STUDENTS’ PARTICIPATION IN THE GOVERNANCE OF PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES
IN ETHIOPIA

A dissertation presented
by
Melsew Tefera Mekonen

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Melsew Tefera Mekonen

Under the supervision of

Dr. Getnet Tizazu Fetene, PhD., Internal Supervisor, Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia

Dr. Michele A. Parker, PhD., External Supervisor, University of North Carolina Wilmington, UNCW, USA

Department of Educational Planning and Management
College of Education and Behavioral Studies
Addis Ababa University
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AAU………..Addis Ababa University
AMBU………..Ambo University
AXU………….Axum University
AMU…………..Araba Minch University
AL……………..Academic Leaders
BU……………..Bahirdar University
HEP………….Higher Education Proclamation
HSIU………….Haile Sellassie I University
HU…………….Hawassa University
JIMU…………Jimma University
MEKU…………Mekelie University
MoE………….Ministry of Education
QUAL………….Qualitative
quan ………..Quantitative
SEIP………….Students Evaluation Instructors Performance
SR……………..Student Representatives
REYA……….Revolutionary Ethiopia Youth Association
UCAA ……..University College of Addis Ababa
WELDU……..Weldia University
WELKU……..Welkitie University
WOLU……….Wollo University
ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the status of students’ participation in governance of higher education institutions in Ethiopia. To that end, the study investigated: the practice of students participation at different governing bodies of universities; the role of university students unions and the status of implementation; the benefits that universities, student population, and students’ representatives obtained; inclusiveness of student unions and their structure; supports made by HEIs; and challenges encountered. To investigate these topics, a mixed methodology (QUAL-quan) design was employed. Qualitative data were generated largely from interviews held with academic vice presidents, deans of students and student union presidents who were purposely selected. Moreover, seven focus group discussions (FGDs) were held with 42 randomly selected students’ union executive committee members. Additionally, documentary sources (e.g., senate legislations, senate minutes, AC and DC minutes), were used. Quantitative data were gathered from randomly selected college deans and department heads, and senior students using three sets of survey questionnaires (N=484). While the qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis, the quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Findings indicated that all universities have legal provisions which allow students to participate at different levels of university governance but this practice was inadequate. With regard to academic matters, except in the senate of universities, students were not participating in senate standing committees, college level and department academic committees. In contrast, the study indicated that students were active participant in administrative matters such as student service committee, in disciplinary matters, and in instructors’ performance evaluation. Also, the study results were positive regards to students’ participation in ad-hoc committees and informal participation. Findings also depicted students’ union role in representing students in the university governance and serving as a bridge and in
promotion welfare of students. On a negative note, the results of the study revealed the limitations of student unions in implementing their roles related to supplementing university curricula through co-curricular activities; in promoting academic excellence, research, and intellectual culture; in encouraging debates on public issues through discussions and publications and in supplementing university curricula through panel discussions, debates, and seminars. The study results also showed that universities, student’s representatives and the larger student populations were benefiting from students participation in governance. It was found that unlike colleges and departments, top level management of universities provided financial and other resources support; and recognize and value the views of students. Findings indicated limitations in providing training and professional support for students’ publication. The study identified institution and student related challenges which have affected students’ participation in university governance. The study concluded, despite the positive aspects in administrative areas, students’ participation in university governance was inadequate particularly in academic matters. For better implementation, the study results imply the need for periodic monitoring, provision of orientation and training to student representatives, and suitable student union election schedule. Among other things, the study underlined the need for awareness creation forums for people at different decision-making positions and academicians, a shift of student union to their roles which have long term effect, and structural rearrangement of student unions. It is also called for similar study in private institutions, influence of participation on academic performance of students, a study to identify the opinion of academic and administrative staff, a study on university student union and its’ internal operation and other areas of attention.
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the background of the study, the reasons for undertaking the research and research gaps in the area of study including the basic research questions of the study are presented under the heading of statement of the problem. The objectives, the scope and significance of the study are also discussed. Finally, limitations of the study and operational definitions of key terms are presented.

1.1 Background of the Study

The concept ‘governance’ refers to the “processes of decision-making within an institution which enables an institution to set its policies and objectives, to achieve them, and to monitor its progress towards their achievement” (Trakman, 2008, p.64). Governance in higher education institutions refers to the legal appropriation of decision making power within universities between the various governance and administrative structures such as boards, presidents, vice presidents, senates, academic committees, faculty, departments, programs, and student unions (Iram & Davidovitch, 2015). University governance is a crucial part of the character of a university and is one of the key elements that “can lead to improving performances” (Silva & Armstrong, 2015, p.814) and “outcomes” (Elobeidy, 2014, p.132).

Participation, thus, is “a very important component of governance” (Sunday & Oluwakemi, 2014, p.160). Participatory governance is a set of structures and processes which enhance effective relationships, collaboration and decision-making based on clearly defined roles and responsibilities (Muhammad & Tahira, 2013). In the context of a university, participatory governance can also be conceptualized as a set of practices under which faculty, administrative supportive staffs and students participate in significant decisions concerning the operation of
their institutions (Elobeidy, 2014). Participatory governance bases itself on the core values of formal and inclusive decision-making, transparency and open lines of communication between and among all members of the university including students. Due to this, participatory governance of universities incorporates student associations as representative bodies of student population (Asiimwe & Steyn, 2013).

Participatory governance in higher education institution is a modern and accepted form of particular relevance in realizing goals that can’t be recognized through an authoritarian form of governance (Muhammad & Tahira, 2013). The tendency is to replace the traditional institutional patterns of governance, a top-down model and an authoritarian form, in favor of more democratic and participatory models (Elobeidy, 2014). In other words, the traditional forms of university governance are criticized in favor of a more transparent model with greater student participation in decision-making. After all, the students are “the key factor in higher education” (Menon, 2003, p.236).

According to recent literature globally, university governance is increasingly seen as a team work and many scholars contend that governance should not be seen as the only responsibility of top level leaders. This magnifies the notion of participatory governance in higher education institutions (Akomolafe & Ibijola, 2012). Shared authority and interdependent responsibility are important in the development of effective university governance. The variety and complexity of tasks performed by universities require interdependence among administrators, academic staff, support staff, and students (Zue & Ratsoy, 1999). Since students compose the largest university population and all university decisions impact them, it is rational for students to participate in university governance (Zuo & Ratsoy, 1999).
Having students as participants in university governance is reported to have multidimensional positive effects. It benefits not only the students but also the institution. Such practices are likely to improve the quality of decisions as well as students’ willingness to accept decisions arrived at with their participation (Betty & Jematia, 2011). Furthermore, the inclusion of students in university governance contributes in realizing the purpose of the university. Similarly, in most cases it helps to ensure a peaceful campus environment (Luescher & Taabo, 2014). Moreover, student involvement warrants representation of student interests, and also provides opportunities to learn how the university works and enables students to develop leadership skills (Olajire & Babatope, 2014; Zuo & Ratsoy, 1999).

Students’ participation in university governance is a practical means of promoting democratic values and also developing democratic governance in an institution (Boland, 2005; Duma, 2011). Above all, it can “contribute to empowerment, or promote democratic citizenship” (Owens, 2000), as cited in (Turnhout, Van, & Aarts, 2010, p.1). In the words of Planas, Soler, Fullana, Palliser, & Vilà, (2013), universities should “serve as participative spaces where students learn democratic principles through example and practice, and how these can be applied to different real-life situations” (p.572). In short, student participation is strongly tied with democratization of universities. University democratization is related to a situation where internal decision-making processes of universities is governed by democratic principles, where members of the university such as students are represented at different levels (Luescher, 2010).

In a situation where students are involved in making decisions, universities experience less student related administrative problems. Ignoring students and not allowing them to take part in decisions and an attempt by university management to enforce decisions, on the other hand, may result in crisis situation. Governance is “the glue that holds the university together”
(Asiimwe & Steyn, 2014, p.138), and the challenges facing universities could be reduced by enhancing the ability of governance and facilitating responsiveness to the needs of university community including that of students. To provide long term solutions for those challenges which affect the healthy functioning of the university and to be responsive for demands which emanates from students and other university community, institutionalization of participatory governance is crucial (Asiimwe & Steyn, 2014). Therefore, participation of students in university governance is crucial for healthy functioning of the university (Akomolafe & Ibibola, 2012; Olajire & Babatope, 2014).

Promoting effectiveness in the university is the other justification for involving students in university governance. Realizing the objectives of universities is often possible through participatory leadership and cumulative efforts of the entire university community including students. When governance is shared, students feel more positive towards university goals and objectives, and strive to contribute their own share (Lizzio & Wilson, 2009).

Failure to engage students in university governance violates the rights of students to participate in decision-making (Carr, 2005) as cited in (Duma, 2011). It is argued that students, as member of the academic community of the university, have the right to participate in the governance of the university (Lizzio & Wilson, 2009). In the words of Olajire and Babatope (2014), “students have the right to be heard” (p.401) and their ideas to be considered in the actual decision making process or implementation of decisions.

Since decisions of university governing bodies have direct impact on students, their participation should be “at all levels of decision making” of the university governance (Bonaled, 2005, p.201; Sunday & Oluwakemi, 2014, p.160), “with full voting powers and in all committees” (Elizabeth, 2014, p.122; Lizzio & Wilson, 2009, p.71). To this end, students should
be represented by their union leaders who are democratically elected to represent students in different levels. This in turn more likely to lead to peaceful co-existence and functioning in the university (Akomolafe & Ibijola, 2012). In enabling student leaders to make significant contributions that realize university objectives, university management is required to provide all sorts of support to the student union (Zuo & Ratsoy, 1999).

A close examination of students’ participation in university governance shows it is a recent phenomenon of the 1970s’ globally. Prior to that, despite composing the larger population of a university, students were perceived as if they were there to receive service from the university (Luescher, 2010). It was after the 1970s’ that students began asking to be part of the governing body of universities and gradually this becomes a reality in many countries (Zuo & Ratsoy, 1999) including Latin American, Europe, and North America. Similar to that of western countries mentioned above, students of African universities begun to participate in university governance beginning from the 20th century (Luescher, 2010). The history of students participation in university governance in Ethiopia is related to the establishment of university college of Addis Ababa and that of Haile Sellassie I University in 1950th to 1960th (Amare 2005, Bahru, 2010). The trend, however, is different during Haile Sellasie Regime (1950-1974), during Dergu Regime (1974-1991) and at present.

According to the findings of many studies conducted in universities located in different countries (for example, Akomolafe & Ibijola, 2012; Bonaled, 2005; Elizabeth, 2014; Lizzio & Wilson, 2009; Sunday & Oluwakemi, 2014; Zuo & Ratsoy, 1999) the practice of student participation in university governance, however, is suffering due to factors related to universities as well as the student body.
1.2. Statement of the Problem

The current global environment in which universities operate and the academic enterprise itself has considerably changed since the late 1960s and the early 1970s (Zue & Ratsoy, 1999). There are many challenges in the way universities are governed (Asiimwe & Steyn, 2014). Managing universities, as an educational institution, has become more complex and challenging (Akomolafe & Ibijola, 2011; Vilkinas & Peters, 2014). One challenge is related to student unrest and protests. Such experiences are common in African Universities including Ethiopia (Omari & Mihyo, 1991). The recent students’ movement in Oromia region, in Ethiopia, is an example. Because of the protests, the normal functioning of universities and schools in the region was interrupted (Mehiret, 2008 E.C; Mahilet, 2008 E.C., Tahissas 9; Niguse 2008 E.C., Tahissas 10, Tahissas 14; Zekarias, 2008 E.C., Hedar 26; Tahessass 3). Confrontations between students and government forces, obviously, disrupt the daily functioning of universities (Luescher & Mugume, 2014; Omari & Mihyo, 1991). For different reasons, universities are also susceptible to conflict among students and groups. Although students’ unions have an important role in protecting as well as controlling such incidents, problems are still observed (Akomolafe & Ibijola, 2011).

The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) higher education proclamation declares the right of students to participate in the university governing bodies in an organized way through their union or representatives than each individually (FDRE, 2009). Similarly, the senate legislation of universities (for example that of Addis Ababa University) recognizes their commitment “to advance student-centered governance” (AAU, 2013, p.1). Moreover, legislations in other universities (e.g., Hawassa University, 2015; Mekelle University, 2012; Wollo University, 2015) recognize the participation of students in different standing and ad-hoc
committees. In practice, according to different scholars (e.g. Akomolafe & Ibijola, 2012; Bonaled, 2005; Elizabeth, 2014; Lizzio & Wilson, 2009), however, students’ participation in university governance is being challenged. This prompts examination of the actual practice and reality in Ethiopian universities.

University students, most frequently, raise academic as well as administrative questions which they want to be addressed by the institution or beyond. The way they present their case and peruse a solution, however, usually entails illegal acts and coercive measures. Although improvement is observed as compared to the previous years, destruction of educational facilities in universities, destroying public and government properties, influencing and frustrating fellow students who do not support the illegal action; fighting among students based on ethnic or religious differences, mere condemnation and hatred to some ethnic or religious group; and revolts and mobs are some of the challenges of higher education institutions. Due to this, the peaceful functioning of institutions is being affected (MoE, 2006 E.C.; Mehiret, 2008 E.C., Tahissas 7; Mahilet, 2008 E.C., Tahissas 9; Niguse 2008 E.C., Tahissas 10, Tahissas 14; Zekarias, 2008 E.C., Hedar 26; Tahessass 3). Students, however, have to be part of the solution by taking part in governance of the university (Akomolafe & Ibijola, 2012, 2014; Asiimwe & Steyn, 2013; Luescher & Mugume, 2014; Omari & Mihyo, 1991; MoE, 2006 E.C).

Since the issuance of the education and training policy, efforts were made to improve the quality of higher education (Mekasha, 2005). With all these efforts, however, quality of education, is still the primary challenge in the education sector including higher education (Daniel, 2004, MoE, 2007 E.C.). Students should be active players in their academic career and should take part of the responsibility for it (Foroni, 2011). “Students are expected to participate in wide range of quality enhancement and assurance mechanisms” which is one focus area of
Taking participation of students in university governance as a central theme of study, scholars have conducted studies in different countries. In this regard there are several empirical studies from Australia (e.g., Lizzio & Wilson, 2009), and from Europe (e.g., Boland, 2005; Cardoso & Machado, 2011; Kuruuzum, Asilkan & Bato, 2005; Menon, 2005, 2003; Michelsen & Stensaker, 2011; Petry & Lenka, 2011; Planas et al., 2013; Rodgers, Freeman, Williams & Kane, 2011). Notable empirical studies from North America include Love and Miller (2003), Luescher (2013), and Zuo and Ratsoy (1999). In the case of Africa, Akomolafe and Ibijola (2014, 2012, 2011), Betty and Jematia (2011), Elizabeth (2014), Olajire and Babatope (2014), and Mbambo (2013) could be cited as examples.

Among the aforementioned studies on students’ participation in university governance, the works of Akomolafe and Ibijola (2011, 2012, 2014), Boland (2005), Elizabeth (2014), Olajire and Babatope (2014), Menon (2005), Love and Miller (2003), were all quantitative studies. These studies revealed a moderate level of students’ participation in university governance. Moreover, most of the studies found that the rationale for students’ participation in university governance was mainly to resolve students’ unrest. For example, Menon (2005), limits her study to just the education department, not looking at the institution level at the University of Cyprus. She used students enrolled in the education program as subjects for her study and found disenchantment and limited level of students’ involvement in both high and low levels of decision making bodies.
The works of Lizzio and Wilson (2009), Mbambo (2013) and Zuo and Ratsoy (1999), on the other hand, were all qualitative studies. The work of Lizzio and Wilson (2009), for instance, investigates students’ participation at the departmental level. To this end, students were used as subjects of the study and the study revealed that student representation at that departmental level was low. Similarly, the qualitative work of Mbambo (2013) examined the extent of students’ participation at senate level and their influence over the decisions was limited. Unlike the above empirical studies, Kuruuzum, Asilkan, and Bato, (2005) and Planas et al. (2013) used mixed method design. The study of Kuruuzum et al (2005), however, used students as the only subjects of the study. Planas et al. (2013), on the other hand, targets on identifying the obstacles to students’ participation.

The works done by Cardoso and Machado (2011), Luescher (2013), Menon (2003), Michelsen and Stensaker (2011), Rodgers et al. (2011), and Petr and Lenka (2011), on the other hand, were all article reviews of empirical studies on students participation on university governance. Rodgers et al. (2011), for instance, indicated that students in UK universities were successfully represented at institutional levels, committee positions and at local program level.

Thematically, studies on student participation can be seen from two angles. The first category revolves around student activism in “extraordinary governance” that includes “student politics, protests and rallies” (Luescher & Mugume, 2014, p.505). Such studies boomed during the 1960s in both developed and the developing countries. The second category has to do with “ordinary one which focuses on students’ participation at the institutional level governance” Luescher and Mugume (2014, p.505). It is believed that “ordinary” structures of student participation in institutional governance are rooted in “extraordinary” student political activities. Most studies, however, are on student politics and activism giving less room to ordinary
institutional level participation in governance (Pabian & Minksová, 2011, p.263). Regardless of an interest in academic governance, there has been “very little research on the nature of student participation in decision making” (Menon, 2005, p.168; Mncube, 2008, p.79). In the case of Africa, for instance, the existing studies related to university students are concerned with student activism, student politics, protests, revolts and the relationship between students and the political system, and not on institutionalized forms of student representation in the governance (Luescher & Mugume, 2014). Due to this, in “African continent as a whole, as well as most individual countries and universities”, scholarly works on student representation in institutional governance is “almost completely silent” (Luescher & Mugume, 2014, p.512) and also “scarcely documented” (Ibid, p.508).

As rightly noted by Lucena et al., it could thus be argued that, students’ participation in university governance is “a forgotten issue” (2013, p.97). Said differently, it remains “under-researched and under-theorized” (Pabian & Minksová, 2011, p.262), and has “remained largely unexplored within academic research” (Brooks, Byford & Sela, 2015, p.166). This indicates the extent to which students participation in university governance is “a relatively neglected” Cardoso & Machado (2011, p.234) and “untouched area of research endeavor” (Butt, More, & Avery, 2014, p.787;) which needs investigation. This suggests the need for further research on the topic of students’ participation in higher education governance in Ethiopia.

In Ethiopia, to my knowledge, there is no published work on students’ participation in university governance. Nor are there any doctoral dissertations and MA studies conducted on the area. The dissertation of Balsvik (1979) titled “Haile Selassie’s Students Rise of Social and Political Consciousness”, conducted in the two main university campuses of Addis Ababa (the Sedist Kilo and Arat Kilo Campuses) was about the growth of Ethiopian students movement.
The dissertation titled “University Governance: Autonomy and Accountability in Ethiopian Public Institutions” conducted by Demewoz Admasu (2013) was the only related work to this study. Demewoz’s study, however, explored public university governance in Ethiopia vis-à-vis autonomy, accountability and the nexus between the two by employing mixed methods. Except its similarity in employing mixed methods, it does not touch any of the issues raised by this study.

The lack of these studies, therefore, justifies the need to conduct the present study. Methodologically, most of related studies conducted in other countries are either quantitative or qualitative works. Some of the works, (e.g., Akomolafe & Ibijola, 2014, 2012, 2011; Betty & Jemata, 2011; Boland, 2005; Elizabeth, 2014; Love & Miller, 2003) used quantitative method and employed questionnaire as the only data gathering instrument. On the other hand, some other works (e.g., Igor & Ivan, 2014; Lizzio & Wilson, 2009; Zuo & Ratsoy, 1999), are exclusively qualitative studies. This study, however, used a mixed method—both qualitative and quantitative for their advantages and opportunities to complement the weaknesses of one method by the strengths of the other method (Johnson & Onwuegabuzie, 2004). Furthermore, mixed methods approach is useful to develop a better understanding of complex phenomena by triangulating one set of results with another and thereby enhancing the validity of inferences (Mertens, 2007). Above all, mixed method provides an “in-depth and breadth of understanding of the context” (Schram, 2014, p.2620) which are not possible by either of qualitative or quantitative methods (Klingner & Boardman, 2011). By so doing, mixed method gives complete picture of the topic under study by combining information from multiple data sources and data gathering techniques (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2006; Sung & Espelage, 2012, Willem, Spaaij, & Bottenburg, 2015).
The other issue which makes this study different from the above mentioned studies is its scope. The work of Akomolafe and Ibijola (2012), and Boland (2005), for example, focused on assessing the rationale for students’ participation. Lizzio and Wilson (2009) worked on departmental committees level; and Planas et al. (2013) aimed at identifying the main obstacles to student participation. Mbambo (2013), on his part, investigates the level of student participation in a senate of a single university. Unlike these works which are narrow in scope, this study attempted to address the level of students participation, the contribution made in realizing the mission of the university, rationale and motivation for students’ participation, benefits student representatives and the larger student population of the university gained, the support provided by the university to strengthen meaningful students participation, and the challenges encountered which all together will make it a comprehensive study.

The research subjects to be included in the study also make the proposed study quite different from the other studies already conducted. For instance, Igor and Ivan (2014) and, Olajire and Babatope (2014), included student union leaders and university administrators; Kuruuzumays et al. (2005), Lizzio and Wilson (2009), Menon (2005), and Love and Miller (2003) included only students as subjects of the study. Unlike the above empirical studies, in order to triangulate the responses from different sources and get rich data, “ordinary” senior students (Pabian & Minksova, 2011,p.265), student representatives at college level, student union executive committee members, department heads, student deans, college deans, and academic vice presidents were used as subjects of the study. Furthermore, the above listed works were conducted in different countries which do not reflect the reality in Ethiopian universities. Keeping the existing research gaps in focus, through this study, I tried to assess the practice of
students’ participation in public universities governance in Ethiopia. More specifically, using a mixed method approach, the study tried to answer the following basic questions:

1. To what extent do students participate in public universities governance related to academic matters and administrative matters in Ethiopia?

This research question was addressed through answering the following sub-questions. These are: the extent to which students participate in academic matter such as in the senate, senate standing committees, college academic commission, department academic council and informal participation; and administrative matter including ad-hoc committees, student service committees, discipline, instructors performance evaluation, institutional planning and evaluation.

2. To what extent university students’ unions in Ethiopia public universities carry out the roles given to them?

3. What are the benefits gained as a result of students’ participation in public universities governance in Ethiopia?

3.1. What are the benefits that universities in Ethiopia gained as a result of students’ participation in public universities governance?

3.2. What are the benefits that student representatives and the larger student population of the university gained as a result of participating in the governance of public universities in Ethiopia?

4. To what extent the existing regulations of universities and student union structure are inclusive to promote participation of all students in the governance of public universities in Ethiopia?
The fourth research question was addressed through answering the following sub-questions. These are: the presence of legal provisions and their inclusiveness; process of organizing student unions, systems of organizing student unions; students’ participation in election process, inclusiveness of all student type in student unions and the structure of student unions.

5. To what extent university administrations provide support to foster students’ participation in public universities Governance in Ethiopia?

The fifth research question was addressed through answering the following sub-questions. These are extent of support given and the strategies used by university management.

6. What are the challenges encountered in the process of participating students in the governance of the public universities in Ethiopia?

1.3. Objectives of the Study

1.3.1. General Objectives of the Study

The general objective of a given study depicts the “what and the Why” a researcher intends to do (Creswell, 2009). The intent of this concurrent mixed methods study is to assess the practice of students’ participation in public universities in Ethiopia so as to fill in the research gaps identified.

1.3.2. Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of this study are:

- To identify the extent to which students participate in public universities governance related to academic matters and administrative matters in Ethiopia;
- To assess the extent to which university students’ unions in Ethiopia public universities carry out the roles given to them;
To assess the benefits obtained as a result of students’ participation in public universities governance in Ethiopia;

- To identify the benefits that universities in Ethiopia gained as a result of students’ participation in public universities governance;
- To identify the benefits that student representatives and the larger student population of the university gained as a result of participating in the governance of public universities in Ethiopia;

To determine the extent to which the existing structure and regulations of universities are inclusive to promote participation of all students type (undergraduate and graduate programs including regular, extension, summer, female and students with disabilities) in the governance of public universities in Ethiopia;

To examine the support made by the university administration to foster students’ participation in public universities Governance in Ethiopia; and

To identify the challenges encountered in the process of participating students in the governance of the public universities in Ethiopia.

1.4. Significance of the Study

This study will have the following importance: theoretical, practical, professional and policy contributions. As mentioned in the statement of the problem, the majority of past studies on students’ participation in higher education governance have focused primarily on universities in Western countries, rare in African countries and practically nonexistent in the case of Ethiopia.

As per Luescher and Mugume (2014) studies, related to student politics in the African context, are mainly concerned with student activism not on institutionalized forms of student
representation in university governance. They also indicted that students’ representation in African higher education governance are inadequately documented. In sum, the writers indicated that the existing scholarly literature on student participation in university governance globally with particular emphasis in Africa as a whole is “scant and almost completely silent” (p. 512), “largely unexplored” (Brooks et al., 2015, p.165); “under-researched and under-theorized” (Carey, 2013, p.71). This study, thus, contributes to fill in the gap in the literature, add knowledge to the already existing stock of knowledge and to the theory on student participation in institutional governance in higher education institutions in general and specifically to Ethiopia.

A rationale for student participation is related to their effective role in university governance. The situation in many countries, however, indicated that practice is suffering in higher education institutions (Elizabeth, 2014; Menon, 2005; Olajire & Babatope, 2014) for different reasons. This study is thus hoped to have practical contributions by providing pertinent and timely information concerning the existing systems, practices, obstacles and recommendations on students’ participation in higher education governance to the Ethiopian public universities.

The report is also expected to enlighten the university governing boards and government officials at large concerning the extent to which university students are involved in governance of university education as spelt out in higher education proclamation and legislations of the institutions. This will help them in taking action to improve the practice.

The study is believed to raise the awareness of student union/council leaders regarding the problems in implementing the rights given to them to participate in governance and the areas that need practical improvement.
By uncovering and highlighting the experiences, practices, and challenges of students’ participation in university governance, this study will provide information to policy makers, which will help them to better understand the reality and make their own suggestions for improvement on policy issues under considerations.

The findings from this research would also serve as an inspiration and trigger interest in other scholars to carry out further research on this area. By this, the study will make significant contribution to the profession (field of study).

1.5. Delimitations of the Study

Participation in university governance may be considered as a concern of all actors within the university community (i.e. managers, academic staff, students, and administrative support staff) (Planas et al., 2013). To make it manageable, this study is, however, delimited to students’ participation in public higher education institutions governance in Ethiopia. Hence the research findings may not be generalized to private higher education institutions in Ethiopia. Among possible elements of university governance, in this study, I examined the level of students’ participation in both academic (at department, college and senate) and administrative matters including involvement in ad-hoc and standing committees. Moreover, I assessed the contribution of students’ participation in governance to universities, benefits to the student body, support made by the university and challenges encountered. Owing to this, I did not seek to examine issues like rational of participation, contribution to society, the status of participation at different regimes in Ethiopia or some other viewpoints. The study was also delimited to the formal student organization which has a formal recognition by the university and students' union or council leaders who formally elected and represent the larger student body of the university as per the legislation of the universities. Because of this, student representatives of any other
form of student organization be it political, religious, ethnic or any other form were not the concern of this study.

1.6. Limitations of the Study

This study has different limitations. First, most of the review literature on students’ participation in university governance in higher education focuses on Western countries that have social, cultural and political contexts which are different from the general context of this study, Ethiopia. This is mainly due to a lack of local empirical studies in the area of students’ participation in university governance in Ethiopia. Secondly, the consideration of age of institutions alone may not adequately distinguish one group of the institutions from the others; therefore, generalizability of the findings to other universities might not be fully warranted. The other limitation was related to AVPs.

Academic vice presidents of sampled universities were among the subjects of this study and interview was the instrument to collect data from these individuals. Unfortunately, two of the vice presidents were not around during my trip to universities to collect data. As a result, I had to interview academic program directors who were the delegate of AVP. The other two academic vice presidents after expressing their willingness to be interviewed and giving me an appointment, they were either absorbed by long meetings or out of campus by the time of the schedule agreed up on. After trying it for two to three days, I managed in getting them. After asking me for an apology for the inconvenience they made, they declined to be interviewed on the ground that they were too busy. Instead, they called academic program directors, which were in an immediate position accountable to AVP, and gave him a direction to respond adequately to all interview questions that I have. These people had stayed for more than three years in that position and which were frequently delegated by AVP, although I failed to get the AVPs
themselves, they were knowledgeable about the issues I raised and managed to get adequate information.

Moreover, they provided me the minutes of the senate to skim over it which helped me to triangulate with the interview they gave me. The other limitation was the difficulty to get minutes of the senate, standing committees, college and department level academic committees. Although the people at different positions were believed to be cognizant of the purpose of the research and issue of education is not confidential in its very nature, people in some universities, were not willing to provide the minutes and read at a glance in their office in their presence. And some were looking at me surprisingly when I asked them for their permission and to give an order for their office managers to access the minutes. Even if student unions were not reluctant like that of offices in the university to have the access of reviewing their minutes, some minutes of the student unions were missing due to their poor office management.

1.7. Operational Definition of Key Terms

In studying students’ participation in higher education institutions governance, it is necessary to examine the level of participation in different decision making bodies particularly through representation of student union or council leaders. Based on this theme, the following is a list of terms used in the study.

1. Academic matter: participation in senate, senate standing committees, college level academic commission, department academic council and other ad-hoc committees
2. Administrative matters: participation in student service committees, discipline, instructors performance evaluation, planning and performance evaluation of the university
3. Governance: Governance refers to the processes and decisions that seek to define policies, actions, grant power and verify performance in the university. Governance of higher
education involves the authority to make decisions about fundamental policies and practices in several critical areas concerning colleges and the university in general (Dela & Jimenez, 2015; Sifuna, 1998; Trakman, 2008).

4. Public universities: Refers to a public higher education institution which provides education in the arts and sciences to undergraduates and graduate students who attend degree programs through any delivery modes of regular, continuing education; distance or virtual education programmes (FDRE, 2009).

5. Participation: Participation refers to representation of students in decision-making with joint decision making power in senates, councils, faculty AC, department AC, different standing and ad-hoc committees; and in both academic as well as administrative matters; and in general in the process of making vital determinations and policy formulation on university governance (Lizzio & Wilson, 2009).

6. Participatory decision making: Participatory decision making refers to a form of decision making where all members, for instance in a senate, its various committees, college/institute academic committees, department academic committees, standing or ad-hoc committees, are consulted and their views are incorporated in the decision making process in order to determine the outcome of the decisions (Dela & Jimenez, 2015).

7. Participatory governance: Participatory governance refers to a collaborative effort of administration, faculty, supportive staff, and students, for the purpose of providing high quality services and realizing the missions of the university, are invited to participate in planning, in developing policies, regulations, implementation and make recommendations under which the university is governed (Magalhães, Veiga, Amaral, Sousa & Ribeiro, 2013).
8. Student union / council: Student union / council refers to the student organization formed by the student body of the university, including those enrolled in regular, continuing and distance education programs and graduate programs which has a recognition by the management of the university as formal representative of students (AAU, 2013; Mulwa, Kimosop, & Kasivu, 2015).

9. Students’ union / Council leaders: Students’ union / Council leaders refers to the students representatives who are democratically elected by their fellow students in the university and recognized by the university management, who are actively engaged at the leadership level within a student union /council (AAU, 2013; Klemenčič, 2012).

1.8. Organization of the Study

This dissertation comprises five chapters. The first chapter introduces the subject matter and provides the rationale for conducting the research. Specifically, the chapter consists of the background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, significance of the study, delimitation of the study, limitations of the study, operational definition of terms, and organization of the study. The second chapter reviews the literature and discusses the concept of higher education governance, students’ participation in higher education governance, ladder of participation, benefits and challenges of student participation. Overview of global and local perspectives of students’ participation in university governance, theoretical frameworks and models of students’ participation are also discussed. The third chapter dwells on the research design and methodology employed to undertake the study. The research paradigm (i.e., mixed research) guiding the study, of the sampling procedure, instruments of data gathering, and procedures of data collection and analysis are also included in the chapter. The fourth chapter contains presentation of findings and discussions made on students’ participation in university governance as per the order of the basic questions. Summary of the study, conclusions drawn and
recommendations are presented in the fifth chapter. The chapter also lists areas for possible future research areas. Finally, sample tools and relevant documents are annexed.
CHAPTER TWO
THE REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

2.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on student participation in university governance, theoretical frameworks, models of university governance, and global overview of students participation in governance including the case of Ethiopia. Finally, challenges and strategies to promote student participation in governance are presented.

2.2. Governance of Higher Education

The term governance can mean different things for different people and is defined in several ways. According to Das (2014), governance refers to the action, manner, or system of governing, ideas of authority, control, or power for decisions. It is the means and actions by which a collective entity decides matters of policy and strategy. In short, governance is “the structure and processes of decision-making” (Ibid, p. 123). Asiimwe and Steyn (2014), and Ngambi and Nthoesane (2013) also indicated that governance is the processes of decision-making within an organization to determine its policies, objectives and goals, actions taken for their achievement, and to monitor its progress towards their achievement. For these authors, governance incorporates both the formal and informal structures of decision-making groups that “drive values and norms affecting participants behaviors and attitudes” (Magalhaes et al. 2013, p.26). Governance is simply “responding to the question: who makes what decisions?” (Vidovich & Currie, 2011, p.54).

In a similar way, governance of higher education is the authority to make decisions on fundamental policies and practices in several critical areas concerning colleges and universities (Sifuna, 1998). Governance of higher education, therefore, refers to the formal and informal
arrangements that allow higher education institutions to make decisions and take action. Similarly, it is concerned with the determination of values inside universities, their systems of decision-making and resource allocation, their mission and purposes, the patterns of authority and hierarchy (Ngambi & Nthoesane, 2013). It is the legal appropriation of decision making power within universities between the various governance and administrative structures such as boards, presidents, vice presidents, senates, academic committees, faculties, departments, programs and the like (Goedegebuure & Hayden, 2007). Higher education governance, thus, connotes the ideas of “operation, administration, accountability, and legitimacy” (Das, 2014, p. 65) of the higher educational institutions. On the bases of the statements provided, there is no one definition of higher education governance that everybody agrees upon. Their commonality, however, is that higher education governance encompasses the authority to make decisions on policies and practices in both formal and informal ways at various levels of administrative structures.

Participatory higher education governance, on the other hand, is one among many models of governance, which provide members of the institution the right to take part in decision making on the basis of clearly understood structures, roles and responsibilities (Carey, 2013). Student participation is therefore, an aspect of participatory governance in higher education institutions.

2.3. Students Participation in University Governance

Student participation in university governance refers to a situation in which students or their representatives are brought into the decision-making process, either as voting partners or as sources of advice and opinion (Bartley, Dimenas & Hallnas, 2010; Kristina, Dimenä & Hallnäs, 2010). Different authors caution that mere presence of students in meetings or in other
sessions, however, doesn’t mean it is meaningful participation in university governance. It is only when students express their ideas freely in university affaires as voting members and express their views through news papers, in discussion programs and the like (AAUP, 1970). In short, it means “infusion of students into the decision-making processes” (Howard, 1970, p.896).

Student participation in university governance often assumes two forms: formal and informal participation. Formal participation refers to the situation where students exercise formal participation in decision-making through representation on boards, councils, committees and the like through purposely-created structures and mechanisms (Honinigh & Hooge, 2014). In addition to formal representation in university governance, student organizations and their leaders play an important role in “advocating the interests of their members through their frequent interactions with university administration” called informal participation (Bégin & Jones, 2014,p.414). Thus, informal participation is a situation where individual or concerned students’ informally influence university administrators through individual negotiation and other opportunities. In most cases, informal participation of students in governance is as effective as that of formal participation (Betty & Jematia, 2011). An empirical study entitled “Student Power in Africa” conducted by Klemenčič et al.(2015) indicated that students representation in formal institutional level governance was found to be higher than informal participation. Moreover, the finding indicted that contrary to the institutional level, student representation in national-level higher education governance was often dependent on informal relationships rather than formal arrangements.

In an optimum situation, all student registered (be it graduate or undergraduate, regular or part-time students, international students or any other form) are expected to be represented in both the student union as well as in the governance of the university (Foroni, 2011; Love
Moreover, female students without any gender bias have to be equality represented in student union as well as in different level of university governance (Jones et al., 2004; Mncube, 2008).

2.4. The Ladder of Students Participation in University Governance

Although student participation in governance could occur in both formal and informal forms, many scholars (e.g. Carey, 2013; ESU, 2011; Waheduzzaman & Mphande, 2014) conceptualized it as a ladder of having four stages (i.e., informing, consultation, dialogue, and partnership and decision-making) by adapting Arnstein’s (1969) ‘ladder of participation’. The first stage is accessibility to information, involving open and free access to all documents related to institutional policies and decision-making structures. Such free access to information is among key elements to have transparent university governance. In the stage of “Informing”, which is a form of authoritarian model and a one-way process, the university administration tells students about their decision before or during implementation of programs. The next stage, consultation, is where participation begins, by soliciting student opinions, views and feedback, but without any guarantee for consideration of their views. Unlike the first stage, consulting is a two-way communication, but students are limited to provide feedback and the right to make decisions remains unilaterally in the hands of university administration.

The third stage is ‘dialogue’ between students and university decision-making bodies. Although dialogue between students and other decision-making bodies is vital for students to have an influence in the decision to be arrived, full influence to affect final outcomes is still in the hands of university administration. The fourth stage ‘partnership and decision-making’, which is the highest form of student participation, where students involve at every stage of university governance, from agenda setting to voting and implementation. Partnership is the
stage where common ownership and shared responsibilities between students and university governing bodies of different level exists. It is a stage where student representation as full voting members is respected (Carey, 2013; ESU, 2011; Waheduzzaman & Mphande, 2014).

In sum, it is the last stage of the ladder where student participation is expected to exist not only theoretically but in practice. It is in such situation where student participation in governance is considered to be real participation that benefits the students, the university and the society at large. In related way, Guaraldo (1996) put participation in a ladder consisting of seven hierarchies.

According to Guaraldo (1996), the first and the highest level in the ladder is empowerment. In this stage members of the student body are expected to have a majority of seats or genuine specified powers on formal decision-making bodies over issues considered in the university. In empowerment, student body are expected to initiate improvements with the assistance of outside organizations or other allies, control the situation and influence the processes and the outcomes. As per this level assumption, people in the formal hierarchy of university management are expected to be less in number and in power in the decision making. Empowerment, due to its characteristics, and statements displayed in Ethiopian higher education proclamation and taking into account universities legislation, does not fit to existing situation of Ethiopia.

The second highest level in the ladder as per classification of Guaraldo (1996) is termed as partnership. In partnership members of the student body and decision-maker individuals in the formal hierarchy of the university agree to share planning and decision making responsibilities about issues considered in the institution. As per the characteristics of partnership, student representatives are expected to take part in institutional policy developments, planning
committees and also other informal mechanisms for resolving problems and conflicts. The influence in decision making of people in the formal structure of the university is more intense than in the case of empowerment. Although partnership is placed sixth level in the ladder developed by Arnstein (1969), in both cases students are given the right to take part in decision making bodies of the university at different levels. Due to this, the characteristics of partnership stated by both writers Arnstein (1969) and Guaraldo (1996) seems to meet the rights of students given by Ethiopian higher education proclamation (FDRE, 2009) to participate in university governance.

The third highest level in the hierarchy according to Guaraldo (1996) is conciliation. In conciliation people in the formal university management devises solutions to issues and problems that are eventually ratified by student representatives. It may take the form of appointing a few representatives of students to advisory groups, or even to decision-making bodies, where they can be heard. However, they are frequently forced to accept the decisions of a powerful and persuasive elites- the formal university management in this case. Due to this, it is frequently a top-down approach. Unlike empowerment where students have the highest influence, in conciliation university management takes the lion’s share of the power to make decision and leaving students to be recipients.

The fourth hierarchy level down in the ladder is termed as dissimulation. In order to achieve a semblance of participation, student representatives are placed on rubber-stamp advisory committees or boards. The main purpose is educating them or, more frequently, getting their support (Guaraldo, 1996). This stage reveals that students’ representatives are allowed to take part in different advisory committees for the sake of getting their acceptance or to let them get lessons on the process. This shows that students are excluded in the actual decision making
bodies which could be considered as real participation. This stage takes similar characteristic to Arnstein’s (1969) therapy levels.

Diplomacy, which is a type of manipulation according to Arnstein’s (1969), is the fifth in the hierarchy level down in the ladder of participation. It takes the form of consultation, attitude surveys, and public hearings. In diplomacy, university officials collect ideas or opinions of students on different issues or about the service being offered by organizing forums or by distributing questionnaires. Although students’ opinions on different issues are collected through attitude surveys or other means, there is no assurance for ideas to be considered or be implemented in the final decisions (Guaraldo, 1996).

The sixth hierarchy level down in the ladder, according to the classification of (Guaraldo, 1996) is informing. Informing is characterized by a one-way flow of information from officials of the university to student body or student representatives about decisions made, their rights, responsibilities and options, without allowance for feedback or negotiation. It is a top-down initiative that prohibits the ideas of students which frequently ends up with controversial results. Due to this, it is merely manipulation of students which could not be considered as real participation.

Conspiracy, according to (Guaraldo, 1996), is the seventh rung down the ladder of participation. Here, in conspiracy, no participation of students in the formal decision-making process is allowed or even considered. Individuals in the formal management hierarchy most often reject any idea of the students.

The ladder developed by Guaraldo (1996) indicates that participation is a hierarchy which goes from nominal form of participation, conspiracy, to empowerment, which is the highest level
of participation. As long as empowerment gives student representatives the majority of seats or specified powers on formal decision-making bodies than people in the formal management position of universities, makes it unrealistic to Ethiopian situation. The remaining ladders, however, could be taken as a guide to the study.

The other ladder of participation is the one which is developed by Arnstein in 1969 where the sole measure of participation is power to make decisions and controlling this as a true aim of citizen participation. Thus, the different levels on her ladder relate directly to the degree to which students have attained decision making power. The ladder, therefore, have eight levels namely: manipulation, therapy, informing, consultation, placation, partnership, delegated power, and citizen control as presented here under.

**Manipulation**

According to Arnstein (1969), in manipulation students have no real possibilities to affect on issues concerning to them. Feedback/ideas are collected from ready made plans but students don’t know why, and they are not informed how it's going to be used. Activities and programs are planned by people in management positions and students are simply part of activities only as users. Students are placed on rubberstamp advisory committees or advisory boards for the purpose of “educating” them or getting their support. At meetings of advisory committees, it is university officials who educated, persuaded, and advised students, not the reverse. Students in this case have no legitimate function or power. Issues or programs may not be discussed with students or it may be described at a meeting in the most general terms (Quetzal & McCallumb, 2006). “We need your signatures on this proposal” is a common characteristic of manipulation (Head, 2007, p.445). After signing their names, student representatives submissively, without asking the important questions, spread the word that they have
“participated” in decision-making bodies of the university. Due to this, decisions, oftentimes, did not reflect their needs and responsive to their priorities (Arnstein, 1969). In sum, in manipulation all decisions are taken by university management excluding students.

