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The role of students' voices in shaping student success at one South African Higher Education Institution

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Background

- Students' voices in shaping student success is important area of practice.

- There is a growing need to recognize the value of student input in improving the quality of education and promoting student success.

- Student voices provide valuable insights into the student experience, helping to identify areas for improvement and innovation.

- However, without robust mechanisms to integrate student feedback into institutional practices, educational goals may not be fully achieved.

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Aim

- Therefore, we explore the role of students' voices in shaping student success at South African Higher Education Institution.

Student Engagement Theory

Emphasizes the importance of actively involving students in their own learning and the educational setting, as well as the impact that their engagement has on their academic success.

Highlights the significance of fostering a sense of belonging and ownership among students, which can ultimately contribute to their overall success.

By incorporating students' voices and perspectives, HEIs can foster greater student engagement and success.

Review of literature

Importance of involving students

- Student engagement promote student success
- Involving students in decision-making processes can lead to more effective and relevant educational experiences (Trowler & Trowler, 2020).
- Students' voices provide valuable feedback on teaching and learning, curriculum design, and support services
- It helps to identify areas for improvement and innovation (Cook-Sather, 2024).

Importance of student voices (contd)

- Students' voices is crucial role in shaping the learning environment and overall success of students.

- Actively engaging with students and incorporating their perspectives into decision-making processes, a more inclusive and supportive environment for student success can be created (Lloyd, 2020).

- By actively seeking out and listening to students' voices, institutions can identify areas for improvement and make meaningful changes that positively impact student success rates (Kleynhans, 2018).

Importance of student voices (contd)

- Create spaces for students to share their experiences and perspectives.

- Institutions need to actively listen to and incorporate student voices into their decision-making processes to create an environment that supports student success (Moeketsi, 2019)

- The importance of amplifying the voices of historically marginalized students create a more inclusive and equitable environment that supports success for all students (Makgoba, 2017)
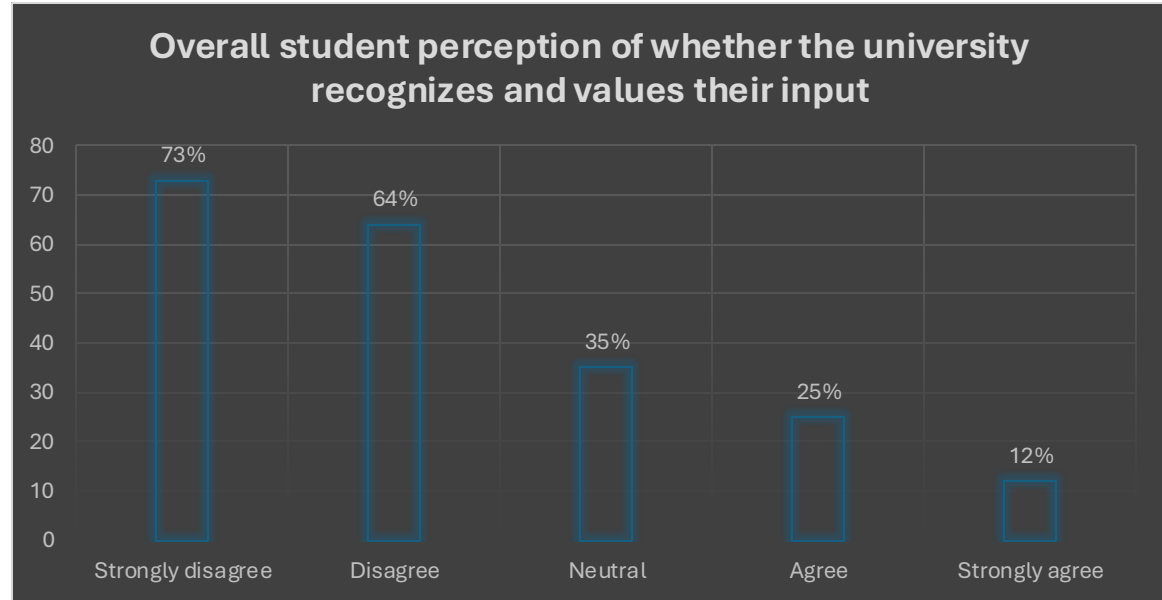
Methodology

- Employ mixed methods
- Questionnaire focused on wider student population to determine their experiences and perceptions
- Focus group focused on student leaders to gain in-depth insights into their involvement in decision-making processes and the responsiveness of institution
- Thematic Analysis of qualitative data
- Statistical analysis for quantitative data

Findings (Quantitative analysis)

Overall student perception of whether the university recognizes and values their input

Strongly disagree	73%
Disagree	64%
Neutral	35%
Agree	25%
Strongly agree	12%

Findings (Thematic analysis)

- "I think the institution should make more effort to listen to us and take our feedback into consideration"

- "I feel like we must #feesMust movement, remember this was one loud students' voice which brought to light a range of critical issues that students face. After all, we are the ones directly affected by the decisions and policies being made"

DO WE MAKE YOU UNCOMFORTABLE?

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for

CHANGE

What do these findings mean?

What's the difference between institutions that listen to students' voices and act accordingly, versus institutions that give students the opportunity to generate their own ideas, solutions to problems, and bring about changes.

Conclusion

The inclusion of students' voices:

- Creating opportunities for student involvement in decision-making processes

- Contribute to a sense of ownership and empowerment

- Fostering a culture of collaboration and engagement

- Create a more inclusive and supportive teaching and learning environment.