the communication. The categories should be so explicit that another researcher could use them to examine the same material and obtain the same frequencies.

3.6 Research problem and sub-problems

The purpose of this study is to investigate the perceptions of the student representatives in the student council at Bilkent University, in Turkey, as to how well the student council system in this university works in terms of enabling the participation of students in the decision making process of the university administration. The following are the sub- problems to be answered:

- a. How well do the student council members think they represent the students in the administrative board?
- b. What do they view as their roles?
- c. According to the council members, what kind of advantages does the existence of the student council bring to the university?
- d. What are the areas of participation they think the most problematic?
- e. How do they think these problems could be resolved to enhance the student participation?

3.6.1 The case: General information about Bilkent University

Bilkent University (BU) was founded in 1984 by İhsan Doğramacı through the resolution of the foundations which had earlier been established by him. The establishment of a private university was later approved by an act of parliament. The aim was to establish a center of excellence in higher education and research. It had been an objective of the founder, who is an academician by profession, to establish a private university distinguished by its high quality and research.

In October 1986 Bilkent University admitted its first students. That year there were 386 undergraduate and graduate students. Currently there are over 12.000 students in nine faculties, two four-year professional schools, two two-year vocational schools and the School of English Language plus six graduate institutes. Among them there are students from 72 countries. With funds from the endowments provided by the founder, the university each year awards full scholarships to over 2.500 students of high academic achievement.

The university is comprised of an academic staff from 43 different countries. According to ISI Citation Indexes, Bilkent continues to be first in Turkey in number of published papers per faculty member and ranks high internationally. The medium of instruction in the university is English. The only exceptions to this are the language courses and the Turkish law courses in the Faculty of Law. Bilkent University participated in collaborative projects and exchange programs with many universities abroad. It has student exchange agreements with a number of universities in the U.S. and Europe.

From the outset, the design of the university structure provided for the student union to represent students in administrative committees as well as the university senate. Beginning in the second year of instruction, the practice of student evaluation of courses and instructors was instituted, which still is a limited practice among the Turkish universities (BU, 2005).

3.6.2 The participants

There are eleven members in the student council at Bilkent University, including the head of the council. Ten of these members are the participants in the data collection procedure because one member refused to take part as he felt he would not be able to contribute very much. Five of these participants are members of the administrative board of the student council whereas the other five are faculty representatives.

All the participants were aged between 20 and 22. Except for one of the faculty representatives, all the other participants were male. Two of the ten members of the council were scholarship students while others were non-scholarship students. Three of them accommodated in the dormitories inside the campus whereas others lived outside the campus, in apartments in the city either with their families or alone.

There is no sampling strategy used since the researcher tried to attain a complete understanding of a particular situation, and had no intention to make generalisations to a larger population. If she wished to generalise beyond her data to a larger population, selecting a purposive sample would be the most suitable. In other words, the researcher would select a sample of participants that she feels will yield the best understanding of the particular situation.

3.6.3 Data collection and data collection instrument

A standardised open ended interview guide prepared by the researcher was used to collect data through face to face interviews. The interview guide, which is provided in Appendix A, consisted of 14 questions. All questions were open ended so that the researcher could obtain information related to the perceptions of the students through their own words. First, each student council member was contacted in order to set the date and the hour of the interviews. Later, the interviews took place in the student council building, in a private room provided by the council, which made the council members feel more comfortable to speak. The shortest interview lasted for 25 minutes, and the longest one for 40 minutes. Interviews were all audially

recorded. The council members had no objection to being recorded. Before each interview the researcher briefed the participant about the purpose of the interview, where and how the interview data were to be used, the confidentiality of their responses, and finally the timing of the interview.

For the reliability and validity of the instrument, expert opinion was consulted to, Bilkent University regulations for the student council were looked into, and the method of reinterviewing a subsample from the population was used. After the interview guide was prepared, the questions were checked and suggestions were made as to how to improve them by field experts in the area of educational administration and higher education. Accordingly, the language and the organisation of the interview guide was slightly changed.

As for the reinterviewing of a subsample, when the first council member was contacted, he was asked to take part in the interview twice. Firstly, the researcher piloted the guide together with him. This interview was not recorded; however, notes were taken by the researcher. The issues to be checked during piloting were as follows:

1. whether the questions focused on issues relevant to the research questions
2. whether the questions were intelligible and clear to the students
3. whether the questions were related to the students' experiences and circumstances
4. whether the flow of the questions was appropriate.

The piloting process helped the researcher to see if there was a need to change the order of the questions since some questions naturally led to the other ones and they needed to be following each other. Therefore, the order of the questions in the guide was slightly changed. As for the other issues, the piloting showed that the questions focused on issues relevant to the research questions, they were understandable, and they were related to the participants' experiences.

In order to check the reliability of the responses of the council members, the documents from the Bilkent University website related to the regulations for the

student council were examined (see Appendix B) and it was seen that there were no discrepancies between what the students said about the rules and regulations and the system itself.

3.6.4 Data analysis procedure

The study aims to investigate the specific experiences and perceptions of individuals engaged in the area of interest. Therefore, face to face interviewing is found to be the most useful way of collecting data. All the interviews were recorded and transcribed. Then, the data were analysed through content analysis technique.

First of all, all the interviews that were recorded were transcribed word by word by the researcher. Transcribing the data herself made the researcher become thoroughly acquainted with the content of the interviews, which provided an opportunity to connect with the data in a better way. The transcripts were printed by leaving the right margin as large as three inches in order to allow the researcher to use that space for categorising and coding the data.

In the next step, the researcher labelled the data for categories. While deciding on the categories, the following issues by Dey (1993) were kept in mind:

- review on the relevant literature
- the focus of the research questions
- inferences from the actual data
- researcher's knowledge and experiences.

The following categories emerged after the first transcript was labelled:

1. Feelings about being a part of student council
2. Perceptions of the reason for the existence of a student council
3. Perceptions of the atmosphere in university administrative settings
4. Type of relationship with administrators
5. Perceptions of their personal contribution to the university administration as a council member

6. Perceptions of the role that student council plays in decisions made at university
7. Perceptions of the type of relationship between the council and the student body
8. Description of the communication between the council and the student body
9. One thing they would like to change in the system
10. Basic problems and issues of student participation in decision making
11. Ways to solve the problems mentioned
12. Other proposals to make the representation system work better

The researcher then worked on these categories to sort them out according to the research questions. When the new categories were formed, all the responses were examined so that they could be grouped together. From this grouping, sub-categories emerged, which were used to organise data while discussing the results. During the grouping process, the similarities and differences between responses were identified in order to obtain the repeated ideas, opinions and experiences. While identifying similarities, the researcher kept the following issues addressed by Tutty et. al. (1996) in mind:

Two important steps are involved in looking for meaning and relationship in your data. First, you will have to develop an interpretation of your data. Interpretations are sometimes descriptive, but may also suggest causal explanations of important events. Second, the research process and conclusions must be assessed for credibility and dependability (p. 109).

The researcher then identified the frequency of the sub-categories by counting the number of times a subcategory appears, and finally outlined these subcategories under the research questions.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The purpose of this study is to investigate the perceptions of student representatives in the student council at Bilkent University as to how well the student council system works in terms of enabling the participation of the students in the decision making of the university. Interview technique was used to collect data. The data were analysed through content analysis.

This chapter presents the findings of the study under the following categories as direct representation of the sub-problems stated under the method chapter:

- e. How well do the student council members think they represent the students in the administrative board?
- f. What do student representatives view as their roles?
- g. What kind of advantages that the existence of the student council bring to the university?
- h. What are the areas of participation they think the most problematic?
- i. How do they think these problems could be resolved to enhance the student participation?

4.1 Profile of the Interviewees

The participants of this case study include ten members of the student council of Bilkent University, who have all been elected at the beginning of the academic year 2004-2005.

There are supposed to be eleven members of the council, nine of which are representatives of the nine faculties at Bilkent University, and the other two the representatives of two schools. However, one member resigned from his role as a faculty representative, which meant he was no longer a member of the

administrative board during the time of the interviews. The researcher, nonetheless, was able to persuade the member who resigned to take part in her study, which meant working with eleven subjects as planned. However, one member was reluctant to take part, so the data had to be collected from ten representatives.

Five of these ten students make up the administrative board of the student council. They were elected among the other eleven after the election process was over. Actually, these members of the council are the ones who directly take part in the actual process of the participation in the decisions made at the university level.

The administrative board members spend a great deal of their time in the council building, to deal with student issues. They have regular meetings with the student council coordinator, and they are called to most of the university senate meetings. Moreover, participation of one of its members in the regular meetings of the university such as “ Mayfest Organisation Committee” is expected.

The participants can be grouped under two categories; the members of the administrative board (5), and the non-members, who are only the representatives of their faculties(5), the numbers being equal. As for the members of the administrative board, they all have an insight into the daily administrative issues of the university. However, the others only work within their faculties or did not work at all, which made it more difficult for them to express opinions regarding the administrative function of the council at the university. This differentiation allowed the researcher to see how things are done and how decisions are made from two different points of views; the ones actually taking part in the process, and the ones with no direct participation in the decision making process. This led to a more realistic understanding of the structure and practices of the student council at the university.

4.2 How well the student council members think they represent the students in the administrative board:

In this section the council members’ responses regarding their perceptions about to what extent they represent the opinions and the preferences of the student body in

the administrative board, looking specifically at their feelings about representing them, and how they perceive the administrative atmosphere.