**Therapy**

At this level students are informed (sometimes selectively, e.g., pointing out the benefits and hiding the disadvantages) about decisions made but there is no opportunity for them to express their concerns. In other words the power of making decision is in the hand of university management bodies. Their real objective is not to participate students in planning, conducting programs and in decisions but to enable university management to educate or treat the participants (Quetzal & McCallumb, 2006). The primary purpose of participation is, therefore, to gain students support through public relations. In sum, in therapy students are given room to take part in committees for the main purpose of securing their support. According to Arnstein (1969), these two levels on the ladder, manipulation and therapy, together labeled levels of “non-participation” (Kristina, Dimenäs, & Hallnäs, 2010, p.154).

**Informing**

Informing students of their rights, responsibilities, and options can be the most important first step toward legitimate student participation. However, too frequently it is characterized by a one-way flow of information - from university officials to students - with no channel provided for feedback and no power for negotiation. Under these conditions, students have little opportunity to influence the program designed for their benefit. Tools like news media, pamphlets, posters, and responses to inquiries are the most frequent techniques used for such one-way communication. The overall goal of this level is to provide students with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities
and/or solutions. “We will keep you informed” (Head, 2007, p.445) is the common words heard from university management. Meetings are usually dominated by one-way communication by simple device of providing superficial information, discouraging questions, or giving irrelevant answers (Arnstein, 1969). In sum, at this level, students are informed but no channel for provision of feedback.

**Consultation**

The most frequent methods used for consulting students are attitude surveys, meetings, and public hearings. When arrangements are made by people in the formal structure of the university, students may indeed hear and be heard. But under these conditions they lack the power to insure that their views are considered by people in the management. Due to this, there is no follow through, no “muscle,” hence no room for assurance of changing the status quo by student representatives (Arnstein, 1969, p.220). The goal of this stage is merely to obtain students’ feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions. “We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback” (Head, 2007, p.445) is the common promise made by university administration. In sum, in consultation, students’ opinions are asked but the right to make decisions remains in the hands of university management.

**Placation**

Placation is simply a higher level of tokenism where students are allowed to advice, but the right to decide remains in the hands of university management. The strategy in placation is to place a few hand-picked on boards, advisory and planning committees and the like while the formally placed management hold the majority of seats and power. Students, thus, could be easily outvoted. In other cases, power holders retain the right to judge the legitimacy or feasibility of the advice. The degree to which students are actually placated depends largely on
the quality of technical assistance they have in articulating their priorities and the extent to which students have been organized to press for those priorities (Quetzal & McCallum, 2006). To sum up, in placation students are given to play advisory role where advice are actually taken. For Arnstein (1969) the above three levels, informing, consultation and placation are “not about genuine participation” rather they are “inauthentic (symbolic) participation”, and therefore labels degrees of “tokenism” (Kristina et al. 2010, p.154).

**Partnership**

At this stage of the ladder, power is in fact redistributed through negotiation between students and university management. They take part in planning and decision-making responsibilities by taking part in structures of planning committees and other levels of the university (Arnstein, 1969). The goal of partnership is to work directly with the students throughout the process to ensure that students concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered. Moreover, students become partner with the university management in each aspect of the decision, including the development of alternatives and the identification of preferred solution. The university will promise to work with students to ensure that their concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and to provide feedback. In addition, the university shows its commitment to look in to their direct advice, innovation in formulating solutions and recommendations for decisions (Head, 2007). In sum, in partnership, real negotiation between students and university management is put in place and students are part of decision making bodies.

**Delegated Power**

Negotiations between students and university officials can result in students to have dominant decision-making authority over a particular plan or program. In delegated power
students have a clear majority of seats and genuine specified powers (Quetzal & McCallumb, 2006). At this level, the ladder has been scaled to the point where students hold the significant cards to assure accountability of the program to them (Arnstein, 1969). In sum, this stage reflects the right of decision-making power is delegated to students.

**Citizen Control**

Citizen control is also termed as self-government where students are expected to make the decision. As per the assumptions of citizen control, students are simply demanding degree of power (or control) which guarantees them to handle the entire job of planning, policy-making, and managing a program or an institution (Arnstein, 1969; Quetzal & McCallumb, 2006). The goal of citizen control is to place final decision making in the hands of the students. “We will implement what you decide” (Head, 2007, p.446) is the statement expected from university management. For Arnstein (1969) the above three levels, partnership, delegated power and citizen control are considered as realistic participation and labeled as “citizen power” (p.2).

Though citizen control is taken as the last and highest level of participation in the ladder developed by Arnstein (1969), which is a form of institutional self-government where students make the decision, it is unlikely to exist in the context of educational institutions in Ethiopia but it might work in the cases of projects. So it is unrealistic to expect to happen in higher education institutions in Ethiopia and does not go to that of 2009 higher education proclamation of Ethiopia. The same is true in the cases of delegated power as well. It is not possible to find any higher education institution which delegate power to students and left them to decide on academic as well as administrative matters. Although delegated power and citizen control according to (Arnstein, 1969) are labeled as the highest level of participation, therefore, both of them are unrealistic to Ethiopian universities.
2.5. Rational of Students Participation in University Governance

In the field of university governance, different authors point out the rational of students’ participation in the governance of universities. The primary reason for participating students in university governance is related to the fact that “students are the sine qua non of university existence” (Moustakis, 2011, p.6) who constitute the “largest number of university community” (Olajire & Babatope, 2014, p.402). This places students “at the centre of higher education” the “principal stakeholder” (Butt et al., 2014, p.787), and “members or partners of the academic community” (Boland, 2005, p.208) of higher education institutions. Their size also gives them “the right to participate” in university governances as an “equal partner” (Miles, Miller, & Nadler, 2008, p.1062) to that of academic staff. The fact that most of the decisions made by the governing body of the university directly affect students is also one of the most dominant rational for including students in university governance (Luescher, 2010; Zuo & Ratsoy,1999).

The need for nurturing democratic values, representative democratic processes within and outside of the university and the prospect to make universities site for democratic practice is additional rationale for involving students in university governance (Pabian & Minksová, 2011). The demand to cultivate future politicians and leaders; the objectives for organizational effectiveness; the preparation of students for their future role as democratic citizens and as members of civil society are also other rationale behind student participation in higher education governance (Kuruutzumay et al. 2005; Olajire & Babatope, 2014). The likely benefits to students, university and society at large (Luescher ,2010) and the intention of improving university governance are also the rationale behind student participation (Zuo & Ratsoy,1999). In general, the nature of students as key members of academic community, their size which brought about the right to have a say and the effect of decisions made by university governing bodies up on students are the rational to participate students in university governance.
2.6. Benefits of Students Participation in University Governance

Institutionalizing participatory governance in universities has multi dimensional benefits. Student participation in university governance is believed to benefit different bodies: the university i.e. “functional”, student leaders i.e. “developmental”, the larger student population and the society at large (Lizzio & Wilson, 2009, p.74).

2.6.1. Students Participation in Governance and its Benefits to the University

Student participation in governance is a means for departments, colleges and universities to successfully train and develop tomorrow’s leaders (Dela & Kobina, 2014). Young citizens educated in these institutions will eventually become the future university board members, presidents, deans and the like (Williamson, 1984). In addition, administering student body, knowing the feelings and request of them, responding and meeting their needs becomes easier to the university (Bukola, Adegu, & Babatope, 2014). It is also an opportunity to university administrators, to learn in various ways from students (Salvioni, Gandini, & Francesca, 2012). It also improves the quality of decisions; helps to make rational decisions; bring new ideas and approaches to the institution; greater acceptance and sense of ownership and support for decisions made at different levels. This in turn makes implementation of decisions easier (Honingh & Hooge, 2014; Mualuko, Mukasa & Judy, 2009). Similarly, engaging students as part of university governance is one of the means for the university to get “timely feedback” (Cardoso & Machado, 2011, p.240) about the service it provides since participation encouraged students to be “honest, open and solution-oriented contributes” (Bartley et al., 2010, p.157). It also facilitates evaluation of curricula, programs, instruction, and to identify the deficiencies of the institution and improve the quality of education provided (Seale, Gibson, Haynes & Potter, 2015).
Furthermore, students’ participation in governance helps to build “healthy organizational climate and an atmosphere of openness, communication, solidarity and trust” (Smith, 1976, p.55). On top of that, it creates "an atmosphere of mutual respect and cooperation between faculty and students" (Ngambi & Nthoesane, 2013, p.57). Such a positive climate in turn reduces the possibility of disagreement and conflict between university administration bodies and students or academic staff members and students (Menon, 2005). Such a situation help university administration to be “re-focused and become more service-oriented and student-friendly” (Luescher, 2010, p.273); transparent and accountable (Waheduzzaman & Mphande, 2014). It is worth noting that conflict is inevitable, unavoidable, and commonly happens in universities. Participating students in university governance, therefore, contributes to overcome the negative effects of conflicts and create peaceful learning environment in universities (Joyce, 2009). Whatever the causes and their natures are, it is also common to see student unrest, protests, strikes and revolts in universities (Omari & Mihyo, 1991; Mulwa et al., 2015). Students’ participation in university governance, in this regard, significantly contributes in “reducing student strikes, protests and revolts” (Boland, 2005, p.206) as well as giving a long-lasting solutions (Akomolafe & Ibijola, 2011). This in turn results in “peaceful learning” environment (Boland, 2005, p.206).

Additionally, participation of students in university governance contributes in the development of representative democracy and democratization processes in higher education institutions (Pabian & Minksová, 2011; Waheduzzaman & Mphande, 2014). Students that are given a voice in the operation of the university become committed to the success of the university mission in the form of team-teaching, peer tutoring and mentoring first-year students and the like (Kuh, et al., 2005). This in turn enables the university to realize its objectives.
(Ngambi & Nthoesane, 2013; Mualuko et al., 2009). In sum, students’ participation in university governance benefits the university in different ways: (1) to have peaceful learning environment, (2) to make better quality of decisions accepted by students, and (3) collaboration and realization of its’ objectives.

2.6.2. Benefits of Students Participation to Student Union Leaders and to Student Population at Large

Participating students in university governance ensure not only representation of student interests, but it is also an opportunities for student leaders to learn how the university works, acquire and practice leadership and management skills through practical examples (Menon, 2003). Students who take part in university governance benefit in terms of developing leadership and critical thinking skills, decision making abilities, personal ethics, self-confidence, moral and interpersonal skills (Flowers, 2004; Foreman & Retallick, 2013). Furthermore, they learn “institutional procedures and practices for reaching decisions” (Mathebula, 2005, p. 202). Moreover, they gain “managerial-skills, such as planning, organizing, teamwork, goal-setting, interpersonal communication, networking, time-management, task-management, conflict management, and budgeting” (Lizzio, & Wilson, 2009, p.70) which could be considered as opportunities even after graduation. Furthermore, student leaders better understand the university as well as public policies, the university operations, university-community relationships and university-government relationships (Zuo & Ratsoy, 1999). Similarly, student leaders acquire competences in political training, social commitment, and concern for social and cultural dimensions (Planas et al., 2013).

Additionally, Student leaders learn how to fulfill different responsibilities and obligations, represent the interests of others and how to deal and work with multiple people
including senior university leaders on important topics (Miles, Nadler, & Miller, 2011). Besides, they learn how democracy works through participation in both student organizations and university decision-making bodies (Menon, 2005). A number of studies (e.g., Dela & Kobina, 2014; Mulwa et al., 2015) revealed that participation in governance improves students' academic performance, and their problem solving capacities. Love & Miller (2003) in their work indicated that participation helps student leaders to “openly challenge administrators and faculty” (p.533) and to provide feedback to the wider student population. Participation, as per the work of Boland (2005) is an opportunity to influence policy-making and to establish a better relationship with university administration.

As per the findings of Foubert & Grainger (2006) who has studied the effects of involvement in clubs and organizations of senior college students, student leaders who participate in university governance benefited in terms of “developing practical competence, managing emotions, developing mature interpersonal relationships, establishing identity and clarifying purpose, and developing integrity” (p.169). It is also reported that elected student leaders develop “public speaking ability, leadership abilities, and interpersonal skills, career planning, credited the tasks of leadership—planning, organizing, managing, and decision-making and gain psychological satisfaction” (Foubert & Grainger, 2006, p.169).

Student participation in university governance reported to be beneficial to the larger student population as well. The findings of many scholars (e.g., Betty & Jematia, 2011) in their paper titled “extent of student participation in decision making in Kenya” and (Omari, & Mihyo, 1991) in their study titled “the roots of student unrest in African universities”, showed that students’ cases at different levels get timely and rational decisions. Due to this, students’ rights are maintained and the likelihood of student unrest, protests and revolts is also reduced. As
per the works of Akomolafe & Ibibola (2011); Mulwa et al. (2015) and Olajire & Babatope (2014), participation helps both the university to run its function as per the academic calendar and realize the university’s purposes without disrupting the academic life. On top of that, it helped the larger student population to attend class peacefully and complete their study by the time set for the program. When students take part in making decisions on issues related to the diet and standards of cleanliness, more than being economical, transparent and protecting corruption, students receive a better diet and sanitary services (Betty, & Jematia, 2011; Omari, & Mihyo, 1991).

In academic terms, as indicated in the works of Bukola et al. (2014) and Omari, & Mihyo (1991), student unions play a significant role in helping students become successful in their course of study by providing pre-entry information using senior students and providing induction during entry to universities. Moreover, the findings of Bukola et al. (2014) showed that student unions take part in tutorial support, financial support, assisting students with administrative problems which in turn help students to improve their academic achievement. Provision of awards to encourage high achiever students are also expected from student leaders. From the seminars, panel discussions organized by students’ unions, students gain lessons that will contribute in becoming rational, logical and good citizens which benefit not only themselves but also their nation as well (Bukola et al., 2014; Omari, & Mihyo, 1991).

In sum, participation of students in university governance has multi-dimensional positive effect which benefits students, the institution and also the society at large. Taking these merits into account, all actors in university governance need to implement what is spelt out in higher education proclamation of Ethiopia and universities legislations.
2.7. Structural Levels and Areas of Students Participation in University Governance

2.7.1. Participation of Students at Different Levels of University Governance

Although students participation in university level governance is to a great extent determined by state legislation, national traditions and culture (Michelsen & Stensaker, 2011), students who make the large number of the university community should be well represented on all decision making process (Bukola et al., 2014; Pabian & Minksová, 2011). Participation, however, doesn’t mean mere representation or “merely allow students to sit on decision- making bodies” (Bartley et al., 2010, p.163). Participation becomes meaningful when students are represented in both high and low levels of decision making bodies accompanied by full voting powers (Menon, 2005; Zuo & Ratsoy, 1999). Students need to take an active role at the course or program level (Carey, 2013; Cardoso & Machado, 2011), and departmental level committees, which have an immediate impact on students; faculty, senate, councils and in boards of the university (Lizzio, & Wilson, 2009; Menon, 2003; Rodgers et al., 2011) with equal rights to that of other members (Bartley et al., 2010; Zuo & Ratsoy, 1999).

Additionally, students have to be active participant in all standing and ad-hoc committees organized by the senate (Elizabeth, 2014; Lizzio & Wilson, 2009). Beyond participating in institutional level, university students must be active actors in national councils and meetings (Betty & Jematia, 2011; Carey, 2013). To this end, student participation at all levels of decision making, should not only be legally permitted but also effectively encouraged by university administration by providing the necessary support in having meaningful participation of students (Shatock, 2002).

The findings of an empirical study conducted by Mabovula (2009) titled “giving voice to the voiceless through deliberative democratic school governance” revealed that students were excluded in the structure of governance and were not seen as equal partners because of their age.
The finding showed that students were shy and passive to talk in a meeting which deals with academic related issues but voice full on issues like sport and social activities. Due to this, the finding revealed no sign of democratic participation in institutional governance.

Similarly, an empirical study conducted by Menon (2005) revealed that students’ participation in the governance of their university in both high and low levels of decision making was very limited. The writers found that students’ inputs were greater in less important decisions than the most decisive ones. This in turn has resulted in feelings of frustration and dissatisfaction on the parts of students. Similarly, the findings of Lizzio & Wilson (2009) exposed that students’ participation at department committee level was found to be insignificant due to lack of willingness and ability of academic managers and staff to participate students. Moreover, the finding showed that role ambiguity was the greatest challenge as reported by students to have meaningful participation at department level.

2.7.2. Areas of Students Participation in University Governance

As members of academic community of the university, students are eligible to participate in both academic and administrative decision-making bodies of different levels and in all matters of the university that have an impact on students. Thus, student participation should not be limited to decision areas related to teaching and learning but also in all agendas put in table by governing bodies (Zuo, & Ratsoy, 1999). Thus, students should participate in “all areas of university life” including developing rules, rewards and sanctions, curriculum, teaching and learning, management and development planning and discipline process (Olatunji, 2014, p.346).

The work of Klemenčič et al. (2015), showed that student representatives participate in planning, implementation and evaluation of various programs, services and events at different levels of the university. In relation to this, the study conducted by Mati et al. (2016) on students'
involvement in decision making in Kenya showed that students were actively participating in discipline committee to see different disciplinary issues and formulation of rules. Such a practice, as per these researchers, helped students in becoming responsible adults who accept the consequences of their own decisions and actions. According to their findings, students were found to be willing to obey their own-made rules, feel more accountable, responsible in their academic work and having a sense of ownership.

The study conducted by Cardoso & Machado (2011) and Michelsen & Stensaker (2011) revealed that students were eligible and were active actors in developing guidelines for self-assessment and feedback arrangements to internal quality assurance and in the evaluation of teaching and teacher performance. Similarly, the work of Pabian, Hündlová and Provázková (2011) students were participating in the elections and appointments of faculties for different positions and in the development of institutional strategies. Institutional policy-making and formulation of regulations (Boland, 2005); and institutional finance matters (Luescher, 2010) are also some other areas that needs the participation of students.

Co-curricular activities and clubs Dela and Kobina (2014) and peace initiative programs Pia and Kasilly (2015) also require students representation. The findings of the study conducted by Kahne and Sporte (2008), revealed that students participation in running and/or as a member of clubs beyond academic benefits fosters students’ commitment to civic participation and volunteer services after graduation. Similar to the above finding, the study conducted by Zacherman and Foubert, (2014) revealed active student participation in clubs and benefiting them not only academically but also in multiple domains. However, their finding showed that, the optimal degree of participation to have a positive impact appears to be between 1 and 5 hours of activities per week.
Issues related to standards of cleanliness and student diet are also the other areas which seek students’ participation in the university. In order to protect student strikes caused by problems particularly related to that of diet, Betty and Jemalia (2011), and Omari and Mihyo (1991) advised university management to give the room for student representatives to have their own say on such decisions.

Since participation in governance could be either directly where all student will directly take part or indirectly through their elected representatives (Quick & Bryson, 2016). Participation in conducting teachers’ performance evaluation is, therefore, one of the area and a direct form of participation. Higher education proclamation of Ethiopia (FDRE, 2009) and universities (e.g., AMBU, 2013; AXU, 2015; WELU, 2014; WELDU, 2012; WOLU, 2015, MEKU, 2102) by their legislation recognizes students’ participation in evaluating instructors’ performance as part of university governance. According to the legislation of these universities, effectiveness in teaching or research of an academic staff is measured by the evaluations of the staff’s work by his students, colleagues or professional peers and the department head at the end of each semester. The contribution of students accounts fifty percent of the total performance evaluation result of instructors (e.g., AMBU, 2013; AXU, 2015; WELU, 2014; WELDU, 2012; WOLU, 2015; MEKU, 2012).

Ministry of Education of Ethiopia, universities management and scholars in the field of educational leadership believed that student performance evaluation contributes to provide feedback to faculty members to improve their teaching practices and also to make personnel decisions like promotion and the like (AMBU, 2013; AXU, 2015; FDRE2009). However, the findings of Kelly (2012) indicated that most students are unaware of evaluation criteria; in most cases students are biased in rating instructors unfairly which affect instructors to be less strict, be
lenient in grading or develop easy assessments. This was mainly resulted from instructors feeling of not getting less evaluation result by students. The finding also showed that the timing in which students complete performance evaluation instructors was also problematic. In most cases, according to this writer, instructors’ performance evaluation was conducted at the end of the semester when examination is approaching where students are busy in preparing themselves for examinations or when students are in examination hall and exam is being administered. Due to this, students didn’t give due attention to it and they simply fill it carelessly (Kelly, 2012).

Similar to the findings of (Kelly, 2012), the survey conducted by Abasi (2011) showed that student evaluation of instructors’ performance is already in practice in higher education institutions in Africa including Ethiopia and used for promotion or salary increment purposes. The finding indicted that the practice was subject to students’ biases. The writer in his finding exposed that due to students’ bias, an instructor who is too strict or holds different views but a hard working gets lower performance evaluation result than the others.

In sum, different scholars agree that students as key partners of university community have the right to participate in both academic as well as administrative affairs of the university. Inclusion of students in decision making of these and other related areas, although with its’ possible limitation in instructors’ performance evaluation has multi positive effects.

2.8. Theoretical Framework

Through this study I examined the status of students’ participation in higher education institutions governance. To this end, among the theories underlying participative decision making, two dominant theories political and democratic theories are used to understand the extent of students’ participation in public universities in Ethiopia.
2.8.1. Political Theory

According to political theory, universities are complex organizations composed of a variety of interest groups who are legitimate and conflict is considered natural among these interest groups (Asiimwe, & Steyn, 2014; Jones et al., 2004). Political theory considers students’ organizations as pressure groups, whose members act together to influence public policy in order to promote their common interest. Student organizations are characterized by “organization, a desire for influence, membership, common interest, and substantial autonomy in the use of resources” (Bégin & Jones, 2014, p.412). Student organizations, from political theory perspective, are legally independent organizations that have political rights in an institution. They also have a defined membership, stable resources and largely rooted within institutional policy networks. As per political theory, it is formally recognized student organization not individual members who have a voice in the governance of the university and it is not individual students but the organized student leaders allowed to represent in negotiation about university policy or any other decision making body (Morrow, 1998).

Accordingly, the formal student organization through their representatives participate in all aspects of decision processes made by governing bodies such as the council and senate of the university and are asked for advice on student issues by university administrators. In a system of voting in collective decisions, each student representatives have equal right to votes like that of any other members of governing bodies. However, it is believed that external interest groups and environment have an influence in academic decision-making process (Bégin & Jones, 2014; Howard, 1970; Morrow, 1998). From a political theory perspective, students frequently employ informal tactics like lobbying and cooperation than confrontational tactics to achieve what they are unable to achieve through formal involvement (Zuo, & Ratsoy, 1999). This theory considers
students as members of the broader political community beyond the university. To this end, students need to learn how democracy works through participation in student organizations and university decision-making bodies to build democratic citizenship (Luescher, 2011).

In summary, political theory is characterized by democratic, equality, transparency and accountability. Due to this, it considers the right of students to participate in university governance not only to benefit the institution and the student body but also to build democratic society at large.

2.8.2. Democratic Theory

Democratic theory is based on the principle that every interest group in the university such as students, academic staff, alumni, corporate partners, government and the public at large be democratically represented in the governance process (Carey, 2013; Foroni, 2011; Luescher, 2011; Trakman, 2008). As per this theory, students are guaranteed to have seats and represented in most important governing bodies, like university boards, academic senate as well as at national levels alongside academics and other actors (Michelsen & Stensaker, 2011; Pabian et al., 2011). Students, according to democratic theory, should fully participate in decision making in all areas of the institution including in developing “rules, rewards and sanctions, curriculum, teaching and learning, management and development planning” (Betty & Jematia, 2011, p.92). Students, thus, are members of academic community or principal stakeholders, full integral partners and the main beneficiaries (Akomolafe & Ibijola, 2014; Das, 2014; ESU, 2011; Seale et al., 2015) who have legitimate right in institutional governance to participate at all levels and in all areas of decision-making on equal terms with others.

This theory states that students play significant role in achieving the goals of the institution and their contribution in building democratic values in higher education institutions
It is also believed that student representation is a means “to further citizenship education, through inculcating democratic values and exercising democratic practice” (Brooks et al., 2015, p.171). Democratic theory believes that similar to that of shift from “teaching to learning” which puts students at the center of the process, students have to be the center of the governance processes of institutions as well (Pabian & Minksová, 2011,p. 270). To this end, students should elect their own representatives for university governing bodies autonomously without exclusion of any student type and unnecessary interference of university administration or other party (Michelsen & Stensaker, 2011). Democratic theory consider that the success of higher education institutions is dependent up on “the success of student representation and on the success of student unions as well as that of institutional leaders in mobilizing students around a vision” of the institution (ESU, 2011, p.37). In other words, democratic model assume students as the “primary agents through which the goals of governance in higher Education can be achieved” (Das, 2014, p.66).

All told, democratic theory recognizes students as primary member of academic community who has the right to participate at all level of university governance. To this end, students need to elect their leaders autonomously without any exclusion of student type. Moreover, democratic theory confirms that student’s participation is a means of realizing the goals of universities.

2.9. Models of University Governance

In line with the above theories, among models of university governance developed by researchers, academic oligarchies model, bureaucratic model, customer model and collegial models are considered in this study
2.9.1. Academic Oligarchies Model

Academic oligarchy or “professorial university” is a model where students take a minority position in all the elected bodies while the decisive majority remained in the hands of academics (Boland, 2005, Luescher, 2011). This model considers that only academics who are directly engaged to the primary tasks of the university meaning in doing research and teaching, have the right to participate in the governance of higher education institutions. The justification behind is that these people are qualified to make decisions about issues related to teaching, research and the like than students. Due to this, decision makers are elected or assigned individuals from qualified academics (Pabian et al., 2011). According to Pabian and Minksová (2011) in academic oligarchy model, “students have no role to play in governance: as learners, they enjoy the freedom to learn but obviously lack the academic qualifications to participate in the decision-making processes” (p.269). As per this model, students are considered as immature, lacking in experience and therefore, simply to focus on their studies. In other words, this model posits that, students are not taken as “legitimate actors” in higher education governance (Pabian & Minksová, 2011, p.269). And therefore, academics “monopolize” while student are “marginalized” in the governance of higher education (Pabian et al., 2011, p.198). In sum, this model expects policies and decisions to be made by academics while students to be passive recipient of instructions.

2.9.2. Bureaucratic Model

The bureaucratic model, which is developed by Max Weber in 1947, as cited in (Asiimwe & Steyn, 2014) and Jones et al (2004), is characterized by formal hierarchy, chains of command, defined spans of control, predetermined rules and regulations and efficiency maximization. Authority, in this model, is rational and legal based on position. Due to this, the
most important authority to make decisions in higher education is the responsibility of the one who is at the top like boards and presidents, central administration, and/or dean excluding others from the decision making process (Apkarian, Mulligan, Rotondi & Brint, 2014; Luescher, 2010; Waheduzzaman & Mphande, 2014). According to this model, students have no say in institutional decision making, in the formulation as well as in the implementation of policy agendas. Such exclusion of students from university governance is based on the perception that students are immature and incapable (Pabian & Minksová, 2011).

2.9.3. Customer Model

As per consumer or market model, students are viewed as “customers”, “clients” (Luescher, 2010, p.264) or “consumers” (Rodgers et al., 2011, p.248) whose satisfaction is very important but lacks expertise to participate in managerial decision-making. As a customer therefore, students are involved in providing feedback within higher education institutions (Bartley et al., 2010; Carey, 2013). Higher education institutions, in this regard, are responsible to ensure student satisfaction on the service they provide mainly education and other welfare services, while students are expected to provide their feedback about the service they gained from the university (Carey, 2013). In universities, informed by this model, students are not seen as “internal” representatives and participants or member of academic community but rather as external users or customers of services and knowledge from the institution (Boland, 2005; Menon, 2005). Thus, students are limited to express their opinion about the quality of service including teaching, assessment techniques, adequacy of facilities and the like (Michelsen & Stensaker, 2011) as a means of safeguarding their immediate and short-term interests (Brooks et al., 2015; Luescher, 2011). Said differently, students are located as informants only. This in turn
gives higher education institutions as an opportunity to know the needs of students and react accordingly (Carey, 2013; Zuo & Ratsoy, 1999).

An empirical study conducted by Carey (2013), found that university students were considered as consumers, where students are limited to express grievances of the university, but not involved in identifying solutions and final decisions and leaving the process of fixing the problem to academic staff. According to the findings of this writer, taking Arnstein’s ladder of participation (1969) students rated as informants who are placed to the level of tokenistic participation.

2.9.4. Collegial Model

The collegial model, proposed by Millett in 1960’s as cited in (Jones, et al., 2004), considers higher education institutions as communities rather than hierarchies. This non-hierarchical, co-operative decision-making nature of the model consider students as full members of the academic community who has the right to participate in university decision-making (Jones, et al., 2004). Such participatory nature of decision making in different governing bodies including in board of governors helps higher education institutions to respond to broader social interests including students than the narrow interests of a single group. This in turn paves the way to negotiate and resolve conflicting interests of different groups in consensus (Luescher, 2011). This model demands the existence of democratic values, “shared power, shared governance, joint responsibility and participation in decision-making” (Apkarian et al. 2014, p.152) among university community including students, and common understanding of the purpose of higher education institutions. The collegial model magnifies the importance of “transparency, open lines of communication among all members of the university community,
accountability, mutual respect and trust” so as to realize not only collegial expectations but also objectives of the institution (Asiimwe & Steyn, 2014, p137).

2.10. Conceptual Framework

The bases of this conceptual framework are the review of related literature, the theories and models of university governance discussed above. According to education policy and higher education proclamation of Ethiopia, and theories and models of university governance, students have the right to form their unions without discrimination of student type and formally participate in university governance at different levels in both academic as well as administrative matters. In addition to formal representation, informal interaction between students and university administration to negotiate on different matters is also a common practice. Furthermore, the theories and models indicated that student participation benefits the university, students and the society at large. However, there are factors which emanate from the students themselves and from the university that affect the practice of student participation and the benefit expected at the end. To overcome these challenges and improve the practice of student participation, timely feedback and clear strategy and support from the university is expected. Thus, this conceptual framework, which is nearly a summary of empirical studies, theories and models on student participation reviewed, is used to guide the basic questions of this study.

In the model I developed, there are three boxes and two circles indicating the overall process of decision making, the factors influencing the process and the final result. The first rectangle reflects formal student organizations that represent all students of the university without discrimination of any group of students be it in terms of sex, religion, program and the like. The arrow which goes from this circle to the rectangle, decision making processes of
university governing body, indicates formal participation of students at different level which goes from board to department level. In addition, it represents students’ formal representation in different standing as well as ad-hoc committees of the senate, and in academic and administrative matters. In addition to this, the two-way arrow in between indicates the informal interaction between students and university administrators of different level. The two-way arrow between the central box and the circle, which shows the benefits, indicates the impact of level of participation to achieve the expected result. In reverse, the final result also affects the level of students’ participation in governance. To this end, there is a continuous flow of feedback between them. For instance, based on the benefits achieved, there is a possibility to increase the number of seats or to involve students in areas they were not involved before. The establishment of formal student organization and representation, the actual participation at different level and the final result are influenced by student related and organization related factors. In addition, as an open system external factors also have an impact at each stage. The arrows which go from bottom to upward reflect this.
2.11. Overview of Students Participation in Higher Education Institution Governance:

Global Perspective

Prior to the student revolts and strikes in universities across the world in the late 1960s and early 1970s, students were considered as “objects of university governance” (Luescher, 2010, p.259). By the mid-twentieth century, Latin American university students held a
significant position in institutional decision-making in these modern universities. Taking the experience of Latin American universities and the need for university democratization, it began to spread like a wave to universities in Europe, North America and the Commonwealth countries (Altbach, 2006) as cited in (Luescher, 2010). As a result, the extent of student participation in university governance has gradually increased in many countries in the world since the 1960s (Zuo & Ratsoy, 1999).

2.11.1. Student Participation in Higher Education Institution Governance in Developed Countries: Canada and USA

In Canada and the United States of America, students participation in university and college governance began in the late 1960s and the early 1970s following the university governance reform and structural revisions made (Zue & Ratsoy, 1999). The reform resulted in greater student representation in governance and students became member of the university board which assumes nine percent of the seats and seventeen to eighteen percent of the seats of the senate (Glen, 2001; Jones et al., 2004). Student representatives in both the board as well as the senate were directly elected by the larger student body (Zue & Ratsoy, 1999). Students, thus, got the right to participate in the election of university presidents, in academic councils at various levels, advisory committees and institutional task forces with “equal rights” to that of other members (Bégin & Jones, 2014, p. 414).

When we see the case in USA, during the late 1960s and early 1970s, due to lack of participation and a demand for it, student unrests were common in universities across the country (Joseph et al., 2008; Miles et al., 2011; Zue & Ratsoy, 1999). These confrontations between student activists and university administrators resulted in new recognition of students' rights of participation in university governing bodies including the board, academic (faculty) senates,
department committee and different committees (Smith, 1976; Miles et al, 2011; Zue & Ratsoy, 1999). According to Luescher (2013) as cited in Oni & Adetoro, (2015) in higher education systems of USA, formal student participation in university decision-making, therefore, become an established feature of university governance. Student participation, thus, is not only limited to student affairs issues, but also to certain aspects of teaching and learning as well as institution-wide strategy and planning.

Europe
All over European countries, student representation in higher education institutions governing body is provided by legislation after student movements of the 1960s and 1970s (Miles et al, 2011). Hence, students are represented in university senates, faculties, and departments; and assume eleven to twenty percent of the seats (Pabian & Minksová ,2011). In France, for instance, students are allowed to participate in the election of the council, and to have proportional representation in faculties and academic departments through their unions (Smith, 1976). Similarly, in Greece, students get the chance to participate in the senate, in the departmental assembly and in a variety of formal standing and ad-hoc committees including the right to elect the rector, vice rectors, deans and department chairman ( Moustakis, 2011).

Universities in Italy also accommodates student representatives in “all four levels - faculty, department, university, and central administration” (Smith ,1976, p.41). Students make up a minimum of fifteen percent seats of each decision making bodies except in personnel matters (Foroni, 2011, p.207). The same is true in UK. According to Rodgers et al. (2011, p.248), beginning from the early 1990s, students are placed as the “principal stakeholder” and “the centre of higher education governance”. Due to this, students get the opportunities to be represented “at all levels of institutional governance -council or board of governors, in the senate, at faculty, department or program levels” and a “similar level of participation in
committees” (Rodgers et al., p.249). Moreover, university senior management and students union made additional informal meetings which strengthen their relationships and to have peaceful university environment (Brooks et al., 2015).

The similarity across countries in Europe was lack of interest on the part of students to take part on governance matter as well as in the elections of student representatives (Lizzio & Wilson, 2009; Pabian & Minksová, 2011) due to “democratic fatigue” and “leaving little time for institutional life” (Boland, 2005, p.205).

2.11.2. Students’ Participation in Higher Education Governance in Developing Countries: Africa

During pre-independence period, African students and student movements focused on the struggle for African independence and have played a significant role in this regard. African university students were absorbed by national politics, activism and non-institutionalized activities. It was after many of the countries have got their independence that the direction of university students struggle shifted towards getting representation in internal institutional governance (Luescher & Mugume, 2014).

In the 1950’s and 1960’s, student governments in African higher education institutions began to represent students’ interests in institutional as well as national governance structures; to run on campus political and social activities of students and also to provide supplemental services to students like peer counseling, academic assistance, support those who have personal and financial problems. To this end, student governments are organized at university, colleges, faculties, schools or department levels following the then university structure. Members of student representatives are, therefore, elected in competitive elections. Citing different authors like Jowi (2002), Kiiru (2011), Luescher (2005) and others in their study, Luescher &
Mugume (2014) revealed the existence of formal student representation in institutional as well as national level higher education governance in African countries, like, Botswana, Ethiopia, Egypt, Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda and others. In these countries, students are formally represented in university councils, senates and committees including policymaking processes but with different level of representation (Luescher & Mugume, 2014). The following discussion on Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania and finally that of Ethiopia, for example, shows the differences among nations.

**Kenya**

As a result of the upsurge of student activism associated with radicalism in student leadership in Kenya in the 1970’s, currently each of the public universities has a student governing organization that represent the student body in different decision making bodies (Joseph et al., 2008). If we, for example, take the University of Nairobi, the oldest university in Kenya, established in 1956, is governed by a university council as the supreme policy-making body and a senate responsible for academic affairs. In these highest decision making bodies, students are represented by two members of the student organization in the university council and by six students in the senate. Students are also represented at college level on the academic boards and departments as well as campus-based strategic management units. Moreover, students are represented in lower level decision making bodies responsible to see cases related to student welfare services such as catering, accommodation and the like. Extra-curricular activities and different clubs are also organized and lead by students. Although formally registered political parties are not operating within the student body, political parties tend to informally sponsor individual students for elections by providing financial support and also by organizing meetings out of the university campus (Luescher, Kiuru, Mattes, Mwollo, Ng’ethe, & Romo, 2011).
The student union is elected each academic year, registered by the office of the dean of students and is approved by the university senate to get legal recognition. This student union serves not only as a student platform for addressing various social, political and academic issues of the student body but also plays an integral role between students and the university management (Joseph, Chemnjob, & Ngware, 2008).

Due to sociopolitical, economic changes and democratization process occurred in Kenya, beginning from 1990s, according to the findings of Macharia (2015), student representation and formal participation in the governance of universities have increased. As a result, student leaders participate in decision-making in various governance structures, boards and committees of the university. This in turn has helped student leaders to act as a bridge between the student body and university administrators. The finding also exposed that on account of student participation in the governance of universities, students ideas were heard and implemented and there was satisfaction among students which contribute in having a more peaceful university climate. Similar to that of Macharia (2015), Hoskins et al. (2008) in their findings indicated that participating students in university governance helped student leaders to be politically socialize with democratic norms, develop future careers and became responsible citizens or future elites who can serve the society after their graduation.

A study conducted by Macharia (2015) entitled “comrades’ power: student representation and activism in universities in Kenya” came up with a finding that in cases where students are underrepresented, misrepresented or not represented at all in the formal decision making processes of university governance, the likelihood of student strikes were common. According to the findings of this writer, in most universities in Kenya, student strikes has resulted in closure of universities which in turn prolong the time required by students for
completing their studies, disrupting students academic life, and driving prospective students and staff to private institutions.

Moreover, the finding showed that the impact of university students strikes resulted from underrepresentation in university governance was not limited to the institutions alone but also influenced the country at large. Contrary to the findings of Macharia (2015), the study conducted by Mwiria et al., (2007) showed that contemporary students, whether they are underrepresented, misrepresented or not represented at all, they simply focus on reading, passing examinations, graduating, and getting out into the highly competitive job market. According to these writers, the current students feel that they lack issues affecting them as one, are more individualistic and the likelihood of student strikes in universities is, therefore, minimal (Mwiria et al., 2007)

**Nigeria**

In Nigeria, students’ union of each university is provided the right to serve as members of universities’ committees. Accordingly, students’ representatives are allowed to serve as members on students’ disciplinary committee; security committee, and also students’ electoral committee. Besides, universities regulation allows students’ union to take part in the ceremony committee, sports committee, students’ welfare committee and environmental committee. The purpose of providing students, the right to be member of these standing as well as ad-hoc committees is to let the larger student body develop a sense of belongingness and to consider themselves as part of the decision making process of university system (Akomolafe & Ibijola, 2011).

The actual practice as reported in the study conducted by Oni and Adetoro (2015) showed that student participation in decision-making is not well embraced and accepted in Nigerian
universities due to structural and bureaucratic nature of the educational system. As a result of the limitation to participate students in decision-making and defective decisions imposed on students, many student demonstrations in Nigerian universities is frequently reported; at the same time Nigerian university student unions are often complaining about it. The researchers also reported a considerable difference within institutions particularly representation at lower organizational levels like faculty, school, department and across different issue-such as teaching and learning, students’ social issues, and the like. In sum these writers in their finding showed that in Nigeria universities, both in private and public, students have little or no say in decision-making concerning academic and administrative matters (Oni & Adetoro, 2015).

The writers also reflected that student participation in Nigeria is often confined to issues like student welfare not on core governance issues. According to the findings of these scholars, this limited practice is leveled as “tokenism and manipulation” (Oni & Adetoro, 2015, p.66) where students are given a voice but have little or no role in the final decisions. In addition to structural and bureaucratic nature of educational system, considering students as minors, immature and lacking the expertise and technical knowledge needed in making decisions and lack of encouragement from university administrators contributed to have low level of student participation in Nigerian universities (Oni & Adetoro, 2015).

**South Africa**

The late 1960s and early 1970s as well as the founding democratic election of 1994 held in South Africa has opened the gate for students’ participation in the internal decision-making bodies of universities (Luescher, 2010). The national higher education act of 1997, allowed students to establish Students’ Representative Council and the right to participate in institutional governing bodies. The University of Cape Town, the oldest university in South Africa which
became a full university in 1918, for instance, is governed by a university council, senate, committees and working groups. Students are formally represented at all levels as full voting members. Accordingly, students are represented on faculty boards, departmental and course level arrangements, strategy planning committee, finance committee and others (Luescher et al., 2011). In addition, students constituted fifty percent of extra-curricular and student affairs decision-making arrangements (Luescher, 2010). Above all, students are represented at national level governing bodies such as the Council on Higher Education, and the Higher Education Quality Committee (Luescher et al., 2011).

**Tanzania**

Students in Tanzania universities are provided the right to participate in governing bodies at different levels represented by their unions or councils. For instance, students of University of Dares Salaam, the oldest university in Tanzania, are members of different levels of decision making bodies like university council, the senate, faculty level boards and to the extent of being represented in some ‘sensitive’ decision-making organs like the examination committees. In addition to institutional representation, students in Tanzania universities are also represented at national governance organs like the Higher Education Student Loan Board (Luescher et al., 2011).

**2.11.3. Overview of Students Participation in Higher Education Governance in Ethiopia**

Like that of most developed and developing countries, the history of students’ participation in university governance in Ethiopia is related to the establishment of university college of Addis Ababa and that of Haile Sellassie I University from 1950th to 1960th. To better understand the historical overview of students’ participation in higher education governance in

2.11.3.1. Students Participation in Higher Education Governance during Haile Sellasie Regime

The evolution of higher education in Ethiopia, is related to the establishment of the University College of Addis Ababa (UCAA), a national university (MoE,1996) and “the first modern higher education institution, in December 1950” (Amare, 2005,p.9). In subsequent years, the engineering college, building college, agricultural college of Alamaya, public health college of Gondar, engineering college, institute of building technology, theological college of the Holy Trinity were opened (Ibid, 2005). Through consolidation of these colleges, Haile Sellassie I University (HSIU) was formed in 1961 (Bahru, 2002) and got its’ charter in February 1961(Amare, 2005). The history of university student union, therefore, dates back to that of UCAA and HSIU.

The student council of UCAA, the first student organization in Ethiopian higher education history, was formed immediately after the establishment of UCAA, early 1960s (Asfaw in Bahiru, 2010). A national student organization which encompasses all the colleges under Haile Sellassie I University with a name of National Union of Ethiopian University Students was established in 1963 (Mulugeta in Bahru, 2010). Later on, all the colleges found in Addis Ababa formed a student union called University Students Union of Addis Ababa. Later in 1965/66, student unions were formed on each campus (Hailu in Bahru, 2010).

