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Upturns Strategy for Increasing Student Engagement in Post-Covid-19

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Abstract:

The way higher education institutions (HEIs) conducted teaching, learning, and evaluation was fundamentally altered by the COVID-19 epidemic. The COVID-19's medium- and long-term consequences are likely to have an impact on educational practices, where students and staff may collaborate as "partners" to ensure a student-centered approach. As a way of maximizing educational experiences for both students and staff in resource-constrained situations, the development of a culture of student partnership has been recognized. The proposals made in this paper are intended to promote and improve the standard of higher education in the years after COVID 19.

Keywords: COVID-19, education and learning, quality control, participation of students, and student affiliation

I- INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 epidemic has altered society's attitudes and behaviors in ways that have never before happened. In the context of higher education, many institutions have been forced to adjust to online learning, which has required them to grapple with complex technological systems, innovative teaching, learning, and assessment methods, as well as adapting to work-from-home environments that have become a prominent aspect of many people's lives. Student-centered involvement in the design and execution of these procedures has received less attention. Given the short amount of time required for such substantial changes to take place and the way time is oriented in relation to approaching annual exams, this is not surprising. It is crucial that students have an equal part in defining their education, helping to shape its design, execution, and review, as we move from the acute phase of the epidemic into the longer-term sustainable reforms that are necessary (Marquis et al., 2015). This is in keeping with the approach of the European Standards and Guidelines (2015) to provide a high-quality higher education offering that is student-centered (ESG, 2015). Implementing important activities in a blended learning environment with the active participation of "students as partners" might help overcome implementation difficulties for educational frameworks like competency-based education (Gruppen et al., 2016; Miller, 1990). In order to support student-centered learning as we transition into a higher education system after COVID-19, this paper explores the fundamentals of student partnership and offers some significant actions that staff should actively engage in.

II-METHODOLOGY

The researcher used a case study approach in this study to determine the level of student participation. A case study is a technique that looks at a situation or case in the context of real life. To comprehend the experiences of the students and staff or to explore, explain, and evaluate the causes or impacts of an event, case studies are conducted. In the social sciences, such as psychology and education, case studies are typically undertaken. Interviews and observation are the most common methods used in these case studies. A database of student records was used by researchers to examine the history of previous cases in order to acquire information for a case study. An example of a case study in psychology might be a researcher who wishes to examine how a teenager becomes extremely anxious after a natural disaster. These situations are often active or ongoing so that real-time data may be gathered. The conclusion of a valid case study is that the data analysis demonstrates a thorough comprehension of the circumstances. In essence, the in-depth analysis would show how the themes, problems, or particular circumstances contribute to the general comprehension of the study's conclusions.

III-CURRENT SCENARIO

The immediate handling of COVID-19 in higher education has given institutions insightful information to critically consider. Reactive procedures are indicative of an industry where decision-making by students was not encouraged from the start. These processes include choosing outmoded didactic online teaching (Bishop, 2002), using the wrong assessment methods and philosophies to gauge higher-level thinking (Agarwal, 2019), and having a hard time striking the right balance when putting in place an inclusive roadmap (Felten & Baumann, 2013) for the delivery of exams while taking into account the environment or resources of the students. As we transition to a digital environment, it is crucial to learn from these choices. Teaching online was a

relatively new concept for many academic staff members, according to the Irish National Digital Experience Survey (INDEX, 2020) by the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education. The report noted that 70% of staff members had never taught in a live online environment prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. A stronger, more collaborative learning community between students and faculty may result from student participation in the creation of the post-COVID blended curriculum (Deeley & Bovill, 2017).

IV- EMERGENCE OF STUDENT AFFILIATION

Higher education now has the chance to begin with a clean slate, free from the constraints imposed by cultural conventions on teaching and learning. There are different ways for students to get involved, including pedagogical planning (Bovill & Bulley, 2011), students-as-researchers (Maunder, Cunliffe, Galvin, Mjali & Rogers, 2012), and as strategic developers in a post-COVID educational environment (Healey, O'Connor & Bradfoot, 2010). Formal legislation (Universities Act, 1997) protects this range of student involvement in curriculum design. In the context of Irish higher education, this author launched a "student partnership campaign" in 2017 at Trinity College Dublin as the Students Union's Education Officer. The campaign, which was centered on four main activities to foster a culture of partnership, was published as Trinity College Dublin and Trinity College Dublin Students Union Student Partnership Policy.