4. 2. 1 Feelings about being a part of the student council

How the representatives felt about being elected as the member of the council was important for the researcher because it provided her with an understanding of how seriously the students are taking this and how well they thought they represented the students.

The students' answers fall into two main categories for this question: feeling happy and excited, and being stressed at times.

As for reasons to be happy, the data reveal that there are eleven reasons that make students happy and excited as a result of being a council member:

- responsibility
- being part of a larger social environment
- popularity
- pride
- participation in decision making
- opportunity for personal development
- being the means of communication between students and the university
- guiding students and helping them develop themselves
- advantages for future business life
- representation of the university outside
- helping democracy prosper within the university

Responsibility: Among the eleven reasons for being happy about being a student council representative, having responsibility is the one which has most been mentioned by the students (five out of ten). Students perceive responsibility as a positive impact on their personalities. They are happy about the fact that they are different from other students with the responsibilities they have. This also makes

them more willing to work because they feel they are mostly responsible to their voters. This feeling of responsibility against voters is so important for one of the interviewees that he had resigned from his post seeing that he could not fulfil his responsibility in a good way because of time constraints created by his academic studies.

Being part of a larger social environment: Having a larger social environment is a reason mentioned by two students for being happy. They think their social environment enlarges since there are a lot of opportunities to meet new people while they are actively working for the council. Students, who they could not normally communicate if they were not the council members, approach them to share their problems and ask for solutions. In this way, they meet many new students.

Popularity: Being known by almost everybody at school, at least in their faculty is why most of the interviewees are happy and excited about being a part of the student council. One of them stated that his position is one almost all of his friends would love to have since it brings popularity among students. It is noteworthy that the interviewees who mentioned popularity as a reason to be happy agree that they have not been elected because of their popularity, but their position has brought them popularity, which is very important to them.

Pride: Most of the interviewees pointed out that they are proud of themselves for being a representative of a student group of 12,000 students. Being different from the others, having more responsibility, being a part of administration together with their professors are several foundations of their pride that they mentioned.

Participation in decision making: Some students mentioned- as the first and the most important aspect of the student council which make them happy and excited – their participation in the decision making process of the university administration. Having the right to discuss and vote for or against certain academic issues, and contribute to the administration academic matters of the university in this way is what they perceive as the most valuable reason to be happy.

Opportunity for personal development: As Stroup (1956) claims, two most commonly advocated aims of student activities are the development of the personal maturity of the individual student, and the growth of democratic citizenship responsibility on the part of the students. As for the second aim, there were some students who referred to it later in the interviews. However, it is striking that only one student mentioned the first aim, that is the development of the personal maturity of the individual student. He stated that he views being a part of the student council as a very essential lesson to be learned, which will help him a lot in his later professional and social life.

Being the means of communication between students and university: One more thing that causes the interviewees to be happy is that they can help the students in their faculties or from student clubs through communicating their problems to the administration. One faculty representative emphasised that students cannot reach the faculty dean as easily and quickly as he can; therefore, it has become his major role to enable problems to be known by the administration. Another student mentioned that this is actually the main reason why he had wanted to become the faculty representative, as he thought there were a lot of problems and needs of the faculty. Problem-solving, in this sense, is an important aspect of being a representative that they enjoy. One of the actively working faculty representatives says: “Generally people come to me with all kinds of problems, even emotional ones, and I like it very much to try to help them solve their problems.” There were a few more other students who take the issue rather sentimentally, and emphasise the vitality of the friendly and sharing atmosphere that they have among themselves as a reason to be happy.

Guiding students and helping them develop: Channelling the student body to a more socially rich life through student activities, and seeing the outcomes of their efforts on the social life in the campus are things that make many of the interviewees happy. Student activities that they coordinate add a variety to the educational atmosphere of the university; furthermore, they help students develop in fields like art, science, technology and sports. Through student activities, an interviewee

emphasised that he was successful in bringing a new dimension to the life in the faculty.

Advantages for future business life: A very interesting point that the interview data reveal is that a few of the representatives like the idea of being a part of the council because they see it as a way of building good relationship with the students who will be their future business acquaintances. One student said that most students' parents belong to the same business environment, so it is highly probable for them to be business partners or rivals in their future business lives. This is the reason why he thinks it is an advantage to be a leader among the students.

Representation of the university outside: Another reason why they are happy is that they have the chance to represent the whole student body in settings outside the university, which they think is important both personally and for the reputation of the university. From the personal point of view, they emphasised that it makes them feel valued as an individual to speak to others not from the university on behalf of the university. In addition, they perceive this role as a crucial one for the university. When there is a ground for them to represent the university in social or higher administrative settings, they feel very excited about being a part of one the pioneers of the system in Turkey.

Helping democracy: What the researcher found rather noteworthy is that one council member thinks that it is a great feeling to be a part of the council because it helps democracy, which he thinks is one of the ultimate goals of university education. There was another one who claimed that student council is essential due to democracy, and that is why he is happy to be a part of it. Furthermore, he added that not only for the members of the university administration, but also for the whole student body, the existence of a student council must create a feeling of contentment since they feel valued as an individual when they participate in the election process.

When we come to the factors that make the interviewees feel discontented or stressed out, there are three of them: inexperience as an obstacle to make more

autonomous decisions, stress caused by time constraints, and not being able to work actively.

Inexperience: Some of the interviewees pointed out that when they are faced with a problem situation, sometimes they cannot take the right actions or follow the right administrative procedures due to inexperience in working together with professionals and people of a high academic status. For this reason, they may sometimes feel stressed out.

Time-related problems: almost all of the representatives in the administrative board mentioned the problem of time as constraint in their lives. Because they need to spend a lot of time in the council building to follow the daily procedures, there is not much time left for them to study for their lessons or relax with their friends. A few of them stated that having to do a lot of things at the same time occasionally creates stress as they also want to be successful in their academic studies.

Not being able to work actively: This issue was raised by some of the faculty representatives, who think they have no roles in university administration since they were not elected to the administrative board. They are not content with being elected as the faculty representatives, as there is no point in it if they are only the representatives of their faculty.

4.2. 2 The perceptions of the atmosphere in administrative settings

It was also important to find out the perceptions of the members of the council about the atmosphere in university administrative settings as this might have an effect on how much they think that they participate in the discussions, offer solutions or suggestions, and raise their concerns on the issues. The data reveal that there are five categories regarding the students' opinions about the nature of the administrative meetings:

- anxiety at the beginning
- being taken seriously
- feeling comfortable to speak

- having the right to speak
- warm atmosphere and rector's positive approach

Anxiety: Most of the students mentioned anxiety as to how they felt in the meetings at the beginning of their careers in the council, which made them perceive the atmosphere as a serious one. There are several different causes of this anxiety changing from one interviewee to the other. For example, three of them stated that they felt anxious due to their inexperience of such formal settings where they need to take turns to speak. Another one mentioned respect as a factor leading to anxiety. It is noteworthy that one of them had feared that his opinions would not be valued. He said "It was a while after that I realised they perceive us as colleagues, not as inexperienced or unknowledgeable students."

Being taken seriously: From what this interviewee admitted, we can move on to another category which is related. Some of the interviewees (three out of ten) mentioned that never felt inferior to the other participants of the senate meetings, and were always taken seriously by them. One said they have a genuine right to speak in those meetings, they are not guests or observers. Another one gave an interesting example to how they are perceived by the other senate members. He recalled that in one of the meetings there were two opposing views regarding a student issue, one belonging to a student representative, the other belonging to another senate member, the vice rector. It was decided to vote for it, and all the members voted either for the vice rector or for the student council member. This made him realise that students and administrators are considered as being equal.

Having the right to speak: Some of the interviewees found it worth mentioning that they have the right to speak in an administrative context; either at a meeting or in more one to one situations. A good example they reported for this is that during a social occasion of the university administration, the rector usually approaches them and asks their opinions on daily issues of the university informally, which makes them feel they are really valued.

Feeling comfortable to speak: Closely related to the previous category, this is also one thing many of the interviewees emphasised. When they overcame the anxiety they had at the initial stage of their careers, it was very easy for them to ask questions, state an opinion, offer a solution both during the meetings and during daily face to face contacts with the administrators.

Rector's personal approach: All these positive comments about the atmosphere and how they are valued in that atmosphere are actually related to the management style of the rector, according to some interviewees. Most of them mentioned that the positive approach of the rector towards both the concept of the student council and the student representatives personally has a very important effect on their participation. It is noteworthy here to mention that although only the president of the council has the right to vote, all administrative board members are invited to senate meetings, and they can also state their opinions just like every other participant. The interviewees agreed that this shows the positive approach of the administrators towards them.

4. 3 What they view as their roles

The findings emerged from this category reveals data about what the council members regard as the role of the student council in a university, what their individual roles and contributions are, and how these roles affect the decision making process of the university.

4. 3. 1 Perceptions of student representatives of the reason for the existence of a student council

Six categories related to the aim of the student council perceived by the members of it emerged from the data in this study:

- participation in decision making
- communication between student body and administration
- catering for the needs of the student clubs and coordinating them
- preparation for real life
- freedom of thought

- representing school in outside settings

It may have struck the reader that there are a number of clashes between these categories and the categories for the previous questions. For instance, participation in decision making emerges as a category as it is a reason why students are happy to be a part of the student government. It was also found out that students see participation in decision making as the most important goal of the student council. However, what made the interviewees contented or discontented, which was the focus of the first question, are mainly related to the aims of the council; therefore, such clashes are natural.