As per the constitution of students union of HSIU, all full time students registered by the office of the registrar were eligible to be member of the student union. The union had a congress composed of representatives of each faculty, college and school of the Haile Sellassie I university; and an executive committee which include the president, the secretary general and
chairmen of the different committees. The term of office of each position was one year (HSIU, 1966). The student union was under the guidance of the dean of students (Bahru, 2002).

To examine the role of students in the governance of the university, it is better just to start from the establishment of UCAA. The UCAA gained its charter in 1954 with the formation of the board of governors, which was highest governing body. The board was composed of six members appointed by the Emperor, the chancellor of UCAA, appointed from different government ministries. Next to the board of governors, the most important legislative body was the faculty council (HSIU, 1961). According to the charter of HSIU (1961) and the legislation of HSIU (1964), the members were the president, vice presidents, and deans of each faculty, dean of students, the head of departments, and three elected full time teaching staff. The council functions through an executive committee and ten standing committees. In addition, there was academic commission of each faculty composed of elected members from the teaching staff. Beyond the rights, to organize in a union, students had no representation in the institutional governing bodies such as the board of governors, the faculty councils, in the executive as well as in any of the standing committees, and in faculty academic commission. The legislation promises inclusion of students only in discipline committee (HSIU, 1961, 1964).

The consolidated legislation of HSIU of 1968 brought no change in terms of giving room to students to take part in major governing bodies. The change from that of 1964 legislation was the right given to students through their union to participate in the orientation program organized for newly assigned students (HSIU, 1968). A statement in the legislation says “the university will encourage the formation of student organization to permit effective representation of student views to the university” [emphasis mine](HSIU, 1964, p.39). In addition to that, the university expresses its willingness to encourage the development of student
organization for the purpose of promoting communication between students and the university; and to consider all sort of students problems related to student-university relationships (HSIU, 1968). This shows the interest of the university to involve students in the institutional governance. In reality, however, the structures from the governing board to grass root department level doesn’t invite students to be members of these decision making bodies.

For instance, the students’ affairs committee of the faculty council, which is a standing committee, consists of only faculty members (HSIU, 1968, p.59). This indicates the extent to which students were excluded from decision making bodies that considered them as passive recipient of decisions made by others even on issues directly related to student body.

The question and the reality, however, indicates that students of that time, were not absorbed by institutional matters but by big societal and national agendas as their priority. The constitution of the student union also revealed this reality:

We Haile Sellassie I university students, animated by the genuine sprit of student movement for nation building; delirious of alleviating, with all the means we can master, the ignorance and poverty and consequent problems of our countrymen; realizing the importance of organized student action as a vehicle of the manifestation of the aspirations of our people; mindful of the indispensability of constructive student initiative in developing countries; believing that a conscious and organized student body will help to enhance the spirit of international peace in general and Pan Africanism in particular (HSIU, 1966, p.1).

The statements in the preamble of the student union’s constitution showed that their primary agenda was to contribute to nation building, alleviating poverty and the problems of the larger society. Above all, their intention was contributing not only to Ethiopia but also to all
developing countries in general with due attention to Pan Africanism. The aim of the union listed in the constitution also indicates students’ commitment to struggle for national development, contribution in the creation of modern state through the cooperation of alumni associations. Looking after the welfare of students and protecting the rights of students was the only one point which focused on student matters among seven aims listed in the constitution (HSIU, 1966). “The national question”, thus, was “the first to the congress of national union of Ethiopian university students (NUEUS)” (Melaku in Bahiru, 2010, p.108). The theme of the fifth national union of Ethiopian university students, for instance, was “mobilization of students’ effort for nation building” (Balsvik, 1979, p.237).

The student union had its own papers such as “Newsletter”, “News and Views” (Bahiru, 2014, p.77), newspapers and journals like “Endih New”, and “Struggle” (Amare, 2005, p.14) which was financially subsidized by the university administration and technically supported by faculty advisors for the status and quality of the papers (Bahiru, 2014). These student papers were taken as a forum for expression of one’s thoughts, ideas, and grievances by using pen-names. Students, thus, were encouraged to contribute humorous quotations, caricatures and proverbs through University College Calls beginning from 1956/57 and “to write on any topic under the sun, except on politics and religion” (Bahiru, 2014, p.79). According to Amare (2005) the major teams in these students’ newspapers and journals were issues of the Ethiopian poor and “off-campus questions” than their immediate lives in campus (p.14). Walelign Mekonnen’s piece, on “the question of nationalities in Ethiopia” which appeared in struggle (Bahiru, 2014, p.199) and a wide coverage made by News and Views of the demonstration about “Land to the Tiller” (Bahiru, 2014, p.119) could be taken as examples.
University students of Haile Selassie regime, in general, were absorbed by raising national questions seeking for social, political and economic reforms. Due to such a commitment on national issues, many students, like Tilahun Gizaw, who was the president of Hile Sellasie I university student union in 1969 and others are assassinated by the security forces (Amare, 2005). This shows that students’ union’s attention during Haile Selassie regime was beyond institutional matters. This was in agreement to Luescher & Mugume (2014) about university students’ contribution in the early 1960s to mid 1980 for African independence and national development. According to him, students were absorbed by non-institutionalized “extraordinary” governance issues or activist politics than formal processes of student representation in the “ordinary” processes of university governance (p. 505).

From the above discussion two things could be drawn. The first thing is that during Hile Selassie regime, university students were excluded from key decision making bodies and provisions were not given by the charter of the university as well as by the legislations. Due to this structural problem of the university, students lacked the opportunity for their voice to be heard in these determinant positions. The second thing which could be inferred is, although students are cognizant of the merit of involvement in key decision making bodies, they were not observed in challenging the university demanding for room in the institutional governance and amendment to be made on the legislation, which was really possible, I guss. Rather, students, as indicated above, were absorbed by national issues, Pan-Africanism movement and in general “off-campus questions”. Due to these interrelated reasons, their role in institutional governance was inadequate.

Unlike exclusion of students from major decision making bodies, it is observed that students were given due room in running different clubs and extra-curricular activities in the
university. Thus, the positive aspect of the legislations relates the recognition for students to exercise the right to form and run different clubs, lectures, forums, debates, and seminars, theatres and associations so as to promote social and intellectual relationships (HSIU, 1964, 1968). Accordingly, based on personal interest, numerous student societies and clubs such as “the poetry (writers) club, the drama club, the glee club, the society of artists, the photography club, the radio cub” were organized and run by a committee of elected students and members of the teaching staff appointed for assisting and monitoring the activities of students (Amare, 2005, p.13). According to (Bahiru, 2014,) the main purpose of extra-curricular activities was “to produce the all-rounded personality-the agile athlete, the eloquent orator, the incisive debater, the accomplished poet and the inspiring leader”. Moreover, it was aimed at giving students the opportunity “to excel in their academic work, thereby enhancing their job prospects and scholarship opportunities if they wished to pursue further higher education” (p. 81).

Hence, debating was conducted on a weekly base in both English and Amharic on issues related to campus administration and national issues involving both students and faculty members. The next most popular extra-curricular activity was oratorical contests and panel discussions organized by the student union. The panelists were not only students and faculty members but there were also invited speakers from outside including government officials. According to (Bahiru, 2014) in a panel discussion conducted in December, 1959, for example, “the panelists were The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ketema Yifru, The Minister of Public Health, Abbebe Retta, and The Minister of Education, Endalkachew Mekonnen. Among the most memorable thing reading of the three best poems written by students during the annual “College Day” in the presence of the Emperor Haile Sellassie and other audience which begun in 1960 could be cited (Asfaw in Bahiru, 2010).
As per the recognition made by the legislation, (HSIU, 1964, 1968), along to the side of organizing the student union, there were professional associations formed at different colleges which helped not only students in getting experiences but also benefiting the society at large. For instance, college of education students’ association, geography society, public administration students association, history society, political science students association and ethnographical society could be mentioned. These associations were engaged in hosting professional as well as community activities, publishing journals and bulletins, organizing panel discussions, study the various traditions of the countries’ population and others (Bahiru, 2014).

Although students participation in running extra-curricular activities, clubs and professional associations seems inadequate for students who consider themselves as “future leaders” (Balsvik, 2003, p.4), and “as the conscience of the people” (Fentahun, 1990, p.102 cited in Amare 2005), the advantage obtained from participating in different clubs transcend beyond social and academic benefits. It gave students opportunities to develop their talent, leadership skills and to reflect their stand to the Emperor and other nobilities of that time.

2.11.3.2. The Overview of Students Participation in Higher Education Governance during Dergue Regime (1974-1991)

Political activities, rallies, and frequent demonstrations of then university students’ on the monarchical government and having slogans like “Land to the Tiller!”, “Down with the Oppressive Government!” (Amare, 2005,p.26,), has contributed for the downfall of the monarch in 1974. As a result of the revolution, the military government commonly known as the “Dergue” (Darge, 1999, p.56) took power and declares socialism to be its ideology. Following the change of a government and its ideology, “the only two public universities up until 2000 in the country” (Girmaw, 2014, p.401) were required to go through many changes. Among the
changes made, revision of their senate legislation so as to give room for students in their governance could be cited.

Similar to that of Russia where university students are represented in their university governance by Russia’s largest national youth organization called “Komsomol”, which served as candidate pool for the communist party (Chirikov & Gruzdev, 2014), universities in Ethiopia for example, Addis Ababa University, put into effect a legislation which include one member in the senate to be represented by “Revolutionary Ethiopian Youth Association” (AAU, 1987, p.200). The similarity among universities of these two countries in representing students in their governing bodies by national youth association might have emanated from the common socialist ideology that they followed. Nevertheless, students were unrepresented in about ten of the senate standing committees including students affairs committee. Moreover, students were not given the right to take part in decision making bodies at college/ faculty or departmental level including disciplinary matters. That was contrary to statements in the senate legislation which promise for students to “extensively participate at all stages of disciplinary process” (AAU, 1987, p.201).

With regard to student organization, the legislation states that all full time regular students of the university to have the right to join Revolutionary Ethiopia Youth Association (REYA) in accordance with REYA proclamation. It was thus REYA that would represent the university students within and outside the university (AAU, 1987).

Taking the above discussion into account, during the ‘Dergue’ regime, university students were not able to form their own free university students’ organization. Secondly, the new developments which allowed students to be members of the university senate was not actual representation of university students but that of Revolutionary Ethiopia Youth Association-REYA, which was a political youth organization of the government. Thirdly, the structure at
faculty and department level as well as standing committees didn’t accommodate students as members. The right of students to form free student union at university level, the right to run different clubs and to organize a “College Day” (Amare, 2005) given during the monarchy period were all taken away. Taking these facts into account, it is possible to conclude that student participation in institutional governance during ‘Dergue’ regime has declined as compared to that of Haile Sellasie regime.

2.11.3.3. Students Participation in Higher Education Governance from 1991 to Date

After 17 years of “successful armed struggle” (Abbink, 2011, p.596), the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), an umbrella organization of ethnic-based organizations led by Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) (Vaughan, 2011), “seized power by force in May 1991 and ousted the authoritarian ‘Dergue’ regime led by Mengistu Haile Mariam” (Bach, 2011, p. 642). With the downfall of the ‘Dergue’ regime in 1991, a new constitution was in place in December 1994 which endorse “ethnic-based federalism, to promote the right of self-determination of nations, nationalities and peoples living in the country” informed by “revolutionary democracy which is a form of neo-Leninist political model or ideology” (Bach, 2011, p. 641) as their core doctrine. The constitution includes statements on human rights, democratic rights, and other broad issues. The constitution under the heading of democratic rights ensures right of thought, opinion and expression, and the right to freedom of association for any cause or purpose (FDRE, 1995).

The new education and training policy, which is in agreement with the constitution, states educational organization and the management to be democratic and participatory. In view of that, the policy insures educational institutions to apply democratic leadership by boards or committees consisting students as members (TGE, 1994). This could be considered as one
among many fundamental changes made in Ethiopia's education system following the change of government in 1991 (Daniel & Abebayehu, 2006). The other change which has been taking place in the country is related to increment of enrollment as well as number of institutions. Currently government higher education institutions owned by the Ministry of Education, found in all regions of the country, has reached 33. As a result, higher education enrolment has increased significantly. For instance, the total undergraduate enrollment increased from 56,072 in the academic year of 2003/2004 to as many of 729,028 in 2014/2015 (MoE, 2016).

Hence, taking into account the right given to students by the constitution as well as by the education policy of Ethiopia and considering the significant increment of student population, the higher education proclamation No. 650/2009 of Ethiopia boldly recognizes and describes the right as well as the role of students in university governance (FDRE, 2009).

The proclamation declares students right to join the institution's student union and through their union or representatives, to participate in the institution's governing bodies: the “board, senate, managing council, university council, academic unit council, academic unit managing council, department assembly, and advisory or specialized committees” (FDRE, 2009, p.5008). Hence, students have the right to be represented in the senate, the leading body of the institution for academic matters. Moreover, students are recognized to be represented in the university council, which advises the president on institutional plans, budget, academic programs, and the like. Besides, students are also allowed to participate in the performance evaluation of academic staff and academic programs (FDRE, 2009).

In alignment with the higher education proclamation of Ethiopia which gives students the right to “participate, through their union or representatives, in the sessions of the institution's governing bodies” (FDRE, 2009, p.5002), universities in Ethiopia have developed legislations
which favor student involvement in institutional governance. Addis Ababa University, for example, put in the preamble of its senate legislation a statement which read as “orient itself to advance student-centered governance” (AAU, 2013, p.1). This indicates the institution commitment to recognize students as partners in the governance of the institution.

Cognizant of the statement in the higher education proclamation, universities in Ethiopia in their legislation include articles which allow students to form their own organization (union or council) for the purpose of promoting academic pursuits, for their own personal development through actual participation in the democratic process of decision making and to represent the students in different governing bodies. For instance, the senate legislation of Addis Ababa University, Arba Minch University, Hawassa University, Mekelie University, and Wollo University, just to list a few among many universities in Ethiopia, include students as member of the senate, academic commission at college level, and department academic committee.

Additionally, students are members of standing committees such as students’ affairs committee and student discipline committees. Besides, students are allowed to participate in performance evaluation of academic staff and academic programs (AAU, 2013; AMU, 2013; HU, 2015; MEKU, 2012; WOLU, 2015). In the case of AAU, for example, students are given rights to participate in most of the standing committees like academic standards and program review committee, admissions and enrolment committee with voting power. In addition, students are recognized as member of the university council, the college council, college managing council, and department committees (AAU, 2013).

Also, it is recognized that all students enrolled by the registrar office have the right to be represented in the student unions. Attention is also given to representation of female students. The office of the dean of students is responsible to follow up the overall process and to provide
2.12. Roles and Responsibilities of Student Unions

As per the senate legislations of different universities (e.g., AAU, 2013; AMU, 2013; HU, 2015; MEKU, 2012; WOLU, 2015), and constitutions of student unions (e.g., AAU, 2015; DBU, 2015; MEKU, 2015; WOLU, 2015) the primary roles of the student organizations are representing the students in the overall governance of the university and serving as a bridge between university management; contributing for academic excellence and research. Moreover, promoting debates on public issues through discussions and publications; contribute in co-curricular activities; and encouraging mutual respect and tolerance among students and the university community are also among their roles. In addition, promoting respect for differences in ethnicity, religion, political view among students and other members of the university; protecting student interests, rights, freedoms, personal safety, and security are also among the roles of the union. In relation to these, working on students to accept their obligations and to be responsible for their own learning; encouraging students to provide student-related volunteer services to the community are also some other roles and responsibilities of the student union (AAU, 2015; DBU, 2015; MEKU, 2015; WOLU, 2015).

Working as a partner with university management to realize the objective of the university; ensuring that students get appropriate services as per the standards set by the university; helping students to become successful in their study by providing pre-entry information and by providing tutorial support are also the other roles. Organizing panel discussions, debates, seminars to create rational and responsible student body who are aware of government and university policies, regulations and rules are also among the roles and
2.13. Rights and Responsibilities of University Students

The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia higher education proclamation No. 650/2009 (p.5001-5002) acknowledges the rights of university students. Accordingly, university students have the following rights:

- free inquiry of truth and freedom of expression of ideas and thoughts in the process of learning and conducting research;
- freedom to learn with appropriate opportunities and conditions in classrooms, campuses and in the larger community;
- protection of their constitutional human rights, personal safety, and security of their personal property on campus;
- freedom to express their views on issues of institutional policy;
- receive protection from any form of discrimination or harassment;
- participate in a transparent system of performance evaluation of academic staff and academic programs;
- join the institution's student union, so as to promote and protect lawfully their common interests;
- obtain access to facilities of the institution through their union;
- participate, through their union or representatives, in the sessions of the institution's governing bodies;
- use, communications media on campus to provide a forum for the free exchange of ideas and to present news, opinion and editorial comments;
The proclamation showed that university students of all type, who are formally registered by the institution, have the right to freedom of expression, freedom to learn, protection of their human rights, equitable and fair treatment, participate in institutional governing bodies and to use communications media. Beyond the rights of students, the proclamation boldly states the responsibilities of university students. Attending classes properly, maintaining standards of academic performance, refraining from any unlawful act, and respecting the authority of any academic staff and the management are among the responsibilities of students (FDRE, 2009).

2.14. Challenges of Students’ Participation in University Governance

The factors that hinder meaningful students’ participation in university governance could be categorized as student related factors and organization related factors.

2.14.1. Organization Related Factors

Meaningful participation in university governance is not guaranteed merely by the presence of students on committees, senates and any other decision making bodies. Friendly environments that encourage free expression of views are demanded from the organization. So, beyond lack of hospitable environment which hinder meaningful participation, there are also a number of institution related factors (Hawes & Trux, 1974). Lack of welcoming and inviting university climate that cause students to perceive the university as an institution which is “not their own” but only to “passing through” (Mncube, 2008, p.578) is a major factor. Dismissive attitude of teaching staff and other governing bodies; considering students as minors, immature who lack experience in institutional policies and technical knowledge are also the other challenges (Mncube, 2008). The cultural assumptions of academic community about the significance of students’ participation have an influence on the status of students’ participation (Lizzio & Wilson, 2009).
Failure to consider students as equal partner and institutional unwillingness to share information and power are also the other challenges (Cardoso & Machado, 2011). Fear of negative feedback from students and the idea that management know best on key institutional issues than students (Cardoso & Machado, 2011; Lizzio & Wilson, 2009); and reluctance of administrators to participate students in governance are also institutional related factors (Menon, 2003). Such instances may lead students to think that their participation in institutional governance and decision-making processes is irrelevant (Cardoso & Machado, 2011) and develop a sense of powerlessness (Pabian et al., 2011). Lack of resources devoted to the development of student leadership; inadequate training given for student representatives (Foroni, 2011) and passive nature of organizational culture may affect the extent of students participation (Lucena et al., 2013).

Students' limited representation, scant orientations are also organization related bottlenecks (Hawes & Trux, 1974). The demand to exclude students from the discussion of sensitive issues by administrative bodies (Luescher & Mugume, 2014; Jematia, Jeruto, & Kanyiri, 2012); “unnecessary bureaucracy” and “lack of transparency in institutions” are also among institution related hindering factors for students participation (Menon, 2003, P.241). Considering a student representative as “a self-interested agent” (Lizzio & Wilson, 2009, p.77) “self-serving and untrustworthy” who focused on “immediate outcomes” (Cardoso & Machado, 2011, p.236) has an influence in the overall process of participation (Lizzio & Wilson, 2009). The nature and extent of student participation also depends on the timetable arrangement made by the institution and instructors as well (Luescher, 2011).

Failure to consider students as “fully fledged members” of the university governing bodies and perceiving them as “minors who are there to listen to the discussion” (Mncube, 2008,
made by other members; the leadership style of university governing bodies can also inhibit participation of students. Interference of university administration, political parties, and other external influences as well as inadequate financial and other support made by the university could also have an impact on the status of students’ participation (Joseph et al., 2008; Luescher & Mugume, 2014). Lack of willingness on the part of university administrators and considering participatory governance as time consuming are the other organization related hindrances (Stephen & Lary, 1997).

2.14.2. Student Related Factors

Many empirical studies (e.g., Boland, 2005; Cardoso & Machado, 2011; Foroni, 2011; Mncube, 2008; Planas et al., 2013) revealed that the level of student participation in university governance is not to the level that one expects for a number of reasons emanated from the student body. The studies conducted by Boland (2005) and Foroni (2011) showed that the challenge begins in the electoral process of students’ representatives. The studies indicated low participation of students to elect their representatives due to “democratic fatigue” and “leaving little time for institutional life” (Boland, 2005, p.205). With regard to attributes related to student representative, Cardoso and Machado (2011) and Planas et al. (2013) in their findings indicated that lack of motivation, commitment and interest to participate in university governance processes as student related challenges. Irregular attendance (Hawes & Trux, 1974); “lack of interpersonal and leadership skills on the part of student leaders due to lack of training and scant orientation” were also student related challenges reported in Eckert (1970, p.310). For Menon (2003), inadequate information about governing bodies also hinders level of students’ participation.
Planas et al. (2013) shows lack of time as a determining student related factor to participate in university governance. Students’ view of themselves as clients or guests than as members of the academic community is also the other student related issue (Boland, 2005; Mncube, 2008). As presented by Carey (2013), pressures on students’ time resulted from extra work and responsibility is also the other challenge for having meaningful students’ participation.

Fear on the part of students to exercise their rights (Bartley et al., 2010); and the division of students by party youth leaguers as the official organ or watchdog also affect the rate of participation (Omari & Mihyo, 1991). The findings of Joseph et al., (2008) revealed that students ability to "express their views" or to "make suggestions" or the way they "submit reports” affect students participation. Moreover, they found that “balancing between academic work and leadership service, and fear of victimization” as hindering factors (p.209).

Beyond categorizing the challenges of student participation into student and organization related factors, Zuo and Ratsoy (1999) in their report indicated that students’ participation in university governance could be hindered by three interrelated factors: personal, environmental and organizational. Personal factor, for instance includes participant's own philosophy, their educational level, degree of maturity, attitudes towards students, leadership style of administrators, experience of students, interpersonal skills and the like. Environmental factors, on the other hand, involve political and economic factors of the larger society and the culture of the organization. Organization related factors, on the other hand, are related to time of scheduling meetings and rules of the university governing bodies.

In summary, the factors that affect students’ participation in university governance could originate from three angles: the student body, the institution and also the environment. In order to overcome these challenges and institutionalize meaningful student participation in universities
governance, development of clear strategies and support mechanisms, and act accordingly is necessary.

2.15. Risks of Participation

Notwithstanding substantial advantages and benefits of students’ participation in governance, it does not come without some potential disadvantages or risks. Among such disadvantages or risks, the following are the most commonly reported by different authors. The risks of participation could be associated with poorly conceived or poorly managed participatory initiatives. For example, the conflict of interests that arise can paralyze the overall process. Such a situation could lead to a loss of credibility. Another risk is loss of focus, which happens when discussions about issues are outside its scope. The activities may be “hijacked by political parties or special interest groups” (Imparato & Jeff, 2003, p.16).

Logue (2005) in his findings showed that participating student representatives who have less skills or knowledge but who are responsible for making decisions; who have less accountability for whatever the outcome might be or have concern than the ultimate decision-makers are also some other risks of participation. In such a situation, participation is burdensome for these people, have unwarranted cost, and does little to improve the quality of the eventual decision. Some of the risks of participation, as reported by Shaeffer (1994), include raise in frustrations on the part of participants and placement of greater power in the hands of the “wrong” and “inefficient people” (p.124).

In most public participation processes, the members of consultation boards and other public participation methods do not represent the public as a whole. This may be a problem when student union leaders do not represent the larger student population. Even when the participation process is successful, the end result may not be satisfactory to all participants or stakeholders.
This could result in frustration in the process and also weakening further participation (Schwartz, 1991).

In a situation where all members involved support student participation process, the process of participation is time taking and requires the effort of all stakeholders. Although students’ participation should produce a more balanced decision, it is also possible that one or more stakeholder use the participation process to unbalance the decision in their favor. Students’ participation, in this case, does not necessarily add to the quality of the decision process (Arminio et al., 2000).

Miles et al. (2008), in their finding revealed that the principle of participation should be based on expertise and competence in which case student representatives commonly lacked. Due to this, their decisions may be short-sighted, usually motivated to satisfy their present needs, and may not take into consideration the long term outcomes of those decisions. The study conducted by McGrath, (1970), identified dominance of the academic society by the students; student immaturity and ignorance of professional values; and interference with student academic life as risks of student participation. The author argued that, in most cases the meetings are called when the students are in the class and so have to either miss the lectures or the meeting. If they miss class and attend meetings, this may in turn affect students’ academic achievements.

The study conducted by Logue et al. (2005) showed that student leaders involved in leadership roles are held accountable to a higher standard of behavior and have higher workload and responsibilities. As a result of these positions, student leaders suffer from high stress and a very busy lifestyle. Schwartz (1991) in their finding reported that participants lives as being exceedingly busy with meetings, activities, events, and other responsibilities in the university. As
per the findings of Arminio, et al, (2000) and Logue et al. (2005) another negative effect related to student participation in university governance is a higher level of personal costs. Students who are involved in leadership roles often lament that their participation limits their academic, recreational and social time. The study conducted by Spratt and Turrentine (2001), showed an increased rate of alcohol use among students who are involved in campuses leadership responsibilities. As reported by Jematia , et al. (2012), a possibility of leaking discussion of "sensitive" issues and decisions arrived by administrative bodies is the other risk of participating students in governing bodies.

A study conducted by Zacherman & Foubert (2014) to see the relationship between engagement in co-curricular activities and academic performance revealed that many college students spend much of their time by missing class in clubs and student organizations. According to the findings of these scholars, students who spent more than 20 hours a week in clubs and student organizations were found at risk for poor academics as compared to their peers, who were not involved or less involved, and end up with decline in grade point average (GPAs) than they had before. Over-involvement was identified as one of the risk of participation of students in university governance which potentially hurt their academic performance. The other risk is misuse of power by student representatives which is also a risk for any other group such as the management, faculty and the like.

The other risk associated to student representatives found by a recent study conducted by Klemenčič et al. (2015) is a possibility of lack of adherence to the principles of democratic governance of student associations as stipulated in their constitution. Due to this, the finding confirm that student representatives misuse the powers vested in them for personal or party-political affiliated interests, and fail to meet the larger student expectations.
Overall, the above discussion revealed that the risks which emanates in the process of participating students in governance could be costly to both the institution and student representatives as well. Conflict of interests among participants, loss of focus, and involving less skilled or knowledgeable individuals could paralyze the overall process. Moreover, student representatives may not be real representatives of the larger student population. In which case, the final decisions may result in loss of credibility that does little to the institution. Leaking of sensitive issues and dissimilation of wrong information which may upraise student mobs are also the other risks to the institution. On the other hand, participation could be also costly to student representatives. It could take much of their time, possibly resulting in high work load, stress and poor academic achievement. Although, the advantages of the participatory approach, greatly outnumber the potential disadvantages, it is important to have a clear understanding of such disadvantages or risks. This in turn helps to take or to put in place appropriate safeguards or preventive measures in advance.

2.16. Supports and Strategies to Promote Student Participation in University Governance

In order to have meaningful student participation in university governance and to elicit the best out of them for mutual benefit, developing clear support mechanism and strategy is not optional. Development of regulation for the process of electing student representatives; allocating adequate amount of finance and other resources; provision of orientation, training, structured support and debriefing mechanisms are among the strategies necessary for having meaningful student participation in university governance (Foroni ,2011; Jematia et al., 2012; Planas et al., 2013). Organizing and sponsoring short term courses, seminars and workshop on leadership training for students’ leaders is also a strategy that needs to be considered (Akomolafe & Ibijola, 2012). Provision of overall information on student rights, roles, rules, regulations, and
policies, to students representatives is also important (Menon, 2003; Onwunli & Agho, 2004). Moreover, due to the "transient nature" of students, organizing training for new student executive members is needed (Zuo & Ratsoy, 1999, p.18).

Academic staff and management teams are also required to have a clear and common understanding of the importance of student participation in decision-making (Planas et al., 2013). To this end, top level management of the university need to provide training to academic and management staff about the benefits of participatory governance (Duma, 2011; Menon, 2003). Scheduling meetings in appropriate time to students; giving them adequate time to present their cases; use of language which accommodate students and consistent utilization of informal meetings and communication are strategies to be considered (Menon, 2003; MnCube, 2008; Zuo & Ratsoy, 1999). Consistent follow-up on the commitment of governing bodies and recognizing the contribution of student representatives have a positive effect (Lizzio & Wilson, 2009). Creating a trusting working relationship between leaders of academic departments and student representatives (Lizzio & Wilson, 2009) is important. Increasing the number of student representation on certain university committees can positively impact students’ participation (Zuo & Ratsoy, 1999). Considering students as members of the academic community and future professionals, reviewing the current decision-making structures and assigning mentors are also the other strategies used to promote student participation (Onwunli & Agho, 2004).

In general, students’ participation in university governance has a multi-dimensional positive effect: to student body, to the institution and to the society at large. However, there are challenges expected from students, the university, and from the external environment. Considering the advantages participating student in university governance and to adhere to the right given to students, universities need to have different strategies: providing orientation,
training, overall information on rules, regulations and also on policies. Similar training for academic and administrative staff members are among the strategies that could result in active student participation. Moreover, structural arrangement, allocating adequate financial and other resources also has a positive effect. Taking into consideration their existing situation, developing, implementing and ensuring the effect of the strategies is expected from each higher education institution.

Summary

Governance of higher education is the formal and informal arrangements that allow higher education institutions to make decisions and take action. Student participation is therefore, an aspect of participatory governance in different decision making bodies such as board, senate, faculties, departments and in standing as well as ad-hoc committees as voting members (Betty & Jematia, 2011). Student participation in university governance assumes formal and informal forms of participation (Honingh & Hooge, 2014). Considering the right of students, all students registered in the university is eligible to be represented (Foroni, 2011). Student participation, thus benefits the university in terms of reducing student strikes and to have peaceful learning environment which at the end contributes in realizing its objectives. Beyond safeguarding the interests of students, it is an opportunity to learn how the university works, and also to acquire leadership skills by practical example (Menon, 2003). The benefit expected, the size of students which makes them a principal member of academic community which gives them the right to have a say in governance are some of the rationale to participate students (Boland, 2005). Practically, however, there are a number of challenges which emanates from both the university and students. To alleviate these challenges and to institutionalize meaningful student
participation in governance, support mechanisms and clear strategies are expected from the university.
CHAPTER THREE
THE RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This chapter describes the different methodological steps to be followed, sampling techniques, data collection process and instruments. It concludes with the discussion of data analysis techniques and a description of ethical considerations.

3.2. Design of the Study

In this study, I employed a mixed method research design, which is a form of pragmatic paradigm. Pragmatism is a paradigm that claims to settle the paradigm wars or “metaphysical disputes” (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p.14) between positivists and constructivists by “rejecting the either/or choices and philosophical dogmatisms” (Burke, Anthony, & Lisa, 2007, p.18) by taking a “middle position” (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p.14). Pragmatism strongly advocates that research approaches should be mixed (Johnson & Anthony, 2004) and recognizes the importance of multiple methods, as well as different forms of data collection and analysis in dealing with social contexts (Creswell, 2003; Sharp et al., 2012) such as this study.

Pragmatism suggests that researchers take an “eclectic approach” (Burke et al., 2007, p.17) to method selection. It provides a fusion of approaches and a basis for using mixed method design as a third alternative from different paradigms of research by using both quantitative and qualitative methods in a single study (Denscombe, 2008). Philosophically, thus, mixed methods research makes use of the pragmatic paradigm and it attempts to legitimatize the use of multiple approaches in answering research questions (Burke et al., 2007).
Mixed method design, therefore, refers to “mixing or combining quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods and approaches in a single study” (Onwuegbuzie & Combs, 2011, p.1); for the purposes of “depth of understanding and corroboration” (Willem et al., 2015, p.71); for “collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study” (Borrego, Douglas, & Catherine, 2009, p.58) and for better information of the topic under investigation than a single method does (Schram, 2014).

In this study I used mixed method design for several reasons. The first one is to benefit from the advantages that mixed design has. Just to mention a few of them, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches, depending on the research questions of course, helps to overcome the deficiencies of both approaches (Lodico et al., 2006; Mansoor , 2008) and to benefit from their strengths in single research studies (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie ,2004); to get an “in-depth and breadth of understanding of a context” (Schram ,2014,p.2620) which are not possible by either of qualitative and quantitative approaches (Klingner' & Boardnnan ,2011); and to get a complete picture of the topic under study by combining information from multiple data sources and data gathering methods (Lodico et al., 2006; Sung & Espelage , 2012).

Moreover, a mixed method gives me room to be flexible in choosing methods of data collection, and presentation of results (Willem et al., 2015). In addition, it “offers the best chance to obtain useful answers from richer data” (Borrego et al., 2009, p.57); it helps to “improve the accuracy of the data and helps to avoid biases which emanates from single-method approaches” (Denscombe , 2008,p.272). Besides, mixed-methods designs beyond supporting stronger scientific inferences, are better suited to unraveling educational phenomena which are complex in nature (Klingner' & Boardnnan, 2011). Mixed methods design also helps to obtain “convergent validity through triangulation” (Sung & Espelage, 2012, p.119). Due to this, many
research questions and combinations of questions are “best and fully answered” (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004,p.18).

The second reason to use mixed method design has to do with the experiences of former studies in the topic under study. For example, studies conducted on student participation in university governance by Asiimwe and Steyn (2013); Hawes and Trux (1994); Planas et al., (2013); and Kuruuzum et al.,(2005) employed a mixed method design and have realized their purpose.

Empirical studies on students’ participation on university governance (e.g. Akomolafe & Ibijola, 2011, 2012, 2014; Boland, 2005; Elizabeth, 2014; Love & Miller, 2003; Menon, 2005) are all quantitative studies. On the other hand, some studies, for example Cardoso and Machado (2011), Lizzio and Wilson (2009), Rodgers et al., (2011), and Zuo and Ratsoy (1999) are qualitative works on the topic under consideration. Employing mixed method design is, therefore, the third and the major reason that distinguishes this study from those listed and other related studies conducted so far.

Taking the rationales discussed above into account, this study involved the collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data. The data, were collected concurrently (simultaneously) in one phase for the purpose of triangulation (Denscombe, 2008) or to “complement or to corroborate” (Schram, 2014,p.2622) by giving more emphasis to qualitative approaches (QUAL +quan) (Creswell, 2009). As per the advice of Borrego, Douglas, and Catherine, (2009), the data collected for the study was integrated at the stages of analysis, interpretations and discussions or conclusions (Schram, 2014). This was done not only for “understanding of the research questions” of the study well (Borrego et al., 2009, p.58) but also for generating “well-validated and substantiated findings” (Creswell, 2009, p.246).
3.3. Sample and Sampling Techniques

The selection of universities and respondents in this study can be seen as two level sampling: the first pertains to - deciding which universities to be included in the study, and the second related to selecting respondents from the targeted universities. Regarding the selection of institutions, I stratified universities in to three categories based on the generation of establishments as first (which are nine in number), second (which are thirteen) and third generation (which are nine in number). These categories of universities were made by the Ministry of Education of Ethiopia (MoE, 2015). The sample public universities were selected using proportional stratified random sampling technique to ensure representation from each stratum of the designated groups of institutions. Mindful of the advice of Ary, Jacobs and Razaviech (1990) on stratified sampling, I first identified the strata of the universities and then I randomly drew a specified number of subjects from each stratum. Accordingly, two universities (Mekelle and Bahir Dar) from the first generation universities; three universities (Axum, Ambo, and Wollo) from the second generation; and two universities (Wolktie and Woldiya) from the third generation universities have been selected.

From each sample universities, I randomly selected 50 % of the colleges and included them in the study. Among the departments in each sampled colleges, I randomly selected 50 % of them and included in the study. To this end, multistage sampling method was used in the selection of colleges and departments. The sampling methods, thus, were employed to ensure representation and generalization of results beyond the boundaries of the study (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). Subjects of the study, (i.e. academic vice presidents, student deans, student union presidents and standing committee members of the union of the selected universities) were chosen through purposive sampling. The same was true for deans and department heads of the randomly selected colleges and departments. This choice/approach was intentional and took into
account the experience and advice of different authors (e.g. Brooks et al., 2015; Olajire & Babatope, 2014; Elizabeth, 2014; Zuo & Ratsoy, 1999) who purposely included students, student union leaders, department and faculty heads, as well as top university officials in dealing with student participation in university governance. With regard to student unions standing committee members, among twelve of them in each student unions, I randomly selected six (50%) of them to take part in the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs).

Similarly, I purposively included student representatives in the randomly selected colleges in the study. By virtue of their being college representativeness, they were thought to be the most appropriate respondents who were “information-rich” (Hoepfl, 1997, p.52). Moreover, purposive selection of these respondents helped me to get people who have the much-needed data that the study seeks to find (Merriam, 1998). Students of senior classrooms in the sampled colleges and departments were selected by quota sampling to represent significant characteristics in proportions in the wider population. After allocating the ratio to university then to college and then to departments, individual respondents were selected by simple random sampling technique. For the purpose of this study, the sample size of students was 384. This was determined by using the standard tables developed by Cohen et al., (2005, p.104).
### Table 3.1.

**Sample Size**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Colleges P</th>
<th>College Deans S (50%)</th>
<th>Dept. Heads in Randomly Selected Colleges TP</th>
<th>Dept. Heads S (50%)</th>
<th>Students P</th>
<th>Students S</th>
</tr>
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<td>9</td>
<td>16455</td>
<td>42</td>
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<tr>
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<td>40381</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
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<td>64</td>
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<td>31</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>150408</td>
<td>384</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* (Source: MoE, 2015, 2016; Universities Websites, University Registrar office) P= population; S= Sample

### 3.4. Instruments of Data Collection

In this study, I used multiple instruments of data collection with the intention of reducing the risk of systematic bias, increasing the validity and strength of the research (Berg, 2007). That helped me not only to gain a better understanding of the key issues under consideration but also to improve the level of confidence and the quality of the data (Maxwell, 2005). As a whole, using multiple instruments has been helpful in creating the opportunity to triangulate data sources that would in turn positively affect the accuracy of the findings (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2007). Cognizant of these advantages into account, I used multi data gathering techniques which includes interviews, focus group discussions, documents and a self-developed questionnaire.

**Interview**

One of the data gathering instruments used in this study was semi-structured interview. The semi-structured interview allowed respondents to give a detailed account of their
perceptions and beliefs about the topic under study. In addition, since this type of interview is flexible and adaptable, it allowed me to probe for more clarifications (Newman, 2007; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). According to Hoepfl (1997) semi-structured interview allowed the researcher to get into the root of what is being investigated and elicit information that provide depth and detail to the study. Said differently, semi-structured interviews enabled me to find out the motives, feelings and opinions related to the issues under consideration. It also enabled me to observe non-verbal communications, gestures and facial expressions (Cohen et al., 2007). More specifically the present study was informed by Carey (2013), and Planas et al. (2013), among many that used semi-structured interviews with university higher officials and student union leaders and were able to expose the subjects’ perspectives on students’ participation in university governance and achieved their objectives.

Keeping these merits and its manageability into account, I conducted semi-structured interview with sample university academic presidents, deans’ of students and student union presidents about the current practice of students’ participation in the university governance in their respective institutions. To that end, I used an “interview guide” which is a list of open ended questions or general topics that the interviewer wants to explore during each interview. For the advantage of “capturing data more faithfully than hurriedly written notes”, using a recorder was “indispensable” (Hoepfl, 1997, 52). Hence, after getting their permission, I recorded all the interviews using two electronic recording devices. I intentionally used two recording devices in case either of them failed to record. Fortunately enough, both devices worked to the end of the data collection. Mindful of the advice of Kvale and Brinkman (2009), to create an environment in which participants feel comfortable to talk freely and expose their experiences, each interview was conducted in their offices and time of their choice. Thus, interviews held
with academic vice presidents and deans of students were conducted during working hours in their respective offices. On the other hand, except with one, six of the interviews held with students’ union presidents were conducted at night after 6 pm in the offices of the student unions. The interview conducted with each academic vice presidents and deans of students lasted one to one hour and half. Similarly, the interview conducted with each student union presidents took nearly two hours. Because of participants’ choice, interviews were held in Amharic, “the working language of the federal government of Ethiopia” (FDRE, 1995, p.132). Still, however, there were times where participants used English words and sentences during their conversation.

Focus Group Discussions

Focus group discussion (FGDs) was the other data gathering technique which I used in this study. Focus group discussion is believed to “elicit people’s understandings, opinions and views in a social context” (Hyden & Bulow, 2003, p.306). In other words, focus group discussion, is a tool used for “exploring peoples’ views or perceptions of, attitudes toward, beliefs, and experiences of particular areas in life” (McLafferty, 2004, p.188). The application of focus group discussions particularly in a mixed methodology strategy such as this study was “a wise choice, especially to explore attitudes on sensitive issues, perceptions, feelings, experiences and ideas about the topic” (Hyden & Bulow, 2003, p.306). In addition, it helped me to gain first hand insights into the participants’ behaviors, attitudes, language (including body language), feelings and an in-depth look into the issue (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; McLafferty,2004). Moreover, Mncube (2012) and Planas et al., (2013) in dealing with student participation in university governance, held focus group discussions with student representatives and successfully explored student’s knowledge and experiences. Cognizant of their success, I used focus group discussions with student union standing committee members and tried to assess their
views about the status of students’ participation in university governance in their respective institutions.

To this end, I developed a focus group discussion protocol based on the research questions. Key areas of discussions were the extent of students’ participation at different levels of universities governance; areas of participation; the benefits to the universities and to students; support made by universities; inclusiveness of the union structure; common challenges encountered and strategies used to overcome the challenges.

Common agreement on the recommended size of focus groups is not yet reached among scholars. For instance, Morgan (1988) as cited in Hyden and Bulow (2003) proposes six to twelve persons; Greenbaum (1988) as cited in Heary and Hennessy (2002) suggests ten to twelve people. Similarly, as cited in McLafferty (2004), Howard et al. (1989) and Kitzinger (1996) recommend six to ten people and four to eight people respectively. Using the average and taking the advantage of small sizes that are easier to manage; which provides greater interaction among participants; richer conversation which are good for sensitive and complex issues like governance (Hyden & Bulow, 2003; McLafferty, 2004), I decided to involve six students in all the FGDs of this study.

The focus group discussions were conducted in the offices of student unions and time convenient to the student participants (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Except in two of the universities where FGDs were conducted in the weekends, the other five were held at night in working days beginning from 6 pm. Due to FGD participants preference to express their ideas proficiently, all FGDs were conducted in Amharic, which is “a language of countrywide communication”, (TGE, 1994, p.24) and “the working language of the federal government of Ethiopia” (FDRE, 1995, p.132). I recorded all of the FGDs after securing their willingness to be
recorded. To be on the safe side, I took notes during the discussions. Cognizant of the statements made by McLafferty (2004), I was the moderator of the FGDs because I am “directly involved in the project” (p.190). Due to this, I let members to develop ground rules and they came up with many issues but finally agreed upon five code of conducts: keep the information obtained in the focus groups confidential; respect other people’s ideas; do not interrupt other person; let the participant finish his/her ideas; and keep mobile phones silent. As a moderator I follow up the implementation of the ground rules in the process of the discussions; encourage all participants to express their views; facilitate interaction among members; keep them on the topic; ask questions and seek elaborations; and work towards creating a non-threatening supportive climate for the participants (McLafferty, 2004). Moreover, as a moderator, I assured participants about anonymity and confidentiality of their responses and their right to leave the FGDs (Hyden & Bulow, 2003) if they wish to do so. In average, each of the seven FGDs took two to two and half hours.