V-ACTIVITIES TO CREATE A CULTURE OF STUDENT COLLABORATION AT INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

A. Institutional Guidelines:

The creation of an agreement policy between the academic institution and the student representative body is the first step in fostering a culture of student collaboration. Government organizations like the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education and new national initiatives like the National Student Engagement Programme (NSTEP) have discussed the importance of "student partnership" at the national level and may be resources that institutions can use. The dual responsibility of student engagement, which is defined as "...the investment of time, effort, and other relevant resources by both students and their institutions intended to optimize the student experience and enhance the learning outcomes and development of students, as well as the performance and reputation of the institution" (Trowler & Trowler, 2011), is placed on students and staff as a result of a joint commitment from both stakeholders. When planning and executing institutional reform that can promote student collaboration in COVID-19 times, it's crucial to keep in mind 10 fundamental elements (Higher Education Authority, 2016).

Ten guidelines for creating an institutional strategy for student involvement - derived from Higher Education Authority, 2016 are Students as stakeholders, democracy Transparency, Students as Co-Creators, Collegiality and Parity of Esteem, Social equality and Diversity professionalism and encouragement, Feedback loops, self-criticism, improvement, and consistency.

Suggestion:

In order to ensure that student-centered approaches to teaching and learning include students from the conception, design, implementation, and review of programmatic and institutional changes in a post-COVID-19 era, academic representatives of students and staff should look for collaborative opportunities to create a road-map for policy provision.

B. Analyzing Formal and Informal Methods of Student Involvement:

In order to explore the areas in which students currently participate in decision-making, the effects of this participation, and the potential opportunities for enhanced student engagement in relation to the COVID-19 changes to teaching and learning, a partnered scoping exercise could be carried out in conjunction with the development of a long-term strategy for promoting student engagement. Sabbatical officials from student unions and related groups are frequent representations. To allow successful representation, student and staff leaders must get dual training. Students can participate in quality assurance and improvement processes at the institutional or local school levels. To fully benefit from and maximize the potential of feedback, this area requires immediate attention. Many times, the feedback loop is closed in an unsatisfactory manner, either by enacting change for future cohorts or by failing to execute any proposed strategies because of an inadequate response rate. In the case of COVID, where such mistakes have initially led to some of the issues outlined above, academics must understand their vital role in incorporating students in quality improvement.. To do this, they must move beyond merely symbolically "capturing" the "student voice" and instead truly listen through the use of focus groups, meetings of the student-staff liaison committee, or the live-action of feedback. A collaborative approach at the programme level in the digital environment, where both students and staff are on a same learning path, may play a crucial role in ensuring students are effectively completing a quality education.

Suggestion:

Start reviewing the options that are already available for students to participate in teaching and learning, and make sure that they are rigorous, include closed loops, and have a significant influence on students' experiences. 'Feedback spirals' (Carless, 2019) allow study of complicated teaching and learning processes and sustainability of change within educational institutions. Take into consideration developing procedures that overcome drawbacks in present student feedback mechanisms. Through creative governance and quality assurance collaboration, uncover more opportunities for student stakeholder participation from the classroom to the institutional level.

C. Establishing Annual Priority:

Accountability and quantifiable results are essential for highlighting how successfully student partnership initiatives have facilitated student participation as well as for pointing out potential areas for future development. It demonstrates improvement between the two parties in addressing the issues brought up by parties in light of COVID-19 adaptations. The yearly goals for the year can be informed by gathering quantitative and qualitative data about the impact of COVID-19 on student involvement from both parties. An overall subject of "revolutionizing student participation via anchoring a culture of cooperation and partnership" in the context of Trinity College Dublin was further broken into three priorities:

• Involvement in governance representation,

• Participation in education and learning,

• Participation in the larger society.