Participation in decision making: Most of the interviewees except a few emphasised that enabling the participation of students in the decision making process of the university administration is the most vital aim of the student council (eight out of ten). According to one, “the council is meaningful only if it provides the students with the right to make their own decisions”. Another representative stated that the council should be close to all students, and bring all opinions together while representing them during the decision-making process. Similarly, one interviewee said; “student opinions can best be communicated and taken into account by students”. All of the interviewees who mentioned this as an aim agreed that students have to be a part of the decision making process definitely in order for the university to be a democratic environment. Different from the others, one interviewee – although he also agreed that the main aim is to be the voice of the students- commented on the real situation at Bilkent University. He said “I do not think this aim really works for our university because of the restrictions brought to the authority of the council.” What these restrictions are and what is suggested by the students to overcome them will further be discussed in the latter parts of this chapter.

Communication between the student body and administration, and problem solving: A great majority of the interviewees mentioned (nine out of ten) as a crucial aim of the student council that it brings the students and the administration together, and in this way helps the students solve their problems. As

to why the student body needs to communicate with the administration, all agreed that students might have complaints about the academic, or social issues of the campus, or some requests to make their lives easier. Functioning as a bridge between the student body and the university, the role of the council was emphasised by the council members to be the primary problem solving mechanism for the students. One faculty representative said “it is difficult for the students to reach higher administrative levels such as the dean of the faculty; therefore, I make it quicker that their questions are answered or problems solved.” Another interviewee mentioned the advantage of easier communication as well as how quick the problems can be solved. The communication between the student body and the university administration is easier and clearer through the council because the council members can consider the issues from both points of view, and bridge the gap between those points of view. A very striking example to the kinds of problems to be communicated or solved by the council was given by a faculty representative, which is worth mentioning here. He stated that the council is especially important for students when they have a dispute with the military force responsible for the security of the campus. For instance, if there have been a fight or another violent action in the campus, students can ask for the help of the council to negotiate with the authorities. However, the interviewee accepts that this is only possible if the student in trouble has a personal acquaintance with one or more persons in the council’s administrative board.

Catering for the needs of the Student Clubs and coordinating them: The data under the previous category reveal that almost all of the interviewees agreed that student clubs cater for student needs. Two of those, however, specified those students as the ones who are actively involved with student clubs and their activities. That is, they agreed that one of the two main reasons why the student council exists is to coordinate the activities of student clubs, which constitute the foundation for the social life at the university. “Student activities are for the students; thus, it should be again students who organise and coordinate them”, one interviewee said while explaining the aim of the student council.

Preparation for real life: Some of the council members in the study mentioned preparation for real life as one of the aims of the student council. However, there is no agreement among these subjects regarding who to prepare for real life. One group stated that student council aims to prepare its members to real life through the real power and responsibilities it gives to them. On the other hand, others think student council enables the fact that students do not only study but they also develop as an intellectual through the activities of the student clubs.

The freedom of thought: The representation of the ideas and thoughts of the student body was mentioned to be another reason for the existence of the student council. Different points of view and perspectives to issues can bring new dimensions to the administration, which may lead to better governance. One interviewee said; “ University is a place for free thought, which is not supposed to be true only for the lecturers. Students are also stakeholders, and they should have the freedom of thought, too. The student council is important because it communicates these free thoughts.

Representing School in outside settings: As for the last reason why the student council is necessary, some of the interviewees mentioned the fact that someone needs to represent the students in front of students from other universities or in front of other parts of the society. When there is such a need, the council should be in charge; hence, the representation will be consistent at different times and at different settings throughout the year.

4.3. 2 Perceptions of their personal contribution to the university administration as a council member

According to the data, the council members’ perceptions of their personal contribution to the student council differ in seven categories, changing from one another due to both internal and external factors:

- not much contribution
- contribution based on time spent
- no individual difference

- hard work due to perfectionism
- the degree of altruism
- contribution based on role division
- club experience

Not much contribution: among the interviewees, there are both members of the administrative board and also the faculty representatives in an equal proportion. Some of the faculty representatives are actively working in order to cater for the needs of the students in their faculties while the others are simply not doing anything. One from this latter group said: “my only contribution was to vote for the administrative board at the beginning of the year. After that, I did not do anything at all.” Both this one and a few other interviewees who agreed with him are dissatisfied with this situation. There are also some faculty representatives who stated their only contribution passing on student issues to the administrative board.

Contribution based on time spent: How much time one representative can allocate to the student council is a very important indicator of how much he contributes personally. Some of the members (two out of ten) indicated that their contribution is sometimes limited because time they allocate to the job is limited. The main reason for the limited time allocation and thus limited contribution turns out to be their academic studies or responsibilities. Not all of the departments have the same amount of total credits per semester; furthermore, some departments are less demanding compared to the others, which is what creates the difference between the representatives from different departments spend different amounts of time for the council. The member who resigned admitted that the stress caused by not being able to contribute because of departmental requirements was a factor leading to his resignation.

No individual difference: Two of the council members in the study stated that they do not do anything different or more than what other members do. They believe everybody more or less makes the same amount of effort. For example, one member said; “ I do not think there is a difference among the members of the administrative

board. Some may spend less time here but I am sure they contribute too in other ways.”

Hard work due to perfectionism: Another indicator of how much one contributes to the council activities is a personality trait, perfectionism, according to one member. He indicated that he is a perfectionist and this causes him to have extra responsibilities taken over by himself, in order to make sure everything is under control. Another member feels that he has to be perfectionist and be extravigilant about things due to the position of presidency he holds. Being the key decision maker on daily issues related to student club activities, he holds more responsibility than any other member, which increases the level of contribution he makes.

The degree of altruism: Some of the interviewees mentioned that sometimes they are forced to choose between council-related responsibilities and their academic or social requirements they need to fulfil. When this is the case, they usually behave altruistically and choose the student council as the priority in their university lives and their time. This is a factor which leads them to perceive their contribution as a more valuable one.

Contribution based on role division: One of the council members indicated that members’ contribution changes from one project to another since each time a new role division is made. Some members are given officerelated duties whereas some need to go out and talk to people to organise events and make deals. However, it is not always the same person who is assigned to the same duty in different projects. Therefore, he means contribution is not dependent on the person’s choice but on the role he is allocated to.

Club experience: As a final category, one interviewee came up with a meaningful personal difference which affects the level of contribution he makes, that is, being a former student club president. Due to his past experience, he said, he can help issues related to student clubs better than his friends can do since he can foresee problems or give advice to students working for student clubs.

4.3.3 Role of the student council in the decisions of the university

When we come to the perceptions of the interviewees in the study regarding the role of the student council in the decisions made by the university administration, there are two opposing views. Some of them claim that there is an impact of the council on the decisions made although it is less compared to the past situation, whereas others think the contribution is not a real one but only has face value. The data reveal that there are five categories under this which go under either of the above frames. It needs to be pointed out here that two of the members did not have any opinions to tell the researcher regarding the answer to this question, the reason behind it being they were only faculty representatives who do not have any insight into how decisions are made or how the council works. What the interviewees regard as the role of the student council on the decisions made by the university administration are as follows:

- representing student opinions
- real participation in student related issues
- comparison to past situation at Bilkent
- not a very meaningful role

Representing student opinions: Almost half of the interviewees mentioned that they perceive the role of the council as a real and meaningful one because it represents the students' opinions through the members' freedom of speech and the right to vote. Even if only one representative, the president, has the right to vote, they agree that what is equally important is that their suggestions are valued and taken into account. One representative said “ We can express our opinions about almost all issues except for the very technical ones”.

Real participation in student related issues: One thing some of the above interviewees pointed out related to the meaningfulness of the council's role is that it is usually only meaningful in student related issues. Two examples to those issues given by them are the organisation of the spring festival, or the formation of the

academic calendar of the next academic year. One subject said: “ We have almost full authority so direct effect on university decisions on issues like student club activities”.

Comparison to past situation at Bilkent University: Almost all of the participants mentioned a change in the impact of the student council on university decisions from past to present. Some think that this change is a preference of the university administration while others claim that the regulations imposed by the Higher Education Council led to some structural changes in the system, which made the participation of the council less effective. The structural changes mentioned here will further be discussed in the latter parts of the chapter.

Not a very meaningful role: Almost half of the interviewees think that the council does not have a real contribution to or a meaningful role on the decision made at the university administrative level. They mentioned several different reasons for this, the most striking being that the university does not really want the students to be one of the decision makers, but they just give it a face value. One interviewee said: “Sometimes I feel they are trying to give the society the message that they care for the students’ rights and they do their best to enhance democracy in the campus just for the sake of advertisement; this is a private organisation in the end.” Another interviewee stated this is an issue of power and they simply may not want to share their authorities and power with students. Finally, one interviewee raised his concerns about the level of democracy in the council itself in terms of representing all students at the university. What he meant is that the administrative board consists of the representatives from the same party; thus, when one party is elected as the administrative board, there is no chance of the representation of the opinions of the other parties. Actually this is the main reason that explains why some faculty representatives are so inactive.

4. 4 The advantages that the existence of the student council bring to the university

Almost all of the council members agreed that the most crucial advantage of the student council is that it creates an opportunity for the students to communicate their ideas or demands to the attention of university administrators. In the following section, how this communication takes place in our context will be examined.