Documents

Another invaluable source of information used in this study was analysis of official documents of universities. This was because “written documents are an unobtrusive potential source of data” (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995, p. 212). The document analysis served not only to enrich and corroborate results obtained through the other data gathering techniques but also as a means of triangulating findings (Hoepfl, 1997; Zue & Ratsoy, 1999). Cognizant of the advantages of document analysis and the lesson drawn from different authors, for example, Planas et al., (2013), and Zue and Ratsoy, (1999) who dealt with similar topic, I used documents related to students participation in governance of different levels of universities that include the senate, college, departments and student unions.
To this end, relevant documents such as policy statements (TGE, 1994), HEP (FDRE, 2009), legislations of universities, minutes of university governing bodies such as the senate, faculty, departments, and ad hoc committees were used. In addition, minutes of discipline committee, and minutes of the student unions were consulted. For manageability purpose, for easily accessibility, and to see the recent and current practice, one and a half year (2008 E.C-mid of 2009E.C) I consulted minutes of different governing bodies in universities and that of student unions. I reviewed documents both before and after collecting the data using the other instruments. The documents were collected from MoE websites, sample universities, and student union offices. I was not allowed to photocopy relevant documents such as minutes but only to read them and take notes related to the basic questions formulated and that was a bit frustrating and time consuming. In general, the document analysis was conducted to uncover information regarding historical development of student governance, policy intentions about participatory governance, areas and level of participation at different level, inclusiveness of the structure, the support made by universities and contribution made so far, agendas of discussion, as well as list of participants, date and time of meetings.

Questionnaire

To obtain relevant information, I employed a quantitative type of data collection instrument (i.e., questionnaire). The questionnaires were used mainly because of its appropriateness for collecting numerical data required for the study (Lodico et al., 2006). In addition, it was easier to reach large sample of respondents from widely dispersed sample population of which some generalization could be made (Dawson, 2002).

Considering its relative merits, researchers investigating students’ participation in university governance (e.g. Akomolafe &Ibijola, 2011;Olajire & Babatope ,2014; Miles et al.,
2008; Menon, 2005), used questionnaire to collect data from students, departments as well as faculty heads and have met their objectives. In deciding to use a questionnaire to obtain the view of students and heads at department and faculty levels, the present study was informed by these prior studies.

To put the merits of using questionnaires into effect, data were collected from college deans, department heads, college level student representatives and senior students. To that end, three sets of questionnaires that take into account the research questions were self-developed. The questionnaires, which were prepared in English language, comprised both open-ended and closed-ended question items. Open ended items were used to enable respondents to “raise new issues and tend to feel that they have been able to speak their mind” (Dawson, 2002, p. 88) which may resulting in “unanticipated findings” (Neuman, 2007, p. 178).

Guided by Wiersma and Jurs (2009)’s advice, I made sure that instructions for completing the questionnaire were clear concise and; and no item would ask for names or other identifying information in order to increase respondents’ motivation and response rate. Moreover, I attempted to make the cover pages of the questionnaires is self-explanatory about the purpose of the study, confidentiality issues and anonymity of their responses.

The questionnaire consisted of seven parts which address all the research questions of the study. The first part is aimed at collecting personal information (e.g. academic rank, current position, and educational qualification, experiences in current position) that are believed to affect students’ participation in university governance. The second section is about the status of students’ participation in the university governance in different structural levels. Questions about
students’ participation in academic senate, university council, standing committees and the like are included.

The third section of the questionnaire includes items on benefits of students’ participation in university governance. This part is categorized into three subparts: benefit to the university, benefit to the larger student body and to student union leaders. With regard to benefit to the university, items like development of accountability and transparency; creation of healthy relationship between students and the university administrators; existence of peaceful learning environment and the like are included. The benefits to the larger student body are tapped by questions such as: “students’ rights are respected and their cases at different levels get timely and rational decisions; and students attend class peacefully and complete their study by the time required for the program”. Some of the items on benefits to student leaders (e.g. I acquired leadership and management skills; I become aware of rules, regulations, directives, and policies of the university; I developed the ability to openly challenge university administrators) are among many.

The fourth part of the questionnaire is on support and strategies used to strengthen students’ participation in university governance. To elicit subject’s response about the support made by the university, items such as: “the university established advisory organs to assist students and their organizations to exercise the rights; and the university provides short term leadership training to students’ leaders” could be cited. Items included in the fifth section of the questionnaire are related to challenges of students’ participation in university governance. It includes items related to the university such as perceiving student representatives as immature, lacking experience and knowledge, lack of interest to participate in governing bodies and the like.
The last part of the questionnaire is open-ended. It allows for comments of the respondents on issues raised and their recommendations about student participation in governance. The questionnaire developed to collect data from the college deans and department heads focused on students’ participation at college level and at department level. With the exception of some modifications to the questionnaire prepared to college deans and department heads, the questionnaire developed to college representative students was the same. The questionnaire developed for senior students encompass issues on participation in election of their union, benefits they gained, and about the roles of student union.

3.5. Pilot Study

Piloting an instrument helps to increase the reliability, validity and practicability of self-developed questionnaires (Lodico, et al., 2006). In addition, it helps to check the clarity of items, gain feedback, eliminate ambiguities in wording, and irrelevant items can be removed (Cohen et al., 2007). Taking these advice in to account, first of all, I gave the self-developed questionnaires, interview and FGD guides (which were designed on the basis of the review of the related literature in the area of student participation in university governance, theories of governance and models, higher education proclamation of Ethiopia, senate legislations of universities and empirical studies on the topic), to people who have been uninvolved in questionnaire construction such as my supervisors and experts on the field of educational leadership who have the experience in university governance. This provides me an opportunity to get their feedback and opinions so as to improve content validity of the instruments (Akomolafe & Ibijola, 2011; Betty & Jematia, 2011). So, about ten items were modified and seven questions were rejected. Afterwards the instruments were further modified and improved based on the
comments and feedback of examiners during the proposal defense. Consequently, six questions were rejected and five of them were merged.

Once revision is completed, I piloted the designed instruments in Debre Birhan University, which is not a sample university in the actual study. Student deans, department heads, student union standing committees and department students’ representative at college level and senior students were participated in the pilot study. Accordingly, interviews were conducted with dean of students and student union president. Moreover, FGD was conducted with student union standing committee members and questionnaire were filled by five college deans, 10 department heads, five student representatives at college level and twenty senior students.

As per the advice of Lodico et al. (2006), Wiersma and Jurs (2009), and Dawson (2002), participants who make up a pilot sample were informed that it is a pilot test and were asked not only to respond to the instruments but also to examine them on many different fronts such as clarity of language and terms. On the basis of the feedback obtained from the pilot study, four questions were rephrased, two questions were split, three more questions were added, and three irrelevant questions were excluded.

In addition to content validity, I tested the reliability of the questionnaire, the degree to which a given instrument provides similar results (Mugenda & Mugenda, 1999). Thus, an assessment of the consistency of the responses on the pilot questionnaires was made to make a judgment on their reliability. To that end, the reliability coefficient, Cronbach Alpha, was used to measure and report the internal consistency of the questionnaire items. As a result, I used the criteria set by Hazzi, and Maldaon, (2015), “ >0.9 “Excellent”, >0.8 “Good”, >0.7 “Acceptable”,

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>0.6 “Questionable”, >0.5 “Poor”, while <0.5 “Unacceptable” (p.58), for comparison. Hence, reliability analysis of the constructs were .758 for structural level and areas of student participation; .854 for benefits of students participation; .772 for strategies used to support students participation; .837 for challenges encountered; .723 for participation in election; .729 for benefits to all students; and .848 for role of student union. As per the criteria set by Hazzi, and Maldaon, (2015), all of these reliabilities were greater than .700 and hence the instruments were considered to produce reliable data. Once the reliability and validity of the instrument is checked on the bases of feedback and pilot analysis, the questionnaire was found to meet the objectives of the research and was distributed as per my schedule.

3.6. Procedures of Data Collection

Taking into account the purposes and basic questions of the study, I developed the instruments of data collection which include semi-structured interview, FGD guides and a questionnaire. Thereafter, the instruments were tested to ensure the validity and reliability of the tools using expert comments in the area of study and using Cronbach’s alpha test for the questionnaire. Once this is ensured, based on the cooperation letter received from AAU, department of educational planning and management, I contacted sample universities to get permission to conduct the study in their institutions. After getting permission from the respective universities (see Annex C), based on the sample frame prepared, I scheduled appointments/meetings with subjects to collect the data using the instruments. I myself did the data collection (meaning the interview, FGD and distribution of the questionnaire) being “sensitive to the issues” and keeping “the need for methodological rigor” (McLafferty, 2004, p. 190). I did that intentionally because my presence would be helpful to address any queries or uncertainties.
immediately and also to ensure a good response rate (Cohen et al, 2005). Finally, the data collected from subjects were analyzed as per the order of the basic questions concurrently.

3.7. Data Cleaning and Screening

Taking the advice of Neuman (2007), the quantitative data analysis was preceded by coding and entering the data. Once these activities are conducted, data cleaning activity took place. Thus, I refined the accuracy of coding and, ten questionnaires whose subjects gave conflicting information or unusable for a number of reasons were discarded. Once the data collected through questionnaires is coded, entered, and cleaned, data analysis begins using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version -20) computer software.

3.8. Data Analysis

Data analysis according to Cohen et al., (2007) refers to “organizing, accounting for, and explaining the data or making sense of the data in terms of the participants’ definitions of the situation” (p.147). Similarly, Hoepfl (1997) indicated that data analysis is nothing but “working with data, organizing it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, and deciding what you will tell others” (p.55). Taking into account the nature of the data collected, nature of research question(s), and many other related factors, I used different data analysis methods. This section, thus, presents the methods that were used for analyzing the quantitative and qualitative data of the study.

Quantitative Data Analysis

For the quantitative study a total 522 survey questionnaires, i.e. 107 to academic leaders (31 deans and 76 department heads), 31 to college level student representatives, and 384 to senior students were distributed. A total of 494 questionnaires i.e. 99 from academic leaders, 30 from student representatives and 365 from senior students were collected and making the return
rate 94%. Both descriptive and inferential statistical methods were employed to analyze the data collected through questionnaires. Data generated from participants’ profile, levels and areas of student participation, benefits of participation, support made by the university, challenges encountered in the process of participating student in university governance were analyzed using frequency counts, percentages, and Chi-square. Frequency counts, percentages, Means (M) and standard deviations (SD) were used for analyzing data collected for answering extent of roles carried out by student leaders. Chi-square ($X^2$) is used to assess “the statistical significance of associations in responses” of the groups of survey participants (Neuman, 2007, p.364). The calculated Chi-square values were compared against the table values (p) and then decisions were made at 0.05 $\alpha$ level of significance.

**Qualitative Data Analysis**

A qualitative analysis is used for the data generated from transcriptions of interview, focus group discussions, and documentary materials. To preserve their anonymity, participants’ names were changed and I used pseudonyms. As far as analysis of qualitative data is concerned, first, I transcribed the data in audio, which was collected from the interviews and FGDs, in Amharic on hard copies. The hand-written Amharic transcriptions of fourteen interviews and seven focus group discussions were 245 pages. Then, I translated it to English and typed them in the word processor for the purpose of analysis. The translation in English, however, was not the entire Amharic transcription, but only relevant issues which are directly related to the research questions of this study.

Before the actual data analysis begins, I read and reread the data to familiarizing myself and to “obtain a general sense of the information and reflect on its’ overall meaning” (Creswell, 2009, p. 216) and thereby to look for possible themes. Then I qualitatively analyzed the data
collected by interview, focus group discussions, and documentary materials using thematic analysis where categories, themes, and patterns come from the data collected (Janesick, 1994). To that end, I “categorized and coded” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 173) the data into themes, categories and patterns which were related to the research questions such as structural levels of students’ participation, areas of participation, benefits gained, supports made by universities, roles of student unions, challenges faced and measures to be taken. Using thematic approach, thus, I analyzed and interpreted the coded data to reveal the findings of the study. Thematic analysis, according to Braun and Clarke, (2006) is identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns, or themes within data.

As long as the study employed mixed research design, mixing may occur across all stages of the research process (Creswell, 2009; Johnson et al., 2007). In this study, however, the quantitative and qualitative data were mixed from the analysis stage onward. Hence, the mixing consists of “integrating the two databases by actually merging the qualitative data with the quantitative data” (Creswell, 2009, p.208) with a primary aim of triangulation and obtaining supportive information. In view of that, I presented qualitative data using direct quote of excerpts of subjects first and followed by that of quantitative data. In the process of integration, tables were used to organize and present quantitative data.

3.7. Ethical Issues Considered

Researchers have the responsibility to their profession as well as to subjects in the process of conducting research. For smooth accomplishment of the research objective, a researcher is obliged to adhere to certain ethical guidelines, ethical principles or standards (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The most dominant ethical issues that needs to be consider by a researcher during data collection include “obtaining informed consent from participants,
protecting them from harm, and ensuring confidentiality” (Lodico, et al., 2006,p.147). Participation, as subjects, in any research has to be on a voluntary basis. To this end, subjects need to know about the overall goal, purpose, procedure, expected duration of the study and expectations from the participants. The researcher, thus, has an obligation to provide the necessary information to subjects. Such provision of adequate information helps them not only to participate in the research voluntarily but also to have a clear picture about the nature of the research.

Moreover, subjects need to know not only that participation is completely voluntary but also their right to terminate participation in the study at any time. This is what informed consent refers to (Lodico, et al., 2006; Neuman, 2007). Furthermore, it is a primary responsibility of the researcher to protect participants from any sort of physical as well as mental harm during the investigation and at the completion of the research project. In addition to that, a researcher is bound to keep the identity of the respondents in order to maintain their anonymity. To this end, confidentiality of information given by participants needs be maintained (Baez, 2002; Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

To adhere to these ethical issues, first, I collected a letter from Addis Ababa University, an introduction letter to sample universities which indicates that I am a student on the field educational policy and leadership and doing a research on student governance. This has helped me to get permission from the university authorities to carry out the research in the institution and contact the relevant faculties, departments and subjects in the university. Then a written informed consent form which is an “important feature of ethical considerations in any research involving human subjects” (Bowen, 2005, p. 214) was prepared, and were given to every participant of the interview and focus group discussions. This helped participants to understand
the primary objectives of the study, what is expected from them and decide either to participate or not to. Participants were asked whether they wanted to participate in the research or not. They agreed to participate in the research, but they were not willing to sign the written consent form and did not see the importance of putting their name and signature on the consent form as long as they orally agreed to participate in the research. The request for written consent which requires the participant’s name and signature was a new and undesirable for most participants and it made participants suspicious about the use of the information. Therefore, in order to obtain authentic and better information, instead of written consent, I obtained oral consent from all participants and the process continued. In the case of the survey, in order to get the consent of participants, every issue which is made clear to interview and FGD participant was discussed in the cover page of the questionnaire.

Since the study deals with how universities practice students’ participation in governance, in order to protect subjects from harm, to maintain the anonymity of subjects and to get the required data to the study, taking the advice of Bogdan and Biklen, (2007) into account, confidentiality of information given by participants was maintained. To this end, at the time of transcription, analysis and in the final report of the study, I used pseudonyms to represent their real names; and the information given is used only for the research purposes (Baez, 2002). In relation to this, to strengthen confidentiality of information and maintain anonymity of subjects, I transcribed the data collected through interviews and FGDs.

Taking the advice of McLafferty (2004) into consideration, I did not disclose the data collected using interviews and focus group discussions to any third party. Without the knowledge and willingness of interview and FGD participants, I did not conduct any sort of audio or video recordings. In relation to this, for those subjects who participated in the survey, I attached a
cover letter describing the purpose of the study, voluntary nature of their participation and about the confidentiality of their responses. In addition, I stated a clear direction on the questionnaire not to write their names. All these things helped me not only to protect the rights of subjects of the study but also to conduct the research smoothly. Practicing the above ethical elements helped me not only to elicit tangible and adequate data from the subjects but also to establish ‘‘friendship which is ongoing and over lasting’’ (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 49).
CHAPTER FOUR
PRESENTATIONS OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents findings generated from surveys of students, department heads as well as college deans. Moreover, major themes that resulted from focus group discussions conducted with student union standing committee members, interviews with student unions presidents, student deans and academic vice presidents/academic program officers are presented. Information collected from documentary materials are discussed and analyzed as they relate to the theories, models and the literature review presented in the second chapter. Accordingly, the findings are presented concurrently using descriptive and inferential statistics for survey data and direct quotations for qualitative responses in line with the research questions designed to guide the present study.

4.2. Presentations of Findings

4.2.1. Demographic Description of Participants

In total, 69 academic leaders (ALs), 30 college level student representatives (SR) and 355 senior students (SS) responded to the survey invitation to participate in this study. In all the three sets of questionnaires, question items requesting participants’ personal information were presented in the first part of the survey. The questionnaires requested the following demographic information: sex, year of study, qualification, academic rank and year of service in current position at the institution (see Table 4.1).
Table 4.2.1.

Demographic Description of Survey Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>AL and Department Heads (n=99)</th>
<th>Student Representatives (n=30)</th>
<th>Senior Students (n=355)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualification</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA/BSc</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA/MSc</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>79.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic rank</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assi. Lecturer</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecturer</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>79.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assi. Professor</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year of experience in current position</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>41.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 years and above</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>46.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year of study</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd year</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd year</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>76.7</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th year</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th year</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The personal information of respondents showed that 100% of all academic leaders who assumed deanship and department head positions were males. This implies a male dominated and low representation of women in leadership and management positions including lower level structure of universities (college and department). This was similar to the findings of Education Strategy Center (ESC) (2015) of Ethiopia whose findings revealed nomination and voting procedures at department and college level which favor male staff members, and low trust in women’s capacities combined with male networks. It is, however, important to note, the study of ESC (2015) was untrue of student representatives and senior students in which female students account 43.3% and 52.7 % respectively. The vast majority of academic leaders (79.8.0%) were second degree holders and 17.4% of them had PhD. Similarly, 79.8% of them were lecturers and 17.4% held rank of assistant professor. As far as years of experience in current position is
concerned, 87.9% of academic leaders had served for two years and above as a dean or as department heads. This implied that academic leaders are well qualified to better understand the issue under consideration and have the experience in that position and therefore assumed that they are able to provide adequate and sufficient information about the issue under study (see Table 4.2.1).

**4.2.2. Findings on Students’ Participation in University Governance**

As stated by many writers (e.g., Das, 2014; Honingh & Hooge, 2014), participatory higher education governance provides students with the right to take part in decision making on policies and practices in both formal and informal ways at various levels of administrative structures. Higher education proclamation of Ethiopia (FDRE, 2009), and universities in Ethiopia through their senate legislations (for example, AAU, 2013; AMU, 2013; AXU, 2015) orient themselves to advance student-centered governance and treat students as partners, at least in theory, to that of academic staff. Hence, higher education proclamation of Ethiopia and universities through their senate legislations provide students with the right to participate, through their union representatives, in the institution’s governing bodies in both academic as well as administrative matters. On the basis of this, student’s participation in university senate, college academic committee/commission, department academic committee/council has been examined in this section. Moreover, students’ participation in senate standing committees, ad-hoc committees and clubs are also analyzed. What is more, students’ participation in administrative matters such as development planning, monitoring and evaluation, the discipline process, performance evaluation of academic staff, student diet and related finance matters are discussed using the data collected from the study.
Students’ Participation in University Academic Senate

A close examination of the senate legislations of the sampled universities indicates that the number of seats given to students and their right to vote on issues discussed in the senate lacks uniformity. Despite lack of uniformity across the universities, students’ participation in university senate was positive. As per the senate legislation of three sampled universities, students are given two spaces to participate in the senate represented by students from students’ union preferably one male and one female (AMU, 2013; JU, 2007; WELKU, 2014). The other three sampled universities, on the other hand, provide four seats in the senate, two undergraduate students’ representatives (one of them is a female) and two student representatives from post graduate program (one of them is a female) (AXU, 2015; MEKU, 2012; WOLU, 2015). Similarly, one of the universities provides four seats for students’ representatives chosen from regular graduate and undergraduate programs, female students and students with disabilities as well as a representative from continuing and distance education (WELU, 2012). In one of the universities, however, students are non-voting members (WOLU, 2015). This implies the existence of legal provisions which favor students’ participation in university senate. Taking this into account, I asked academic vice presidents of the universities what the status of students’ participation in academic senate is. During their interviews, all of the academic vice presidents of the universities included in the study responded that students were active participants in academic senate of universities. The response of one of the academic vice presidents from the second generation universities could be considered as a representative response. He said:

The senate, the leading body of the university for academic matters, is responsible to determine the academic calendar of the university; accredit academic programs and their curricula to ensure quality of education and research; approve students’ status and award
degrees. It has also the mandate to open, close, merge or change the name of academic units. To realize these responsibilities, students are made to participate in senate meetings through their union president and other female member of the union. Although the number of meetings are few in number, twice a year in most cases and agendas are also more or less same, they are contributing a lot by providing constructive ideas and information to the remaining participants. They are also free to express their ideas with confidence.

In agreement with the views of the academic vice presidents, six of the seven student union presidents provided a positive response during their interviews. A student union president in one of the first generation universities said:

Usually we receive a call from the president office to attend senate meetings often three or four days in advance. Simultaneously, we receive memo with lists of agendas set for discussion for that specific event. If we have an issue to be seen by the senate, we can communicate to the president ahead of the meeting and if he finds it relevant for discussion, it can be considered. I mean we are free even to propose an agenda for discussion in addition to actively participate in the senate. Although the meetings are usually held during class hours, knowing the meeting date ahead of time has helped us to adjust our program and attend the meetings. As long as the numbers of senate meetings are a few in numbers, it is not a challenge to attend regularly.

I asked him to verify whether their participation is genuine or done for forms sake. In response, he reported that the president or his office informed them ahead of time and they never missed attending senate meetings. As full voting members of the senate, he noted, “we freely
argue on the issues put on table for discussions, and there were times when we rejected the final decision arrived by the majority and let our difference to be recorded in the minutes.” Although student representatives sit together with their instructors with rich experience, he added that they never hesitate to express what they feel is correct and positive to student community as well as to that of the institution. The interviewee also reported that they were confident enough to convey their ideas whenever they attend senate meetings and were taken as genuine participation. As a follow-up question, I asked the student union presidents if there were times when they suggested an agendum and whether it was subsequently added in the senate meetings.

Except two of them who said they had proposed agendas on graduation status approval of medicine students and a change of nomenclature from construction technology management to construction engineering technology which were discussed by the senate, the rest of them had no such experiences but to express their ideas freely on agendas brought by the president. Although students’ participation in university senate was positive on the bases of responses obtained from most of interview participants, a difference, however, is heard form one student union presidents. He said:

Like any other senate member of the university, we receive a call from the president office to inform us about senate meeting schedules. Accordingly, we attend meetings as per the schedule and express our views freely. The chair of the senate also encourages us to forward our ideas and reflect the views of the larger student population. At the end of the day, however, we did not vote in the final decisions, it is because we are non-voting members.
From his responses it was possible to tell that he was unhappy about their status of participation as non-voting members. Then, I asked him if he had tried to change that non-voting status and what he did so far. He replied that on the basis of the experiences they obtained from other universities during national public universities student union forums, they submitted their claim to the university management for amendment to be made to the legislation to become voting members of the senate like that of other public universities. The dean of students, who the student union is accountable for, during interview, confirmed that the claim was true and he had submitted to the office of the president and was still waiting for response.

Twelve senate minutes from five of the sample universities, which I had the chance to review, also confirmed that student representatives were included in the list of the participants. On the basis of the excerpts of academic presidents as well as that of student union presidents presented earlier and the senate minutes reviewed, it could be said that students were really participating in the senate of the universities and universities have also maintained what they promised to do in their senate legislations. However, in one of the universities which considers students as a non-voting member of the senate indicated that the right of students and that of higher education proclamation were not uniformly executed in all universities.

Students’ Participation in University Council and Senate Standing Committees

As stated in the literature review earlier, students have to be active participant in different standing committees organized by the senate (Akomolafe & Ibijola, 2014; Lizzio & Wilson, 2009). Higher education proclamation of Ethiopia (FDRE, 2009) also confirms students’ right to participate in the sessions of the institution's governing bodies. In agreement with the proclamation, universities in their legislation also declare the right of students to participate in different senate standing committees as well as in university council. However, the finding
revealed that students were excluded in university councils and majority of the standing committees. Here under the status of students’ participation in university council and senate standing committee as per the views of subjects who participate in the interview is presented.

**Participation in University Council**

Students are given the right to participate in the university council, which is responsible to advise the president on institutional plans, budget, organizational structures, academic programs, on division, merger, and closure of academic units (e.g., see senate legislations of AXU, 2015; FDRE, 2009; MEKU, 2012; WOLU, 2015). The responses obtained from all the seven deans of students’ and other subjects, however, indicated that students were not represented in any of the institutions’ council. Here is the excerpt of one of the dean of students:

I see in the legislation that two undergraduate and two postgraduate representatives, one of them from each group to be female student, can participate in the university council, which is a highest advisory body to the president in many issues. In reality, however, there was no demand for participation coming from the student union and no one from the top asked me to provide a list of students to be a member of council of the university. Due to this, students were not represented in the council.

More or less a similar response was obtained from the dean of students of the other second generation university. “The student union is accountable to the dean of students, and I am a member of the council,” he noted, “but I didn’t see student representatives participating in the council”. When asked him why the students are not represented while the senate legislation required them to be represented, he responded, “To be honest, I didn’t pay due attention to it and I didn’t enforce the top level management to let students have a say in the council”. He continued, “The student union itself didn’t make the claim as well”. In addition, though it was
promised in the legislation, he indicated that, due to lack of attention on the part of the management and the desire not to affect student class hours, it was not possible to implement what has been stated in the legislation.

The responses of all the seven student union presidents of sample universities were also consistent with the response of student deans indicated earlier. One of student union presidents from first generation universities indicated that students were not represented in the council of the university. As per his responses, their attention and awareness about their rights were on the senate and other administrative committees but not that of university council. Due to this, they didn’t claim be it to the student dean, to which they are accountable, or to the university president.

Similarly, the remaining student union presidents, dean of students and academic presidents who participated in the interviews indicated that students were not participating in the university council. As a result, students’ right to participate in the council simply remained on paper. This, as per the response of the participants, was resulted from lack of attention on the part of people in the management position to bring students in the council. Likewise, lack of awareness on the part of student union representatives about their right to be represented in the council and their failure to make a claim were the other hindering factors.

**Participation in Senate Standing Committees**

One of the areas of university governance that allow students to participate is senate standing committees. For instance, students are recognized as standing committee member of students service committee/student affairs committee, council of graduate studies, library and information communication technology committee, anti HIV/AIDS and sexual and reproductive health committee/health, environment and safety committee, policy committee, academic
standards and quality assurance committee, ethics and code of conduct committee, external relations, culture and image building committee (e.g., AMU, 2013; JU, 2007; MEKU, 2012; WOLU, 2015; WLKU, 2014, WODU, 2012). Taking this into account, I asked subjects about their own perception on the status of students’ participation in these senate standing committees. The response of interviews obtained from all the seven deans of students, and all the seven student union presidents showed students’ participation in senate standing committees was insignificant and it was limited to one of the standing committee-students service/affairs committee. Almost all the FGD participants had a similar observation. And this is what the dean of students’ in one of the second generation universities said:

The student union is accountable to my office and I do know the status of students’ participation in standing committees of the senate. As far as I know, they have an equal status of participation in students’ affairs or service committee. This committee works on matters related to student cases like student appeal, student services, extracurricular activities, part-time employment activities and the like. For instance, in relation to part time employment, the student union screens out students who have serious financial problem. To this end, the student union makes the screening based on applicant students’ recommendation letter they brought from their localities. Once this is completed, the student union submit their list to the committee for final decisions in which student representatives are members of the decision making body. The same is true to any other issues where the committee is responsible for. Other than this committee, as I indicated earlier, there is no other standing committee that students are participating.

Strengthening the above idea, one of the vice presidents from the third generation universities reported that they identified the areas of standing committees where students are
eligible to participate. As a tradition of their university, however, standing committee meetings were usually held during class hours of students and consequently they don’t want students to miss their class which is the major objective of students to be in the university. And he believed that missing classes have an adverse effect on students’ academic achievement. “That is way we don’t see students in standing committee meetings. For instance, in academic standards and quality assurance committee, which is led by me,” he added, “I don’t remember the day in which students attended”.

Similar to what was said by former respondents; student union standing committee members in their FGDs grudgingly complained their lack of participation in senate standing committees. Here is what, Tolossa, one of the participants from first generation universities said:

The student union is not that much concerned and does not give due emphasis in the representation of senate standing committee as we do to administrative issues, just to be frank. Due to this, we are not taking it seriously. On the other hand, people in the management of the university neither encourage us and nor take the matter seriously about students’ representation in these standing committees as they do in administrative arrangements. In a word, our participation is limited to students’ service standing committee responsible on issues like discipline, students appeal, co-curricular and clubs activity (FGD-1)

Another participant added that the students’ union did not have the tradition of searching for the areas in which students were formally empowered by the legislation which resulted from lack of induction or familiarity with the legislation which was expected to be given by the dean of students. He continued, “This has hindered us from claiming all our rights given and participate in standing committees”.

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The response of subjects showed that students participation in senate standing committee was almost nil except participating in students affairs committee which works on student services, extracurricular activities, disciplinary issues; supporting students from poor families and supporting female students. As per the views of subjects, this inadequate participation of students in senate standing committee resulted from lack of attention in both the management as well as that of the student union and due to lack of adequate orientation about the right of students in senate standing committees of the institutions. This shows that the legal ground and institutional policy is in place but the challenge was in implementing what has been stated.

**Participation in College Academic Council/ Committee/ Commission**

One of the university governing bodies which mainly engage in academic matters and which has strong and direct contact with student body is college academic council/ college academic commission /college council/ college academic committee. As stated in HEP of Ethiopia (FDRE, 2009), universities have acknowledged students to be members of college academic commission / college academic committee. The number of students taken as a member of college level academic commission/ council has similarities as well as variations across universities. For instance, two students’ representatives, preferably a male and a female are given a seat with full voting power in some of the universities (e.g., AMU, 2013, AXU, 2015, WELKU, 2014; WLDU, 2012). In some other universities, two regular (one of them a female student) and two other graduate students (one of them a female) are also been taken as voting members (e.g., MEKU, 2012). One other university, on the other hand, has given a seat only to one student but taking as a voting member (e.g., JIU, 2007). The extreme case, however, was one of the universities that gave two seats for students in the academic commission but as nonvoting
members (e.g., WOLU, 2015). Although there are differences in terms of number of participants as well as the right in voting, participants were asked about the status of students’ participation in college academic commission. The findings in both the qualitative and quantitative data showed that students’ participation at college level academic commission was almost a neglected area across universities. The observation of majority of FGD participants of student union standing committee members confirms this reality. An FGD participant named Birrara from one of the third generation universities had, for example, this to say:

In relative terms, when we go down the structure of the university, the acceptance as well as recognition of the student union decreases. I mean, student union is influential and has acceptance by the top level management but this is not true at college level. The student union is powerless and is not recognized as part of academic committee members. There are deans who consider academic matter is the only duty and concern of them but not that of the student union. There are times when college deans consider the right of student union is limited only to controlling student cafeteria but not to have a say in academic issues at college level. Due to this, although the student union formally informed the college via letter the list of student representatives in college academic commission, college deans do not invite us whenever there are academic commission meetings. (FGD-2)

Another student union president from second generation universities had a similar view:

The student union, mainly the standing committee members, select students from the college, one male and one female student, who have better academic performance, good at communication skills and free from disciplinary problem and will let the college know them through a formal letter. Selecting a student representative from the college student,
however, was the responsibility of the college, but they haven’t done that. Although the union did what was expected of it, most frequently, college deans don’t take it positively and do not want to let us participate. For sure there are deans who dislike the union and who mistake it for a political entity. Moreover, there are also deans who do not want to see the existence of the union; and want us to focus only to our studies. There are also deans who do not have awareness about the rights given to us to participate in academic commission. Because of these and other related reasons, students’ participation at college level academic commission is not practical.

Supporting the views about the impracticability of student participation in college level academic commission a male FGD participant of student union standing committee member from first generation universities also underlines the existence of a misconception on the part of college deans and other academic staffs in viewing student representatives as if they stood only for the right of students. “There are also others who considered student representatives lacking the knowledge about agendas put on table for discussion” another participant adds, “Due to these and other factors, he continued, “they don’t make a call whenever there are academic commission meetings at the college level” (Girma, FGD-5).

One of the academic vice presidents from second generation universities, who gave me an interview on the status of students’ participation in college academic commission, partially agreed with what were said by student union members. According to him, there are colleges who do not participate students in academic commission meetings and the factors which hinder students from participation were not only institution related factors but also students related as well. Having a look at his actual words may give us a clear understanding of his views:
Actually, students are not participating in all academic commission meetings but they do in some of them occasionally. I have a report on their attendance, although it is irregular. I feel that in most cases, academic commission meeting schedules overlap with students’ class hours. Secondly, there might be times where deans fail to announce students’ representatives ahead of time. The other reason might be the weakness of students’ representatives themselves to claim for attendance. There are also students who don’t feel comfortable to sit in meeting along their instructors. A feeling of victimization by instructors due to difference in ideas might have affected them negatively for their attendance. Moreover, the student union didn’t timely send the list of students’ representatives in academic commission. Although these and other related hindering factors are expected to have an effect, I’d like to note that there is an attempt here and there to participate students in college academic commission.

The document review, however, was in full support of what student representatives’ claims. One of the college academic council from the first generation university, had twenty-two meetings in the time range between mid of 2015 -beginning of 2017 and discussed over agendas like students cases, day-one-class- one, teaching learning process, staff cases, center of excellence, attrition rate of students, annual plan, one-to-five arrangement, first and second quarter performance evaluation. Besides, class audit report, college activity and evaluating development army were also among the agendas discussed over to pass decisions. All meetings were conducted in the morning beginning from 8:30. There were about fourteen to sixteen participants. Although student representatives’ names are included in the list of participants, except in four of the meetings, student representatives did not participate in the remaining eighteen meetings of college level academic council.
Similarly, academic commission minutes of one of the colleges in the second generation universities revealed similar result to that of the college in the first generation university. College level academic committee had twelve meetings from mid 2015 –beginning of 2017 (beginning from 2008 E.C. to mid of 2009 E.C). The meetings were conducted in working days between 8:30 A.M to 12: 00 P.M. There were six to seven academic staff members who attended the meetings to discuss on agendas like implementation of tutorial program; evaluation of teaching learning process, day one class one, graduation approval; regular and summer students’ cases; selection of department heads, re-grading; and curriculum approval for MA program. In addition to this, regular PGDT practicum cases, graduation approval of PGDT students, establishing discipline committee at college level, add and drop cases, and evaluating the performance of department heads were among the agendas listed in the minutes. In all these meetings, the minutes read showed that there were no student representatives participating in the sessions.

Academic commission minutes reviewed in one of the colleges from third generation universities disclosed similar results. The college quality assurance officer of the college allowed me to review twenty- one academic committee minutes of the college conducted between mid of 2015 - beginning of 2017 (beginning from 2008 E.C. academic year to mid of 2009 E.C). In most cases there were about eleven to thirteen participants and they discussed on agendas like evaluating teaching learning, summer program, graduation approval, students cases, day-one-class-one, cheating cases, attrition rate, club performance, educational development army and the like. In all of these meetings, there were no students representatives who participated in making decisions on the agendas set by the college.
In general, I had the chance to review eighty-four college level academic commission/council minutes from first generation universities, sixty-eight from second generation universities and seventy-nine minutes from third generation universities. In other words, I reviewed a total of two-hundred-thirty-one college level academic committee minutes. From a total of two-hundred-thirty-one meetings, students participated in five of the meetings: four in first generation and one in second generation universities.

As a whole, except in one of the universities which acknowledges students as non-voting members, all universities have legislations that allow students to participate in college academic commission/council. This implies there is policy which recognizes students as member of university community who have equal right like that of academic staff. The gap however, lies on implementing what has been stated in the legislation. As we have seen in the preceding analysis, most of the agendas discussed by AC members were student related matters which really needs the reflections of students. On the other hand, the meetings were held on working days and working hours which may overlap with students’ class hours. Thus, as indicted by subjects, inconvenient meeting time, failure to inform student representatives, considering students as if they lacked knowledge on agendas, students’ fear of victimization, and lack of clear awareness about students’ right might have contributed for almost nil status of students’ participation in college level academic commission. As shown in Table 4.2, the quantitative findings were also in agreement with the findings identified from the qualitative data.
Table 4.2. 2.

Students Participation in College Academic Commission

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Chi-Square value(d.f)</th>
<th>P-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Academic leaders (AL)</td>
<td>Students’ representatives (SR)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never at all</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>69.6</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Almost always</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. p<0.05.

The majority of the two groups of survey participants (ALs=69.6%; SR=80%), showed that students did not participate in college academic commission. This was a similar result to the qualitative data implying that college level academic commission excludes students and controlled by the faculty where they make the decisions. The responses of the participants on the status of students participation in college academic commission at $\chi^2 (8, n =129) = 40.73$ p = <.001 level, indicated statistically significant association (see Table 4.2.2).

Students’ Participation in Department Academic Council/ Committee/ Assembly

One of the university governing bodies that provide students with the right to participate, through their union or representatives, as stated in Article 37 and Article 43 of HEP No. 650/2009 is department committee/ department council. Department council/ committee has a responsibility which is directly related to students such as evaluating and approving courses, evaluating students’ academic performance, conducting periodic supervision on quality of teaching and the like. On the basis of the rights given by higher education proclamation, universities were expected to include in their senate legislation the rights of students to be a member of department council. However, discrepancies are observed across universities. In some universities, department academic councils consists only academic staff of the department.
without student membership (AMU, 2013; JIU, 2007; WELDU, 2012). The other university includes two students from full time undergraduate and two students from graduate program students of which two of them to be a female student (e.g., MEKU, 2012). One of the universities gives a seat in department academic council to one student only (e.g., WELKU, 2014). Still one other university provides a seat for one student as nonvoting member in department academic committee (e.g., WOLU, 2015). As opposed to what is stipulated in the articles stated in HEP No. 650/2009, the policy varies across universities. In some of the universities indicated above, students are totally excluded from department academic council by their legislation. In others, students were included as nonvoting members.

Although there is a difference in terms of number of participants as well as the right to vote, participants were asked about the status of students’ participation in department academic council. The findings in both qualitative and quantitative data showed that students’ participation in department academic council/committee was totally a neglected area which was fully controlled by academic staff members of universities. The observation of majority of FGD participants, and seven students’ union presidents reflected this reality. One FGD participant from one of the first generation universities reported:

Gudeta : As per our experiences, the student union selects and formally announces students’ representatives to college academic commission. However, we do not have the practice of assigning a student representative to department council. The student union believes that department heads are responsible in the election of student representatives from the students of the department to be member of DC. The student union standing committees members are from different departments, but none of us do not have the information of students’ representation in department council. I can confidently say that it
is a neglected area by the student union as well as by that of university management. (FGD-2)

Similar to what is stated by student union standing committee member, student union president of same university also confirms absence of students’ participation in department council. This is what he said during the interview:

The legislation provides the right of students to participate in department academic council. And we know that there are serious of students’ problem at department level that needs to be addressed. Most frequently, students complain about instructors grading, harassment of female students, complaints against assessment methods, examinations, cheating cases and the like. We know that students’ cases are being decided in their absence at department level. In most cases, I myself have visited many departments and instructors to talk about student cases which were really difficult to handle. Other than the failure of the department heads to do what was expected, due to lack of attention as well as structural problem of the union itself, students are not represented in making decisions at department level. As a result, students are not participating in decisions, in the election of department heads and college deans. This has ended up with full control of department council by academic staff and students to be mere listener of decisions made by them.

The response of subjects showed that those universities which formally recognize students as member of department council didn’t practice what they promised to do. A review on minutes of department councils also revealed the same result. A review on DC minutes of one department from a first-generation university, for example, is in support of what students said. There were twenty-one department academic committee meetings conducted from mid 2015 –
beginning of 2017 (beginning from 2008 E.C. academic year to mid of 2009 E.C). The most common agendas that the committee discussed over include: recruitment of female instructors, course offering, scholarship, students probation cases, extension students cheating cases, implementation of one- to- five developmental army arrangement, and third year students cases. Moreover, course re-distribution and third quarter performance evaluation of the department were among the agendas. All the meetings were conducted in working days usually in the mornings beginning from 10’oclock. In these meetings, there were three to five participants of academic staff members only.

Correspondingly, a department council minute review made in one department of second generation university also showed exclusion of students from decision making at department level. The department academic committee had eighteen meetings from mid of 2015 – beginning of 2017 (beginning from 2008 E.C. academic year to mid of 2009 E.C) and discussed over and passed decisions on agendas like proposal defense, one- to- five arrangement implementation, students’ progress, continuous assessment and challenges encountered, third year students case, graduate assistance requirement, course offering, students complain on different courses and other related topics. In all of these meetings it was only academic staff members who participated in the decision making.

Like that of departments in first and second generation universities, department minutes in third generation university showed similar results. The department academic committee had 12 meetings in one and half year and was conducted in the presence of ten to thirteen academic staff members. The committee discussed over agendas like provision of exam papers and feedbacks to students, exam administration, re-grading, student class size, and evaluating the overall teaching learning performance of the department. Furthermore, tutorial support to female
students, students’ academic achievement, cheating cases, preparing department plan and the like were also the other agendas. In all of these meetings, student representatives did not participate.

Altogether, I had the chance to review ninety-four department level academic council minutes from first generation universities, one hundred forty-eight from second generation universities and one hundred thirty six minutes from third generation universities. That means, I was allowed to review a total of three hundred seventy-eight department level academic council minutes. And as could be understood from the agenda items, most of the cases concern students. Frustratingly, though, student representatives never participated in any of the three hundred seventy-eight meetings. This indicates that, department level academic councils were totally controlled by academic staff members leaving students to be voiceless in their own issues. Due to exclusion of students from department council, the right of electing department heads and college deans as well were fully remained in the hands of academic staff members. The quantitative data also showed similar findings.

Table 4.2.3:
Students Participation in Department Academic Council

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Chi-Square value (d.f)</th>
<th>P-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Academic Leaders (AL)</td>
<td>Students’ representatives (SR)</td>
<td>20.74(6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never at all</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>81.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Almost always</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes.  p<0.05.

As shown in Table 4.2.3., survey participants were asked to evaluate the level of students’ participation in department academic council. A great majority of the academic leaders
(81.8%) and nearly all student representatives (96.7%) indicated that students “Never at all” participated. This implies that academic staff members fully controlled decisions in DC. Opinion of participants on level of students’ participation in department academic council showed statistically significant association at $\chi^2 (6, n=129) = 20.74$ $p = 0.002$ level (see Table 4.3).