A reflection campaign during COVID-19 may focus on "ensuring student involvement in the COVID-19 epidemic via a culture of cooperation," through which a number of actionable performance metrics are offered, with duties assigned to student and staff working groups. Priorities in the new normal COVID-19 environments are likely to centre on how faculty and staff collaborate to implement the pre-approved competency frameworks of their programmes in a blended learning environment. This collaboration could be facilitated by having frank and open discussions with students at the start of the academic year about expectations and realities. Although the majority of curricula have developed thorough competence frameworks, programme review boards would be missing a chance if they did not moving ahead priorities thorough digital literacy as a critical skill in all programmes.

Suggestion:

Involve students in determining their own goals for the academic year using a strategic management methodology, such as a strengths-weaknesses-opportunities-threats (SWOT) analysis (Helms & Nixon, 2010), and make sure that their suggestions are consistent with those of management and academia. Agree on a suggested strategy for implementing important overlapping areas for improvement that would materially affect the experiences of all stakeholders, such as improving pedagogical design of online education offering.

D. Evaluation, Introspection, and Communication:

Other institutional approaches to creating a "Students as Partners" culture have suggested three phases of implementation, including testing and prototyping, identifying and putting into practice strategies, and developing systems and processes to support your planned activities (Shaw, Rueckert, Smith, Tredinnick & Lee, 2017). They also recognized the significance of evaluation as a crucial activity to drive change (Coombe, Huang, Russell, Sheppard, Khosravi, 2018). Taking stock of the work of the cooperation between students and staff at the conclusion of the academic year is the final action to support "student partnership." The effective implementation of any performance indicator, the yearly evaluation of the priorities, and a demonstration of best practices for partnered solutions inside the institution all contribute to the organization of this. Such reflection assures the policy's rigors in representing stakeholders' goals, which is necessary for COVID-19. Additionally, this distribution gives academics the chance to modify procedures in a user-friendly manner. As we transition back to more in-house teaching, it also suggests potential future initiatives to further establish a culture of student collaboration, such as creating "student leaders" in teaching and learning by including them in committee chairing and peer-reviewing of teaching.

Suggestion:

As a live campaign, make sure ongoing discussions and reviews occur between students and faculty throughout the year to track progress in the areas of priorities that have been agreed upon. If necessary, revise and adapt the campaign in light of modifications to the national higher education context, such as the return of in-class learning or increased resource availability due to the establishment of a Higher Education ministry. At the conclusion of each year, identify, emphasize, and communicate the partnerships between staff and students that were successful in overcoming COVID-19-related obstacles.

VI- BENEFITS AND OBSTACLES

It has been stated that certain staff members may feel uneasy with the shift in power to a "partnership" with students, even though many HEIs and staff have started to really welcome student cooperation (Murphy, Nixon, Brooman & Fearon, 2017). Murphy and colleagues identified four key procedures that need to take place to promote academic staff "buy-in."

1. Increasing staff engagement and willingness by starting where problems are occurring (such as with online tests) and working with students to create tools that are student-centric there (Cook-Sather, Bovill & Felten, 2014).

2. Fostering student involvement in the partnership process by collaborating with national training organizations.

3. The emphasis should be shifted from staff as experts to staff as facilitators.

4. Realizing the opportunity for professional development presented by collaborative engagements. A comprehensive analysis of the "Students as Partners" research in higher education (Mercer Mapstone et al., 2017) found that essential transferable abilities including meta-cognition, enhanced

critical skill development, and greater student efficacy are just a few of the benefits. Additionally, better curricular materials, higher desire for research and teaching, and better personal career possibilities benefit staff employees.

VII- REFLECTION AND CONCLUSION

This paper makes the case that the "student voice" is frequently absent from or included too late and in the process of bringing about significant change. Prior to COVID-19, which was focused on enhancing and troubleshooting digital learning, there may have been a culture of student partnership within the institutions. If this was the case, it is likely that the institutions worked with students to ensure that the delivery of digital education was pedagogically sound. But in the post-COVID era of teaching and learning, there is a fresh chance for meaningful student and staff cooperation to guarantee a quality education. This allows the groundwork for such cultures to be built. A number of the activities described in this article can help to foster this culture, while also acknowledging that students and staff must work together to ensure that student participation is a top priority.

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