4. 4. 1 Relationship and communication with the student body

One of the indicators of how representative the student council is of the student body is the extent to which they communicate with it. If the students cannot reach and communicate their messages to their representatives, in that case the council represents only its own opinions, which is not pertinent to their mission. The interviewees mostly agreed that the most substantial advantage the council brings to the university is the relationship and communication it provides between the student body and the university administration. On the other hand, there were also ones who stated that such a communication is not really necessary. The data show that the representatives view the relationship and communication between the council and the student body in four different ways:

- relationship only with club members
- not enough participation in activities by students
- hierarchical order
- problems regarding the elections

Relationship only with student club members: Almost all of the interviewees (eight out of ten) mentioned the fact the council is in close relation with only actively working members of the student clubs. Other than this, students are reached only during elections. “If a student has not voted, has no active role in the activities organised by the clubs, it is not surprising to hear that he does not even know where the student council is or what job they do,” one interviewee claimed. Others also agreed that there is reciprocal communication only if students take part

in the student club activities. The lack of this communication; however, does not worry most of the student representatives as they think there is no need anyway for other students to communicate with them.

Not enough participation in activities: Some of the council members indicated as the reason why the council is in relation with only few students that the number of student activities is limited bearing the population in mind, which is because there is little participation to the existing ones. This is reported by the interviewees as a result of the social aspect of the university culture. They admitted that Bilkent University, for most students, is only a place for learning, not a social atmosphere. They come here when they have a class and they leave after class. They do not spend their relaxation or fun time in the campus because their social life is out of the school, not inside it. This also means there is no reason for most of them to be interested in both the existence and the activities of the student council. Lack of interest was mentioned as a category by three of the interviewees, who emphasised that this is a natural result of the socio-economic status the students belong to, and also the existence of ample facilities at the university in every area. One interviewee strongly emphasised that this lack of interest is not caused by ineffective communication or announcement but its only a matter of choice to go and hang out in Ankuva (the shopping centre in Bilkent) instead of joining a seminar or watching a film in the campus.

Hierarchical order: One of the interviewees who agreed that there is limited communication between the students and the council mentioned the difficulty of reaching the council as a reason for that. He said: “If a student has a request, first he sees the faculty representative. The representative informs the administrative board about it, and they take action if they can. If not, they transmit the request to the university administration. This cycle might be discouraging for students.”

Problems regarding the elections: One interviewee strongly emphasised the fact that elections are not announced effectively, which results in less participation of the students. The communication problem which starts at the initial stage continues during the whole year.

4. 5. The areas of participation they think are the most problematic

It is interesting to find out that the answers for this question are in great diversity, compared to the others. There are nine categories under this question and on only one of them the majority of the interviewees agree. The most popular answer was related to the degree of authority that they think the student council has:

- more authority and power
- fair representation
- elections once in two years
- administration more open to participation
- reaching more students
- perceptions of the student body and the council
- university life
- rotation in administrative staff
- more participation in academic decisions
- the 50% rule
- not enough representation of all students.

More authority and power: The majority of the students mentioned that they would change the degree of authority that is given to the council if they had the power (six out of ten). Some students think that the obligation to ask for the approval of the student dean and then the rectorate for any matter restricts their authority at a considerable degree. For example, they pointed out that the signature of the three more higher levels is not quite necessary about a daily student club need, such as money or place. “The student council’s role is to take care of the student activities so they should be fully responsible for their decisions and actions,” one of them said. This means, the students suggested as a change that the university abolish the obligation of the approval of dean of students on student council decisions. Another one suggested having full authority at least only in student club related issues.

Fair representation: Almost half of the interviewees mentioned more fair representation as a change they would make were they given the chance. The problem is about the election system. When asked what they are unhappy about the election system, they stated that they do not think the students are represented fairly at the council. The data indicate that there are several reasons for this claim, the two of which stand out as important. Firstly, because the numbers of students in each class in different departments are unequal, one faculty has a representative for two hundred students whereas the faculty of economics and administrative sciences has one for one thousand students. This is because the election system does not take the population of classes into consideration. This leads us to the second problem, the 50% rule. According to this rule, in order to be elected, candidates' votes need to be over 50% of the class population in the first two consecutive days. Otherwise, he or she cannot be elected on the third day. In large classes this creates a bigger problem because it is difficult to reach 50% there are even cases where classes do not have any representative chosen.

Elections once in a two years: Another wish related to the election system was a rather individual one. One faculty representative said he would be happy if the council did not have to rule for only one year but was able to continue for the second year. He said; "in one year you just get to know the system and the procedures, if you were to continue for a second year, you would be more efficient in your second year due to experience."

Administration should be more open to participation: The interviewees who mentioned that participation of the student council in decision making is not at an adequate level believe they would enable the council to participate more if they were given the chance to change one thing. The way to do it suggested by one interviewer is increasing the number of council members with a right to vote in the senate meetings. Normally, it is only the president who votes, but the council members agree that all administrative board members should have the right to vote.

Reaching more students: The data reveal that some of the interviewees are discontented with the fact that there is not enough relationship with the student

body. When asked what they would change, they came up with the idea that there should be more close relationship with the students. One interviewee said no effort is made to reach and listen to the students after the elections, which he would try to change by creating a need both for the council and the students to communicate more frequently with each other.

Perception of the student body and council: One member in the study shared his wish about the student body, which is only possible to change in the long run. He said; “I would change the students’ perceptions of democracy so that they are more interested in the elections and latter student council events. Most prefer to spend time in Ankuva rather than joining a student activity, which shows they do not really care about being part of the university. Since the council members are also coming from the same culture, it is noteworthy to quote here the wish of another faculty representative: “The members of the administrative board are also reluctant to do anything meaningful. They are there either because it looks good on their CV’s or it makes them more popular,” he said.

Adding to the previously mentioned concerns about the lack of interest of the student body in democracy and how they can be a part of the democracy, it is noteworthy here to quote the simile used by one faculty representative for the student council elections. She said, “most perceive it as a high school king and queen contest where the most popular boy or the girl is chosen in American movies.” She added that they are not aware that voting is a democratic right. More strikingly, the perceptions of the council members are not very different from those of the student body. “They are mostly interested in the status it brings to them,” this faculty representative thinks.

University life: Closely related to the cultural issues mentioned above, one interviewee complained about the fact that there is no university life at Bilkent. However, what he wants to change is not student perceptions, but the fact that university administration does not see it or mind it. He said, “the university should be appealing for the students to stay after their classes end in terms of social

facilities.” This means keeping the students in the campus is an issue the administration has to deal with.

Rotation in administrative staff: Just like the council is being elected every year, one interviewee suggested that the student council coordinator should also be appointed for the job for one year, which means every year a different council is to work with a different coordinator appointed by the university. The rationale behind his suggestion is to avoid personal problems interfering in the student issues. To make it clear, the coordinator might have had bad experiences with the previous year’s council. He said this should not affect how he perceives the new council or his job generally.

More participation in academic decisions: A few of the interviewees mentioned that student council opinions are asked and taken into consideration on student related issues in the senate meetings. However, he thinks there should be more ground for other representatives at lower levels to participate in the decisions. For example, the department heads should ask the opinion of the class representatives of their departments when they are finalising the courses to offer. This means, participation should be at all levels, not only with the vote in the senate meetings.

The 50 % rule: Most of the students claim that the restriction brought to the election system by the Higher Education Council which was referred to before as the 50 % rule is a major problem, which makes the election period painful for the candidates. Especially if they are coming from a large class, for example of two hundred students, they find it very difficult to make a hundred students vote for them in one day since the students who will vote for them are not very much into the subject.

Not enough representation of students: This category is highly related to the previous one in terms of rationale, but it depicts another very important result of it, the formation of the parties. During the elections, candidates from different parties compete for the class representative position, which makes propaganda and

campaigning easier for candidates. Parties are formed to cooperate and work together to inform people about the candidates and persuade them to vote for them. This has the advantage of better propoganda. However, a few of the representatives agreed that this creates a problem in representation in the administration board of the student council because when different representatives from different parties come together to form the student council, another election is held among them to choose the administration board. "Here is where the unfair representation takes place," one representative said; since when party is chosen as the administrative board, it is only them who work with. The other faculty representatives belonging to other parties hardly ever come to the any activity related to their roles in the faculty.

4. 6 How they think these problems could be resolved to enhance the student participation

Although the council members had already stated some solutions to the problems they mentioned, those were more structural ones which they thought were more diffucult to put into practice. As an answer to this question, they came up with more practical solutions or at least ones that the university can itself deal with, which can be grouped under eight categories:

- more propaganda during elections
- obligatory voting
- freedom to set agenda and determine jobs
- better communication with student body
- keeping students in the campus
- symposium
- higher budget
- more guide from faculty deans

More propaganda during elections: This category was raised by some students in two different aspects. Firstly, some representatives suggested that the student body know better about the time, place and other details about the elections.

Normally the announcement is done through large posters which do not include any details at all. Therefore, especially if the class is large, most students are not fully aware of what's taking place. "Better announcement can be realised through class instructors or lectures raising the issue, or one person responsible for the announcement visiting the classes to talk about it orally", one of the candidates could be held responsible for preparing more appealing posters or billboards for their classes to attract their friends' attention to the elections. Another issue regarding announcement during elections is that candidates do more appropriate propaganda for themselves. One faculty representative claimed that candidates should have the right to held propaganda meetings or demonstrate themselves through billboards in the buildings.