**Participation of Students in Ad-hoc Committees**

In addition to participating in different governing bodies of universities, students, as per Article 37 of HEP No. 650/2009 are given the right to participate, in different *ad-hoc* committees organized by the senate. In addition to what has been recommended by scholars who conducted research on student participation in university governance (e.g., Elizabeth, 2014; Lizzio & Wilson, 2009) and the statements in HEP, universities in their legislations have also acknowledged students participation in different *ad-hoc* committees (e.g., AMU, 2013; MEKU, 2012; WELU, 2012; WOLU, 2015). During their interviews, all the seven academic vice presidents, all the seven deans of students, and all the seven student union presidents said students are involved in different *ad-hoc* committees. Most of the FGD participants also had similar notion. What a dean of students from one of the third-generation universities said is more elaborate:

In any kind of *ad-hoc* committees organized by the office of the dean or at university level at large, it is difficult to find an *ad-hoc* committee without student members. For instance, if we take reception and a welcome program organized for first year students and also to that of senior students, the majority of the members are students. The same is true in the case of graduation committee. If we take the case of annual celebration of the day of nations and nationalities, the dominant members are students. Similarly, an ad-
hoc committee organized to run annual program of Christian and Muslim holidays are also mainly handled by students.

FGD participants of student union standing committee members also gave similar opinion when asked about the status of students’ participation in *ad-hoc* committees. “For example first year students’ welcoming program was mainly run by students” said Toyba, one of FGD participant from one of the first generation universities. The committee, according to her, is responsible to develop a proposal with all its details of activity, responsible persons to carry out the duty and also required amount of finance to run the program. As per their proposal, students are assigned to different bus stations, and help students to take the transport arranged by the university; registration committee help the new comers to be registered and take their Id card and meal cards; then the dormitory committee take the students to the dormitories where they are assigned without any robbery or theft. Student union president reported:

Honestly speaking, whenever an *ad-hoc* committee is organized by the university, you will always find student members. Leave alone in *ad-hoc* committees which have a responsibility to run an activity within the university compound, there are times where students are made members of an *ad-hoc* committee organized in collaboration with the town administration and the university. For example, students are members of the command post\textsuperscript{1} established by members from the university and other political leaders from the town. To put it in a nutshell, students have the lion’s share in most *ad-hoc* committees organized by the university.

\textsuperscript{1}The state of emergency for the maintenance of public peace and security was declared 27\textsuperscript{th} of October, 2016 with regulation No.391/2016. The state of emergency is lead by command post composed of members from relevant bodies. In educational institutions, conducting strikes that disturb the learning and teaching process, shutting down educational institutions or causing damage to these institutions is prohibited. Moreover, law enforcement organs may enter universities and take the necessary measures to stop disturbances and detain the persons involved in the strike. / Source: Federal negarit Gazeta 23\textsuperscript{th} Year No. 2, Addis Ababa, 27, October, 2016 Regulation No.391/2016 and the detailed guideline/
The excerpts quoted above showed that students were active participants of ad-hoc committees organized by universities. In support of this, one of the academic vice presidents from the third generation universities explained his observation taking the experience of an *ad-hoc* committee organized to provide orientation to first year students’. The following excerpt expresses the idea better:

First year students’ orientation *ad-hoc* committee is among many which are organized every year. This committee is responsible to give full orientation to students on what is expected of them, what they can expect from the university and the various processes and steps that they need to take in meeting requirements and standards. Moreover, orientation is given on certain behavioral limits and standards of conduct; about the overall nature of departments to select from; different policies of the university, the rights and obligations of students and related topics. This is given by a committee in which student representatives are members who participate until the mission is accomplished. The same is true in many of the ad-hoc committees organized by the university. Thus, participation of students in *ad-hoc* committees of the university is real and unquestionable.

I asked the participants to tell me the reason behind in having active participation of students on *ad-hoc* committees and not in standing committees as well as that of AC and DC meetings. From their response, it was found out that the short lived nature of ad-hoc committees; students’ willingness and commitment to participate; the demand of the management to reduce the burden from doing routine tasks were the major reasons behind for having active participation of students in different *ad-hoc* committees.

From the preceding discussions it is possible to understand that as per the legal provisions made by the HEP and senate legislations of universities, students actively participate in *ad-hoc*
committees organized by universities to realize their short lived objectives. It is also indicted that students were active participants in ad-hoc committees organized by the collaboration of the university and other external body within the town administration where the university is found. For example, participation in command post, a responsible body in controlling the security of residents within as well as outside of the university due to the state of emergency declared in the country, could be taken as an example.

**Students’ Participation in Administrative Areas**

In addition to governing bodies engaged in academic issues, students are eligible to participate in different administrative areas as well (Michelsen & Stensaker, 2011; Quick & Bryson, 2016). Taking this into account, subjects were asked to reflect on the status of students’ participation in administrative areas. Accordingly, during their interviews, seven of the academic vice presidents, seven of the deans of students’, seven of student union presidents, and almost majority of FGD participants responses were positive. The following report on students’ participation in student cafeteria and other related student service committee, in disciplinary matters, in instructors’ performance evaluation and in planning and evaluation of overall university performance reflects this truth.

**Student Cafeteria and other Related Student Service Committees**

Students’ services are set of services of student affairs such as: room checking committee, sport and recreation committee, and food and cafeteria committee. These committees are set up primarily to protect the wellbeing, safety, protection, defense and support of students so as to help students to realize their goals as students and as future professionals and leaders. Hence, each of them is discussed in the following section.
Students’ Participation in Room Checking Committee

The room checking committee includes members from the student union, proctors and other administrative support staff organized to conduct an inventory of rooms before commencement of the new academic year and patrol the presence of students in their dormitory at night. The committee is responsible to report a repair requests to facilities management office and follow up its implementation. To this end, most of the student union standing committee members spends the summer long vacation in the campus. FGD participant from students’ union standing committee member of third generation universities said:

Kedir: Dormitories are managed by teams of individuals composed of proctors of the block and student representatives from the residents assigned by the student union. In addition, there are students assigned by student union to each floor. Both block committee and students assigned to each floor to check availability of necessary services like toilet, water, light and the like. Whenever they encounter things that need to be repaired they report to the concerned body for immediate action. The major responsibility of dormitory committee is to control student movement which might be political related, religious affiliated, robbery, drug addiction and the like. Moreover, the committee visits every dormitory in the middle of the night to check the presence of students in their bedrooms/dorms and to take attendances. If students [during such visits] are not in their dormitory but somewhere in the library or other place within the university, they are expected to immediately come and report to the committee before leaving their residence. In such cases, their friends make a call to them. Those students who are absent during the patrol and pass the night outside the university are called the next day and given a warning for the last time. The student union makes a call to students’ parents to let them know about the behavior of their son/daughter. (FGD-5)
Similarly, an FGD participant from one of the second generation universities responded that such a patrol system has significantly contributed for students to spend their time on their lesson and protect students, particularly that of female students, from immoral activities. He indicated that it is widely reported and practically there are some female students who engaged in commercial sex activities; and there are also some other students who went to night clubs mainly on weekends. According to him, the patrol conducted at night brought a positive result particularly in controlling students with similar problem. Another participant also confirmed that the patrol system contributed to control those students who want to organize student strikes, and those who want to disturb other students for various reasons. In such a patrol system, he continued “all student union standing committee as well as other sub-committee members participate. Regarding cases encountered during a patrol which are considered as unacceptable, decisions are also made in a democratic way as per the regulation of the university.

During data collection, I found that the practice of dormitory checking was not uniform across all universities. In two of the first -generation universities and in one of second generation university, it was not conducted on a regular basis but only when there is a security problem. In two of second generation universities and in two of the first- generation universities, however, it was a day to day task. One of the dean of students indicted that such a practice was obtained from one of the first -generation universities found in Ethiopia when presented in national public universities forum and taken as best experience to be adopted by all other public universities.

To further look into the reactions of students on the patrol, I asked the deans and the students’ union presidents from the second and third-generation universities which regularly apply a patrol of students. Opinions about patrolling are quite mixed: some had positive reactions
while other thought the whole practice is unacceptable. The reaction of students, as per the responses of subjects, differed between male and female students, freshman and senior students, and medicine and other department student counterparts. Most of male students as compared to their female counterparts, senior students and medicine students oppose the adoption of patrolling in educational institutions as if it is a military camp. And they feel that they are matured enough to manage themselves and the patrol is unnecessary.

The above discussion showed that student union as a member of room checking committee controls the presence of students in their dormitory and also that of the proctors on their duty. Beyond controlling, they are also part of the decision making body on those students who violate the regulations. The patrol conducted at the mid of the night to check the presence of students in their dormitory was not uniformly practiced in all universities. Besides, students had a mixed reaction, in support of and against it. Such a practice may have a positive effect upon the general student population to stay in the campus and use their time for academic purposes. Moreover, as indicated by subjects, it may have a contribution in protecting young female students from commercial sex, which is a common discussion point in many of the mass Media of the country. Beyond its positive contributions, however, such a patrol system may have an adverse effect on the time as well as on academic performance of the union representatives who conduct the patrol at night. Moreover, the patrol, which is adopted from military institutions, as indicted by subjects, may be violating students’ right and could be a cause for conflict between the management and the student body. One could also question whether the patrol is a best strategy in educational institutions than working on the mind of the students to manage themselves. I think it is taking the side effects of the patrol conducted at night that some of the sample universities failed in applying it.
**Sport and Recreation Committee**

One of the administrative area in which students have strong hold and participation is sport and recreation committee. It is a committee which is organized under the dean of students and his delegate who is the chair-person of the committee and three student union representatives and sport and recreation officer members. With regard to the level of students’ participation in this committee, participants of the interview as well as that of FGD indicated that students have equal right like that of other members in making decisions and students were actively participating in the committee across universities. The following excerpt of the dean of students of one university may be considered as a representative response:

Sport and recreation committee is in charge of organizing and leading student lounge; creating conducive environment for students to provide DSTV channel service; organizing and leading sport festivals for different occasions; and organizing different cultural and music festivals. Moreover, it is also responsible to organize other recreation and educative programs. Since students are represented in the committee by their student union, there are three students from the union who are members of sport and recreation committee of the university. In this committee students like that of other committee members have the right to bring agenda, discuss freely, and vote to arrive at final decisions when we fail to reach some consensus.

In support of that, a student union president from first generation universities noted that the committee handles activities like organizing and selecting students who represent the university in national public university students sport festivals, organizing different cultural show programs, and music festivals. As committee members, he showed that “full responsibility of controlling the foot ball games of European countries broadcast by DSTV lies on the shoulder of
student representatives”. He added “The same is true in controlling music festivals, cultural festivals conducted at night and services provided by student lounge”.

As indicated earlier, students were active participants in every issue taken by sport and recreation committees of universities and had equal right to participate in the planning of activities, in making decisions, in implementing what was decided, in controlling, monitoring and evaluation of programs and finally in reporting. The minutes of student unions of universities under study revealed that most of the agendas discussed from mid of 2015 – beginning of 2017 (beginning from 2008 E.C. academic year to mid of 2009 E.C) were mainly on students’ recreation issues such as DSTV, celebration of nations and nationalities day, quality of students lounge service, annual students sport festival and the like. This showed that, as stated in the excerpt of student union president above, the minutes also indicated that the focus of student unions were agendas of recreation than that of academic related issues.

**Food Service and Cafeteria Committee**

Since Ethiopian public universities provide boarding service, they offer cafeteria service to regular and summer students based on a planned menu for breakfast, lunch and supper. To this end, there is food service and cafeteria committee lead by director of students’ services/ dean of students which is responsible to monitor the performance of this service (e.g., AXU, 2015; WOLU, 2015; MEKU, 2012; WELU, 2014). Taking this into account I asked deans of students, student union presidents as well as that of standing committee members about the level of students’ participation in food service and cafeteria committee. The responses of seven of the deans of students, seven of student union presidents and most of FGD participant of student union standing committee members indicated that students were active participants at every
stages and areas in which the committee is responsible. The following excerpt of a dean of students’ from third generation universities may explain the issue more explanatory:

In this committee students’ union standing committee member, who is the head of cafeteria service, is one of the members who are responsible to control the purchasing, processing and catering of food items. Although the purchase of any food item is made by government procurement regulation, the committee has the responsibility to conduct market assessment. During this process, student representative of the committee participate in the market survey where ever the committee goes. Once the winner of food item and other supply items is identified, the agreement document which specifies the quantity, quality, and price of the item signed by the president of the university copied to the student union. Once the copy of the agreement is in the hands of the union, twenty one students, who are accountable to the union head of cafeteria service, control every food item submitted to the cafeteria store, when food items are taken to the kitchen to be cooked and when students are served.

A dean of students from one of the first generation universities also reported that every food item is deployed to cafeteria store after it is checked by quality control committee in which students have the leading role. According to him, the decision to accept or to reject the food item delivered by the contractor, as per the contractual agreement made at the beginning, is the responsibility of the entire committee members, if student representatives disagreed in receiving the food items, it is over there, and it will be sent back. In sharing me his own experience as a dean of students and chairperson of quality control committee, “there were times in which two trucks of “Teff” and one hundred quintals of chickpea were sent back because of the opposition of student representatives alone”. He believes that “it was wrong from the procedure of
committee decision making, which is guided by majority vote, but if we did that, *student strikes could breakout immediately*” (emphasis added).

In agreement with what was stated earlier, a dean of students from second generation universities reported that student union representatives of student service committee control students’ budget and commented when there is inflated or deflated price of food items. They also participate in the purchase of any student related item through direct procurement. Moreover, he stated that student representatives had the right to follow up the food items delivered by the contractor and also have the right to reject them when it was against the contractual agreement. He added that student representatives had the right to follow up daily menu of students during breakfast, lunch and dinner time as well. Other than their influence to accept or to reject the food items delivered by the contractor, students have also a mandate to put their approval for a payment order to be made by the dean of students. Regarding this, a dean of students from one of the third generation universities had this to say:

> When any food item is delivered by the contractor, in addition to the formally assigned storekeeper of the cafeteria, a student representative of the committee, who is assigned for that specific day, has to put his signature in the space of the format left to them. In order to write payment order to finance department at the end of each month, then, I must check whether the list of the received items are approved by the student representatives or not. If it is not approved by student representatives of the committee, it is risky for me to write payment order to finance department.

Although some difference is observed across universities, in addition to actively participating, students have a significant influence in students’ service committee. Students participate in market survey, selection of a contractor to deliver any food item, in procurement of
items through direct procurement, and controlling students budget. Moreover, students have the right to reject when food items delivered by the contractor in violation of the contractual agreement. Student members of the service committee also make sure whether students get service as per the menu or not. On top of that, students have the right to approve when any food item is delivered to cafeteria store, and finally to give their approval for the dean of students in making payment order at the end each month. This indicates that the right given to students by HEP and legislations of universities to participate in different student services such as cafeteria committee, service quality control committee, and dormitory and campus health committee were fully implemented. This shows that students actively participate in administrative matters which might be due to students’ commitment to participate to these areas or the willingness of the management as well as the sensitivity of the roles handled by the committees.

The document analysis of student union minutes of one and half year -from mid 2015–beginning of 2017 (beginning from 2008 E.C. academic year to mid of 2009 E.C) showed that agendas most repeatedly discussed by student union standing committee members were students cafeteria service, a request for weekly menu change, fasting foods for Christian and Muslim students, quality of food service, water service, dormitory services, and storage system of food and other related item. This shows that student unions representatives, other than taking issues of student services to different committees to be agendas of discussion, themselves take it as a priority of the unions as compared to academic matters. A question forwarded to FGD participants, student union presidents, deans of student and academic vice presidents on students’ union emphasis on academic vs. administrative matters also confirms that trend. The excerpt of students’ union president from one of the second generation universities may give a better idea:
Students’ service like cafeteria does not give you time and requires your immediate intervention. If we fail to respond to it or if we are even late to respond, we know what the reaction of the students will be- students’ strike. If students’ strike happens, in no doubt, it will have a devastating effect upon the resources of the university. Cognizant of that, the standing committee of the union, members of peace forum and student police members, be it during breakfast, lunch or dinner time, spend their time around the student cafeteria. As I said, although student services are our priority areas, it does not mean we totally neglect academic issues. [Emphasis added]

From the statements presented above, student union president acknowledged that students service particularly that of cafeteria is the primary focus of the student union because of the sensitivity of the service and its possibility to be a cause for students’ strike. Another student union president had a similar view:

The student union is member of the command post which was recently established due to the state of emergency declared in the country. The committee has identified that problem in student cafeteria, dormitory, water service, electricity, football games or other related gatherings as a potential causes for students strike. Due to this, as a firm direction of the command post, it is not necessary to leave any space for students to start questioning which could later divert to other unanticipated political dimensions. You see, if we let this happen, it will immediately spread elsewhere and may have unprecedented consequences. So, such things have to be handled in artistic way and we are also doing it.

To further look into whether students have ever gone on a strike following dissatisfaction on cafeteria service or for any other reasons, I asked deans of students and student
representatives. Subjects reported that although infrequent and short lived, there were students’ strikes in some of the universities mainly related to poor cafeteria services, water service and rarely for politically reasons. One of the deans of students from one of the second-generation universities indicated that when the country was in state of emergency, due to the failure of the management to deliver water services for about three days due to technical reasons, there was devastating students’ strike which resulted in serious damages of cafeterias, classrooms and windows of administrative buildings. He added:

The primary focus of the management and that of the command post is securing peaceful teaching learning situation. We are aware that students service related issues are sensitive by their very nature and the student population could not tolerate and do not have any excuse but strike to claim for their rights. Such instances do have political implications, destructive effects and are easily replicable to other universities. It has also an adverse effect on the image of the university. Cognizant of these evils, we are strongly working not to have any sort of student strikes. Unfortunately, for technical reasons we failed to deliver water services and faced what we wished not to have it. Eventually, with the support of the federal police, we managed to control the strike and the university resumed its normal function a day after the strike.

Protecting students from calling any sort of strikes which could later be diverted to political dimensions were the reasons for the student union to focus on cafeteria and other service related issues. On top of that, as indicated earlier, problems in student cafeteria, dormitory, water service, football games or other related gatherings were identified by the command post as potential causes for students strikes. From this it is possible to understand that students were actively participating in administrative areas like food and cafeteria committee,
sport and recreation committee, room checking committee, not only due to their own preference and openness of universities management but also due to a direction from external political body-command post. It is also possible to guess that the demand to protect the replicable effect of students strikes across universities of the country; the political implication on the country’s stability related to the state of emergency; the possible personal cost to the post of top level university officials and the focus of the command post (the government) in securing peaceful learning university environment might have resulted in active participation of students in administrative areas of universities.

**Student Participation in Disciplinary Matters**

One of the administrative areas which is clearly described in HEP No. 650/2009, and universities legislation (e.g., AMU, 2013; MEKU, 2012, WELDU, 2012), as reflected in the works of many scholars (e.g., Mati et al. 2016; Olatunji, 2014), is the rights of students to participate in the decision making process of disciplinary matters. In light of that, interview and FGD participants were asked about the extent of students’ participation in disciplinary matters. The responses of all subjects were affirmative. A dean of students from one of the first-generation universities, for example, said:

Disciplinary hearings of student cases are conducted by committees established for this purpose at campus level by the office of the dean of students. Students’ disciplinary committee includes the dean of students or any other person delegated by administrative vice president who works as a chairperson of the committee, one academic staff member, two student representatives from the student union, one female student, one representative from physically impaired students, representative from campus police as well as a proctor appointed by the dean of students. Students account almost half of the
composition of the committee. Accordingly, students’ cases are not seen without students’ presence. In a situation where decisions are made by direct voting, when it is difficult to arrive at consensus, student representatives have equal rights like that of any other members and have the right to vote in favor of the decision or against or to remain abstain.

The remarks above show that students, as stated in the legislation of universities, are meaningfully represented in discipline committee of students and have equal right like that of other members in making final decisions. In favor of these remarks, one FGD participant from second generation universities reported that student disciplinary cases take the procedure of the formal court system where the student union assigns students from law faculty as a member of the committee. He indicated that any disciplinary case of a student is initiated either by the department or any member of the university and made in writing including the name of the accused, particulars of the offense, the time and place of the offense, list of the evidence, and violated provisions of conduct. He added:

The committee gives the accused an opportunity to defend by all legitimate means. The committee informs the accused about the contents of the case in writing. The accused may reply in writing with the attachment of all the necessary evidence. Once this is accomplished, the disciplinary committee starts hearing and investigating the case based on the evidence produced by the parties. Moreover, the committee has the authority to get access to any relevant documents and to call any person who might be needed for investigation.

Another FGD participant expressed that after passing all that stages, the committee made a recommendation to the department head or to the college dean or to dean of students to
put their final decisions as per the regulation of the university. According to the information gathered from other FGD participants, a student aggrieved by the decision of the department head or the college dean or dean of students has the right to appeal up to the president in which case his/her decision would be final and binding.

The quantitative data gathered from subjects and presented in Table 4.2.4 supported the trends identified from the qualitative data.

Table 4.2.4:
Student Participation in Disciplinary Matters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Chi-Square Value(d.f)</th>
<th>P-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Academic leader (AL)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Respondents Students Representatives (SR)</td>
<td>Chi-Square Value(d.f)</td>
<td>P-value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never at all</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Almost always</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>75.8</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. p<0.05

As shown in Table 4.2.4, more than 75% of academic leaders and 70% of student representatives responded that students have “almost always” participated in disciplinary matters of students. The opinion of the participants on students’ participation in disciplinary matters implied statistically significant association at $\chi^2 (6, n=129) = 20.74 \ p = 0.001$ (see Table 4.2.4).

From these data, it is possible to understand that students were meaningfully represented and participated in discipline committee of students as per the legal provisions made by universities.

Students’ Participation in Instructors’ Performance Evaluation
Participation in university governance could be either directly where all students of the university take part or indirectly through their elected representatives (Michelsen & Stensaker, 2011; Quick & Bryson, 2016). Students’ participation in instructors’ performance evaluation is, therefore, one of the administrative area and a direct form of participation in university governance which is recognized by higher education proclamation of Ethiopia (FDRE, 2009) and also by the legislations of universities (e.g., AXU, 2015; WELU, 2014; WOLU, 2015). According to the legislations of universities, effectiveness in teaching of an academic staff is measured by his students at the end of each semester which accounts for fifty percent of the total evaluation result (e.g., AMBU 2013; WELDU, 2012; MEKU, 2102) with the purpose of providing feedback to faculty members to improve their teaching practices (Michelsen & Stensaker, 2011). Taking this into account, I asked interview and FGD participants about the status of students’ participation in instructors’ performance evaluation. The responses indicated that students, across all universities, were practicing it in accordance with the rights stipulated in the legislation. In meeting its purpose, however, all participants were doubtful for a problem related to the process of administering it as well as in using it by instructors. Here is what academic vice president of one university had to say on the issue:

As clearly spelt out in the legislation [of our university], we have a comprehensive checklist arranged in a Likert scale to be filled by students and measure the overall performance of an instructor. The items include issues that an instructor is expected to carry out throughout the semester. Assessment conducted by students account fifty percent of an instructors’ evaluation result. Accordingly, every instructor at the end of the semester is evaluated by his students. Students’ participation in evaluating the performance of an instructor is almost a culture-no doubt. The question is the extent to
which we use the feedback given by students. To comment on this, of course it needs further study, but just to reflect my own personal feelings, although there are some, I can say it is not meeting its purpose at large beyond putting it in numbers.

As a follow-up question, I asked the academic vice president to further look into his views on how it fails to meet its objectives. He responded that the purpose of instructors’ performance evaluation is to get feedback from students and therefore to improve the teaching – learning process. First of all, “I doubt the fairness of students in evaluating instructors and providing critical comments”. Secondly, he added “instructors are not as such serious about it, this is my view, as I said, it needs further investigation, but I am still skeptical about meeting its purpose”. These statements indicated that students were exercising the rights to evaluate the performance of instructors. The problem, however, was the fairness of the assessment and in using the feedback given by students to improve the performance of instructors. Here are similar remarks made by another academic vice president:

Students’ performance evaluation is regularly conducted at the end of the semester and every student participates in rating their instructors against statements listed in the evaluation checklist. The evaluation is administered by department heads in the absence of the instructors to be evaluated. Due to this, students are free to rate their instructors based on their judgments. Once the evaluation form is filled in, the department heads summarizes the result as well as the comments made by students in the open ended items and lets the instructor know. This is a common practice actually but still there are problems. First of all, I doubt the fairness of students in rating their instructors. And secondly, I don’t think all department heads do it on time and let all instructors get the
feedback. Honestly speaking, the other thing is, instructors don’t ask about it unless they need it for promotion.

As stated in the HEP as well as in the legislations of universities, students participate in evaluating instructors’ performance. However, subjects indicated that there were problems in the process particularly in the fairness of the evaluation made by students and also in the attitude of instructors to take the feedback positively. Three FGD participants of students’ union standing committee members, from first generation universities, for example, stated that students do fill in the performance evaluation of instructors, but in most cases they do not do it fairly. It was indicted that they consider two things: the generosity of the instructor in giving grades; in other words, students tend to penalize hard graders and reward “generous” graders. They also consider the possibility of the instructor to give them courses in subsequent semesters. “Irrespective of the instructor’s ability in delivering the subject matter, course coverage, availability in class and the like,” confesses a female student, “we simply focus on the relationship he/she has with us and the likely of giving high grades to students” (Rahel, FGD 2). Another participant also noted, “if the instructor has smooth relationship, is not strict with students, is not serious in administering examinations and generous in giving grades, he/she is likely to gets high performance evaluation result” (Gebru, FGD 2). The opposite was true if the instructor is strict with misbehaving students, serious in marking and who directly put what students have scored, serious in taking attendance and the like. Explaining how the purpose of performance evaluation is defeated, one participant further underlies, “In most cases students are not aware of the purpose of the evaluation itself. Moreover, there are times where students are directed to fill in performance evaluation of instructors while we are in exam hall (Goitom, FDG-2).
In support of the above view, one of the deans of students from third generation universities in his interview reflected that in most cases students don’t read the criteria listed in the instructors’ performance evaluation checklist and don’t consider the instructors’ ability in delivering the subject matter but his behavior. If students like the instructor, they simply give him/her high results. In contrast, they give lower points behaves otherwise. Students usually consider the grade that the instructor submits. Along that line, a dean of students from a second-generation university said, “From my observation as an instructor, in most cases students do not make a fair judgment. Instructors who are serious in giving courses as well as in grading are victims of performance evaluation made by students”. He added “I am not confident to say performance evaluation made by students have met its objectives in terms of providing truthful feedback to instructors which would be helpful in improving his/her teaching effectiveness”. The quantitative result also showed similar result.

Table 4.2.5: Students Participation in Evaluating Instructors Performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students evaluate instructors performance at the end of the semester</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Academic leaders (AL)</th>
<th>Students Representatives (SR)</th>
<th>Chi-Square value(d.f)</th>
<th>P-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scale</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. disagree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>36.62(25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.99</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>63.34</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. agree</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>56.6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23.34</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEIP helped to improve instructors performance</td>
<td>St. disagree</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>26.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>62.7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>40.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>St. agree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. p<0.05.

As can be shown from the data in Table 4.2.5., majority of the academic leaders (87%) and more than 86% of student representatives agreed that students used to evaluate instructors
performance at the end of the semester. But they didn’t agree on the contribution of students’ performance evaluation in improving the instructors teaching performances as responded by 85.9% of academic leaders and 66.6% of student representatives. The opinion observed among the groups on students evaluation of instructors’ performance and in improving his/her performance showed statistically significant association at $\chi^2 (25, n =129) = 36.62 \ p = 0.013$ and $\chi^2 (8, n =129) = 40.73 \ p = <.001$ levels respectively (see Table 4.5).

The participants indicated that students practically used their right in evaluating the performance of instructors. However, students were reported to be unfair in the way they do the practice due to lack of attention to the criteria, being grade oriented than considering the actual performance of the instructors and also the possibility of the instructors to give them courses sometime in the future. Although students were exercising the rights given to participate in performance evaluation of instructors, on the bases of the statements given by subjects, it is unlikely that students’ evaluation has contributed to improve the teaching effectiveness of instructors, which was the primary objective.

**Participation in Planning and Evaluation of Overall University Performance**

Students are given the right to be represented in university council which is responsible to advise the president in many areas including institutional proposals regarding plans and university performances (FDRE, 2009). A number of scholars (e.g., Boland, 2005; Cardoso & Machado, 2011) also advocate that students participation in planning and evaluation of overall university performances. Participants of interviews and FGDs were thus asked to reflect on the status of students’ participation in planning and evaluation of overall university performance. By and large, their responses revealed that students’ participation was limited to providing feedback about the plan and comments on university performance. The responses of the dean of students
in one of the second generation universities could be representative of the responses of others. Here is what he said during interview starting from where the planning process starts:

Plan and Institutional Change Directorate of the university identifies the strategic pillars usually adopted from Ministry of Education. These pillars are formally sent to colleges and other offices of administrative wing. Colleges do the same to departments to develop their strategic plan according to the pillars sent from the directorate office. It is usually department heads who develop and send back to the colleges. The colleges then combine what has come from departments and send them to academic vice president office. The plans of all colleges plus the office of academic vice president are merged together by a committee, usually members from college deans, and it is sent to Plan and Institutional Change Directorate. The plans developed by all other offices are combined together and become a strategic plan of the university. Although it is a bottom up system, leave alone students I don’t think academic staffs have a say in this process due to lack of attention on importance of participation. The same procedure is true in preparing annual plan. But beginning from the last three or four years, there is public discussion in different agendas including the plan and performance report of the university. In which case, academic staffs, administrative staffs and also students made their comments and provide feedback for improvements to be made (emphasis added).

FGD participants concur. One FGD participant from first generation universities had, for example, the following to say. “At the beginning of every academic year, university management organizes a five to six day meetings to discuss on different agendas of which the plan of the university and annual performance report of the university are among them” (Toloma, FGD-4). It is reported that students without frustration commented on the plan and also on the performance
The above responses disclose that students directly take part in the planning and evaluation of university performances through provision of comments and feedback after the whole planning process was completed. It was also identified that students do provide what they felt is appropriate and universities were observed in using it in making decision to improve their plans as well as their performances.

**Informal Participation of Students in University Governance**

Scholars record that student participation in university governance is not only limited to the formal form of participation which is representation on formally created structures but also through informal form of participation which is as effective as that of formal participation (Das, 2014; Honingh & Hooge, 2014). Through informal participation, student union leaders advocate and influence the interests of students through frequent interactions and negotiations with university administrators at different level inside or outside of their office (Bégin & Jones, 2014). It is a means for the management to make decisions which considers the needs and interest of students (Betty & Jematia, 2011; Das, 2014). Taking this into account, I asked participants of interview and FGDs about informal participation of students in university governance. The responses of seven dean of students, seven student union presidents during their interview and almost majority of FGD participants of student union executive committee members indicated that, the level of informal participation of students in university governance is found to be high at the top level but tends to decline as we go down to lower tier of the university.
administrative structure. Here is what a dean of students from one of the second generation universities said:

The student union and their leaders are really our right hands and our relation is like that of equals. They contribute for having peaceful learning environment. They control the services provided by the university and protect any sort of student movements. To this end, they work day and night. If a problem occurs, they immediately take their own measure and report to us. Because of that, we feel provision of open door policy is not a choice but a must. We consider them as unpaid partners of the management. They are doing a tough administrative work. So without waiting for formal meetings, they can come to our offices any time even before or after working hours or they can make a call at any time even at night. The management is willing to listen to their cases, usually the cases are more of service related which needs immediate actions. On the bases of the information obtained from students’ representatives, the management discusses on the issues and passes decisions. So our relation is not limited to formal arrangements but also includes that of informal way.

From the above remarks it is possible to understand that student representatives were considered as unpaid but full time workers who were welcomed by the management at any time and place for their valuable contributions. It was also seen that most of the cases submitted to the decisions of the management were more of service related information which need immediate reactions.

One of students’ union presidents from one of the second- generation universities reported the existence of a parental type of relationship between the student union and the
management particularly that of the top level. Due to this, the management exercises an open door policy. According to him, if student union leaders go to the office of the president without having a pre-informed formal appointment, without waiting like that of any other gusts. At times, they are given precedence over academic staff waiting for their turn to enter the President’s office. Another student union president reported that in most cases, the issues presented to the management were urgent and sensitive in nature such as security, issues related to cafeteria and the like. He said, “We can also call any time even at the mid of the night and there were times for the president to come to campus at the mid of the night”. Frankly speaking, he continued, “the informal participation outweighs the formal type. However, such informal participation in which the union influences the decision of the management is not all the same with the offices of vice presidents, deans and department heads”.

Student union standing committee members from second and third generation universities revealed similar views during FGDs. Participants are of the opinion that informal participation of students outweighs formal type of participation and it was most frequently applicable at the top level of university management than the lower levels. Here are their words:

Tamtew: Student union representatives have frequent informal participation on the decisions made by top level management than the formal one. If not exaggerated, I can say there is a possibility to meet the president on daily basis. If we go down the structure starting from offices of vice presidents to deans and department heads, there are offices in which entering a heaven would be easier than their office (FGD-4)

Tilahun: The University president has adequate awareness about the role of student unions and considers us a partner of the management. I think, beyond their personal behavior to open their office to the union, his participation in national workshops
organized by federal ministry of education and in the national forum of public institutions where universities share their experience, have also contributed to have an open door policy. By the way, at every national forum of public institutions, two student union representatives, the president and the vice president of the union also participate. When we see the case at college and department level, leave alone to have frequent contact with them and informally influence their decisions, the union is considered as a political organization and individuals are considered as fault finders and ‘ears’ of the ruling party. (FGD-5)

The statements made by subjects revealed that students’ informal participation in university governance outweighs the formal level of participation. The informal relation between top management and top student union leaders is viewed as very close. The top-level management of universities consider the unions as partners which might be due to their clear awareness about the roles of student unions resulting from their participation in national workshops and forum of public institutions. It is also possible to guess that the close relation between university top management and student union leaders might have resulted from the contribution of the union in handling students to have peaceful learning environment which in turn favor presidents to stay in their positions. In clear terms, informal participation of student unions might personally benefit higher university officials in addition to the institution and larger student population. As a result, student union of universities had the opportunity to informally influence the decisions made by the management and negotiate in different issues. Down the structure of universities, however, the status of informal participation of students in governance was inadequate. Moreover, the student union was not positively perceived as a partner but as
fault finders and ‘ears’ of the ruling party which might have resulted from lack of clear awareness about the rights and role of student unions.

**Effectiveness of Student Unions in Carrying out Their Roles and Responsibilities**

As per the senate legislations of different universities (e.g., AAU, 2013; AMU, 2013; AXU, 2015; MEKU, 2012; WELKU, 2013; WELDU, 2012; WOLU, 2015) and constitutions of student unions (e.g., AAU, 2015; AXU, 2016, MEKU, 2015; WOLU, 2015), student unions are organized purposefully with clearly stipulated roles to benefit the student body, the institution and the society at large. Taking this into account, I asked participants of the study, to respond to questions which were set on the effectiveness of student unions in carrying out their roles and responsibilities. On the bases of the interview held with seven of academic vice presidents, seven deans of students, seven student union presidents, and majority of FGD participants of student union executive committee members, the findings were mixed. Positive trends were observed in areas of representing the students in the university governance and serving as a bridge and in promotion welfare of students. There was a mixed outcome in supplementing university curricula through co-curricular and club activities.

However, the finding was insignificant in carrying out their roles and responsibilities in promoting academic excellence, research, intellectual culture of tolerance to diverse opinions; in encouraging debates on public issues in varied forms including discussions and publications. Same negative results were also found in supplementing university curricula through panel discussions, debates, seminars, among members of the university community and the society at large; and in promoting mutual respect, understanding, tolerance and co-operation among university students, and other members of university community.
The excerpt of interviews and FGD participants and that of quantitative data collected from students, presented here under, shows what was indicated. Hence, the subthemes under roles and responsibilities of student unions that include representing students in the university governance and serving as a bridge; promoting welfare of students; supplementing university curricula through co-curricular and club activities; promoting academic excellence, research, intellectual culture of tolerance; encouraging debates on public issues through discussions and publications; and supplementing university curricula through panel discussions, debates, seminars, to promote mutual respect, understanding, and tolerance are discussed hereunder.

**Representing Students in the University Governance and Serving as a Bridge**

Interviews held with academic vice presidents, deans of students and student union presidents and also FGD participants indicated that the student unions were not only representing students but also serving as a bridge between the management and the student body. The actual words used by student union president from second generation universities holding these views are more expressive:

The student union is a formally elected organization which is recognized by university management as a legal representative body of students. Due to this, the union, on behalf of students, attends different meetings and makes decision on different issues. Accordingly, the union representing students participate in the senate, in ad-hoc committees and other arrangements. For instance, the union is a member of student service committee led by the dean of students. In that committee, there are students who reflect the stand of students. Moreover, we participate in national public universities forum representing the students of the university. In whatever meetings the union participates, it reflects the needs, interests and challenges of the general student body. In
addition to formal representation in committees and other arrangements, the union informally meets with the management to present questions of students which might be related to education or service, and also takes back the reactions/decisions of the management to the student body.

Another student union president from one of the third generation universities disclosed that the student union does not merely present the problem of the students to the management but it always proposed possible actions and solutions to be taken. “This action of the union”, he added “has helped the management in two ways: in saving their time and in making rational decisions as well”. By so doing, the student unions not only represent students in different occasions but it also serves as a bridge to have smooth flow of information, peaceful and healthy relationship between the management and the student body. The quantitative data obtained from students was also in agreement to the above excerpt made by student union president.

Table 4.2.6:
Representation of Students in the University Governance and Serving as a Bridge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>26.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>355</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Survey participant students were asked to rate their observation on role of student union in representing students at different level of university governance and serve as a bridge between the student body and university management. The response of majority of the students,
86.2%, (M= 4.1 ; SD=1.2) was found to be positive (see Table 4.2.6). This might have resulted from the commitment of student representatives, encouragement made by the management and the smooth relationship developed between them. In sum, the above discussion showed that, unlike whether parliamentary or presidential system used to organize, the student union was serving as representative of the student body as well as a bridge between the management and the student population.

*Promoting the Welfare of Students*

The outcome of both qualitative and quantitative data showed that the student union executive committee and sub-committees organized under the head of each executive committee were strongly serving for the welfare of students. In compliance with this, FGD participant of executive committee member from one of the first generation universities notes:

Alemu: Among many activities expected from the union, we are working on cafeteria, dormitory, health, recreation opportunities, access and adequacy of water service, sanitations of toilets, interruptions of electric power and the like. The union, for example, controls and check the quality and quantity of food items to ensure that the service are delivered as per the agreement made with the contractor. Whenever water and electric power is interrupted, we do not simply report to the management and concerned individual and sit idle, but we follow it up until it is resolved. Whenever the union receives complaints about grading, harassment and the like, we directly contact the instructor and try to solve the problem or report the cases to top management. Plus, most of executive committee members of the union spend the long summer vacation in the university to work with the management in making preparations for the upcoming
academic year. In doing all these tasks, we are making a sacrifice in time and energy, and we are doing it consciously for the welfare of students. (FGD-1)

One FDG participant from second generation universities reported that the student union worked in collaboration with the management with the aim of delivering better cafeteria, water, recreation and other related services being cognizant that a failure to do so could result in damaging student turmoil. Such instances were believed to be costly to both the student body at large as well as to the university. The other participant of the FGD disclosed, “Whenever there is a sort of student movement motivated by politics, religion, ethnic issue, or due to dissatisfaction on the service being offered, as long as we are within the student body, we easily get the information and immediately report to campus police, to the management and to the command post” (Tomas, FGD-6). By so doing, the union in collaboration with the university administration managed it without any sort of distraction. The union president further noted that they do these things not because “we are a spy of the management or that of the government, but we do it to protect the students and the university from unpredicted damage”. All these efforts made by the unions “beyond protecting the welfare of students has significantly contributed to have uninterrupted academic schedule of the university. Due to this, students are graduating as per the schedule of the university”. (Lakew, FGD-3)

Students who participated in the survey also positively recognize the efforts made by the student unions to carry out their role related to the welfare of students.
Table 4.2.7:

Promoting the Welfare of Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>56.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>34.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>355</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As indicated in Table 4.2.7., a great majority of survey participants, 90.5%, (M= 4.13; SD=1.3) agreed on the efforts made by student union in realizing their role in promoting the welfare of students. This implies the extent to which student unions were working on student services and other administrative matters. In sum, both qualitative and quantitative data showed similar responses from participants. As representative of students, the student union works in providing adequate cafeteria, dormitory, health services as well as recreation opportunities. Student union also work in securing access and adequacy of water service, sanitations of toilets, tackling interruptions of electric power and the like. Moreover, it works in protecting the security and wellbeing of students. These have helped students to attend class without interruption and graduate as per the schedule of universities. Taking this in to consideration, it is possible to believe that student unions have adequately promoted the overall welfare of the student population.

Supplementing University Curricula Through Co-curricular and Club Activities

Supplementing university curricula through co-curricular and club activities is also among the roles of student unions as shown in the legislations of universities in Ethiopia (e.g., AAU, 2013; AMU, 2013; AXU, 2015). Scholars (e.g., Dela & Kobina, 2014; Pia & Kasilly,
2015) showed that for their very nature in running co-curricular activities and clubs, students representation is also important. In addition to its academic benefits, students’ participation in co-curricular activities promotes students’ dedication to civic participation and volunteer services after graduation (Kahne & Sporte, 2008). In line with that idea, participants of the study indicated the existence of student representation in running and as members of co-curricular activities and clubs. However, with regard to supplementing university curricula, participants had mixed views. A dean of students from one of the second generation universities indicated that there are co-curricular and club activities which are fully run by students or in collaboration with instructors as committee members. Among many of co-curricular and club activities organized in the university, gender club, anti-HIV/AIDS club, ethics and anti-corruption club, anti-drug and addiction club, peace and security club could be taken as an example. Beyond the members of each clubs, he said, students at large are also benefiting from the programs organized by these clubs. He added:

Most of the clubs, however, are NGO driven clubs. Students have an interest to be the head or to be committee member of these clubs. You know, getting such a support is good in implementing club activities, but I still worry about its’ long term effect. You see, at the end of the day, it may lead students to develop a sense of dependency and also a bad lesson related to abusing resources, which is terrible. If financial support of these donor organizations stops, they will no longer function. You see, the clubs and co-curricular activities are not organized in the areas where students could do without any attachment to NGOs. For instance, drama club, sport and athletics club, debate club, literature club, panel discussion club, and the like could be run by the students without the support of any external funding agency. Above all, such clubs could help students
exploit their talent, excel at their academic work, and thereby enhance their job prospects. My worry is, in the name of running clubs, we are letting students to develop unaccepted behavior related to making money. With all these limitations, an attempt is there in supplementing the curriculum of the university.

Similarly, FGDs participants from different universities also reflected their involvement in different co-curricular activities and clubs supported by NGOs. FGD participant from third generation universities reported that there were about twenty five clubs in the university out of which it was only a few of them which were functioning through financial and material support obtained from different NGOS. For instance “gender club, anti-HIV/AIDS club, ethics and anti corruption club, anti-drug and addiction clubs are the most functional due to their attachment with NGO which provide financial and other material resources” (Neberga, FGD -7). It was also disclosed that there is an office under the dean of students staffed with four officers who are responsible for controlling and supporting the overall activities of the clubs. Students who participate in the survey were asked about the role of student unions in supplementing university curricula through co-curricular and club activities. Their response was slightly positive.

