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Topic: Student Unions: Cornerstones of Institutional and Social Changes

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6. Conclusion

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"In the halls of a student union, the future is designed and debated." The above line of Lenin shows student activism is the cornerstone of social and institutional changes. Student unions are organized groups of students that become voice of social concerns and act as bridge between government or decision makers and public. There are number of student unions functional at national and international levels. Student unions are cornerstone of institutional and social changes by becoming an agent of change in political landscape; advocating of social rights, becoming voice of public's sentiments and providing platform for nurturing leadership qualities. Moreover, student unions guarantees global peace, safeguard rights of marginalized groups and shaping institutional policies. Besides, student unions create awareness among masses about social issues. The function of student unions can be better and effective by calling a healthy

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debate on role and scope of student unions, including student unions in decision making processes and accountability of student unions. In addition to that, banning of violent and extremist student unions can produce efficient working results of student unions. Student unions are catalyst of bringing social and institutional changes if their direction is on purpose and cause.

Student unions are organized group of students from different educational institutions. These organized groups involve in decision-making processes of institutions to protect rights of students on different aspects. The head of student unions are elected democratically. They organized seminars, debates and meetings in order to highlight issues. They also show street powers in order to fulfill their demands.

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Globally, the student unions are working in different countries and producing significant social and institutional changes. For instance, the American Alliance of Students in America and the Canadian Alliance of Students in the Canada are functioning positively and showed significant street power in currently ongoing Israel-Palestine conflict. However, they are banned in hybrid democratic countries and autocratic countries.

Following paragraphs shed light on the manifestations of student unions as the cornerstone of institutional and social changes.

Firstly, student unions are agent of change in political landscape. They act as catalyst in institutional changes. The recent protests in the Bangladesh by the students has toppled the government. The protest started from the University of Dhaka has shaken the governmental institutions. Hence, student unions

are agent of change in political landscape.

Secondly, student unions are advocate of social rights. They gather public in large numbers to highlight social issues. The case in point in this regard is street protest of Baluch students with the locals of Gwadar. The protest was about social issues such as water availability and unemployment in the area. Therefore, student unions advocate social rights.

Thirdly, student unions are voice of public's sentiments. They become voice by promoting and presenting public's opinion in front of governing bodies. For example, the Vietnam war in 1980 had deteriorating effects on the USA by economically and diplomatically. The Progressive Movement by the student unions at that time prevented the American government of that time to further engaged in war. So, student unions are

voice of public's sentiments.

Moreover, student unions provide platforms for nurturing leadership qualities. The conduction of healthy debate and constructive dialogues help in polishing of future leaders. Nelson Mandela<sup>and</sup> Barack Obama are notable names in this regard. Both of these personalities are product of student unions. Hence, student unions are platform for nurturing leadership for key institutions.

Additionally, student unions guarantee global peace and aid in prevailing peace. The ongoing war crimes committed by Israel in the Palestine are highlighted everywhere by the student unions. The European countries have unprecedented pro-Palestine protests all over the world. These protests pressured the governmental com'dore to stop aiding Israel. Therefore, student unions guarantee global peace.

Another manifestation of

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Student unions as the cornerstone of social and institutional change is safeguarding the rights of marginalized groups. For instance, the student unions such as The Anjuman-e-Himayat Islam, The Ali-Grah Movement and Sindh Federation of Students in the sub-continent had played vital role in creation of Pakistan.

The students of above mentioned organizations had compelled the British to find and the political solution of the United India. They safeguarded the rights of Muslims which was the most marginalized group in the United India. So, student unions safeguard the rights of marginalized groups.

In addition to that, student unions shape the institutional policies. By protesting or dialogues, they can drive the policies of institutions.

The quota system in Bangladesh about jobs was not in favour of every citizens.

The nation wide street protests by the students and public



- had compelled the government to reverse it. Hence, student unions can shape the institutional policies.

Lastly, student unions create awareness among masses. It aids in fostering a sense of community building among public. The arrangement of seminars, webinars and meetings create awareness and spread sense of belongingness to a country among people. Therefore, it can help in spreading awareness.

The functions of student unions can be effective and efficient by following recommendations.

Firstly, there should be a call of healthy debate on role and scope of student unions. It would help in addressing challenges of student unions that they are facing in different arena. That call can be annual or biennial.

Secondly, there should be

a proper mechanism for including student unions in decision making processes. For example, in formulating educational policies, the representative of student unions should be included. It would help in formulation or designing of educational policies favouring students.

Thirdly, there should be a mechanism of accountability of student unions. It can help the student unions to work for nation's progress and focused on its direction. The finances and spending of finance should be checked and balanced.

Lastly, there should be banning of violent and extremist student unions. The extremist student unions are the breeding ground of extremist ideologies, which are dangerous for countries. The banning of violent and extremist student unions can

stop polarization of society.  
In a nut shell, student unions are organized groups of students across the country to raise concerns and act as bridge between government and students. It is a catalyst of social and institutional changes by highlighting social voices. Student unions create significant differences by taking part in decision processes. However, it can add more differences by taking holistic approaches. The aforementioned case in points proved that student unions are cornerstone of social and institutional changes.