Obligatory voting: Another suggestion related to elections is that voting should be obligatory in order to increase the rate of participation in elections. One interviewee explained the rational behind his suggestion as follows: "To vote is both a right and a duty in democracy. Therefore, it should be the student's duty to vote, not his preference." Another one, who agreed that students should be obliged to vote brought the suggestion up that students are to vote for their representatives at least twice in their educational periods. In this way one student would participate in the elections for two times in a 4 or 5 year period, which would automatically increase the participation since there are some students who do not vote in any year of their education.

Freedom to set agenda to determine jobs: Some of the interviewers agreed that the fact that the council only works to do the jobs predetermined by the dean of the students in university administration. They have no right to set an agenda of themselves and take actions accordingly. As a solution to this problem, they stated that the council should be given chance to create its own projects or tasks. "They should not just be told what to do, but suggest having different responsibilities or undertaking different roles to the university administration."

Better communication with student body: Although many students mentioned the lack of communication with the students as a deficiency of the system, only a few of them were to come up with a solution for it. The solutions put

forward were to increase the number of student club activities, or to encourage students to organise more activities; and to use the e-mailing facilities more effectively. Better communication takes place if the representatives and the students come together more often, which brings us to the next category.

Keeping students in the campus: One of the most frequently mentioned problems was the lack of interest from students. The reason for this is that students do not have a social life in the campus; they just leave after class. So as to increase their level of interest in the social life and thus the existence of the student council, first of all they should physically be in the campus. The suggestions mentioned above to improve communication also apply to this category. For example, some interviewees stated that there should be more social activities. However, considering the fact that the interest in the existing activities is not adequate either, one interviewee suggested they become obligatory. Just like during the orientation period, students should collect points from the activities they take part in, and get extra credits with those points. One reason why students do not show enough interest in the activities was shown as that the activities are only specific to student clubs. If a student is not interested in meeting people in or learning about a specific club area, then there is less chance for him to participate. That is why one interviewee said it would increase the participation of something in social activities if faculties had their own social events. “The students would feel more comfortable meeting people from their own environments, so they would participate more,” one representative said.

Symposium: One interviewer claimed that most of the problems are structure related, so it might be a good idea to revise the design of the structure. However, this should not be done by one or two persons in the university administration, in his view. “An opportunity should be created to discuss all the issues intensely and brainstorm solutions,” he said, adding that this opportunity could be a symposium held for one or two days, where all relevant parties come together –the senate, the council administrative board, the faculty representatives, HEC representatives and even regular students.

Higher budget: One interviewee from the administrative board of the council complained that they do not have the sufficient budget to be more independent since some projects are merely refused because of budgetary constraints.

More guide from faculty deans: As mentioned before, there is a clear distinction between faculty representatives who actually do nothing and the ones working actively within their faculties. To change this distinction, in other words to enable all faculty representatives to work actively, one of these active representatives said that his dean's role is very important on his being active. Therefore, he suggested that all deans have a meeting with their faculty representatives after the elections, and be willing to work together for the benefit of the faculty's students.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

In this chapter, in the light of the discussion of the results of the study, some major conclusions will be drawn, and some suggestions will be offered to make the participation of students in decision making more meaningful.

First of all, for more than half of the interview questions, the answers of the ten council members showed great diversity in themselves. In other words, it was only a few questions on which most of the representatives agreed on an answer. Keeping the fact that this is to some extent normal for this kind of open ended interview questions in mind, there may have been another reason behind this diversity, which the researcher predicts as the fact that they are not a unified group, or there is not a commonly shared, strong culture within the student council. Since the design of the structure does not permit all the faculty representatives to work together as a team, they do not work to achieve the shared goals. The administrative board in itself is a team working effectively to achieve common goals; however, the faculty representatives are all alone in their faculties. The administrative board members and the other faculty representatives do not make a team, which is the most crucial factor leading to the lack of communication between them. To sum up, as the student council is comprised of members who do not have similar experiences about student representation; therefore, they do not share a common culture, which in a way explains the diversity among their responses.

5. 1 Discussion

One of the basic issues that was mentioned by many of the council members was the fact that they can only participate in the decisions related to students, and even in that case their participation is rather limited as they attend meetings only if they are invited. The members suggested that students must also have a say in departmental matters such as the curriculum. Putting curriculum into the agenda of the student government will also be very useful according to Wilson (2000) because students have a lot of valuable views about curriculum, and teaching and learning. The system in İstanbul University, for example, which was mentioned in Chapter II, creates better opportunities for students to participate in the decisions related to teaching and learning because there is a faculty student council which tries to solve the problems of the students related to their departments, and attends the meetings of the faculty administrative board, where curricular issues are more likely to be on the agenda.

In Chapter IV it was mentioned that some of the faculty representatives do nothing at all in terms of representing the students in their faculties whereas some of them work very actively to communicate and solve the problems of the students. This difference was found to be caused by the different approaches the faculty administrators have towards the representatives. As a result, it was recommended as a solution by the interviewees that the faculty deans be more vigilant and supportive towards the representative and guide him or her properly. This is another point on which scholars agree. Just like Klopff (1960) who says professional assistance is necessary to the councils because they lack the adequate experience and knowledge of administration, Portnykh (2001) also suggests that pedagogical supervision of the administrators would ease the council members' lives as well as leading to more effective decisions.

Among the aims and functions of student councils that were found to be mentioned in the literature, organising the social life in the campus is an important one, which was perceived as one of the most important functions of the council by the student

representatives. Klopff (1960) lists the responsibility of the council to coordinate all social campus activities as an essential one since he thinks developing student morale is a positive approach to student discipline. The student representatives in this study mostly think that this function is what they actually do as the main part of their responsibilities is to coordinate student club activities in the campus.

Another shared function between the council members and the literature is democracy education. Büyükkaragöz (1990) for example, claims that the personalities of individuals are most valued by democracy; and we are not born with the necessary skills for and the knowledge of it. Therefore, education, especially higher education is the ground where young people are prepared for democratic citizenship. Korkut (2004) also mentions the importance of administrative experience the students gain from the experience of student representation. Wilson (2000) is another scholar who suggests that the best way to learn about democracy and citizenship is to experience elements of them in everyday school life, which is parallel to what was found in this study as one of the aims of student councils. The interviewees also thought that preparation for real life is one of the greatest advantages that they gain from the experience.

When we look at the studies done on the issue, we see that there are some parallel points to be raised. First of all, in the study by McCannon and Bennett (1996), the students responded to the question why they took part in student government as it is a good opportunity to meet new people. This was also mentioned as an advantage of being part of student council by the representatives in the current study. Another advantage found in both studies is to have it on their CV's.

When the history of student governance in the world was being summarised, it was mentioned that in the 1990's a disinterest was developed towards student governance by the university students, which resulted from the fact that youth became more career directed, and did not pay enough attention to anything if it would not help him or her have a better career (Love and Miller, 2003, p.1). Some council members also mentioned disinterest in our case as a reason why participation of students in Bilkent University in student council elections or student club

activities is limited. It is noteworthy that one interviewee also claimed as a reason for this disinterest as the fact that students see the university as a preparation for profession, not as a social environment with its own culture, social life and democracy.

The study from Holland by De Boer (1998) tried to assess to what extent student councils performed democratically by analysing the views of both the student council members and the university executive board. The findings indicate that there is a gap between the actual and desired levels of influence by the student council on the decisions made. In our case, there is no gap between the actual and desired levels of influence according to the council members if the council is to participate in only student related decisions. However, what they really desire is meaningful participation in all decisions of the university.

5.2 Conclusions

1. Although in reality there are eleven members of the student council, it is only the council administrative board who works actively and is in charge (five faculty representatives).

2. As for the faculty representatives who are not in the administrative board, they generally (four out of five) do not involve in any kind of administrative activity, and has no contact with the university administration, even within their faculties. There are representatives who have never been to the council or met the council coordinator, for example.

3. There is a clear distinction as to how their roles make them feel between the administrative board members and other faculty representatives since the latter group has not been given any responsibility to undertake.

4. A great majority of the students are aware of the fact that the student council is necessary in order to enable the participation of the students in the decision making process. They all agree that students are a vital part of the education system in the

campus, and they should have the right to be a part of the decisions made about the system.

5. The students perceive the atmosphere in the administrative settings they have been to as being comfortable, warm, positive and encouraging, which they mostly think is caused by the rector's personal approach to the concept of student council. It is worth reminding here that representatives participate in the meetings of the university administrative board or the senate only if they are invited.

6. The students generally perceive that the contribution of individual representatives is not important. What they perceive as important is having a clear role division and collaboration among the members of the council administrative board. It can be concluded that there is collaboration and role division in the administrative board.

7. The council members think that the council has only got a meaningful involvement in the decisions made at the university on student related issues. Their opinions are welcome and valued when there is an issue directly related to the students; however, they are not seen as one of the decision makers on other issues.

8. The council members perceive the student body as being far away from the council. They think there is not enough communication and a close relationship between the representatives and the students. They perceive the lack of interest in social life and also in their democratic rights as the main reason for this.

9. Most of the students would bring more authority and power to the student council if they were given the chance to change one thing about it.