Table 4.2. 8.

Supplementing University Curricula Through Co-curricular Activities and Clubs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>Students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>3.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>355</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.2.8., revealed the frequency and percentage for participants’ typical responses on the role of student union in supplementing university curricula through co-curricular and club activities. 185 (52.1%) student participants responded “agree” and “strongly agree” while a considerable size of respondents (23.3%) responded “undecided” and 24.4% “disagree” and “strongly disagree”. The data showed slightly a positive response but still significant size of subjects were not satisfied with the effort of student unions role in supplementing university curricula through co-curricular and clubs activities. This might be due to the limitations of the student unions to work mainly on NGOs driven co-curricular and club activities but ignoring what they could do without external support.

As the whole, the above discussion showed that with the aim of supplementing the curriculum being offered in class, there were co-curricular activities and clubs run by student union and instructors jointly which was similar to the finding of Kahne & Sporte (2008). Among the clubs and co-curricular activities, common in most of the universities were gender club, anti-HIV/AIDS club, ethics and anti-corruption club, anti-drug and addiction club, Red-Cross club, peace and security club. As stated by subjects, most of them were strongly attached and function by the support of NGOs. If the external sources should cut the financial support for some reasons, it is most likely that the clubs would perish. This indicated that most of the clubs were strongly dependent of external financial sources. Although the support obtained enabled students in implementing club activities, it has a negative effect in which students may develop sense of dependency and a terrible lesson in abusing resources. On the other hand, co-curricular activities and clubs which were not costly, which were in the hand of students, and which could significantly contribute in supporting the curriculum being offered, did not get due attention. Above all, those co-curricular activities and clubs which could help students in exploiting their
talent, excel their academic work, and thereby enhance their job prospects were not taken seriously. It was also identified that due to financial constraints co-curricular activities and clubs were not uniformly operational in universities. Although not uniform, it was possible to understand that the attempt to support the curriculum of universities through co-curricular activities and clubs was put in place in universities. Moreover, students were active participants in running co-curricular activities and clubs.

Promoting Academic Excellence, Research, Intellectual Culture of Tolerance

Student unions have a responsibility in promoting academic excellence, research and intellectual culture of tolerance. Subjects were asked to reflect on this issue. The responses, however, revealed that there were no meaningful achievements made by student unions in promoting academic excellence, research and intellectual culture of tolerance. A student union president from one of the third-generation universities made this observation:

I don’t think we are really doing to the level of expectations. Our union’s major focus and what we consider as our main role is fulfilling and satisfying the day to day demand of student’s like cafeteria, recreation, water service and the like. In spite of our efforts, we still didn’t satisfy them. When a sort of students’ problem is addressed, unluckily enough, another problem surfaces. Due to this, we are like that of fire fighters that simply focus on addressing immediate problems. You know why? We do not have time! Really we do not have the time to think about academic excellence and research. Although organized action is not done so far in creating the culture of tolerance, we are doing our best to protect the campus from any sort of violence..

By the same token, another student union FGD participant reported that the union was too busy addressing administrative problem of students. With this limitation, however, the union
worked in collaboration with gender office, by way of rewarding high achiever female students. Another FGD participant, after admitting the weakness of the union in promoting academic excellence, research and intellectual culture of tolerance, indicated the attempt of the student union in providing tutorial support to female students. In agreement with student union representatives, deans of students and academic vice presidents had a similar view. They indicated that due to the and sensitivity of administrative problems, student unions do not give due attention to academic excellence, research and intellectual culture of tolerance. Students who participated in the survey also showed the limitation of student unions in implementing its role in promoting academic excellence, research, intellectual culture of tolerance. The following table depicts this.

Table 4.2.9:
Promoting Academic Excellence, Research, Intellectual Culture of Tolerance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>22.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>58.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>355</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Survey participants were asked to reflect their observation on the role of student union in promoting academic excellence, research, and intellectual culture of tolerance. The response of majority of student participants, 81.5%, (M= 1.89; SD=1.2) on the issue was found to be “disagree” and “strongly disagree” (see Table 4.2.9). This implies that the contribution of student
unions in promoting academic excellence, research, intellectual culture of tolerance, which is the major missions of universities, was insignificant.

The responses presented above revealed that, student unions priority was addressing the administrative problems of students of and the unions were totally engaged in working on when they occur. This has taken the time of student representatives and leaving no time for action to promote academic excellence, research and intellectual culture of tolerance. On the basis of this data, it is possible to understand that student unions were absorbed by activities and administrative problems which have shorter term effects. On the other hand, student unions’ roles and responsibilities such as promoting academic excellence, research and intellectual culture of tolerance, that have a long term effect on the overall achievements of students, did not get due attention. From the data, it is made clear that student union leaders do not seriously engaged in more major issues like curricula and academic such as peer tutoring, peer counseling, research, raising societal concerns due to time factor. It seems, however, a pretext. Actually, taking into account the responses of subjects, student unions may have intentionally focused on student service related activities in order to protect student mobs and to maintain a peaceful teaching learning environment.

**Encouraging Debates on Public Issues through Discussions and Publications**

One among many of the role of student unions was to encourage debates on public issues in varied forms including discussions and publications (AAU, 2013; WELDU, 2012; WELKU, 2014; WOLU, 2015). Similar to their limitation in promoting academic excellence and research, student unions were not active enough in encouraging debates in general public issues like social, economic, and political issues be it in the form of discussions or publications. This was
due to the recent state of emergency declared in the country. A remark made by student union president from one of the second generation universities is more elaborative:

Due to the state of emergency declared in the country, leave alone to organize debates on different public issues, it is not possible to call any gatherings even to discuss on students administrative problems. To be frank, even before the declaration of state of emergency in the country, we do not have the culture of organizing debates on economic, social, or political issues of the society at large. Our focus was not on such critical problem of the public, but addressing administrative problems of students to protect any kind of student protests. As a student of higher education institution and representative of student union, we need to have the courage to do it but we haven’t done that.

In agreement with the above remarks, a student union president from one of the first-generation universities noted that the student union lacked the tradition of organizing debates on public issues. The state of emergency, which prohibit any sort of public gatherings, was the other reason he indicated. With regard to encouraging public debates through publications, it was found that “leave alone a publication media to promote debates on public issues, the student union do not have even a periodic leaflets to publicize the achievements of the union” (Hassen, FGD-7). The response of students who participate in the survey indicated similar result.
Table 4.2.10:

Encouraging Debates on Public Issues through Discussions and Publications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>61.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>355</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The item in Table 4.2.10., measuring the role of student unions in encouraging debates on public issues through discussions and publications showed negative responses of participants. The majority of students, 86.2%, (M= 1.95; SD=1.1) rated “disagree” and “strongly disagree” showing the limitations of student unions in promoting public debates on issues either through discussions or publications or in both.

On their own admission, student leaders consider themselves as guardians of the country’s future, and they feel higher education students are supposed to make their contribution for their countries development and strive to examine the diverse social, economic and political issues of the county. One of the contributions was through organizing debates on various issues of the country for university community and others through discussions and publications. The reality, however, revealed that student unions failed to carry out such a significant role. The major reasons given for their failure to carry out this role were the prohibition made by the state of emergency. However, before the declaration of the state of emergency, the finding showed that student unions lacked both the practice and the tradition of engaging in such serious issues.
Moreover, the state of emergency doesn’t prohibit academic debates in higher education institutions, being in a hall. The justification given by student unions seems mere a pretext.

**Organizing Panel Discussions, Debates, and Seminars to Promote Mutual Respect, and Tolerance**

The other issue posed to subjects of the study was about the role of student union in supplementing university curricula by promoting activities as panel discussions, debates, seminars, among members of university community and the society at large (AMBU, 2103; AXU, 2015; MEKU, 2012). The responses of subjects illustrated that student unions of sample universities did not have the culture of organizing panel discussions, debates, and seminars, not only with purpose of supplementing the curriculum being offered by universities but also to create a conducive learning environment for university community and the society at large. An academic vice president from one of the second-generation universities interviewed pointed out that as higher education institution, there should be a learning session to all member of university community and also to the society at large. For students, he said, in addition to the courses offered in class, mechanisms should be in place to learn from others and broaden their sphere of knowledge. He added,

Public debates, panel discussion, and seminars on different topics organized on certain schedule are some of the approaches to be held in universities. Student unions, in this regard, are expected to play a leading role. In a university, which is home of intellectuals of various fields and outlook, it is not as such a challenge for student unions to organize such educative sessions. It is also possible to invite people outside of the university, if needed and make a lecture, make a debate or discuss on social, political, and economic issues of the country. Quality of education, for example, could be a topic of discussion. It
is by engaging students in such debates that student unions make national contributions. Above all, it is through such arrangements that the student union plays a key role in promoting mutual respect, understanding, tolerance and co-operation among university students, and other members of the university community. As a mini Ethiopia, where students come from different nations, nationalities, different languages, and cultures, arrangements of public debates, panel discussion, and seminars contributes in handling such diversity. It is thinking of such contributions that universities in their legislations stated it as one of student union roles and responsibilities.

He disclosed that he has been in that position for the last three years, and he hasn’t seen such programs organized by the student union of the university; nor does he remember a request made by the student union to the management to organize public debates, panel discussions, or seminars.

Beyond celebrating nations and nationalities day annually, student union leaders admitted their limitations in organizing public debates and panel discussions which have an effect in promoting mutual respect, understanding, and tolerance among student body and university community. In agreement with what has been stated above, a dean of students in one of the second generation universities gave two reasons for the failure of student union in organizing panel discussions, debates, and seminars to supplement university curricula. “The first and the major one is the institution itself is not an example to student unions in organizing panel discussions, debates, seminars and the like”. He added, “We don’t enforce student unions leaders to this direction as we do on administrative tasks such as cafeteria, dormitory and other related services”. It was also reported that students’ unions interest in organizing such educative session is extremely low. Senior students who participated in the survey had similar views.
Table 4.2.11:

Supplementing University Curricula through Panel Discussions, Debates, Seminars, to Promote Mutual Respect, Understanding, and Tolerance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>355</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The vast majority of survey participant students, 94.6%, (M= 1.73; SD=1.4) confirmed their disagreement that student unions don’t address the role related to supplementing university curricula through panel discussions, debates, and seminars so as to promote mutual respect, understanding, and tolerance among university community (see Table 4.2.11).

The statements made above illustrated that student unions were not exercising one of its roles which should have been accomplished so as to supplement university curricula by promoting activities such as panel discussions, debates, seminars, among members of the university community and the society at large. Moreover, there were no adequate efforts in promoting mutual respect, understanding, and tolerance among student body and university community. The most important reasons to avoid these roles were lack of role model on the part of the institution in organizing panel discussions, debates, seminars; lack of getting directions from the institution to concentrate on these roles; and lack of interest on the part of student unions to carry out these roles but giving priority to administrative roles of the union. Taking these shortcomings into account, it is possible to understand that student unions focus was on
roles which have an immediate need satisfaction than those roles which are educative and having a long-term impact on the life of students.

Overall, as per subjects response on the role of student unions, the focus of student unions were on roles related to fulfilling and satisfying the day to day demand of student’s. Due to this, those roles which have a long-term effect on students’ personality, on peace and to the society at large were not taken seriously.

Benefits of Students participation in University Governance

Benefits Universities Gained

Higher education proclamation of Ethiopia (FDRE, 2009) as well as universities in the country has incorporated articles in their senate legislations that describe the rights of students to participate in the governing body of universities. Universities have included these articles not only because of their commitment to address the right of students but also because they are cognizant of the benefits that universities gained from doing it. A number of scholars who worked on the area of students participation in university governance (e.g., Bukola et al., 2014; Honingh & Hooge, 2014; Salvioni et al, 2012) have also confirmed the benefit in their findings. Taking this into account, I asked subjects about the benefits that universities have gained as a result of participating students in university governance. Both qualitative and quantitative data showed that universities have benefited in many aspects particularly in carrying out its administrative tasks but it was insignificant in academic aspect. The excerpts from a dean of students in one of the second generation universities may be more informative:

The university has benefited a lot. It is the student who knows the real problem of the other student. They help us to get genuine, timely and complete information. Whenever a group of students have a plan to organize strike and disturb the campus, for example, the
university management will get complete information about the organizers, their list, and their motive immediately. So far, they haven’t brought you any wrong information. The information, thus, has helped the management to make rational decisions and control students’ strikes before creating any sort of destructions.

The above remark indicated that student union was serving as a source of timely information for the management. Likewise a dean of students from one of the first generation universities reported that participating students in university governance lessens the burden of the management and reduced administrative problems of students. Student representatives were in a position to handle any student related administrative problems in its’ initial stage. So the management had the time to think on major issues than routine administrative tasks. They were also responsible for any kind of cafeteria and other related service that the university offered. Furthermore, whenever conflict among groups or individuals arises, the unions handled it through peer mediation and controlled it before it took undesirable form. He added that “They also question and challenge the management which is an opportunity to see what we failed to consider before”.

The comment made above indicated that students are positively contributing to the university particularly in reducing administrative problems raised by students, in handling conflicts through peer mediation, and this gives time for the management to focus on strategic issues. In the same vein, one of the academic vice presidents from one of the second generation universities said:

Beginning from the last three or four years, there have been conferences which were held at the beginning of the academic year. The conferences were designed for academic staff,
supportive staff and students as well. Every year, at least two days, to the minimum, are allocated for presentation and discussions of the university plan of the new academic year, which was already approved by the board and sent to ministry of education, and performance report of the previous academic year. In this session, students critically comment the plan focusing on academic as well as administrative issues. With regard to performance report of the university, it is a hot debate where students objectively indicate our gaps and sometimes challenge the objectivity of the report as well. They critically comment on individual instructors, departments, faculties, adequacy of facilities, cafeteria and on other services and also about the management. Overall, students provide constructive feedbacks about the service being given by the university which have served as an input to the management in making rational decisions.

In addition to providing constructive feedbacks about the service being given by the university, which served as an input to the management in making rational decisions, students have also contributed in reducing the burden of the administration in terms of controlling the campus at night. A remark made by an academic vice president from third generation universities revealed that whenever problem occurs, student representatives exerted efforts to handle it. “They are always in the first line and face every administrative, political, religious or academic related questions raised by students” he said. In most cases it was at night, during the absence of the management, that students made some sort of mob to express their dissatisfaction. “Without exaggeration,” he said, “most administrative questions of students are handled by the students themselves”. They reported to the management when it was beyond their capacity to handle. The management, beyond accessing information and progress report from student representatives, administrative burden that the management was supposed to shoulder is taken by
students. Such a practice gave the management not only time to be engaged in strategic issues but also a relief from such a challenge. In line with this, a dean of students from one of the third-generation universities stated:

Most of the student union representatives are mature and had similar experience in secondary schools. Due to this, they are confident enough to reveal and inform the problem of the university. Furthermore, they speculate what would happen sometime in the future and alert us ahead of time. They have reduced our burden particularly related to students’ cafeteria. They prepare menu, control the implementation of the menu, they monitor it and the majority of the students trust their representatives. The university management as well as the command post has identified cafeteria service as an immediate cause of students’ riot. Therefore, such initiatives of the student union have assisted us to protect any kind of student strike around cafeteria, a place where students’ strikes usually begins.

A dean of students from one of the second generation universities added that as a result of active participation of students’ representatives in running students’ budget allocated for students’ service mainly to cafeteria has helped the management to be transparent and lessens students dissatisfaction in connection with the quality of service offered. He reported that participating student representatives in various administrative issues have facilitated the smooth running of activates and has improved acceptance and implementation of decision.

Unlike the benefits in many aspects of administrative areas, the contribution in academic areas, however, was inadequate. The statement made by the academic vice president from one of the second generation universities reflects this reality:
As a result of participating students in universality governance particularly through utilization of open door policy by the top management and that of informal participation of student union representatives, peaceful and secured learning environment is created. We have managed to avoid any sort of student protest motivated by political, religious or any kind of administrative reasons. Their contribution in the area of academic matter, however, is not adequate. You know why? From the very beginning, the focus student union on academic issue is extremely limited. To share my own practical experience, there was a meeting organized for all university community including people at different positions. Student union representatives were among the participants. More than ninety five percent of their questions were on food, food and food related matters. Their contribution on 1: 5 arrangement, feedback clubs, quality issues are minimal.

In agreement with what was reported, a dean of students’ from second generation universities reflected his experience using an example from a meeting organized by the university to discuss on ‘Tilk Tshedesso’ (deep renaissance). He reported that in the meeting of students, where student union leaders were the major actors, “the questions raised by student representatives, you don’t believe me, were about cafeteria and cafeteria related services”. Academic issues, which are the primary purpose for their presence in the university, didn’t get much attention” and their contribution in this regard was inadequate.

Acknowledging their limitation in making contribution in academic areas, a student union president from one of the first generation universities, put the blame on both the institution and on themselves. He reported that, they didn’t have room at college or at department level to have a say in academic areas and make contributions. On the other hand, he indicated that student representatives didn’t give due attention to academic issue and did not have time to do
so. And they were busy with problems related to student services such as ‘injera’ (Ethiopian traditional food made from ‘Teff’), ‘dabo’ (bread) and other administrative issues. The quantitative data has similar findings.

Table 4.2.12:
Benefits Universities Gained

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>AL</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>SR</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Chi-Square value (d.f)</th>
<th>P-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.12.1</td>
<td>Peace full learning environment created</td>
<td>St. disagree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>36.62(25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>68.9</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>53.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>St. agree</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>100.</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.12.2</td>
<td>Timely feedback is obtained</td>
<td>St. disagree</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>34.78(20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>61.5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>St. agree</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>100.</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.12.3</td>
<td>Transparency has developed</td>
<td>St. disagree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>29.54(15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>61.6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>St. agree</td>
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<td>19.1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>100.</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.12.4</td>
<td>Acceptance &amp; implementation of decisions has improved</td>
<td>St. disagree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>36.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>54.5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>St. agree</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>100.</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. p<0.05.
As shown in Table 4.2.12, the majority of academic leaders (84%), and over 66% of student representatives confirmed the existence of peaceful learning environment. The opinion observed among the groups on the existence of peaceful learning environment showed statistically significant association at \( \chi^2 (25, n =129) = 36.62 \ p = 0.033 \) (see Table 4.5). In the second item of same table, nearly 74% of academic leaders and 60% of student representatives showed that universities benefited in terms of getting timely feedback as a result of participating students in university governance. In the third item of same table, the majority of academic leaders (80%) and 16% of students’ representatives indicated that participating students in university governance helped universities to become transparent in its activities. The opinion observed among the groups on the contribution of students participation in university governance in helping universities to become transparent in its activities showed no statistically significant association at \( \chi^2 (15, n =129) = 29.54 \ p = 0.064 \) level. With regard to acceptance and implementation of decisions, 68% of academic leaders responded positively while 86% of student representatives showed their disagreement on the issue. This might be due to the exclusion of students from decision making at college and department academic commission levels. The responses of the participants at \( \chi^2 (15, n =129) = 24.43 \ p = 0.058 \) level showed no statistically significant association (See table 4.2.12).

In general, the findings revealed that, students’ participation in university governance have positively contributed in many of the administrative areas. First and for most, it has contributed in having peaceful learning environment. Due to this, students’ strikes which may happen for reasons related to politics, administrative problems, religion and the like appear to have been controlled.\(^2\)

\(^2\)When I was in the field for data collection, however, during my stay for weeks in two of the universities, I observed federal police overseeing the campuses, served in staff lounge and using lecture rooms as residential places. This causes to question about the reality and existence of long lasting peaceful learning environment in the universities.
Administrative burden of the management particularly in running student services has reduced. Due to this, the management got the time to focus on other strategic issues. The finding also revealed that students’ participation in planning and evaluating the performance of the university was a means to get feedbacks about the service being offered and served the management as an input in making decisions. The management was also capable of addressing students’ questions in an organized way. Transparency in procurement and administration of student service was also created and these have benefited universities in protecting students’ turmoil. Unlike the contribution made in administrative areas, the contribution of students’ participation in university governance in academic area was insignificant. It seemed that lack of attention and priority made by student union representatives and that of the management at different level were accountable for this inadequacy.

**Benefits of Larger Student Population and Individual Benefits of Student Representatives**

A number of scholars (e.g., Flowers, 2004; Foreman & Retallick, 2013; Lizzio, & Wilson, 2009; Menon, 2003; Mathebula, 2005; Planas et al., 2013) indicated that beyond benefiting universities, student union representatives and the larger student population benefits from participating in university governance. In this study, participants were asked about it. Both the qualitative as well as quantitative data showed that student union leaders and also the larger student body benefited from participating in university governance in the form of developing leadership skills, better student services and the like.

Here is what one of student union president from one of the second generation universities said:

Due to our participation in many of administrative areas like procurement of food items, controlling the items delivered to students cafeteria and checking the movements of
items in the place where it is cooked, students are getting better quality and quantity of cafeteria services as per the menu of the university. Moreover, students get better recreation opportunities like DSTV, and other essential service like dormitory and clinical services. Besides, students’ claims, particularly things related to administrative problems, get immediate solutions.

The above student union presidents indicated that the larger student population benefited from representation in university management particularly in the area of cafeteria service and recreation, and for their views to be considered by the management. However, despite all these efforts, the student union leaders felt that the student body is still unsatisfied. Students believed that they are not getting better cafeteria service as compared to the budget allocated for them. A student union president from one of the first generation universities said:

With regard to students’ right, no student is dismissed illegitimately and also protected from getting “F” grade unfairly. In addition, as a result of the state of emergency declared in the country, as a member of the command post, we have managed in protecting students from being taken to jail unlawfully. For instance, as a result of the revolt which breakout in 2015/2016 in the region, there were about three hundred twelve students who were taken by the federal /regional police from the campus. On the bases of negotiations and collaboration work we made with the command post, it was only seven students who were sent for three months ‘training’ (‘Tehadesso’). The remaining three hundred and five students, after they were given the necessary advice in a hall, have been released, and they are allowed to continue their studies.

FGD participant from the first generation universities also reported that through peer mediation arrangement of the union, which include students from faculty of law, “without the knowledge of campus police and discipline committee, about ninety six cases, which could penalize students for two years of dismissal as per student discipline regulation, were peacefully resolved”. Moreover, in collaboration between the student union and gender office, there were students from poor family background particularly female students, who got financial, stationary material and sanitary facilities support. Subjects response obtained from quantitative data also revealed similar result.
Table 4.2.13: Benefits of the Larger Student Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4.2.13.1. Students get better quality and quantity of cafeteria service as per the standard of the university</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scale</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>355</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4.2.13.2. Protect students right, freedom and security</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4.2.13.3. Get pre-entry information and orientation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4.2.13.4. Disciplinary cases follow legal procedures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4.2.13.5. Students get tutorial support organized by the SU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4.2.13.6. High achiever students are awarded by SU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The items in Table 4.2.13 showed that as a result of participating in university governance, the larger student population benefited in administrative areas but not in the case of academic areas. The majority of students, 93.8% (M= 4.22; SD=1.2) as shown on the first item of same table, agreed that students got better quality and quantity of cafeteria service as per the standard and menu of the university. Similarly, as displayed in the second item of the above table, 79.5% of respondents (M= 3.74; SD=1.9) indicated that as a result of participating in university governance, students’ right, freedom and security was protected. Likewise, as indicated in the third item of same table, more than 92% of respondents (M= 4.11; SD=1.4) indicated that students got pre-entry information and orientation about campus life and related matters. Correspondingly, 88 % of subjects indicated that disciplinary cases of students follow legal procedures and students were treated fairly as per the regulations of universities. Nevertheless, concerning the tutorial support organized by the student unions, 65.7% of the respondents (M= 2.14; SD=2.1) did not agree with the claim of the union. It was only 16 % of them who responded positively.

The last item of table 4.2.13.6 was about the awarding of high achiever students to encourage students and to promote competition among students. Accordingly, 69.2% of respondents (M= 2.08 ; SD=1.2) indicated their disagreement and it was only around 15% of them who respond “agree”. The responses given by subjects for six of the items revealed that the larger student population benefited mainly on administrative areas but not in the academic matters. This was similar to the findings of the qualitative data. This showed the inadequacy of efforts made by the student unions on academic areas compared to that of administrative areas.

The above discussion indicated that students’ participation in university governance benefited not only the institutions but also the larger student population. Hence, students’
questions and voice were submitted to the management and addressed timely. Besides, students’ rights particularly that of discipline cases were seen following the legal procedures. Based on the appeals made by the union, a number of students who were victims of wrong decisions became free from penalty and were allowed to continue their studies. The negotiations made with the command post were also successful. Above all, students’ questions and voices got the chance to be heard by university management in an organized way. In addition, there were also students particularly female students who got financial and material support. But this was not true in organizing tutorial support and awarding high achiever students. In general, students benefited more from their union more in administrative matters than in academic issues.

**Personal Benefits of Student Representatives**

Students’ participation in university governance has multidimensional positive effect. In addition to benefiting the institution and the larger student population, it has unprecedented positive effect for student representatives. Some researchers (e.g., Foreman & Retallick, 2013; Planas et al., 2013) in their study indicated the personal benefits of student representatives. Subjects of the study particularly student union presidents and standing committee members were asked about the benefits they obtained as a result of participating in university governance. The data showed that student representatives developed managerial skills, acquired knowledge on government policies and the like. However, it had a cost on their grade point. Let’s look into what one of the student union presidents from first generation universities said:

As a result of participating in national higher education institutions forum, in the senate, in different ad-hoc committees, in cafeteria and student service committee, in the command post and in other meetings which I cannot list all, I have gained practical knowledge on how the university works, and other government policies, procedures and
directives. I have also learned how to manage meetings. As a head of the union, I have been able be aware of different kind of activities carried out by the office of the union. Due to this, we get experience and exposure about planning, implementing the plan, monitoring the progress, evaluating the overall performance of the union and develop a report to concerned body.

In conformity to the above statements, another student union president from one of the second generation universities reported:

In most cases we get the chance to attend meetings with senior professional people who are rich in experiences. We frequently spend time with presidents, deans, directors and with people in different positions. We have also the chance to meet with people outside the university. All these opportunities are a learning session to us. If we take for example people in higher position of the university, we are aware of what the president, vice presidents and dean of students do. So it is a lesson for our future career.

The above report indicated that those students who participated in different level of university governance gained experience, developed managerial skills, and became aware of government policies, directives and procedures. It was simply taken as a learning session for the students. Similarly, FGD participants from third generation universities reported that participating in different governing bodies was an opportunity to them to develop their reasoning ability and communication skills as well. Moreover “we developed the courage to speak in the presence of large audiences and ‘big’ people and have learned about the bureaucratic procedure of the university” (Goitom, FGD 5). It was also indicated that beyond getting psychological
satisfaction and a sense of usefulness, which cannot be expressed in monetary form, they built their level of confidence.

In congruent to the arguments of scholars who conduct research in the area (for example, Foreman & Retallick, 2013; Planas et al., 2013), the data showed that student representatives benefited from participating in university governance. Besides, student representatives were able to know more people and establish personal relations which would not be a realistic if they do not have taken this position. This showed that, participating in university governance in addition to addressing the immediate needs of students, had also an educative value to individual student representatives. It was also found that in three universities (first and second generation universities) former student union presidents, regardless of their grades, were assigned as deputy deans of students. As per the responses of deans of students, there were also other two student union presidents who were employed as instructors in consideration of their contributions to the university.

Although student representatives benefited in many ways discussed above, it was not achieved without making sacrifice. Almost all student representatives participated in the interview and FGD indicated that they spent much of their time to serve in the union to the extent of missing classes. Due to this, respondents pointed out that they were not as successful as they had been before they joined the union in terms of their grade point average (GPAs). A student union president from one of the third generation universities interviewed says:

We know that we are here for academic purpose. To be successful in our study, we need to give priority to our study. But we are not doing that. We attend long meetings and when you came back from lengthy meetings, we do have the appetite to study. At times
the meetings are not only lengthy but they are also boring and you need to argue at every point. We also waste out time when we move here and there to handle cases related to cafeteria, dormitory issue, security issue, health service, and water service and other. We can’t do them easily. There is long bureaucratic chain which takes us even days to address the case. To deal with people at different positions, you miss classes and also study hours. On average, we spend four to six hours a day for similar purposes. All this have taken our time and we sit for exam without adequate preparation. So it is undeniable that decline in grade point average is a problem of us who are in the executive committee or related positions.

Some deans agree. For example, a dean of students from one of the second generation universities reported that most of the student union representatives graduate with lowest grade point average (GPAs) as compared to the GPA that they had at the time of joining the union. They sacrificed themselves for securing the rights of the larger student population. To make fellow students happy, they worked day and night. They don’t even attend classes seriously. “If the criteria to join executive committee of the union were not students who have grade point average of 3.25 and above” he remarked. “I am sure; all of them could have been dismissed due to academic failure”.

The data showed that student union representatives devoted themselves and make sacrifices to do administrative tasks related to student service, participating in long meetings and the like. They miss classes as well as study hours and as a result their CGPAs dwindle. This might have resulted from the silence of the management to get the work done by the students to reduce their own burden. It might be also a result of inadequate orientation about the risk or disadvantage of participation and inadequate follow up made by the management. This might
have resulted from their motivation to be employed as graduate assistants at the time of their graduation. This implies that participating in university governance, if not appropriately handled (e.g., if representatives fail to do things on schedule by giving priority to their study) and do things on schedule by giving priority to once study, there are times which makes someone a loser in his/her grade point average. On the bases of this, it is possible to conclude that, if one fails to manage his time appropriately, participation could also be costly.

**Inclusiveness of University Regulations and Student Union Structure**

University students are given the right to organize themselves in student unions (FDRE, 2009). In their legislations, universities (e.g. AMU, 2013; AXU, 2015; WELU, 2012) also affirm that regardless of their admission category, every student in the university including those enrolled in continuing and distance education programs and graduate programs are given the right to be represented in the student union. Accordingly, the student union is expected to officially represent the whole student community of the university and the dean of students is given the responsibility to ensure the representativeness of the student unions (WELU, 2012; WOLU, 2015, MEKU, 2012). Taking this into account, I asked the subjects participated in the interviews and FGDs to comment on the composition of the student union. The finding revealed that, student unions of all sample universities had members of undergraduate regular program students only. The statements made by dean of students from one of the third generation universities make this assertion more vivid:

From legal perspective, all students of the university have the right to be included in the student union and our legislation also acknowledges this. From practical point of view, it is the regular undergraduate students who form the student union and take part in different governing bodies. Actually, we did not do any effort to bring the other program
students in the existing union or to form their own union. First of all, there is no any claim which comes from students of continuing and distance education programs and graduate programs. Secondly, it is only undergraduate regular students who have permanent residence and other related services. In providing these services, it was important for us in getting the support of the student union and has realized it.

The statements made above indicated that there was policy ground and legal provisions to have inclusive student unions composed of all student type enrolled in the university. The problem, however, was in implementing what is stated in the legislation. Both the university and the student body were responsible for this limitation. Universities were not that much concerned about their representation non-regular undergraduate students (continuing and distance education programs and graduate programs), did not make a claim to establish their union and to have a say in the governance. Taking this into account, it is possible to conclude that the existing student unions were not inclusive of students in all programs of universities and leaving them to be voiceless.

**Election Process, Structure of Student Unions, Female and Physically Impaired Student Representation**

In discussing about the election processes, structure of student unions and representation of female and physically impaired students, as per the finding indicated above, it means about undergraduate regular program student union. As can be understood from the responses of student deans, student union presidents, standing committee members and constitution of student unions, the election process of student union has two systems: parliamentary system in six of the
universities and a presidential system in one of the universities. The procedure followed in these two groups of universities in establishing student union varies as per the system used.

Student union president in one of the second generation universities reported about the parliamentary electoral system which is similar to any democratic election systems, an independent electoral board composed of seven to nine people from the university and former student union standing committee members is established. As per the schedule of the board, formal election date is announced through notice posted in places where students can easily access the information. The election, then, begins from each classroom. In the presence of two or three persons from the election board, most of the time at the end of class hours, one male and one female student who have better academic achievement (usually above 3.25) and students free from any disciplinary case are elected by direct vote. These class representatives become member of the parliament. Once every class representative is elected, the next step is election of executive committee consisting of 11-13 members. To this end, a general assembly of all parliament members, meaning class representatives, is formally called by the election board. In the presence of fifty plus one number of class representatives, eighteen students are nominated by direct proposal from the parliament members as a candidate for executive committee. One of FGD participants from one of the third generation universities said:

Once the nomination is accomplished, the floor is opened to make any sort of comments about the candidates. If the comment given on the candidate is serious and accepted by the participants, another candidate is nominated. The next step is a time for the candidates to present what they want to do, if elected, in the area of academic, student service, security, external relations and the like. It is after listening to their proposal, that the election board starts the voting process through direct voting. Members of the election
board assign to each raw to count the votes. After checking all these preparations, the chair of the election board reads the list of the candidates one from the top and one from the bottom until the voting is made to all the candidates. The board sums up all the votes and announces those students who get the highest vote to become members of the executive committee.

The FGD participants were asked about the composition of the executive committee members and one of the participants showed that the executive committee is composed of president, vice-president, secretary-general, public relation general, treasurer, head of academic affair, head of health affairs, head of cafeteria and student services, head of social and recreation affairs, head of gender affairs, head of special needs affairs, head of student discipline and security affairs, head of audit and control. There were also sub-committees established under each heads.

As a follow-up question, I asked the participants to tell me about the assignment of positions. The responses indicated that once the result of the election is announced in public, assignment of positions in executive committee of student unions takes two forms. The first one is assigning positions based on the number of votes that a candidate gets. Accordingly, the one who obtains the highest number of votes becomes the president, the next one becomes the vice president, the third becomes general secretary and it goes like this. The position for head of gender and social welfare and head of special needs affairs are reserved for female student and for student with physically impaired respectively. The other form of assigning position is just to leave the right to elected candidates to make the assignment themselves considering their interest and ability based on argument and negotiations regardless of the number of votes one gets.
Though the student unions in six of the universities use a parliamentary system, but different procedures are observed in three of the universities. The general assembly which is composed of all member of the parliament elects president, vice-president, secretary-general, and public relation general through direct voting as indicated above. The students who take the highest executive committee positions nominate students for the remaining executive committee positions as well as to subcommittee members, either from the member of the parliament or out of that, and submit their list with explanation to the parliament for approval. The parliament then comments on the proposed candidates and takes it as is or may make some changes.

The above discussion on student unions which uses parliamentary system revealed that students’ participation in organizing the union is high, and free to elect their own representatives beginning from class level and to the union at university level. Furthermore, in the positions of executive committee members, there are fixed seats for female and also for physically impaired students which are not handled by any other student. According to the statements of a dean of students, if female student and a student with physically impaired fail to be elected by the general assembly, the executive body keeps the positions vacant and fill it by direct assignment. From this, it is possible to see that the overall procedure followed in organizing student union is participatory which fits to the principle of democratic elections. Moreover, in organizing the student union, an attempt is made to include all student type of regular program regardless of religion, ethnicity, politics, gender and physical conditions of students. This shows student unions which use parliamentary system are inclusive and nondiscriminatory.

From the several discussions I had with subjects as well as from documents I checked, i.e. student union constitutions and legislations, I understood the existence of differences across universities in the area of accountability of the student union and election schedule. In some of
the universities, student unions are accountable to the president of the university and some others are answerable to deans of students. Such variations may have resulted in differences in the acceptance of the student union as well as in the status of participation in university governance. The other difference observed is on the election schedule of student union. In some of the universities, election is conducted around November and December, a few months after the graduation of former student union executive committee members. This has resulted in vacant position of student representation in different governing bodies. In some others, on the other hand, the election is conducted around March and April. In such cases, there is smooth transition of power from the former representatives to and newly elected ones. Other than avoiding vacant positions in student representation in different governing bodies, such elections are opportunities for newly elected representatives to learn about their role and make smooth transitions.

The university, one among the first generation, which uses presidential system in organizing student union, has a constitution describing its intention to be free, autonomous and non political student union. That is not, however, the case in practice. According to the president of the student union and FGD participant executive committee members of that first generation university, the student union is originally organized based on its political affiliation with the ruling party-EPRDF. Looking at the students union president actual observations from one of the first generation universities explains the issue much better. In organizing the student union of the university, presidential system of election procedures is followed. First of all, he said, the campus EPRDF officers nominate four students to run for a president, vice president, secretary and public relation positions. The four candidates, according to him, have to be from the four member parties of EPRDF: Tigray People Liberation Front (TPLF), Oromo People Democratic
Organization (OPDO), Amhara People Democratic Movement (APDM) and Southern People Democratic Movement (SPDM). He continued:

It is these individuals who run for these positions and compete among themselves. Election board is formed having members from dean of students and senior students. Each candidate announces what he/she will do if elected via notices and other means. After two weeks of announcement, in a formally determined day, the election is held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the will of the electors. The election starts early in the morning at 6:00 A.M and continues until sun set. The electoral board starts the count at 6:00 P.M. and formally announces the result in the same day. As per the number of votes, the nominee who get the highest vote becomes the president, the next highest is the vice president, the third one becomes the general secretary and the one who get the lowest vote takes the position of public relations. Once this is accomplished, in collaboration with people from the campus EPRDF office, the remaining executive committee members are recruited from EPRDF partner parties. In realizing this purpose, these four parties have to share their seats.

The student union president form same first generation university reported that, Oromo People Democratic Organization shares its seats to student members of Ethiopian Somali Revolutionary Party and Hariri National League; Tigray People Liberation Front shares to student members of Afar People National Democratic Party ; Amhara People Democratic Movement (APDM) shares to student members of Benshangule Gumuze Revolutionary Movement; and Southern People Democratic Movement shares its seats to students who are member of Gambella Peoples Democratic Movement. During this process, without violating political organization membership, a female student is assigned as the head of gender affairs and
a student who has physical impairment becomes the head of special needs affairs. The student union president from one of the first generation universities revealed that “student unions who equate themselves as politically free are not free in reality. In one way or another, the unions are politically affiliated particularly to that of the rulings party, EPRDF”.

From the above discussion, it was possible to understand that the student union organized through presidential system is politically influenced. Due to this, it was against the student unions’ constitution stating as politically free student union. Moreover, it alienated students who were not members of EPRDF and its partner political parties. Although such arrangement contributed in getting the support and trust of the management, and seems to be inclusive of students from different ethnic groups, gender and students with special needs, it has violated the rights of students given to them by higher education proclamation to be freely represented in their union and to be “founded on the principle of universality of membership” (FDRE, 2009, p.5002). In other words, students with different political ideology were excluded. Thus, it is possible to conclude that the student union organized in presidential system was not inclusive of all student type of regular program. The statements also made clear that the foundation for organizing student unions was different across universities.

According to interviewees and FGD participants, executive committee of student unions which was organized in parliamentary or presidential system operates at university level. The term of office of student unions organized in both type of systems is two years. In those universities which have only one campus, there is one student union at university level. In those universities which have more than one campus, there are student councils which are accountable to the union and acting as coordinators of activities in that specific campus. The student union executive committee or the council assigns student representative to college academic
committee. This shows students’ union organizational structure is not parallel to academic structure of the university. It simply floats at university level or campus level. This has resulted in absence of student union formal arrangements at college and department level which was supposed to have meaningful contribution in the area of academic. This implies the existing structure of student union is a hindrance to have active participation of students in the area of academic particularly at college and department level. In other words, the existing structure of student unions indicates that the emphasis of student unions were to work at university or campus level particularly on the areas of administrative matters than the academic.

In harmony with the qualitative data, the quantitative data also illustrated that students’ participation in the election of executive committee members in both parliamentary and presidential system was high.

Table 4.2.14:
Students Participation in Election Process of Student Union

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Respondents Students</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very High</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>41.12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>49.22</td>
<td>4.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>undecided</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5.63</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Low</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>355</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The items measuring level of students participation in the election of executive committee members in both presidential and parliamentary system as indicated by 90.3 % of respondents (M= 4.26; SD=0.8) was high. This implied that student unions had the acceptance of the larger student body and executive committee members were considered as real representative of the student body regardless of political affiliation of individuals.
Support Given by Universities to Promote Student Participation in Governance

In order to have effective student participation in university governance which benefit the institution and the student population, a clear support system and strategy should be in place by the university (Foroni, 2011; Jematia et al., 2012). Taking this into account, I asked subjects of this study about the level of support given to student representatives and strategies put in place by the university in order to have meaningful students participation in university governance. The finding indicated that the degree of support given to student representatives varies along the structure of the university. Most of student informants had positive perceptions about the level of support made by top level management. Here is what one of student union president from one of the first generation universities reported:

I have been serving for the last two year as a president of the union and I have observed that the top level management is always willing and have a welcoming approach to student representatives. The union is considered to be part of university formal structure and everything made to any office is also allocated to us as well. The office of the dean of students provides both durable and stationary material to the union. Whenever the union wants to carry out a sort of training or experience sharing, we prepare a proposal indicting the details of the activities and the estimated cost, and then it is processed following the financial procedure of the university.

The statement made above revealed that student unions are regarded as an office which is part of the university and that they obtain every support in kind needed to run their activities. A dean of students from one of the third generation universities expressed that in order to support the student union and the individual representatives, scholarships were given to student union executive committee members. There were also times where student union representatives, who have better grades, employed as graduate assistants. Additionally, opportunities are put in place
on a yearly basis to get experiences from other local universities. Above all, it was found that student union representatives are made to participate in national forum of public universities. In such cases, universities cover all necessary costs of the student participants. Furthermore, the management implemented open door policy where student’s views, ideas and suggestions are taken as valuable.

In line with the above statements, a student union standing committee member from second generation universities reflected similar views but blaming lower level management during FGDs. He reported that the union gets unreserved support from the president of the university and the top level management regarded the union as partner and was willing to listen to them and react accordingly. In the lower structure of universities beginning from college level, however, “We are not considered as equal member of the institution and they are uncomfortable with student union representatives and they prefer to concentrate only on our study” (Ahmed, FGD-2). “Due to this, student representatives”, he adds, “Students don’t get the necessary support at the lower structural level of universities”.

As presented above, beyond supporting the union in kind and cash, the university top level management recognizes students’ union contributions by giving value to their views. This, however, was not similar at college and department level. As stated earlier, people at college and department level want students simply to focus on their study; they don’t want them to lose their time in the name of participation in governance. Due to this, they didn’t give the support student representatives demanded. Moreover, dissatisfactions on the support made by universities particularly related to induction and orientation to newly elected student representatives and absence of short term trainings on different topics were reported. The quantitative result also
showed the inadequacy of support made by deans and department heads to student representatives.

Table 4.2.15:

Support Given by Academic Leaders at College and Department Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Chi-Square value(d.f)</th>
<th>P-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.15.1. Student representatives are Encouraged</td>
<td>AL SR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n %</td>
<td>n %</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never at all 4.0</td>
<td>18 60.0</td>
<td>40.07(15)</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely 19.1</td>
<td>9 30.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes 51.5</td>
<td>3 10.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently 14.1</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Almost always 11.1</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total 100.0</td>
<td>30 100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 4.15.2. Orientation and training is given to SR | | 32.55(10) | <.001 |
| n % | n % |
| Never at all 58 58.5 | 19 63.3 |  | |
| Rarely 11.1 | 11 36.7 |  | |
| Sometimes 13.1 | 0 0 |  | |
| Frequently 13.1 | 0 0 |  | |
| Almost always 4 5.2 | 0 0 |  | |
| Total 100 | 99 100.0 |  | |

Note. p<0.05.

As shown in table 4.2.15, survey participants were asked to rate the status of support given to student representatives by academic leaders at college and department level. 51.5% of academic leaders responded that they “sometimes” encouraged students’ representatives, while 60% of students’ representatives indicated that they “never at all” got encouragement from academic leaders. The chi-square test also revealed no statistically significant variation of participants’ opinion to this item. With regarded to orientations and trainings, more than half of academic leaders and 63.3% of students’ representatives responded that they “never at all” got this kind of support from college and department academic leaders. The responses of the
participants at $\chi^2 (10, n=129) = 32.55 \ p = <.001$ showed statistically significant association (See table 4.2.15).

As shown earlier, the management of universities particularly that of the top level including deans of students are doing their best in supporting the union to do its job through provision of stationary material, office facilities and the like. Moreover, they organize experience sharing programs, let students’ to attend national forum of universities and also used open door policy to listen to students’ views. As opposed to the support they readily got from the top level management, student representatives do not obtain the support from college deans and department head; they want them to focus more on their studies than ‘wasting’ time in the name of participation. This might be the reason to keep aside students from academic committee of college and department levels. Although the top level management is committed to provide material, financial and other form of support, they were in shortage of providing short term trainings on different topics. Students also complained about inadequacy of orientation and inductions for newly elected student representatives. This might have influenced student representatives to focus on administrative issues and to give less emphasis to academic matters.

*University Support for Student Publications*

Higher education proclamation of Ethiopia stipulates student unions to have their own “communications media to provide a forum for the free exchange of ideas and to present news, opinion and editorial comments” (FDRE, 2009, p. 5002). In accordance with that, universities in their legislations specify not only the rights of students through their union to have publications and editorial comments, but also the type of support universities offers. Universities promised to encourage and assist students and their unions to exercise freedom of expression and the press. Universities promised not only to provide resource support but also to establish advisory
organs/board / to assist students unions and advise students on the quality, form and legality of publications under national laws and university regulations (e.g., AMU, 2013; AXU, 2015; MEKU, 2012; WELU, 2012; WOLU, 2015; WELU, 2013). Taking this in to account, I asked subjects who involved in the interviews and FGDs about the support made by the university and about the publications of the student unions. According to the responses obtained from participants, universities do not establish advisory organs to assist student unions in having their own publications as they promised. As a result, there were no student unions which have their own publications including periodic brushes and leaflets.

An interview given by deans of students from sampled universities, reported that students have the right to exercise their freedom of expression and that of having different publications like newspaper, brushes, bulletins or journals as stipulated in the legislation of the university. But, due the failure of the student union in making a request and also the limitation of the institution to establish an advisory organ, which may assist students in the quality of their publications, no student unions which have periodic publications. A student union president from one of the second generation universities has similar views. “The student union is aware of its rights in having publications”. He continued, “I feel that the university does not oppose if we ask financial or professional support. But the challenges that we faced daily in relation to student service don’t give us time to think over publications and related things”.

The above response of subjects showed that student unions do not have any sort of publication be it newspaper, brushes, bulletins or journals. On the other hand, universities promised to provide support but practically do not provide resources and establish an advisory organ to assist students in the quality, form, and legality of publications. This has resulted from the lack of attention of the student union to have its own publications and its failure to make a
request for resource and professional support from the university. Moreover, student unions are not creative enough in using the knowledge and skills of student members to develop their own web sites and easily reach student members via technology. On the whole, it indicates the failure of the student union to create communication media for the free exchange of ideas which is acknowledged by HEP (FDRE, 2009).

Challenges Encountered

Although it is the corner stone, inclusion of statements in higher education proclamation and universities senate legislations by itself does not guarantee in having meaningful students participation in university governance. Bearing this in mind, I asked interview and FGD participants about the challenges they encountered. Their response revealed that most of the challenges are related to both the institution as well as to the student body. The actual words used by student union president from one of the first generation universities holding these views are more expressive:

People at college and department level as well as most of the instructors, did not consider the union as an organization which is established to support the objectives of the university but as a political entity which serve as a spy of the government. Due to this, they do not have an inviting approach to student representatives. Furthermore, meetings are scheduled during class hours and student representatives do not receive a call or memo ahead of time. It is also observed that, people at lower level of structure do not have adequate awareness about the right of students to participate in college and department academic committee. In addition to considering us a politician or undercover agent of the management, they believe that we are ignorant about issues seen at that level and immature which cannot make contribution to the quality of the decisions. Due to this,
we are alienated from making decisions on agendas which are more of academic plus directly related to student body.

In support of what is presented, FGD participant from one of the second generation universities reported that people at college and department level including instructors do not want them to sit with them for a meeting. Instructors wanted students simply to focus on their study. Moreover, they did not consider students as partners who have the right to see academic cases but as a legal counsel of students. In addition, “the top level management is aware of the limitations at college and department level but due to lack of attention, do not enforce these structural levels” (Fesum, FGD-7).

The responses obtained from subjects showed a number of university related factors such as inappropriate meeting schedule, lack of awareness on the part of academicians about the rights of students, considering students representatives as legal counsel who always stand only to the rights of students, reluctance of the top level management to enforce people at the lower level and others are among institution related hindering factors that have affected students’ participation in university governance. As per the responses of subjects, beyond institution related factors there were also challenges linked to the student body that have affected their participation in institutional governance. The following statement obtained from a dean of students from one of the third generation universities shows this:

Due to fear of victimization particularly on their grades, there are student representatives who do not want to challenge deans, department heads and instructors for their rights as they do to the top management. Moreover, many of student representatives are poor in managing their time. The other challenge is related to the student union itself. Student union election is conducted in around November which extends to December and leaving
vacant position for student representatives for about a semester. In relation to this, there is no clear student union structure at college and department level as they do at university or campus level. And this is the other major challenge. Although they all work to have peaceful learning environment in the university, a role conflict that exists among student organizations has also affected the status of participation.

To further my understanding, I asked about the other student organizations which have a role conflict with student unions. He reported that “there are different student organizations such as peace forum and student police, which have political bases of the ruling party, which have similar roles to that of student unions”. It is also reported that beyond a role conflict which exist among these student organizations, there are problems related to accountability in terms of structure.

In agreement to what has been presented above, one FGD participant from one of the third generation universities reported that due to lack of clear understanding and awareness about the rights given to student unions, resulted from inadequate training or orientation, students do not seriously claim their rights at college or department level. In addition, there are times where the management considered the union as if it always favors students. The student body on the other hand considered the student union as if they do nothing for the larger student population but serving as informants of the management. He added, “You know, we are between two fires, like the traditional bakery of Ethiopia, students on one side and the management on the other” (Ujulu-FGD-1). Likewise, the findings from quantitative data were also in agreement with the qualitative result.
Table 4.2.16:
Challenges Encountered

| 4.2.16.1. Inconvenient time of meeting | Respondents |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Scale |  | Academic Leaders |  | Student Representatives |  | Chi-Square value(d.f) |  |
|  | n | % | n | % |  |  |  |
| Strongly disagree | 3 | 3.0 | 1 | 3.3 |  |  |  |
| Disagree | 3 | 3.0 | 2 | 6.7 | 45.2(25) | 0.008 |  |
| Undecided | 13 | 13.1 | 3 | 10.0 |  |  |  |
| Agree | 48 | 48.4 | 17 | 56.7 |  |  |  |
| Strongly agree | 32 | 32.3 | 7 | 23.3 |  |  |  |
| Total | 99 | 100 | 30 | 100.0 |  |  |  |

4.2.16.2. Failure to inform SR in advance

|  |  |  |  |  |
| Strongly disagree | 4 | 4.0 | 1 | 3.3 | 44.16(25) | 0.010 |
| Disagree | 4 | 4.0 | 4 | 13.3 |  |  |  |
| Undecided | 17 | 17.1 | 3 | 10.0 |  |  |  |
| Agree | 51 | 51.5 | 17 | 56.7 |  |  |  |
| Strongly agree | 23 | 23.4 | 5 | 16.7 |  |  |  |
| Total | 99 | 100.0 | 30 | 100.0 |  |  |  |

4.2.16.3. Lack of orientation and training

|  |  |  |  |  |
| Strongly disagree | 4 | 4.0 | 1 | 3.3 | 35.64(25) | 0.027 |
| Disagree | 3 | 3.0 | 4 | 13.3 |  |  |  |
| Undecided | 13 | 13.1 | 3 | 10.0 |  |  |  |
| Agree | 56 | 56.5 | 14 | 46.7 |  |  |  |
| Strongly agree | 23 | 23.4 | 8 | 26.7 |  |  |  |
| Total | 99 | 100.0 | 30 | 100.0 |  |  |  |

4.2.16.4. Perceiving SR as self interested

|  |  |  |  |  |
| Strongly disagree | 11 | 11.1 | 1 | 3.3 | 63.38(25) | <.001 |
| Disagree | 14 | 14.1 | 3 | 10.0 |  |  |  |
| Undecided | 12 | 12.2 | 4 | 13.3 |  |  |  |
| Agree | 56 | 56.6 | 13 | 43.3 |  |  |  |
| Strongly agree | 6 | 6.0 | 9 | 30.0 |  |  |  |
| Total | 99 | 100.0 | 30 | 100.0 |  |  |  |

4.2.16.5. Lack of knowledge on issues discussed

|  |  |  |  |  |
| Strongly disagree | 53 | 53.6 | 16 | 53.3 | 28.99(25) | 0.031 |
| Disagree | 22 | 22.2 | 4 | 13.3 |  |  |  |
| Undecided | 10 | 10.1 | 3 | 10.0 |  |  |  |
| Agree | 11 | 11.1 | 3 | 10.0 |  |  |  |
| Strongly agree | 3 | 3.0 | 4 | 13.3 |  |  |  |
| Total | 99 | 100.0 | 30 | 100.0 |  |  |  |

Notes: *p < 0.05.
The last item in the above table, lack of knowledge of student representatives on issues discussed, showed negative responses of participants. The majority of academic leaders (75.9%) and student representatives (66.6%) showed their disagreement that lack of knowledge on the issue discussed at college and department level was not a challenge. More than half of academic staff (62%) and nearly 74% of student representatives, agreed that perceiving student representatives as self interested who favor students and who could not add to the quality of decisions was also taken as the other challenge. As per the third item in table 4.2.16, more than 70% of academic leaders and majority of student representative (79%) showed their agreement that lack of training and orientation was also the other challenge encountered. In the second item of same table, nearly 75% of academic leaders (68.2%) and 73% of student representatives responded that failure on the part of academic leaders to inform student representatives to attend meetings was the other challenge to have meaningful students participation in university governance. In the first item of the table, it is indicated that the greater majority of the academic leaders (80%) and 80% of the students agreed that inconvenient time of meetings which overlap with students class was one of the challenge encountered. The chi-square test also revealed statistically significant association of participants’ opinion at $\alpha=.05$ level in all items listed as challenges (see Table 4.2.16).

Altogether, the responses of subjects from both qualitative and quantitative data showed that the factors taken as a challenge in having meaningful participation of students in university governance are related to both the institution and to the students’ body. Institution related factors include considering the student union as a political entity which serve as a spy of the government and the management than a partner, lack of inviting approach to student representative, inappropriate meeting schedules and failure to inform student representatives in advance are
among the major ones. Furthermore, lack of clear awareness about the right of students on the part of people at lower level of structure and the failure of the top management to enforce people at college and department level, considering student representatives as ignorant of issues of discussion, and considering student representatives as immature which cannot make contribution to the quality of the decisions are also the other institution related factors. People at college and department level, including instructors firm stand, not to see students in meetings but to focus only on their study; and considering student representatives as self interested and a legal counsel of students who favors students are also among institution related challenges. With regard to student related factors, declining in grade point average resulted from over emphasis in running student service like student cafeteria; poor time management; fear of victimization to challenge deans, department heads and instructors for their rights are among the challenges. Furthermore, a role conflict which exists between student unions and other politically affiliated student organizations is also the other challenge.

**Similarity and Differences of Findings across Generations of Universities**

Irrespective of generation of universities, there is legal provision which acknowledge students’ right to participate, through their union representatives, in the institution’s governing bodies in both academic as well as administrative matters. The number of seats given to students and their right to vote lacks uniformity in each sample university regardless of generations. Despite lack of uniformity in the number of student members, across generations of universities, students’ participation in university senate was positive. Although there is legal provisions made by the first, second and third generation universities, to participate students in different senate standing committees as well as in university council, the finding revealed that students were
excluded in university councils and in majority of the standing committees except in students
service committee across the three generations of universities and difference is not observed.

HEP of Ethiopia (FDRE, 2009), and all sample universities acknowledged students to be
members of college academic commission. But, the number of students taken as members of
college level academic commission varies in individual university irrespective of generations.
The findings showed that students’ participation at college level academic commission was a
neglected area across universities irrespective of generations. The same holds true to students’
participation in department academic committee. In all the three generations, there was
meaningful participation of students in administrative matters, ad-hoc committees and informal
participations.

With regard to effectiveness of student unions in implementing their roles, irrespective of
generations of universities, positive trends were observed in areas of representing students in
university governance and serving as a bridge and in promotion welfare of students. There was a
mixed outcome in supplementing university curricula through co-curricular and club activities.
In the three generations of universities uniformly, student unions were ineffective in
implementing their roles related to promoting academic excellence, research, intellectual culture
of tolerance to diverse opinions; in encouraging debates on public issues; in supplementing
university curricula through panel discussions, seminars; and in promoting mutual respect,
understanding, tolerance and co-operation among university students, and other members of
university community.

In the entire first, second and third generation universities, students’ participation in
university governance benefited the institutions mainly in carrying out its administrative tasks
but insignificant in the areas of academic aspect. Likewise, in all the three generations of
universities, the larger student population benefited in many of the administrative areas. Similarly, across the three generations of universities uniformly, students’ participation in university governance was educative sessions for student representatives.

With regard to inclusiveness of university regulations, all universities in the three generations recognize universality of membership to organize themselves in student unions. Similarly, except in one of the first generation universities, students are practically represented in the student unions. Female and physically impaired students are freely represented in student unions without difference in all the three generations of universities.

In relation to support made by universities to promote students participation in university governance, in all the three generations of universities uniformly, the top level management was supportive but it was not true in the lower level of university structure. Across the three generations of universities without differences, universities did not establish advisory organs and allocate budget to assist student unions in having their own publications. Due to this, all student unions in the three generations of universities do not have periodic publications. With regard to challenges, without any difference in the three generations of universities, both the institutions as well as the student body related factors were encountered.

4.3. Discussion of Findings

*Over all Students Participation in Academic Matter and in Administrative Areas*

Governance of higher education is the authority to make decisions on fundamental and critical areas at university level, senates, faculties, departments, or at academic committees (Ngambi & Nthoesane, 2013). It is the formal and informal arrangements that allow higher education institutions to make decisions on various structural levels. As discussed earlier, participatory higher education governance is believed to provide students the right to take part in
decision making (Carey, 2013). In light of that, the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia higher education proclamation (FDRE, 2009) and universities (through their senate legislations) stipulate the right of students to participate in university governing bodies through their union representatives (e.g. AAU, 2013; MEKU, 2012). Unlike Hile Sellassie Regime, this was similar to that of Dergue Regime but students’ representatives during the Dergue Regime were not elected from university students but from that of “Revolutionary Ethiopian Youth Association” (AAU, 1987). A possible implication of this result is the existence of political influence and interference of governments to control university students’ unions beginning from Dergue regime. As reported by Mulinge et al., (2017), similar political interference particularly at the time of election of student unions is also a current problem in Kenya universities.

The results of the present study revealed that currently students are given two to four seats to participate in the senate represented by students from students’ union. Except in one of the universities, encouragingly, students were found to be voting members who have the right to air their views on issues they believe beneficial to the institution and to the student body. This shows that students through their representatives participate in the senate of universities. Not only is the finding reflective of the stipulations made in 2009 higher education proclamation of the country, but it is also in line with a collegial model proposed by Millett in 1960’ (cited in Jones, et al. 2004). As noted earlier, collegial model regards higher education institutions as communities of which students are full members of the academic community with the right to participate in university decision-making. The positive results of students’ participation in senates of universities, puts in the ladder of Arnstein (1969) at the stage of partnership and decision-making, the highest form of student participation. As per this level, students are given the right to take part in decision making, respected as full voting members and to have a common
ownership and shared responsibilities between students and university senate (Carey, 2013; ESU, 2011; Guaraldo, 1996; Waheduzzaman & Mphande, 2014).

Interestingly though, this encouraging finding is contrary to results reported in related studies conducted in other African countries (e.g., Mbambo, 2013; Mulinge, Arasa, & Wawire, 2017) and some other European countries (e.g., Menon, 2005). The study of Mbambo (2013), who assessed the status of student participation in institutional governance in South African Universities in the case of the University of Cape Town, for example, reported that students have limited participation and influence over the decisions made by the Senate. Similarly, a study conducted in the neighboring country, Kenya, by Mulinge, Arasa, & Wawire (2017) indicated that students are “officially alienated from top-level decision-making organs including university senate” (p. 151) which pass the bulk of the decisions that affect students and the functioning of their universities. Likewise, the study of Menon (2005), showed very limited participation of students in the senate of the University of Cyprus. In comparison with countries like South Africa and Kenya, which are relatively more advanced economically and democratically, the situation in Ethiopia is surprisingly better. On the basis of the findings of the study, this might have resulted from strong informal and friendly relationships which exist between university presidents and student union leaders.

In agreement with the literature (e.g., Elizabeth, 2014) higher education proclamation of Ethiopia (2009) and senate legislations of the universities studied (e.g., AXU, 2015; WOLU, 2015) recognize the rights of students to participate, through their union, in the university council and in many of senate standing committees, which have a responsibility of academic related activities. This, at least in theory, indicated that there are no legal provision problems at national or institutional level which hinders students from participating in major
decision making bodies and also senate standing committees. This is a complete departure from the situations during the regimes of Haile Selassie and the ‘Dergue’ regime (See AAU, 1987; HSIU, 1964, 1968). The response obtained from subjects, however, indicates that, in practical terms, students are not represented in institutions council and in senate standing committees except in students’ service/affairs committee. And the result is consistent with related findings (e.g., Zuo, & Ratsoy, 1999) where students were excluded from some standing committees of major institutional governing bodies. The findings of the present study is also comparable to that of Menon (2005), which reported students had limited participation in high levels of decision making bodies. On the other hand, the findings differ from that of Rodgers et al. (2011). The study of Rodgers et al. conducted in UK universities showed that students were successfully represented at institutional levels and committee positions. This might be because of UK universities are found in a country which is democratically advanced. Moreover, cultural, political, and organizational culture differences, attitudinal and personal factors such as leadership styles and philosophy that individuals follow, and student motivation for representation might have brought this difference.

Different scholars (e.g., Menon, 2005), indicate that students participation in university governance should be in both high and low levels of decision making bodies. To this end, student participation at college level academic commission was recognized by HEP of Ethiopia (FDRE, 2009) and also by senate legislations of universities (e.g., WELKU, 2014). One could say this is an encouraging development when compared with the scenario in Haile Selassie and Dergue regimes in which there was no such legal provision (see AAU, 1987; HSIU, 1964, 1968). This implies that universities recognize students as pertinent members of their governance structures who must participate in decision making at college levels of universities. The findings of this
study, however, indicated that students are not practically participating in decisions made at college level. This has resulted in making students just to be passive recipient of decisions made by only academic staff members.

Unlike the positive results from Kenyata University which is reported by Mulinge, et al. (2017), this finding is similar to results reported in related studies conducted in other African countries (e.g., Akomolafe, & Ibijola (2011); Elizabeth,( 2014); and Olajire & Babatope (2014) and some other European countries (e.g. Menon , 2005). The studies of Akomolafe, & Ibijola (2011); Elizabeth,( 2014); and Olajire & Babatope (2014) reported that students’ participation in governance of Nigeria universities be it at the top or lower level including college and department committees was found to be low and resulted in student’s revolt and closure of universities. Similarly, the result of a study reported by Menon (2005) showed that students were excluded from college level decisions. Such exclusion of students from decisions at college level could be a cause for students’ strikes which may result in closure of universities, distractions of facilities and prolong the time required by students for completing their studies. Moreover, it may affect the democratization of the governance process in the university. A similar negative finding was obtained on students’ participation in department academic council.

There is legal provision of participating students at department academic committee level (e.g. FDRE, 2009; WELKU, 2014; WLDU, 2012), which have an immediate impact on students’ day to day activities (Cardoso & Machado, 2011) and that is in agreement with the literature (e.g. Carey,2013; Menon, 2005); but this was not the case in the regimes of the emperor and the Dergue (See AAU, 1987; HSIU, 1964, 1968). In practical terms, though, students don’t participate at department level decisions. This failure by universities to practice what they preach show the incongruence between the legal provisions made in documents and
the practical participation. This finding is paradoxical that universities are source of knowledge but they are not practitioners of democratic principles. This finding, thus, cause one to question the extent to which democratic culture is rooted in universities. The result revealed that students are excluded from decisions made by departmental committee, the most strategic and potentially useful level to solve students’ problem. This appeared clear in participants’ responses (for example, See Table 4.3) as well as from what subjects reported during the focus group discussions and interviews. The DC minutes also revealed similar result.

This is a similar finding with the works of Lizzio & Wilson (2009), Mabovula (2009), and Menon (2005) where students’ participation at department committee level was insignificant due to unwillingness of academic managers and staff to participate students. It is also possible that because of structural problems of student unions and also lack of attention given by student representatives. This finding, however, is contradictory to what is stated in HEP, senate legislations of universities and the literature (e.g. Klemenčič et al., 2015; Rodgers et al., 2011; Zuo & Ratsoy, 1999).

In a situation where student participation is part of education for democracy and universities are “a training ground in democratic citizenship and leadership” (Luescher & Mugume 2014,p.511), the finding revealed that universities undermine and do not exemplify this major responsibility particularly at college and department level. From democratic theory perspectives, it is violating the legitimate rights given to students to participate in different institutional governance and areas of decision-making. This in turn hampers the positive contributions of student representation “to further citizenship education, through inculcating democratic values and exercising democratic practice” (Brooks et al., 2015, p.171). In other words, students are hampered from practically learn how democracy works through participation
in decision-making (Akomolafe & Ibijola 2014; Das, 2014). At the same time, students are excluded in the elections and appointments of faculties for different positions, deanships and department heads. And this is contradictory to the literature (e.g., Pabian et al., 2011) and from the principle of democratic theory perspective as well. From political theory and its characteristics, therefore, exclusion of students from decision processes made at college and department academic committees show the gap of HE institutions in areas of democracy, equality, and transparency (Luescher, 2011; Michelsen & Stensaker, 2011).

Likewise, when the findings at university council, senate standing committees, college academic committee and department academic council are evaluated from the models used in this study, they fit to the characteristics of academic oligarchy or “professorial university” model (Boland, 2005, Luescher, 2011, Pabian and Minksová (2011) where qualified academics, elected or assigned individuals, are the sole decision makers (Pabian et al., 2011) and leaving students to be passive recipients of the decisions (Luescher, 2011). Accordingly, students have no role to play in governance particularly in academic areas and therefore, academics “monopolize” while student are “marginalized” in these decision making bodies of universities (Pabian et al., 2011, p.198). The finding also implies the absence of shared governance seriously at lower level which could contribute not only for true democratization of decision-making process at grassroots level but also in nurturing the next generation leaders.

Analyzing the findings of college academic committee level and department council from the angle of ladder of participation used in this study, both of them lay in the lowest and the last stage named ‘conspiracy’. This is characterized by absence of students’ participation in the formal decision-making process (Guaraldo, 1996). Thus, it is simply a form of authoritarian model and a one-way process, where people in the academics make the decision and tell students
about their decision. Contrary to that of college academic committee and department council, students’ participation in Ad-hoc Committees, however, is positive.

In agreement with the literature (e.g., Elizabeth, 2014), Ethiopia HEP no 650/2009 Article 37 of and universities (e.g., AMU, 2013; MEKU, 2012) recognized students right to participate in different ad-hoc committees organized by the university. This indicates the presence of fertile policy ground which encourages students to have a say in ad-hoc committees organized for different purposes. The finding showed that, unlike in senate standing committees, students are actively participating in many of ad-hoc committees organized in universities. This finding is in congruent to the findings of Elizabeth (2014), Lizzio & Wilson (2009), Rodgers et al. (2011), and Zuo & Ratsoy (1999) where are students successfully represented in different committee positions. Such positive practices beyond realizing the purpose of these ad-hoc committees, as indicated by many writes (e.g., Menon, 2003; Flowers, 2004), may help students develop sense of belongingness and also to acquire many leadership skills. Furthermore, in harmony with the findings of Lizzio, & Wilson (2009) and Zuo & Ratsoy (1999), such active participation of students in ad-hoc committees is also an opportunity to gain lesson on teamwork, goal-setting, interpersonal communication, and networking.

Thus, the study revealed that the student body makes up the lion’s share in most of the ad-hoc committees organized by the university which have a responsibility to run an activity within the university compound. Moreover, across study universities student union representatives are members of the command post, an ad-hoc committee organized following the declaration of state of emergency in Ethiopia, established by members from the university and other political leaders from the town where the university found. Like that of ad-hoc committees, students have meaningful participation in administrative areas as well.
Some of administrative areas of universities in which different scholars (e.g., Boland, 2005) recommend to have active participation of students include student service and diet, performance evaluation of instructors, disciplinal committee, planning and evaluation of overall university performance. In congruent to the scholars indicated above, HEP No. 650/2009 of Ethiopia (FDRE, 2009) as well as universities (e.g., WELK, 2014; WOLU, 2015), recognize the right of students to participate in different administrative areas that have direct link with student population. This shows the existence of positive legal provisions which encourage students to participate in administrative areas. And, the finding of this study reveals that students actively participate in different administrative areas. Due to this, student representatives spend much of their time to the extent of affecting their academic achievement. This is in agreement with the results of Luescher (2010) and Omari & Mihyo (1991). In congruent to these scholars, student representation and to have their own say on such decisions related to administrative areas have potential in protecting student strikes and destructions caused by problems particularly relate to these issues. Sample universities in this case seem they are aware of the negative consequences of exclusion that they provide larger space for students to have a say in administrative areas.

The other administrative area of universities which allow students to have a direct participation by HEP (FEDR, 2009) and legislations of universities is performance evaluation of instructors. As stipulated in the legislations of universities and in agreement with what is stated in the literature (e.g., Michelsen & Stensaker, 2011; Quick & Bryson, 2016) the effectiveness of an academic staff in teaching is measured by his students at the end of each semester. This is a similar finding with the study of Abasi (2011) indicating the practice of student evaluation of instructors in higher education institutions in Africa including Ethiopia. However, similar to the findings of Kelly (2012), most students are not aware of the evaluation criteria and in most cases
students are biased in rating their instructors. Thus, it forces one to question the effectiveness of student evaluation of instructors.

The other administrative area in which students are successfully participating was disciplinary matters of students. In harmony to the findings of Mati et al. (2016), in Kenya, students are actively participating in discipline committee to see different disciplinary cases of students. Consistent with the literature (e.g. Mati et al. 2016; Olatunji ,2014) such a positive practice, beyond protecting the rights of students, help students to become responsible citizens who accept the consequences of their own decisions and actions, and to be willing to obey rules. Moreover, in agreement with the findings of some related studies (e.g. (Mathebula, 2005; Planas et al.,2013; Zuo & Ratsoy, 1999) such a positive practice is an opportunity for student representatives to learn institutional procedures, public policies and regulations.

One of the findings of this study, mainly in four of the study universities, was the participation of student union standing committee as well as other sub-committee members in room checking committee which is responsible to patrol the presence of students in their dormitory at night and to take attendances. Although there was a mixed reaction from students about the patrol system conducted at night, which seems adopted from military institution, the primary purpose was to protect students, particularly that of female students from immoral activities. As said, although the patrol has a positive contributions, one can easily guess the adverse effect on the study hours of student union standing committee as well as other sub-committee members. On the other hand, as educational institutions, one may question not only its appropriateness but also its ability to bring about a long term effect. The findings of this study, in general, revealed that students’ participation in administrative areas is better as compared to areas in the academic structure. This is a similar finding to that of Menon’s (2005)
where students input is greater in administrative areas than in academic structure and senate standing committees.

When students’ participation in the senate, different ad-hoc committees of universities and participation in administrative areas, is analyzed from the angel of Arnstein’s (1969) ladder of participation, they placed in the stage of ‘partnership and decision-making’, which is the highest form of student participation, where students involve at every stage from agenda setting to voting and implementation. Due to this, congruent to the literature (e.g., Carey, 2013; Waheduzzaman & Mphande, 2014), common ownership and shared responsibilities between students and university governing bodies of different level exists. In congruent to political and democratic theory principles, students are adequately represented (Foroni, 2011; Trakman, 2008) in academic senate, ad-hoc committees and in different administrative areas (Michelsen & Stensaker, 2011). Moreover, in agreement with the literature (e.g. Betty & Jematia, 2011), students are fully participating in decision making of these areas on equal footing like that of other members.

On the other hand, when the finding on the senate, different ad-hoc committees of universities and participation in administrative areas is seen from the angle of the models used for this study, it aligned with collegial model where students are considered as full members of the academic community with the right to participate in decision-making (Jones, et al., 2004). Such a practice, thus, contributes to have a system of transparency, mutual respect and trust between students and university administration (Asiimwe & Steyn, 2014). The other administrative area assessed is students’ participation in planning and evaluation of university performances.
A number of scholars (e.g., Cardoso & Machado, 2011; Boland, 2005) advocate that students’ participation in planning and evaluation of overall university performances. The finding of this study shows students’ participation in planning and evaluation of university performance are limited to providing feedback and commenting on the and already designed plan and also on the performance report of universities. The right to take the feedbacks and make the decision is in the hands of the management. This coincides with the customer model where students are considered as “customers”, “clients” (Luescher, 2010, p.264) or “consumers” (Rodgers et al., 2011, p.248) who have the right to provide feedback (Bartley et al., 2010; Carey, 2013). Due to this, students in light of the customer model are considered as external users who have the right to express their opinion on the plan as well as the overall performance of the universities (Michelsen & Stensaker, 2011).

Such arrangement, as indicated in the finding, gives university management to know the needs of students and react accordingly as a decision maker (Carey, 2013; Zuo & Ratsoy, 1999). This is similar to the findings of Carey (2013), where students are considered as consumers in which their role is relegated to expressing grievances of the university, but not to have a say in the final decisions. When this finding is seen from Arnstein’s ladder of participation (1969), it is placed to the level of consultation where students are consulted by organizing meetings with the aim of obtaining students’ feedback but the right in making decisions remains in the hands of university management. In addition to the above formal forms, the other form of participation of students in university governance is informal form.

Student participation in university governance does not limit itself to the formal form of structures but also through informal form of participation (Das, 2014) which student representatives advocate the interests of students through frequent interactions and negotiations.
with university management inside or outside of their office (Bégin & Jones, 2014). The finding of this study indicates that informal participation of students in university governance is high at the top level but decreases when moving down the structure. This shows that, colleges and departments are not only closed for students to participate in the formal structure but they are also to the informal one. This reveals loose relationship between student representatives and people at college and department level. This strong informal participation of students at the highest level of university structure is taken as positive achievement of universities in Ethiopia as compared to their counterparts in South Africa. The finding of Klemenčič et al.’s (2015) in, “Student Power in Africa”, show this reality. In agreement to political theory principle, students frequently employ informal tactics like lobbying and cooperation with top university management than confrontational tactics to achieve what they want to (Zuo, & Ratsoy, 1999). In congruent to the literature (e.g. Betty & Jematia, 2011), the finding reveals the extent of open door policy exercised by the top university management and the degree of smooth relationship that exist between the student union leaders and the top level management.

**Effectiveness of Student Unions in Implementing their Roles and Responsibilities**

One of the objectives of this study is assess the effectiveness of student unions in implementing their roles. Student unions are legally recognized organizations established to realize clear roles and responsibilities stipulated in senate legislation of universities and also in their constitutions. One of their roles is representing students in the university governance body and serving as a bridge between students and university management. Except its limitation at college and department level, the finding revealed a positive result. This finding is similar to that of Zue & Ratsoy(1999), where student unions represented students in different decision making bodies of university of Alberta. It is also similar to the results of Mulinge et al. (2017) in Kenya.
public and private universities. Similarly, in congruent to the findings of Joseph, et al. (2008) student unions served as a bridge between students and university management.

Moreover, similar to the findings of Betty and Jematia (2011) and Carey (2013), student unions formally represent students in national public universities forum. Such opportunities might contribute to share experiences from others and challenge the management for their rights. With regard to the role of student union in promoting the welfare of students, the finding shows student unions are strongly working in realizing it. It is a similar finding to that of Joseph, et al. (2008), Mulinge et al. (2017) and the work of Zue& Ratsoy (1999), where student unions protect various social issues and the welfare of students. This finding suggests the potential in reducing students’ dissatisfactions and strikes which may happen due to provision of student services.

There is a mixed outcome with regard to student unions role in supplementing the university curricula through co-curricular and club activities. The finding indicates the existence of student representation in running and as a member of co-curricular activities and clubs. But, most of the clubs are NGOs driven clubs which could stop functioning when the support is blocked for some reasons. Those clubs which are cost free and in the hand of students but having a long term effect in building the overall personalities of students are not considered. This is contradictory to student unions of Haile Sellassie regime. With the purpose of producing “the all-rounded personality”-the agile athlete, the eloquent orator, the incisive debater, the accomplished poet and the inspiring leader” and with the aim of giving students the opportunity “to excel in their academic work, thereby enhancing their job prospects” (Bahiru, 2014,p.81); there were “the poetry (writers) club, debate club, the drama club, the glee club, artists club, the
photography club, the radio cub” (Amare, 2005, p.13) organized and run by a committee of students and teaching staff.

Furthermore, unlike the finding of the present study, there were professional associations formed at different colleges which supplement university curriculum and contribute to the society at large (see Bahiru, 2010 and 2014). Thus, similar to the finding of Lizzio & Wilson (2009), the role carried out by students union in supplementing university curricula through co-curricular and club activities is moderate. Similar to the result of Mulinge et al.(2017) reported on Kenya public and private universities student unions achievement on their role related to clubs and associations ,if not completely lacking , is minimal. This study results suggest that student unions do not give due attention to their roles which are cost free as they do to roles which are NGO driven which might be due to their interest to get an immediate monetary benefits.

Unlike the roles discussed above, students unions are not engaged in carrying out roles related to promoting academic excellence, research, and intellectual culture of tolerance to diverse opinions; in encouraging debates on public issues in varied forms including discussions and publications. Moreover, the finding is negative in supplementing the university curricula by promoting activities as panel discussions, debates, seminars, among members of the university community and the society at large. Similarly, student unions do not execute the role related to promoting mutual respect, understanding, tolerance and co-operation among university students and other members of the university community. Due to this, those roles which have a long term effect on students’ personality are not taken seriously. The focuses of student unions are on short lived issues which bring an immediate relief.
The practice in Ethiopia is also contradictory to what student unions in Kenya and Nigeria universities did in this regard. That is really educative to the Ethiopian student union counterparts. The finding of Mulinge et al. (2017), for instance, showed that student unions in Kenya are strongly engaged in organizing public discussions, debates, forums, and inviting motivational guest speakers to cultivate the future leaders, democratic citizenships, and make national contributions through a dialogue of diverse views. Similarly, the findings of Bukola et al., (2014) and Omari, & Mihyo (1991) revealed that student unions organize seminars and panel discussions which contribute not only in producing rational, logical, and good citizens which benefit their nation but also in promoting academic excellence, intellectual culture of tolerance and diverse opinions. Contrary to the results of Zue & Ratsoy (1999), where student unions used two student newspapers, the present finding indicated that student unions do not have any publications to promote debates on public issues and to easily reach the student community and the society at larger.

The finding of the present study is also contradictory to the student union of Haile Sellassie regime which organizes debates in a weekly base on issues related to campus administration and national issues involving both students and faculty members. Moreover, unlike the finding of this study, student unions of Haile Sellassie regime organized panel discussions to the extent of inviting panelists from outside including government officials such as the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Public Health, the Minister of Education (see Bahiru, 2014). Similarly, unlike the present student unions, the then student unions of Haile Sellassie regime used “Newsletter”, “News and Views” (Bahiru, 2014, p.77), newspapers, and journals like “Endih New”, and “Struggle” which served as a forum for expression of one’s thoughts, ideas, issues of the Ethiopian poor and “off-campus questions” (Amare, 2005, p.14).
The annual “College Day” organized by the student unions to read the three best poems written by students which reflect the life of the poor in the presence of Emperor Haile Sellassie and other audience (See Bahiru, 2010) is also the other local experience to the present university student unions. This implies not only the existence of local experiences held half a century before but the failure of the present student unions to extend these former local experiences. Moreover, the finding reveals a difference in focus of student unions roles between the then and the present student unions.

Benefits of Students participation in University Governance

The other objective of this study was to assess the benefits that universities, larger student population and student union leaders obtained as a result of participating in university governance. Students’ participation in university governance has multi-dimensional positive effect including the institution. The findings of many scholars who worked on the area of students participation in university governance for example, Bukola et al., 2014; Honingh & Hooge, 2014; Salvioni et al, 2012 and others have confirmed this truth. In agreement with the literature (e.g., Honingh & Hooge, 2014; Mualuko, Mukasa & Judy, 2009), the finding indicated that universities get timely, genuine, and complete information which is helpful in making rational decisions and immediate reactions whenever demanded.

In addition, unlike universities in Nigeria which frequently closed and failed to work as per their academic calendar due to frequent students protest (see Ayodele, 2005; Akomolafe, & Ibijola, 2011; Elizabeth, 2014; Olajire & Babatope, 2014), the universities studied in this study in most cases are in a position to protect student strikes, manage them immediately if occur thereby securing “peaceful learning environment” (Boland, 2005, p.206). Due to this, in most cases they
act as per their academic calendar approved by their senate without any extension due to student strikes.

Like that of the findings of Bukola et al., (2014) and Cardoso & Machado, (2011), universities get timely feedbacks about the service provided and know the feelings and request of students and respond accordingly. Similarly, in congruent to the literature, for example, Waheduzzaman & Mphande (2014), students participation in governance helped universities to be transparent mainly in areas related to student cafeteria services. In agreement with what Luescher (2010) has said, the management is capable of addressing students’ questions in an organized way and create peaceful relation with student representatives. Likewise, routine administrative burden of the management is reduced and helped them to “re-focus” (Luescher, 2010, p.274) on major strategic issues. Contradictory to the findings of (Kuh, et al., 2005), however, the contribution in the area of academic matter is minimal.

Different scholars (e.g., Foreman & Retallick, 2013; Planas et al., 2013) in their research result revealed that students participation in governance benefits not only the institution but also the larger student population and individual student representatives. In congruent to the findings of Betty & Jematia, (2011) and Omari, & Mihyo (1991), the larger student community of the study universities get better quality and quantity of cafeteria services and recreation opportunities. Unlike universities in Nigeria, as indicated in the works of Akomolafe & Ibijola (2011), Mulwa et al. (2015) and Olajire & Babatope (2014), students attend their study without disruption caused by student protests and graduate by the time which the program demand.
With regard to the benefits of student union representatives, in agreement to the findings of Foreman & Retallick (2013) and (Menon, 2003), they learn institutional procedures and how the university works, government procedures and developed managerial skills. On top of that, in congruent to the literature (e.g., Flowers, 2004; Mathebula, 2005), student union leaders learn and practice decision making procedures, and developed reasoning and interpersonal skills. Similarly, in congruent to the findings of Lizzio, & Wilson, (2009) and Zuo & Ratsoy (1999), student union representatives learn how to manage meetings, how to handle conflict and how to approach and work with senior university officials. In order to sustain the positive results achieved so far and to bring about similar benefits in academic areas, a collaborative effort of student unions and university management is demanded.

_Inclusive Legal Provisions_

Higher education proclamation of Ethiopia (FDRE, 2009) and universities (e.g. AMU, 2013; AXU, 2015) gave university students the right to organize themselves in student unions regardless of their admission category. This shows the existence of legal provisions which promote inclusive student organizations. Same results is reported by Mulinge et al. (2017) from Kenya universities which establish legal provisions that recognize students as pertinent members of their governance structures and promote inclusive student unions regardless of age, gender, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, nationality, study program and year of study.

Surprisingly, in practice, it is only regular undergraduate students who make up student unions and take part in different governing bodies. This is contradictory to the findings of Foroni, (2011), Love & Miller (2003), Rodgers , et al. (2011), and Zuo & Ratsoy (1999) where all student type were represented in student unions and in university governance.
constitution of regular undergraduate students unions in their executive committee provides one position for female students and one for students with physical impairment. This indicates the inclusiveness of the regular undergraduate students’ unions for female and student with physical impairment. When the composition of student unions is analyzed, female students are inadequately represented in the executive committee as compared to their male counter parts. This is consistent with the finding of Joseph, et al., (2008) where student unions in public universities of Kenya are male dominated which resulted from perceiving female students as uncommitted and poor in leadership ability. Similar reasons might have contributed in the sample universities in Ethiopia.

In organizing student unions, six of the seven universities use parliamentary and the remaining one uses presidential. Unlike “the principle of universality of membership” (FDRE, 2009, p.5002) and against its own student union constitution, one of the universities which used presidential system recruits candidates for executive committee only from members of Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front party members. As indicated in the findings of (Luescher & Mugume (2014), like that of many universities in African countries (e.g. Ghana, Kenya, South Africa, Tanzania, and Uganda), the current result shows the involvement of the ruling political party in the election of student union in one of the first generation universities that used presidential system of organization. This involvement of the ruling political party like that of many universities in African countries (See Luescher & Mugume (2014) might indicate the intention of the government to use the student union as “an agent of party-political machinery’ (Jansen 2011) as cited in Luescher & Mugume (2014,p. 506).

Such politically affiliated student unions could have both positive and negative results. Political careers of student leaders after graduation, scholarship opportunities, and representing
student interests by putting pressure on university managements could be among the merits. On the other hand, however, over and above violating right of all students to freedom of association which makes unfair discrimination, student leaders may lose their confidence to genuinely represent the interest of the student community. Similar to the reports made by Luescher & Mugume (2014), this calls to ‘depoliticize’ election of student unions like that of the University of Pretoria and to ban on all party-political activities like that of universities in Tanzania.

Regardless of the systems used in organizing student unions, the larger student population actively participates in electing their representatives. This might have resulted from students’ interest to practice direct democratic elections. This is contradictory to the findings of Boland (2005) indicating low participation of university students in Europe to elect their representatives due to ‘‘democratic fatigue’’ and ‘‘leaving little time for institutional life’’ (p.205).