10. Almost all of the students are unhappy about the election system and the level of representation of the students. They agree that some students are underrepresented owing to the regulations of the election system.

11. As a very important factor leading to many different circumstances about the participation in university decisions such as not having a colourful social life in the

campus, or the lack of interest from the students in the student council, the students pointed out as the culture of the university. This means that most of the problems are related to how the student body perceives things, which is why they view it is difficult to improve the system.

12. Still, they think there are certain things that the university administration can do to solve the problems of the system, such as forcing the students to take part in administrative process through obligatory participation in elections.

5. 3 Implications for practice

Students are not very much aware of one of the main reasons why the student council exists, that is the education of democracy and citizenship. This might be because this aim of having a student council at the university is not very much emphasised by the administration in our case. The student body is not given any guidance about why there are student council elections, and what the purpose of the student council is. Therefore, the rate of participation is very low. This shows that there is a need for the university administration to think of ways to raise the students' awareness of the importance of democracy in the campus and the need to take part in this democracy. This could be done through making it a part of the curriculum, or more informally through making the students exposed to the idea with posters or walls.

An important factor leading to the lack of interest of students in the student council is the fact that they do not see the university as a place for social or political life. They do not participate either in elections or activities enough as they do not give a lot of importance to them. Therefore, although it is a long term suggestion changing the university culture is one possible strategy for making the students a real stakeholder in the decisions made at the university. However, the researcher is aware of the fact that this would not be very easy thinking that our case is a private university and there are economic reasons behind the culture existing today.

The students should be a part of the decision making process not only through the vote of the president in senate meetings, but at all levels of the administration starting from departments. For example, the faculty representative should also be a participant in faculty administration meeting in order to present student opinions and preferences, which are not usually taken into consideration in the present system.

In addition to being a decision maker in their faculty administration, the faculty representatives should also be a real member of the student council. In other words, the student council jobs should not only be done by the administrative board but by all members of it. Better coordination can be ensured between all the faculties only if all the members of the student council come together regularly and share the work load.

5.4 Implications for research

In addition to the implications made for practice, the following implications were made for further research. These will hopefully provide an impetus for further research on student participation in decision making.

1. The focus of this study was only one university. There may be other studies looking into the overall picture of all the universities in Turkey concerning student participation in decision making, or comparing two universities with different organisations of student governance.

2. Considering the fact that our case is a private university, other research into state universities or into the differences in the perceptions of students in private and state universities may be useful to see the relationship between the culture of the university and the perceptions of students about taking part in the decision making process.

3. The current study provided an overall picture of the situation in one university from the student representatives' perspective. Other studies could be conducted to look at different perspectives at a time and examine the differences between these

perspectives. For instance, how student representatives see their participation could be compared to how the students or the university administrators see it.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1.** How do you feel about being a part of a group which represents all of the students?
- 2.** Why do you think the existence of a student council is important and necessary for the university?
- 3.** Can you describe me the atmosphere in the meetings of the administrative board that you have so far participated in?
- 4.** What do you think of your personal contribution to the university administration as a student representative? Do you think you really make a difference?
- 5.** Do you find communicating your ideas or suggestions in an administrative board meeting easy or difficult? Why?
- 6.** Do you think the council has or has not got a real and meaningful role in the decision making process of the university administration?
- 7.** Does the participation of the student council in the decision making affect the nature of the decisions made in the university board? If yes, how? If no, why not?
- 8.** What do you think of the communication between the student council and the student body? Is it effective? Why or why not?
- 9.** What would you like to see changed in the way things are done in the student council and the university administration?
- 10.** What do you think are the basic issues or problems of the student participation in the university administration?
- 11.** What would be the ways of solving the issues or problems you mentioned earlier?
- 12.** How effective is the way student council is formed? What would you say about the effectiveness of the election system?
- 13.** What would you propose to make the student representation system better?
- 14.** Is there anything that I have forgotten to ask that you feel important?

APPENDIX B

BİLKENT ÜNİVERSİTESİ ÖĞRENCİ KONSEYİ YÖNERGESİ (SENATO KARARI: 1 Ağustos 2003)

Amaç

Madde 1- Bu Yönergenin amacı, Bilkent Üniversitesi'nin ön lisans ve lisans programlarına kayıtlı öğrencilerin eğitim, sağlık, spor ve kültürel ihtiyaçlarının karşılanmasında öğrencilerin görüşlerini belirleyerek, yönetim organlarına bildirilmesi ve yönetim organları ile öğrenciler arasındaki iletişimi oluşturmak amacı ile kurulacak olan Öğrenci Konseyi'nin seçim ve çalışma esaslarını düzenlemektir. Bu Yönerge, Üniversitelerarası Kurul tarafından çıkarılan, Üniversiteler Öğrenci Konseyi Yönetmeliği'nin verdiği yetkiye dayanılarak hazırlanmıştır.

Kapsam

Madde 2- Yönergede öngörülen esaslar, Üniversite'nin ön lisans ve lisans öğrencilerini kapsar.

Tanımlar

Madde 3- Bu Yönergede geçen kavram ve tanımlar aşağıda belirtilmiştir.

a) Sınıf Öğrenci Temsilcisi: Önlisans ve lisans düzeyinde öğretim yapılan fakülte ve yüksekokullarda, her bölümün her sınıfında kayıtlı öğrencilerin, bir yıl süre ile seçtiği birer öğrencidir.

b) Bölüm/Program Öğrenci Temsilcisi: Bir bölümde bulunan tüm sınıflardan seçilen sınıf öğrenci temsilcilerinin bir araya gelerek oluşturduğu bölüm öğrenci kurulu tarafından, bir yıl süre ile ve salt çoğunlukla seçilen öğrenci temsilcisidir.

c) Fakülte/Yüksekokul Öğrenci Temsilcisi: Her fakülte ve yüksekokul bünyesindeki bölümlerin öğrenci temsilcileri kendi aralarından bir yıl süre ile ve salt çoğunlukla seçtikleri fakülte veya yüksekokul öğrenci temsilcisidir. Yalnız bir diploma veren fakülte ve yüksekokullarda bölüm temsilcileri fakülte veya yüksekokul temsilcisi olarak görev yaparlar.

d) Üniversite Öğrenci Konseyi: Fakülte ve yüksekokul öğrenci temsilcileri tarafından oluşturulan kuruldur.

e) Üniversite Öğrenci Konseyi Yürütme Kurulu: Fakülte ve yüksekokul öğrenci temsilcileri tarafından oluşturulan Üniversite Öğrenci Konseyince salt çoğunlukla ve bir yıl süre ile kendi aralarından seçtikleri başkan, üç başkan yardımcısı ve bir genel sekreterden oluşan kuruldur.

f) Konsey Başkanı: Üniversite Öğrenci Konseyini temsile yetkili olarak Üniversite Öğrenci Konseyi tarafından seçilen Üniversite Öğrenci Konseyi Yürütme Kurulu başkanıdır.

g) 2547 sayılı Kanunun 3 üncü maddesindeki tanımlar, aksi belirtilmediği müddetçe bu Yönerge açısından da geçerlidir.

Seçim Kurulu

Madde 4- Seçim Kurulu öğrenci işlerinden sorumlu rektör yardımcısının başkanlığında, Üniversite'nin akademik ve idari personeli arasından Rektör tarafından görevlendirilecek, Başkan dahil beş kişiden oluşur. Seçim Kurulu Başkanı, gerekli gördüğünde idari ve akademik birimlerden uzman ve danışman görevlendirebilir. Seçim Kurulu her akademik yılın ikinci haftasında Öğrenci Konseyi seçim takvimini belirleyerek, ilan eder. Gerektiğinde dekanlık ve yüksekokul müdürlükleri ile işbirliği halinde çalışan Seçim Kurulu'nun görev ve yetkileri şunlardır:

- a) Seçim yönteminin belirlenmesi,
- b) Seçimlerin yönergeye, seçim kurulu kararlarına ve ilgili mevzuata uygun olarak yürütülmesi,
- c) Seçimlerin güvenlik içinde yapılabilmesi için gerekli tedbirlerin alınması,
- d) Seçim duyurularının yapılması,
- e) Bölüm seçim sorumlularının tespiti ve görevlendirilmesi,
- f) Sınıf temsilcisi adaylarının, adaylığa uygun olup olmadıklarının incelenerek, uygun olan adayların ilan edilmesi, adaylar ve seçimlerle ilgili yapılan itirazların karara bağlanması,

Aday öğrenciler, seçim takviminde belirlenen süre içinde yazılı olarak bölümlerine başvurarak, adaylıklarını ilan ederler. Adaylar seçim takviminde belirlenen süre içinde, (en az bir hafta) bireysel tanıtma kampanyası yürütebilirler.

Seçimler, Öğrenci İşleri Müdürlüğü tarafından, her sınıf için ayrı ayrı hazırlanan seçmen listeleri esas alınarak gizli oyla yapılır.

Seçim Kurulu seçim sonuçlarını ilan eder.

Hazırlık sınıfı öğrencilerinin adaylık başvuruları, seçmen listelerinin belirlenmesi İDMYO seçim sorumlusu tarafından yürütülür.

Madde 5-Öğrenci temsilcisi adaylarında:

- a) İlgili fakülte ve yüksekokulun kayıtlı öğrencisi olması,
- b) Genel not ortalaması oluştuğunda, genel not ortalamasının en az 2.00, bir önceki dönem ortalamasının en az 2.00 olması, hazırlık sınıflarında ise düzey tekrarı yapmamış olması,
- c) Hiçbir disiplin cezası almamış olması,
- d) Üniversite'deki öğrencilik süresinin (hazırlık eğitimi hariç), iki yıllık programlarda iki, dört yıllık programlarda dört yılı aşmamış olması,
- e) Sabıka kaydının bulunmaması,
- f) Aday olduğu dönemde izinli olmaması, şartları aranır.

Seçildikten sonra (b ve d bentleri hariç) yukardaki şartlardan birini kaybeden temsilci, temsilcilik niteliğini ve buna bağlı görevlerini kaybeder. Yerine seçimlerde en yüksek oy alan aday temsilci olur. Ancak, Üniversite Öğrenci Konseyi Yürütme Kurulundan boşalan üyeliğe Madde 7 deki yöntemle yenisi seçilir.

Öğrenci temsilciliği ve buna bağlı görevler, takip eden akademik yılın seçim sonuçlarının açıklanmasına kadar devam eder.

Öğrenci temsilciliği ve buna bağlı görevlerden Konsey Yürütme Kurulu üyeliği dışındaki görevler için ikinci kez aday olup seçilmek mümkündür.

Seçim Usulü

Madde 6- Bir sınıftaki Sınıf Öğrenci Temsilcisi seçiminin geçerli olabilmesi için, o sınıfta kayıtlı öğrencilerin; birinci gün seçimlerinde en az %80'inin; ikinci ve üçüncü gün seçimlerinde ise %50'sinin katılımı şarttır. Seçilebilmek için katılan öğrencilerin en az yarısından fazlasının oyunun alınması zorunludur. Birinci gün seçimlerinin sonunda sonuç alınamazsa, ikinci gün seçimlere devam edilir. İkinci gün sonunda da sonuç alınamaması halinde, en çok oy alan iki aday arasında üçüncü gün seçimlere devam edilir. Oyların eşitliği nedeniyle adayların ikiye indirilememesi halinde, eşit oy alan adaylar seçime birlikte devam eder. Üçüncü gün sonunda da sonuç alınamaması halinde, o sınıfta o döneme ilişkin seçim iptal edilmiş sayılır.

Hazırlık sınıfı öğrencileri, kendi bölümlerine mensup hazırlık sınıfı öğrencileri arasından birer hazırlık sınıfı öğrenci temsilcisi seçerler. Seçilen bu öğrenci, ilgili Bölümün sınıf öğrenci temsilcisi olarak görev yapar.

Madde 7- Seçilen sınıf öğrenci temsilcileri, sonuçların ilanından sonra, seçim takviminde belirlenen günde, ilgili Bölüm Başkanı veya görevlendireceği kişinin nezaretinde toplanarak, gizli oyla aralarından bir kişiyi bölüm öğrenci temsilcisi seçerler.

Bölüm öğrenci temsilcileri, seçim takviminde belirlenen günde toplanarak, ilgili Dekan/Yüksekokul Müdürü veya görevlendireceği kişinin nezaretinde gizli oyla Fakülte/Yüksekokul öğrenci temsilcisini seçerler.

Fakülte ve Yüksekokul öğrenci temsilcileri, seçim takviminde belirlenen tarihte ilgili Rektör Yardımcısı veya görevlendireceği kişinin nezaretinde toplanarak kendi aralarından gizli oy ve salt çoğunlukla, bir başkan üç başkan yardımcısı ve bir genel sekreterden oluşan Üniversite Öğrenci Konseyi Yürütme Kurulu'nu ayrı ayrı seçerler.

Seçimlerde kararlar salt çoğunlukla ve gizli oylama ile alınır, ilk oylamada sonuç alınamaması halinde aynı oturumda ikinci oylama yapılır, ikinci oylamada da sonuç alınamaması halinde en çok oyu alan iki aday arasından üçüncü oylama yapılır, üçüncü turda da sonuç alınmazsa en çok oy alan iki aday arasında kura çekilir. Ancak başkan yardımcılığı seçimlerinde salt çoğunluk şartı aranmaz.

Madde 8- Başkan gerektiğinde Üniversite Öğrenci Konseyi Yürütme Kurulunu toplantıya çağırır. Kurul, kararlarını salt çoğunlukla alır ve kararlar üyeler tarafından imzalanır. Başkanın raporlu olduğu hallerde bu görevi seçeceği bir yardımcısı tarafından yürütür.

İlgili Fakülte/Yüksekokul öğrenci temsilcileri, uygun gördükleri aralıklarla toplanır ve bağlı oldukları eğitim birimini ilgilendiren, Konsey'in amaçları doğrultusundaki kararları alırlar. Gerekli gördüklerinde ilgili mercilere önerilerde bulunurlar.

Fakülte/Yüksekokul öğrenci temsilcileri Dekan/Yüksekokul Müdürü'nün uygun göreceği, öğrencilerle ilgili konuların görüşülmesi sırasında ilgili kurula oy hakkı olmaksızın katılmak üzere davet edilir.

Üniversite Öğrenci Konseyi Yürütme Kurulu başkanı Üniversite Senatosu'nda öğrencilerle ilgili konuların görüşülmesi sırasında Rektör tarafından Senato'ya ve Üniversite Yönetim Kurulu'na davet edilir ve oy hakkı olmaksızın toplantıya katılır.

Öğrenci Konseyi'nin Görevleri

Madde 9- Öğrenci Konseyi'nin görevleri şunlardır:

- a) Öğrenci Konseyi, Konsey Başkanı'nın başkanlığında, Yürütme Kurulu seçimlerinin tamamlanmasını izleyen ikinci hafta içerisinde Öğrenci Dekanlığı'nın çağrısı üzerine toplanır. Bu toplantıda Yürütme Kurulu tarafından hazırlanan bütçe görüşülür.
- b) Olağan toplantılar her yarıyıl içerisinde iki kez olmak üzere yapılır. Toplantılarda Yürütme Kurulu idari ve mali konularda bilgi aktarır.
- c) Dönemin son toplantısında Yürütme Kurulu dönem sonu bütçesini sunar.
- d) Öğrenci Konseyi'nde toplantılar üye tam sayısının bir fazlası ile yapılır ve bütün kararlar toplantıya katılanların salt çoğunluğu ile alınır.

Öğrenci Konseyi Yürütme Kurulu'nun Görevleri

Madde 10- Öğrenci Konseyi Yürütme Kurulu'nun görevleri şunlardır:

- a) Öğrencilerin sorunlarını, görüş ve düşüncelerini, başta Rektörlük olmak üzere Üniversite yönetim organlarına, Öğrenci Dekanlığı kanalı ile iletmek,
- b) Rektörün daveti üzerine, öğrenciyle ilgili konuların görüşülmesi sırasında Senato veya Yönetim Kurulları toplantılarında oy hakkı olmaksızın başkan veya yardımcılarında biri tarafından temsil edilmek,
- c) Üniversitedeki sosyal ve kültürel yaşamı koordine etmek ve geliştirmek,
- d) Öğrencilerin gönüllü toplumsal hizmet çalışmalarını koordine etmek,
- e) Üniversite bünyesinde, üniversitelerarasında veya uluslararası yapılacak sosyal, kültürel ve sportif etkinliklerde üniversite öğrencilerini temsil etmek,
- f) Üniversite'de Öğrenci Kulüpleri Yönergesi gereğince kurulan ve çalışan öğrenci kulüp/topluluklarının çalışmalarını koordine etmek,

Madde 11- Üniversite Öğrenci Konseyi Yürütme Kurulu ve tüm öğrenci temsilcileri, çalışma ve faaliyetlerini Üniversite ile koordine etmek ve Üniversite'nin onayını almak suretiyle T.C. Anayasasına ve yürürlükteki diğer mevzuata uygun olarak yürütmek zorundadır. Aksi halde bu tür davranışları tespit edilen kurul üyelerinin ve temsilcilerin, üyelik ve temsilciliklerine Rektör tarafından son verilir.

İdari ve Mali Konular

Madde 12- Öğrenci Konseyi Yürütme Kurulu, Öğrenci Dekanlığı'na bağlı olarak çalışır.

İdari ve Mali İşler Rektör Yardımcılığı, Öğrenci Konseyi Yürütme Kurulu'nun bütçe amiridir. Muhasebe işleri ise İMİRY tarafından bu görev için atanan Muhasebe ve Tahakkuk Müdürlüğü yetkilisi tarafından yürütülür.

Öğrenci Konseyi Yürütme Kurulu yıllık bütçeyi hazırlar. Bütçe; Öğrenci Konseyi tarafından kabul edildikten sonra Öğrenci Dekanlığının uygun görüşü ve İdari ve Mali İşler Rektör Yardımcılığının onayı ile yürürlüğe girer. Çalışma dönemi sonunda Yürütme Kurulu dönem sonu bütçesini önce Öğrenci Konseyi'ne, ardından Öğrenci Dekanlığı'na ve İdari ve Mali İşler Rektör Yardımcılığına sunar.

Bütçeden harcama yapma yetkisi Öğrenci Konseyi Başkanındır. Harcamalar bütçede belirlenen amaçlar için ve bütçe sınırları içinde yapılır. Her çeşit harcama belgesinde ve işlemde Başkan ile Genel Sekreterin imzası bulunur. Memur maaş katsayısının beşbin katı üstündeki harcamalarda, Başkan, Genel Sekreter ve Başkan Yardımcılarından biri olmak üzere, üç imza bulunur. Bütçe amaç ve sınırları dışında harcama yapılması halinde, harcamayı yapan ilgililer mali ve cezai olarak sorumlu olup, haklarında yasal işlem yapılır.