Support of University Administration to Foster Students’ Participation in University Governance

Effective student participation in university governance demands support from universities. To this end, universities, in agreement to the literature (e.g., Foroni, 2011; Jematia et al., 2012) has senate legislations which acknowledged students representation at different level of university governance. On top of that, in congruent to the findings of Jematia et al., (2012); Planas et al., (2013) universities provide financial, office facilities and other physical resources to student unions. Moreover, in harmony to the literature (e.g. Akomolafe & Ibijola, 2012; Menon, 2003) student union representatives are given experience sharing opportunities, recognitions for their contributions through certification and also opportunities are given to attend different meetings including national forum of public universities. In addition, the top level university management uses open door policy, oral encouragement, and valuing the views and opinions of students as support mechanisms. However, unlike the findings of Onwunli &
Agho (2004) and Zuo & Ratsoy (1999), short-term courses on different topics, seminars, leadership trainings are not provided. This might have affected student unions not to focus on academic issues as they do in administrative areas and on many of their roles.

**Challenges Encountered**

Although there are legal provisions which endorse students’ participation at different level of university governance, the inclusion alone, however, does not guarantee in having effective students participation in university governance due to a number of challenges. In agreement with the findings of Zuo & Ratsoy (1999), the factors that affect students’ participation at different level of university governance are related to both the institution as well as to the student body. Similar to the findings of Arminio (2000) and Menon (2003, 2005), failure to inform student representatives in advance and inappropriate meeting schedule which overlap with students class hours are among institution related challenges. Like the finding of Zue & Ratsoy (1999), lack of clear understanding on students rights and the benefits of participation on the part of deans, department heads and instructors, and the need to have students to focus only on their study are also the other challenges students faced. Like that of the findings of Lizzio & Wilson (2009), Luescher & Mugume (2014) lack of top level management consistent follow-up on colleges and departments; interference of political parties and role conflict with other student organizations are also among the challenges that students come across.

With regard to the challenges related to students and their union, like that of the findings of Zue & Ratsoy, (1999) absence of formal student organizations at college and department level has resulted in having least influence in decisions at these levels. Inappropriate election schedule of student unions, pressure on student leaders from both sides -the student body and
university management, failure in balancing between academic work and leadership service resulting in declining in academic achievement are the other challenges (Joseph et al., 2008). Likewise, in congruent to the findings of Akomolafe & Ibiola, (2012) and Foroni (2011), inadequate orientations and training on roles, rules, regulations, and polices are also student related challenges which affected students participation in university governance.

Summary

The finding indicated that except in the senate of universities, students’ participation in academic matter is inadequate. On the contrary, students are meaningfully participating in administrative matter and ad-hoc committees. With all its’ inadequacy of participation, both the institution and the student body have benefited from the process. Although there are legal provisions which promote inclusive student unions, in reality it is controlled by regular students only and leaving the others voiceless. Among many of its roles, student unions are busy on those which provide short term effects than those which have a long term effects. It was also found institutional as well as student related challenges which affect students’ participation in university governance.
CHAPTER FIVE-SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Introduction

With reference to the research methodology discussed in chapter three the aim of this part of the dissertation is to provide summary of the study and to formulate conclusions regarding the objectives of the research as stated in the first chapter. The conclusions drawn have implications for practice, policy, and theory based on the literature review and empirical studies seen in the process of this study.

5.2. Summary of Findings

Purpose

The major objective of the present study was to examine the status of students’ participation in the governance of public higher education institutions in Ethiopia. The target population of the study was taken from seven randomly selected public universities, two from first generation, three from second generation and two from third generation, on the bases of their distribution of generations.

Research questions

The following research questions were designed to guide the study:

1. To what extent do students participate in public universities governance related to academic matters and administrative matters in Ethiopia?

2. To what extent do university students’ unions in Ethiopia public universities carryout the roles given to them?

3. What are the benefits gained as a result of students’ participation in public universities governance in Ethiopia?
4. To what extent the existing regulations of universities and student union structure are inclusive to promote participation of all students in the governance of public universities in Ethiopia?

5. To what extent the university administration provide support to foster students’ participation in public universities Governance in Ethiopia?

6. What are the challenges encountered in the process of participating students in the governance of the public universities in Ethiopia?

Three groups of participants took part in the study: academic leaders, (mainly academic vice presidents, dean of students, college/school/faculty deans and department chairs); student union executive committee members, and senior students. Data were solicited from these informants with the help of interview guide, focus group discussions, and documentary sources and self-developed survey questionnaires. For the quantitative study a total 522 survey questionnaires, i.e. 107 to academic leaders (31 deans and 76 department heads), 31 to college level student representatives, and 384 to senior students were distributed. A total of 494 questionnaires i.e. 99 from academic leaders, 30 from student representatives and 365 from senior students were collected and making the return rate 94 %. The analysis of data is made on the basis of data gathered from the study participants and document reviewed.

The current study employed a mixed research design. A concurrent mixed method design in which qualitative and quantitative data are collected in parallel and these two types of data are mixed beginning from data analysis on ward. The mixed research design, as clearly stated by Creswell (2009) and Johnson et al., (2007) helps to gain a more complete understanding of the research questions. Data were gathered from two sources. The primary data sources were interview, survey questionnaires and focus group discussions. The primary data
was integrated with information collected from secondary data sources such as higher education proclamation, institutional documents such as university senate legislations, senate minutes, and college and department academic committee minutes and student union minutes.

Using multiple data sources contributed to reduce the risk of systematic bias (Berg, 2007), for better understanding of issues under study (Maxwell, 2005), for data triangulation and for strong confirmation of the study findings (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2007). To guide the study, a conceptual framework of students’ participation in university governance developed by Zuo & Ratsoy (1999) and which is modified for the purpose of this study was used. The data for the qualitative research of this study was drawn from documents; interview conducted with academic vice presidents, deans of students, student union presidents and seven FGDs student union executive committee members. Cognizant of the advice of McLafferty (2004), FGDs were moderated by the researcher himself.

With regard to the quantitative data, 69 academic leaders which include deans and department heads, 30 college level academic council student representatives and 355 senior students filled in a five-item survey questionnaire prepared in accordance with the objective of the study and the review of the literature. Based on the analyses of both the quantitative and the qualitative data presented in the preceding chapter, the conclusions are given below under six subheadings related to the research questions restated above: students participation in public universities governance related to academic matters and administrative matters, student unions and their roles, benefits that universities gained, inclusiveness of structure and regulations, benefits that student representatives and the larger student population gained, support mechanisms used by universities, and challenges encountered. And the findings of the study are briefly summarized below.
5.1. **Students’ participation in university senate and senate standing committees**

Universities in their senate legislations recognize students as member of the senate but the number of seats given to students and their right to vote on issues lacks uniformity. Irrespective of lack of uniformity, it was found that students’ participation in university senate is relatively high. Although there are legal provisions, except students’ affairs committee which works on student services, extracurricular activities, and disciplinary issues, students’ participation in university council and in senate standing committees is almost nil.

**Students participation in college academic commission and in department academic council**: Students’ participation in college academic commission and department academic council is almost a neglected area across universities; it is fully controlled by academic staff members. But students’ participation in Ad-hoc committees, in administrative areas such as student cafeteria and other related student service committee, sport and recreation committee in disciplinary matters, in instructors’ performance evaluation and in planning and evaluation of overall university performance is high.

**Informal participation** The level of informal participation of students in university governance is found to be high at the top level but it declines as one move down the structure of the university.

**Effectiveness of student unions in carrying out their roles and responsibilities** The findings are mixed. Positive trends are observed in areas of representing the students in the university governance and serving as a bridge and in promotion welfare of students. There is an attempt in supplementing university curricula through co-curricular and club activities. Some of the findings are, however, discouraging. Student unions have limited role in carrying out their roles
and responsibilities with respect to promoting academic excellence, research, intellectual culture of tolerance to diverse opinions; and encouraging debates on public issues in varied forms including discussions and publications. The student unions have little or no role in supplementing university curricula through panel discussions, debates, seminars, among members of the university community and the society at large; and in promoting mutual respect, understanding, tolerance and co-operation among university students, and other members of university community.

_Benefits obtained_ The study revealed that the universities studied benefit in many ways because of student participation. First the universities benefit in the form of getting timely information and constructive feedbacks about the service given, reducing the burden of the management and lessen administrative problems of students. And this gives time for the management to focus on strategic issues. Secondly, it reduce the burden of the administration in controlling the campus at night. Thirdly, participation of students in cafeteria service help the management to be transparent and lessens students’ dissatisfaction on the quality of service offered. The larger student community also benefits in administrative areas such as better cafeteria service and recreation opportunities. Additionally, students’ views are considered by the management and their security is protected. Students get pre-entry information and orientation about campus life. Moreover, disciplinary cases of students follow legal procedures and treated fairly as per the regulations of universities. Students’ strike has reduced and students graduate by the academic calendar as per the length of the program. As personal benefits, student representatives gained experience, developed managerial skills, and became aware of government policies, directives and bureaucratic procedures of the universities. Besides, they
develop reasoning ability, communication skills, the courage to speak in the presence of large audiences and ‘big’ people, get physiological satisfaction and a sense of usefulness.

**Inclusiveness of university regulations** There are legal provisions and regulations that declare inclusive student union and the right of any student to organize in student unions regardless of their admission category, program, gender, ethnicity, religion and any other differences.

**Election process and structure of student unions, female and physically impaired student representation:** It was learnt that the election process of student union has two systems: parliamentary system in six of the universities and a presidential system in one of the universities. It was found that the student union organized through presidential system is politically influenced by the ruling party which excludes other students who are not members of EPRDF to become executive committee members. Students’ union organizational structure is not parallel to academic structure of the university but simply floats at university or campus level. This has resulted in absence of student union formal arrangements at college and department level. Students’ participation in the election of executive committee members in both parliamentary and presidential system is high. Although the executive committee of student unions are male dominated, fixed seats are given to female and physically impaired student

**Support given by universities to promote student participation in governance** The degree of support given to student representatives varies along the structure of the university. The top level management and deans of students regard the union as part of university formal structure and provide both durable and stationary materials. Furthermore, the management organize experience sharing programs in local universities and provide scholarships to selected student
union executive committee members. Likewise, the management employ student union representatives as graduate assistants and allow students to attend national forum of universities. Open door policy used by the top level management and their willingness to listens to student unions executive committee members views are among the support strategies. However, this is not true at college and department level. Moreover, universities do not assign advisory organs to assist student unions to have publications and therefore no student union in sampled universities which have its’ own publications.

Challenges Encountered The challenges encountered are related to both the institutions and to the student body. Perceiving the student union as a political entity and a spy of the government; inappropriate schedule of meetings; considering students as immature and ignorant are among institution related challenges. Additionally, lack of awareness about the rights of students; reluctance of the top level management to enforce the lower level are also institution related hindering factors. Fear of victimization particularly on grades, poor time management, in appropriate election schedule of student unions, and lack of clear student structure at college and department level are some of student related challenges. Role conflict with other political affiliated student organizations like peace forum and student police is the other student related challenges.

5.3. Conclusions
Students’ Participation in HEI Governance Related to Academic and Administrative Matters

The first empirical objective of the present study was to ascertain the extent of students’ participation in the governance of the university in both academic and administrative matters. It was determined that students are actively participating in the senate of universities. There is also strong informal participation of students with the top level management of universities.
However, despite the existence of legal provisions, students are not practically participating in senate standing committees, college level academic council and department academic committee. On the other hand, students are meaningfully participating in administrative areas such as student service, performance evaluation of instructors, discipline committee, different ad-hoc committees and others related. Students’ contribution to universities particularly in academic areas suggested by Carey (2013) Menon (2005) Zuo, & Ratsoy (1999) is determined by the extent to which students are participating in the academic structure such as colleges and departments. This implied that the legal regulations which provide students to participate in academic areas remained on paper and these levels are controlled by academicians excluding students from decisions making. Taking this finding into account and also weighing it from democratic and political theory perspective as well as that of partnership decision making model, universities particularly colleges and departments are undemocratic.

The study results revealed the existence of legal provisions which promote students participation in university senate standing committees, college level academic committee, and department academic council. In practice, however, students are excluded from decisions made by these governing bodies and fully controlled by academic staff members. In relation to this, the finding showed the existence of legal provisions in both national and institutional level which promote organization of inclusive student unions established on the principle of universality of membership. The finding, however, indicated that, it was only regular undergraduate students who organize themselves in student unions. Based on these findings, it is possible to conclude that, there exist a discrepancy between policy, institutional legal provisions and practices.
Effectiveness of Student Unions in Carrying out their Roles

University student unions are legally recognized organizations established with clear roles and responsibilities. The finding of the present study showed a mixed result in terms of implementing their roles. Accordingly, the union represented students at different level including in national public universities forum and therefore, serving as a bridge between students and university management. Moreover, student unions are extremely engaged in promoting the welfare of students. With regarded to supplementing the university curricula through co-curricular activities, except a few NGO driven clubs, those clubs which are cost free and which have a long term effect in building an all-rounded students which could excel their academic work and their future life are not considered. Moreover, students unions are not engaged in carrying out their roles on promoting academic excellence, research, and intellectual culture of tolerance to diverse opinions; in encouraging debates on public issues in varied forms including discussions and publications. On top of that, the finding is discouraging in the role of supplementing the university curricula by promoting activities as panel discussions, debates, seminars, among members of the university community and the society at large. Same was true in promoting mutual respect, understanding, tolerance and co-operation among university students and other members of the university community. This shows that students unions focuses on roles related to fulfilling and satisfying a day to day demand of student’s. Taking this into account it is possible to conclude that university student unions are not effective in implementing their roles and they are shortsighted.

Benefits Universities Obtained as a Result of Participating Students in Governance

The legal provisions made by higher education proclamation of Ethiopia (FDRE, 2009) and senate legislation of universities to promote students participation in the governance is
intentionally made to benefit both students and universities. Writers (such as Elizabeth, 2014; Olajire & Babatope, 2014) indicated the actual benefits that universities gained from such a practice. Accordingly, institutions got timely, genuine, and complete information which is helpful for the management in making rational decisions and an immediate reaction. As a result, universities are able know the feelings and request of students and respond to students questions particularly that of administrative issues. Universities are also capable of getting timely feedbacks about the service they provided and act accordingly. It also helped universities to be transparent mainly in areas related to student service particularly cafeteria and related services. Routine administrative burden of the management, mainly related to student cafeteria service, is also reduced. Such cumulative achievement resulted in abolishing student protests and forms of violent demonstration. Because of this, peaceful learning environment is created allowing universities to operate as per their academic calendar without any extension caused by student strikes. The findings of the present study however revealed that student unions are absorbed by administrative issues like that of student service mainly on cafeteria. Due to this, in promoting quality of education through peer tutoring, working on cooperative learning (1:5 arrangement), research activities and community service areas are inadequate. Thus, it is possible to conclude that, contribution of students’ participation in governance is mainly on reducing administrative burden but inadequate in the area of teaching learning, research and community service, and major missions of universities in general.

Benefits to the Larger Student Population and to Individual Students Union Representatives

Students’ participation in governance benefits both the larger student population and individual student representatives. Accordingly, the findings revealed that students get better quality and quantity of cafeteria services, recreation opportunities, sanitary services and their
cases at different levels including that of discipline and other administrative problems get timely responses. Moreover, students are able to attend their study and graduate as per the length of the program without disruption caused by student protests. Due to structural problem of the student union and absence of student participation at college and department academic council, the benefits are more of short lived and administrative oriented than academic related.

In relation to benefits of students’ participation in university governance to student union representatives, in agreement to the literature, for example, Foreman & Retallick (2013), and Lizzio, & Wilson, (2009) and (Menon, 2003), is an opportunity for them to learn government and institutional procedures, to develop managerial skills, to learn and practice decision making procedures, develop to reasoning, interpersonal skills and self-confidence. Moreover, they also learn how to manage meetings, manage conflict and how to approach and work with senior university officials. Although, student union representatives are beneficial in getting such skills which could help them in the rest of their life after graduation, they had to pass through personal challenges which demanded them to face a decline in grade point average. Based on these findings it is possible to conclude that, participating in university governance provides not only individual benefits to student union representatives but it has also personal risks and costs.

*Inclusiveness of Existing Regulations of Universities and Student Union Structure*

The study results revealed the existence of legal provisions which promote organization of inclusive student unions. The finding, however, indicated that, it was only regular undergraduate students who organize themselves in student unions. On the other hand, universities being satisfied with administrative burden reduced by undergraduate students’ organization, universities don’t seem to exert efforts to encourage other groups of students to organize
themselves in union and contribute in the area of academic, research and community service. On the other hand, in one of the universities which use presidential system in organizing student union, allowed only students who are members of Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) to compete for executive committee and excluding others. But there is no difference in representation of women and students with disabilities across all sample universities. Based on this finding, it is possible to conclude that, legal provisions which promote inclusive student unions are put in place in both national and institutional level, but in practice student unions are not inclusive of all student type and leaving them to be voice less.

All students who are registered in the university have the right to be the member of the student union and also the executive committee. The national higher education proclamation of Ethiopia as well as universities legislations recognizes universality of membership of student unions. The finding in one of the student union from one of the first generation universities which use presidential system in organizing student union, allowed only students who are members of the ruling party, Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) and its’ regional partner parties members, to compete for executive committee members of the student unions and excluding all other students who are not members of EPRDF and its’ regional partner parties. On the bases of this finding, it is possible to conclude that there exist interference of the ruling party in university student unions and the empowerment of student unions is questionable.

Challenges Encountered

In the process of participating students in university governance, there are a number of challenges encountered. Challenges encountered range from failure to inform student
representatives to that of inconvenient time of meetings. On top of that, absence of student union structure at lower level, inconvenient election schedule of student unions and others are the challenges in the other direction. Due to this, the overall status of students’ participation in university governance was not to the desired level as stipulated in the legal provisions. Thus, both the institution and student unions are accountable in hampering the status of students’ participation in university governance.

5.4. Recommendations

As indicated in the discussions and concluding sections above, there are a number of gaps which needs to be considered to improve the practices of students’ participation in public universities. Taking these into account, the present study has forwarded the following recommendations.

Implications for Policy and Practice

*Periodic monitoring:* The finding revealed that, universities have clear legal provisions which promote students’ participation at different level of university governance. In practice, except in university senate, administrative areas and informal participation at the top level of university management, the rest which was promised in the legislation to participate students, i.e. in many of standing committees, college AC and department level DC have remained on paper. Cognizant of its advantages, the top level university management should periodically monitor colleges, departments, standing committees. To insure the implementation of the legal provisions made by universities and the HEP and to have effective practices of student participation at different levels, student unions should make the claim of their rights and need to focus on the lower level structure of the university as they do to the top level. Ministry of education also has
to take it as one discussion point at national forum of public universities and area to be checked during supervision in universities.

**Provision of orientation and training to student representatives:** In order to have meaningful student participation, knowledgeable and committed student representatives who are aware of their roles, rights and obligations are required. Taking the difficulties of the responsibilities, student representatives have to know about the possible risks and challenges that they may encountered as well. Familiarity of student representatives about university policy, rules and regulations and also their priority targets is also important. The finding showed that such strategies were inadequate. It is also natural for student representatives in the student unions to have a high turnover due to graduation and need to train the future student representatives over and over again. Thus, in order to help student representatives to develop their leadership skills and to perform their challenging roles effectively, university management, mainly the office in which student unions are accountable for, should organize comprehensive orientation program and periodically provide need driven trainings on different topics.

**Organize awareness creation forums to people at different decision-making positions and academicians:** The finding showed that students’ participation in the lower structure of universities were almost absent. Student representatives were not positively perceived but as a spy of the government and the management. They were also considered as customers than partners who have the right to participate in decision-making. Beyond the formal form, informal type of participation was also insignificant at these levels. Student representations in most of senate standing committees were also insignificant. There was a demand to control the decision making by the academician and students to focus only on their study. The teaching staffs are really the ones who could promote or inhibit student participation through their attitudes. To
reverse such a stand, university management should organize awareness creation forums, seminars and workshops to people at different decision-making positions and also to all academicians about the rights of students, the benefits of participating students at different governing bodies and sensitize them on issues of participatory governance.

_A shift of roles which have a long term effect:_ The finding showed that student unions are strongly working on the welfare of students particularly in the area of student cafeteria. Most of the co-curricular activates run by student unions are also NGO driven. Those co-curricular activates which are cost free and in the hand of students but having a long term effect in building the overall personality of students didn’t get due attention. Moreover, student unions are not promoting professional associations of students as Haile Sellassie I university students did half a century before. On top of that, student union roles related to promoting academic excellence, research, and intellectual culture of tolerance to diverse opinions; in encouraging debates on public issues in forms including discussions and publications; activities as panel discussions, debates, seminars, among members of the university community and the society at large and the like are not addressed. Student unions beyond being absorbed by routine cafeteria and related roles which have a short term effect, they should transform to carry out the roles which have a long term effect that benefit the student body, the university and the society at large. To this end, Ministry of Education, university management and the national public university students union should collaboratively work to have far sighted student unions which work on roles which have a long term effect.

_Organize inclusive student union:_ The finding indicted that there are legal provisions which promote inclusive student union organizations. The existing student unions are organized by regular undergraduate students only excluding all other program students which have a
common agenda on teaching learning, research and community service. For instance, graduate students, who are thought to have sufficient knowledge and experience to contribute meaningfully to university decisions particularly in academic areas, have remained voiceless. Thus, taking into account the rights of other students and the advantages of inclusive student organizations, federal ministry of education, universities and national public universities student union have to discuss on the issue together with all concerned stakeholders to have inclusive student unions.

*Depoliticize’ election of student unions* The finding indicated that in the student union, which used presidential system of organization there was involvement of the ruling political party in the election of student union. It was only members of EPRDF and supportive regional political party members who have the right to be member of student union executive committee members. Organizing student unions by political affiliation of students is against not only to the provisions in HEP which advocate principle of universality of membership but also its’ own student union constitution which declare to be free, and non -political affiliated. It is violating the right of all students to freedom of association which makes unfair discrimination. Moreover, the finding revealed the existence of different student organizations across sample universities such as peace forum and student police, which have political bases of the ruling party, with similar roles to that of student unions. These politically affiliated student organizations have a role conflict with the student unions. Such political affiliation of the student union organizing system, at the end of the day, could be also a cause for conflict among students in the institution. Taking the lesson from other African countries, like that of the University of Pretoria and that of universities in Tanzania (See Luescher & Mugume, 2014) Ministry of Education and national
public university students council should officially ban all party-political activities and depoliticize’ election of student unions.

*Proper student union election schedule:* The finding revealed that there are student unions who conduct election of student union executive committee members in months between November and December after former student union representatives left the campus due to graduation. As a result, vacant positions are created and students are not represented for about a semester at different levels. To overcome such a challenge and to have smooth transition between the then and the new student union representatives, elections should be scheduled in the second semester around March and April. Such a schedule has many advantages. First, it gives an opportunity for first year students to be part of the union and serve in the union beginning from the upcoming academic year. Secondly, there will not be any vacant positions left without student representative. The third and the major one is there will be a smooth transition between the former and the new executive committee members and giving them the chance to work together for about two months. On top of that, the new executive committee members could get adequate induction and lessons about their roles, regulations and could run the union by its own in the upcoming academic year. To this end, university student unions, national public university students’ union and university management should take the responsibility to have such election schedules.

*Provide professional support to student unions to have their own publication:* Unlike university students of Haile Sellassie regime, none of the students unions studied have publication be it newspaper, journals or news leaf lets. On the other hand, universities in their legislations promised to provide not only financial and other resource support but also professional support for student unions to have their own publications but this is not the case. In
order to promote exchange of diverse ideas and to provide students to air their views and also argue over societal issues, universities should put into action what they have promised in their legislations. Student unions, on the other hand, beyond organizing editorial board members and promoting article contributions, they should be far sighted and knock at the gates of the management to get professional support and to have their own publications.

**Structural rearrangement of student unions:** The finding revealed that unlike academic structure of the university which goes from senate to college and department level, student union structure simply floats at university level or campus level council with the aim of facilitating administrative activities. As a result there is no parallel student union structure at college and department level. Beyond the attitude of academic staff, the absence of the student union structure has contributed for the absence of students’ participation at college and department level. This in turn has resulted in having insignificant contribution in the areas of academic, research and community service. Moreover, students’ right to be represented in decision making bodies, which are directly linked to academic life, is also violated. This calls for healing the broken structure of the student union and make it parallel to the structure of the university through rearrangement of the existing one. To this end, all sections in a department should elect one male and one female representative. These elected class representatives of a single department elect at least five to seven council members having its own chairman, secretary, and other members.

For the purpose of decision, the number has to be odd. The chairman of the council is representative of academic committee at department level. The chairman and the secretary of each department in a college becomes members of college level student union and can elect a chairman, a secretary and other members, but has to be odd in number. The chairman represents
students in college academic committee council. These department and college level councils have a primary responsibility to work with instructors, department heads and deans mainly on academic matter. Following the chain of command, the councils are accountable to the university student union. To this end, ministry of education, university administration at different level, university student unions and national public universities student union has to have a common understanding through organizing discussions on the issue for its implementation.

Convenient time of meetings: The finding of the current study indicated that inconvenient time of meeting which overlap with the class of student representatives is one of the major challenges. Due to this, student representatives had to cut classes and attend meetings or not to. It was also found that decline in grade point average as a common problem of student union representatives. Moreover, long and frequent meetings are also the other problems. The resent study conducted by Education Strategy Center (ESC) (2015), a wing of ministry of education, also confirmed the challenge in universities related to the timing and length of formal meetings “often continuing into the late evening hours” (ESC, 2015, p.9). Thus, taking into account the merits of participating students to arrive at rational decisions which consider the interests of students; acceptance and easy implementation of decisions; and above all taking into account the educative purposes in producing the future university heads at different levels and considering its benefit to the society at large, university management should take into account student members when they schedule meetings.

5.5. Suggestions for Further Study

The current study was carried out in public universities. Another research study should therefore be conducted in a private university to find out whether the same findings would be obtained. The present study recommended a study to be conducted to find out the influence of
students participation in university governance on the academic performance of the student representatives. Study on university student union in Ethiopia including how they internally operate, their constitution as compared to other countries, funding sources, office management, decision-making procedures, internal and external relations and activities is also the other research area that his study recommended. This study used top level management, student union representatives’ deans and department heads as subjects. It doesn’t include the views of academic staff. Thus a study on the opinion of academic staff on student participation in university governance is also important. A similar study on participation of academic staff and administrative staff in university governance is also a future area of study.

Summary

This, the final chapter, part of the study presented summary of the study, conclusions drawn, and recommendations forwarded by the researcher. In the summary part purpose of the study, the research questions, methodology employed to carry out the study, and the research model chosen are re-discussed and summarized. Conclusions drawn along with the six research questions designed to guide the study are presented. The conclusions have implications for improving implementation practices, serving as an input for policy makers, and adding to the body of literature. Finally, the chapter concluded with recommendations and areas for further research related to the present study. The importance of similar study on private universities; influence of participation on academic performance of students; a study on student union itself; a study to identify opinion of academic staff; and a study on participation of academic and administrative staff on university governance are emphasized.
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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Survey Questionnaires

Addis Ababa University

School of Graduate Studies
Department of Educational Planning and Management

To: College Deans and Department Heads of Public Universities

Dear Participant

You have been selected as a representative sample of a public University to take part in this study. The study is conducted in partial fulfillment for the requirements for PhD dissertation on the title: Students’ participation in public higher education institutions governance in Ethiopia. The study emphasizes on structural levels and areas of participation, the benefits achieved so far, the support made by the university, and challenges encountered. The purpose of this questionnaire is, therefore, to collect relevant information about your views on students participation in faculty/college and departments governance in particular and the university in general. The report on the findings of the research would be used primarily for the benefit of the institutions and for policy makers.

Your genuine and timely responses are believed to have of a paramount importance to the successes of the study. Your response to the items of this questionnaire will remain confidential and anonymity will be maintained by the reporting of data in aggregate form. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may withdraw from the survey at any time. Please, do not put your name anywhere on the survey. You are requested to take the 20-25 minutes to complete the attached questionnaire. You can use a “X” mark to indicate your responses for items with alternative responses. Please briefly state your responses for the open-ended items.

Thank you for your time, effort and consideration.
Sincerely!

Melsew Tefera (Address: Mobile Phone: +251911335146 email: melsewtefera@yahoo.com)
**Part One: Participants’ Personal Information**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
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<td>Which university do you belong to?</td>
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<td>Which college/faculty/institute/school do you belong to?</td>
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<td>Which department do you belong to?</td>
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<td>What is your sex?</td>
<td>Male (  ) Female (  )</td>
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<tr>
<td>What is your current Educational qualification</td>
<td>BA/BSc. (  ) PhD (  ) MA/MSc. (  ) Other _______</td>
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<tr>
<td>What is your Academic rank</td>
<td>Graduate Assistant (  ) Assistant Lecturer (  ) Lecturer (  ) Assistant Professor (  ) Associate Professor (  ) Professor (  ) Others (please specify) _______</td>
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<tr>
<td>How long have you worked in the current position?</td>
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**Part Two : Structural Levels and Areas of Students Participation in University Governance**

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<th>No</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Almost always</th>
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<td>Student representatives :</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>participate in college AC</td>
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<td>participate in department AC</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>bring agendas for discussion freely</td>
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</table>
4 express their views freely
5 have limited inputs to influence final decisions
6 participate in instructors evaluation
7 participate in the elections and appointments of faculties for different positions,
8 participate in students disciplinary matters
9 Students evaluation of instructors performance helped to improve instructors performance

If any other areas and committees that students participate, please list them here
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Part Three: Expected Benefits of Students’ participation in university governance

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<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Statement</th>
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<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Transparency and representative democracy has developed</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Smooth relationship with students is created</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Timely feedback about the service is obtained</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Peaceful learning environment is created</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Acceptance and implementation of decisions has improved</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Students’ rights are respected</td>
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Part Four: Strategies used to strengthen students’ participation in university governance

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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Students are encouraged and assisted to exercise freedom of expression</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Orientation is given to newly elected student representatives

Meetings are scheduled in appropriate time to students

Open door policy is put in place to student representatives

If any other benefits achieved so far, please list them here

If any other strategy used so far please list them here

Part Five: Challenges of students’ participation in university governance

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<th>Statement</th>
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<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Inconvenient time of meetings that overlap with student classes</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Failure to inform student representatives in advance</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Lack of adequate orientations and training on roles and responsibilities</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Lack of adequate knowledge on issues raised</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Student representatives are self interested and does not add to the quality of decision</td>
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If any other challenge faced in the process of participating students in governance, please list them here

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

Thank You
To: Student Representatives at College Level

Dear Participant

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<td>Which department do you belong to?</td>
<td>What is your academic year of study?</td>
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<td>What is your sex?</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>participate in instructors evaluation</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>participate in students disciplinary matters</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Students evaluation of instructors performance helped to improve instructors performance</td>
<td>St. agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

If any other areas and committees that students participate, please list them here
________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________

Part Three: Expected Benefits of Students’ participation in university governance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Transparency and representative democracy has developed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

282
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Almost always</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Students are encouraged and assisted to exercise freedom of expression</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Orientation is given to newly elected student representatives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Meetings are scheduled in appropriate time to students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Open door policy is put in place to student representatives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*If any other benefits achieved so far, please list them here*

________________________________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________

*If any other strategy used so far please list them here _________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Inconvenient time of meetings that overlap with student classes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Failure to inform student representatives in advance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Lack of adequate orientations and training on roles and responsibilities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Lack of adequate knowledge on issues raised</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Student representatives are self interested</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and does not add to the quality of decision

If any other challenge faced in the process of participating students in governance, please list them here

_____________________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________________
To: Senior Students

Dear Participant

You have been selected as a representative sample of a public University to take part in this study. The study is conducted in partial fulfillment for the requirements for PhD dissertation on the title: Students’ participation in public higher education institutions governance in Ethiopia. The study emphasizes on structural levels and areas of participation, the benefits achieved so far, the support made by the university, and challenges encountered. The purpose of this questionnaire is, therefore, to collect relevant information about your views on students participation in faculty/college and departments governance in particular and the university in general. The report on the findings of the research would be used primarily for the benefit of the institutions and for policy makers.

Your genuine and timely responses are believed to have of a paramount importance to the successes of the study. Your response to the items of this questionnaire will remain confidential and anonymity will be maintained by the reporting of data in aggregate form. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may withdraw from the survey at any time. Please, do not put your name anywhere on the survey. You are requested to take the 20-25 minutes to complete the attached questionnaire. You can use a “X” mark to indicate your responses for items with alternative responses. Please briefly state your responses for the open-ended items.

Thank you for your time, effort and consideration.

Sincerely!

Melsew Tefera (Address: Mobile Phone: +251911335146 email: melsewtefera@yahoo.com)

---

**Part One: Roles of student union/ Council**

*Directions:* The statements listed below represent roles of student union/ Council of universities. Please review each statement and give the appropriate response by putting [X] against the relevant column which applies to your university.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1  | Election Process  
Students of the university actively participate in the election process of council/union leaders | | | | | |
| 1  | Benefits Gained  
| | | | | |

---
Students get better quality and quantity of cafeteria service as per the standard of the university

2 Protects students rights, freedoms, and security

3 High achieving students are awarded by SU

4 Students get tutorial support organized by the SU

5 Disciplinary cases follow legal procedures

6 Get pre-entry information and orientation

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>About the role of student union</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Encourage students to provide student-related volunteer services to the community</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2 Represent students in the university governance

3 Promote welfare of students

4 Served as a bridge between university management and student body by organizing forums and discussions

5 Supplement university curricula through co-curricular and club activities.

6 Promote academic excellence, research, intellectual culture of tolerance to diverse opinions

7 Encourage debates on public issues in varied forms including discussions and publications

8 Supplement university curricula by promoting activities as panel discussions, debates, seminars, among members of the university community and the society at large
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Promote mutual respect, understanding, tolerance and co-operation among university students, other members of university community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Periodically produces newspaper or news latter to inform the larger student population about its performance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B: Interview and FGD Guide

Addis Ababa University
School of Graduate Studies
Department of Educational Planning and Management

Interview Guide to Academic Vice President and Students’ Dean

How do you evaluate students’ participation in electing their representatives and their unions? What is the overall process and procedures followed? What are the challenges observe in the election process? To what extent student union is inclusive of all student type?

How do you evaluate students’ participation in the governance of the university at different levels: meaning at senate, council, college and department levels? What about in standing and ad hoc committees of the university?

According to your observations, in addition to their formal involvement in the university decision making process, what have students done informally to exert their influence on decisions? What is the tradition of the management in using open-door policy for student leaders? Please give me some examples

Do student representatives participate in all areas of decision making processes at different levels? Are there issues that student representatives excluded and for what reasons? Do they have equal right to vote? What do you say about the number of representation that students have at different levels?

What do you say about students’ representatives’ confidence and their ability to influence others? Are student representatives informed prior to the meeting about the agenda? Which methods are usually used? Are students able to place issues on the agenda to be discussed? What do you say about the benefits that the university, the larger student population and student leaders gained as a result of participating in university governance?

Do you think student union of the university is inclusive of students in all program- regular, extension, summer, postgraduate and the like? What about that of female and students with impairments? What is your perception about the election process of the union and involvement of students in the election of their leaders?

To what extent university management at different level is supportive to institutionalize meaningful students’ participation in university governance? What practical efforts and actions have been taken? Will you please list some examples?

To what extent the student union executes its role given to it? What achievements are observed?

What do you think are the most dominant challenges and constraints encountered in the process of participating students in the governance of the university? In your opinion, what issues need to be addressed and what measures should be taken to improve the current trend of students participation in university governance?

Are there any other things significant that we have not yet discussed? Thank you!
Addis Ababa University  
School of Graduate Studies  
Department of Educational Planning and Management

Interview Guide to Students Union President

How do you evaluate students’ participation in electing their representatives and their unions? What is the overall process and procedures followed? What are the challenges observe in the election process? To what extent student union is inclusive of all student type?

How do you evaluate students’ participation in the governance of the university at different levels: meaning at senate, council, college and department levels? What about in standing and ad hoc committees of the university?

According to your observations, in addition to their formal involvement in the university decision making process, what have students done informally to exert their influence on decisions? What is the tradition of the management in using open-door policy for student leaders? Please give me some examples

Do student representatives participate in all areas of decision making processes at different levels? Are there issues that student representatives excluded and for what reasons? Do they have equal right to vote? What do you say about the number of representation that students have at different levels?

What do you say about students’ representatives’ confidence and their ability to influence others? Are student representatives informed prior to the meeting about the agenda? Which methods are usually used? Are students able to place issues on the agenda to be discussed? What do you say about the benefits that the university, the larger student population and student leaders gained as a result of participating in university governance?

Do you think student union of the university is inclusive of students in all program- regular, extension, summer, postgraduate and the like? What about that of female and students with impairments? What is your perception about the election process of the union and involvement of students in the election of their leaders?

To what extent university management at different level is supportive to institutionalize meaningful students’ participation in university governance? What practical efforts and actions have been taken? Will you please list some examples?

To what extent the student union executes its role given to it? What achievements are observed? Does the student union have an attachment to the larger student population? What are the mechanisms in place? Does the student union participate in the national forum of public institutions? What do you say comment about the board of the university?

What do you think are the most dominant challenges and constraints encountered in the process of participating students in the governance of the university? In your opinion, what issues need to be addressed and what measures should be taken to improve the current trend of students participation in university governance? Are there any other things significant that we have not yet discussed?

Thank you!
FGD Guide for Students Union standing committee members

How do you evaluate students’ participation in electing their representatives and their unions? What is the overall process and procedures followed? What are the challenges observe in the election process?

To what extent student union is inclusive of all student type?

How do you evaluate students’ participation in the governance of the university at different levels: meaning at senate, council, college and department levels? What about in standing and ad hoc committees of the university?

According to your observations, in addition to their formal involvement in the university decision making process, what have students done informally to exert their influence on decisions? What is the tradition of the management in using open-door policy for student leaders? Please give me some examples

Do student representatives participate in all areas of decision making processes at different levels? Are there issues that student representatives excluded and for what reasons? Do they have equal right to vote? What do you say about the number of representation that students have at different levels?

What do you say about students’ representatives’ confidence and their ability to influence others? Are student representatives informed prior to the meeting about the agenda? Which methods are usually used? Are students able to place issues on the agenda to be discussed? What do you say about the benefits that the university, the larger student population and student leaders gained as a result of participating in university governance?

Do you think student union of the university is inclusive of students in all program- regular, extension, summer, postgraduate and the like? What about that of female and students with impairments? What is your perception about the election process of the union and involvement of students in the election of their leaders?

To what extent university management at different level is supportive to institutionalize meaningful students’ participation in university governance? What practical efforts and actions have been taken? Will you please list some examples?

To what extent the student union executes its role given to it? What achievements are observed? Does the student union have an attachment to the larger student population? What are the mechanisms in place?

What do you think are the most dominant challenges and constraints encountered in the process of participating students in the governance of the university? In your opinion, what issues need to be addressed and what measures should be taken to improve the current trend of students participation in university governance? Are there any other things significant that we have not yet discussed? Thank You!!!
Appendix C: Cooperation letters

ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND
BEHAVIORAL STUDIES
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Date: January 24, 2017

To: Adda University

Meseaw Tegena is PhD student in Educational Policy and Leadership in the Department of Educational Planning and Management. He is currently working on his dissertation paper entitled

"Students' Participation in the Governance of Higher Education Institution in Ethiopia"

This is therefore, to kindly request your good office to provide him with the necessary support and information.

With Regards,

Kenenissa Bekele (PhD)
Chairman, Department of Educational Planning and Management
Date: January 24, 2017

To: Mekelle University

Melsen Tegena is PhD student in Educational Policy and Leadership in the Department of Educational Planning and Management. He is currently working on his dissertation paper entitled "Students' Participation in the Governance of Higher Education Institution in Ethiopia."

This is therefore, to kindly request your good office to provide him with the necessary support and information.

With Regards,

Kenenissa Dabi (PhD)
Chairman, Department of Educational Planning and Management
To: Weldiya University

Melsew Tegera is PhD student in Educational Policy and Leadership in the Department of Educational Planning and Management. He is currently working on his dissertation paper entitled

"Students' Participation in the Governance of Higher Education Institution in Ethiopia"

This is therefore, to kindly request your good office to provide him with the necessary support and information.

With regards,

Kenenissa Dabi (PhD)
Chairman, Department of Educational Planning and Management
## Appendix D: Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basic questions</th>
<th>Issues seen under each basic questions</th>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Researcher explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students’ participation in academic matter</td>
<td>Academic senate</td>
<td>meaningfully participate</td>
<td>Except in academic senate and ad-hoc committees, different governing bodies related academic matter were controlled by academicians which fits to a customer model of governance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Senate standing committees</td>
<td>except participating in students affairs committee, it is almost nil</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>College academic committee</td>
<td>Students were excluded</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Department academic committee</td>
<td>Students were excluded</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ad-hoc committees</td>
<td>meaningfully participate</td>
<td>Real participation exists; it was in agreement to partnership and decision model.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Informal participation</td>
<td>meaningfully participate at top level of university structure</td>
<td>Contrary to the formal type of participation, students were informally participating at top level structure of universities revealing the status of relationship between student representatives and degree of open door policy put in place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students’ participation in administrative matter</td>
<td>Student service committees</td>
<td>Adequately participated</td>
<td>Students devotion was on administrative matters and the level of participation was in line with partnership and decision model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student discipline</td>
<td>Adequately participated</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Instructors’ performance evaluation</td>
<td>Adequately participated</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In planning and performance evaluation of universities</td>
<td>Limited to provide feedback in general assembly</td>
<td>Incongruent to customer model, students were limited to give only feedback leaving the right to make decisions to the hand of academicians.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student unions and their roles</td>
<td>Extent of carrying out their roles</td>
<td>inadequate</td>
<td>Except representing students and promoting welfare of students, student unions were weak in carrying out roles which have a long term effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits obtained</td>
<td>Benefit</td>
<td>contributed in many of</td>
<td>Contributions in academic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>universities gained</td>
<td>administrative areas</td>
<td>area, research and community service was insignificant.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits the larger student population gained</td>
<td>Students’ questions and voice were heard and got better cafeteria, dormitory, recreation and health service..</td>
<td>Students were beneficial from their union more in administrative matter than academic wise.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal benefits of student union leaders</td>
<td>They developed managerial skills and gained knowledge on how the university works,</td>
<td>It was a learning session and had educative value to individual student representatives.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal provisions and Inclusiveness of student unions</td>
<td>Existence of institutional legal provisions</td>
<td>Senate legislations affirmed the right of all student.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students participation in organizing their union</td>
<td>the election process of student union assumed parliamentary and presidential system; high level of students’ participation in organizing their union</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inclusiveness of student unions of all student type</td>
<td>Not inclusive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Support strategies</td>
<td>Universities recognize students’ unions; value to their views; provide financial and material support.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Challenges</td>
<td>Considering student union as a political entity and as a spy; inappropriate meeting schedules</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Challenges related to institutions and to student unions have influenced the expected benefits.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inclusive of student type</td>
<td>Only regular undergraduate students make up student unions, excluding postgraduate and continuing program students.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Support mechanisms used by universities to foster student participation</td>
<td>Except provide resources and establish an advisory organ to assist students in the quality, form, and legality of publications.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inclusiveness of student unions</td>
<td>Not inclusive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Challenges</td>
<td>Lack the motivation and commitment; fear of victimization; structural problem of student union</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>