Öğrencilerden Konsey ve kulüpler için aidat veya başka bir ad altında herhangi bir ücret alınmaz.

Madde 13- Rektörlük'çe, Öğrenci Konseyi'nin harcamaları için Üniversite bütçesinden ödeneksağlanır.

Yürürlük

Madde 14- Bu Yönerge Bilkent Üniversitesi Senatosu tarafından kabul edildiği tarihte yürürlüğe girer.

Yürütme

Madde 15- Bu Yönerge hükümlerini Bilkent Üniversitesi Rektörü yürütür.

Geçici Madde 1- İlk seçimler 2003-2004 akademik yılında yapılır.

Geçici Madde 2- İlk seçimler yapılmaya kadar, halen mevcut Öğrenci Konseyi görevine devam eder.

2.1

I: Öncelikle duygularıyla başlamak istiyorum. Bütün öğrencileri temsil eden bir grubun parçası olmak nasıl bir duygu?

→ feelings about being a part of the student council

Öncelikle bu konuda bulunmak için herkesel diyolağın iyi olması gerekiyor. Ben de bu göreve geldiğim zaman çok heyecanlandım ve hala aynı heyecanı yaşıyorum. Sorumluluğum da arttı. Eskiden normal bir öğrenci olarak okula gidip geliyorduk fakat artık bin öğrencinin sorumluluğunu size ait bazı konularda. Tabii bir de protokolda vs. okuşu temsil etmek de güzel bir duygu. Bu yüzden gurur duyuyorum.

→ good relationship with all members
→ excitement
→ responsibility
→ representation of school in outside settings.
→ pride

I: öğrenci konseyinin varlığı sence bir üniversitede neden önemlidir ve gereklidir?

→ the reason for the existence of a student council.

Öncelikle okulun bize verdiği yetkilerden dolayı bu görevi yapmak bize gerçek sorumluluklar verdiği için bizi hayata hazırlamak açısından önemlidir.

→ authority shared
→ preparation for real life

I: Peki üniversite açısından bakarsak amacı nedir?

Okulu temsil etmek bence. Öğrenci konseyi öğrencilerin her kesimine yakın olmalı, herkesle ortak bir noktada birleşmeli, bütün fikirleri gözleterek ona göre hareket etmesi gerekir.

→ representation of sts in administration.

I: Yönetimle toplantılara katılıyorsunuz üniversite senatosuyla bire bir çalışma içindedesiniz, o toplantılardaki atmosferi biraz tarif edebilir misin?

→ atmosphere in university administrative settings

Rektörümüz gerçekten öğrenci konseyine çok önem veriyor. Örneğin senato toplantılarında sadece konsey başkanının oy hakkı varken, o beşimizi birden davet etti. En azından diğer arkadaşlarımız da havaya görmüş oldular. Mesela Mayfest'le ilgili tamamen bizim görüşlerimiz üzerinde duruldu. Yani toplantılarda her konuda konuşabiliriz, ama direkt öğrencilerle ilgili konularda bizim söz hakkımız isteniyor.

→ importance given by the rector
→ chance for all members to experience.
→ expectation to state opinion reg. student issues.

I: Biraz cevap verdin gerçi ama bununla ilgili bir sorun daha var. Fikrini belirtmek istediğinde bunu kolay buluyo musun yani zorluk çekiyo musun konuşurken?

Çok rahat bir şekilde konuşuyoruz hatta geçen toplantıda oylar ikiye bölündü mesela bir rektör yardımcısı mı edimin altında yazıldı diğeri de benim adım altında yazıldı.

→ feeling comfortable to speak
→ being taken seriously & valued.

I: kişisel katkına baktığında peki yürütme kurulunun bir parçası olarak nasıl bir fayda sağladığını düşünüyorsunuz? Arkadaşlarınızdan farklı olarak bir katkı var mıdır sence?

→ personal contribution to student council

Beş kişiden oluşuyoruz ama başkan olduğunuz için yapılan iyi ya da kötü her işte idari olarak sorumlusu ben oluyorum. Bir etkinlik olduğu zaman en sorumlu insan benim. Diğer arkadaşlar da eminim aynı hassasiyet gösteriyolardır ama benim biraz daha ince eleyip sık dokumam gerekiyo. Daha stresli, daha son noktalarda karar veren.

→ being the president
→ perfectionism
→ more stress
→ key decision-maker

2.2

benim. Örneğin görev dağılımını yapan benim çünkü beş kişide ^{→ role allocation done by me}
kimin neye yatkın olduğunu biliyorum. Bunları gözlemek ^{→ power of observation}
gerekiyo.

I: peki üniversitenin aldığı kararlara konseyin ne kadar etkisi var
sence?

role of student council in
decisionmaking of university

Öğrencileri ilgilendirmeyen konularda zaten çok fazla bizil
çağırıyorlar toplantılara. Örneğin daha akademik konularda biz
görüş bildirmiyoruz ve söz almıyoruz çünkü o konularda bilgimiz
yok.

participation
only in student issues

I: yani öğrencilerle ilgili konularda katılımınızın gerçek bi katılım
olduğunu düşünüyo musun?

kesinlikle. Gerçekten Bilkente rektörümüzün tavrından dolayı
her türlü söz hakkımız var. Öğrenci konseyinin şimdiye kadarki tüm
önerileri ve istekleri değerlendirildi bu sene. Örneğin ekodiyalog'u
getirecektik bu sene. Prosedür gecikti çünkü ordan ani haber geldi.
Rektör yardımcısını arayıp açıklayınca durumu hemen çözdü gerekli
izinleri verdi. Hiçbir zaman önümüze bi engel konmadı.

great participation in st. issues
suggestions taken into account.

I: peki öğrenci konseyiyle öğrencilerin ilişkisi konusunda konuşabilir
miyiz? Öğrencilerle nasıl bi iletişim kurduğunuzu düşünüyorsunuz?
Sence verimli mi?

relationship & communication
st. council and the
student body

bizim öğrencilerle ilişkimiz kulüp üyeleriyle oluyor zaten 90
tane kulüp var, hepsinin buraya gelen aktif olarak çalışan 3-4 üyesi
olsa bu 300-400 kişiyle birebir ilişkide olduğumuzu gösterir.
Kulüpler zaten bütün öğrenci ypsısının eşit bir dağılımı olduğu için
ilgi alanlarına göre, bence herkese ulaşıyo. quote

only with st. club members
working actively.

I: bütün öğrenci grubuyla iletişim kurmak istediğinizde bunu nasıl
sağlıyorsunuz?

Örneğin Cuma günü sinema günleri başlıyo. Amacımız bütün
öğrencilere etkinlikler yoluyla ulaşmak. Bizim burada var olmamızın
onlara da sosyal olarak artı olarak yansımaları gerekir sonuçta.

social activities to reach
others.

I: öğrenci konseyinin kuruluşunda, yapısında, üniversite
yönetimine katkısı açısından bakarsak değiştirmek isteyeceğin bi şey
var mı?

one thing they would like
to change

konseyin idari personeli bence yıllardır buradalar. Belli
periodlarda konseyin seçilmesi gibi onların da değişmesi gerekir
Buraya her sene değişik bir konsey geliyor. Ve önceki yıllardan belki
bir önyargısı var mesela koordinatörün. O önyargıya dayanarak
yaklaşıyo yeni gelen konsey de aynı gruptan geliyosa. Geçmişte
yaşanan şeyler geleceğe malediidiği için bence de orda da daha sık
görev değişikliği yapılabilmesi gerekir ki kişisel sorunlar araya
girmesin. quote.

rotation necessary in
council admin staff.

I: peki öğrencilerin katılımıyla ilgili sence sorunla nelerdir?

seçimlerden başlarsak, bir kere seçim zamanı üniversitenin
havası değişiyor, hareketli bir ortam oluyor, bizim tek sıkıntımız 50% rule
(yök'ün getirdiği oy sınırlaması. İki gün boyunca oylar toplam %

Quot. {50'yi geçmezse üçüncü gün sıfırlanıyor. İki gün içinde sınıftaki öğrenci sayısının yarısına ulaşmak çok zor. Bu yüzden üçüncü gün herkesi tekrar oy vermeye toplamak zorunda kalıyoruz.} Ama seçimlerin her sene yapılması ve değişik bir konseyi seçilmesi bence güzel.

I: peki bu sıkıntınızı üniversite yönetimi ile hiç paylaştınız mı?

: evet. Ama bunun yük'ün kuralı olduğunu ve değişmeyeceğini söylediler.

I: seçim sistemi dışında önemli gördüğün bir problem var mı?

: üniversite yönetimi ile iletişimimiz gayet iyi. Spor konseyi ya da Bilkent News gibi farklı idari alanlarda da temsilcimiz var. Toplantılara katılıyor ve bence öğrencilere daha iyi hizmet etmek açısından bu çok önemli.

I: öğrencilerin daha iyi temsil edilebilmesi için bir önerin var mı?

: bence bu açıdan Bilkent diğer üniversitelere göre ve oradaki konseylerin etkinliklerine göre çok daha iyi durumda.