

# **Student Voice in Shaping Teaching and Learning at University of KwaZulu-Natal- Is there value in listening?**

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## Structure of Presentation

- Introduction
- Research Questions
- Research Objectives
- Rationale
- Literature
- Methodology
- Recommendations

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# INTRODUCTION



## INTRODUCTION

- Subsequent to high student drop out rates, low graduation and slow progression rates, the University of KwaZulu Natal embarked on a strategic project renewal process.

Race	Gender	Intake	Graduated		Excluded		Dropped out		Continuing	
			Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Total	Females	6374	3990	36%	362	3%	2210	20%	145	1%
	Males	4575	2376	22%	99	1%	1579	15%	144	1%
Overall		10949	6366	58%	461	5%	3789	35%	289	2%

(Institutional Intelligence, 2021)



## INTRODUCTION

- Evaluating: Operations, Curriculum, Assessments and Student support services
- The goal to enhance the alignment to institutional vision and strategic priorities

“*...positioning students as participants in decision-making processes shows institutional commitment to greater student involvement in changes to teaching, learning and institutional development.*”

Strydom & Loots, 2020, p.26



## INTRODUCTION

- As primary stakeholders in the process, student perspectives on the suitability of current assessment and support policies and practices need to be integrated
- Institutional innovations require broad student involvement in the overarching goal of increasing student success.



## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the study is to;

- Examine the potential value of enhanced student participation in the UKZN project renewal process
- Determine how students perceive their role in the UKZN project renewal process and;
- Identify ways students can be brought to the forefront of conversations on educational improvement

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## RESEARCH QUESTIONS



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1. What do student's voices give in education reform of HE that academics and support staff at UKZN cannot provide?
2. What experiences do students value most about their education at UKZN?
3. How do UKZN students measure student success?
4. How do students measure their success in real-world settings?
5. What are the most suitable methods for magnifying student voices within UKZN?

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## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES



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- Provide an overview of the value student voice brings in education reform of higher education
- Explore student educational experience at UKZN
- Evaluate indicators of student success according to student perceptions at UKZN
- Determine enabling platforms for student's voice to be heard in UKZN

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**RATIONALE**



## RATIONALE

- Currently, only a few representatives from the SRC form part of the project renewal process
- This limited student involvement cannot result in systematic changes in structures, norms or beliefs.
- The inability to functionalise student opinions in practice offers limited benefits to students and to the institution and the system it operates within.

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LITERATURE



## LITERATURE

- In order to fully understand an educational system's challenges it is necessary to hear from those most affected by its form and processes (Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy, 2019)
- Evidence reflects how crucial the student voice is in transformational change within education systems (Butler, Kane & Morshead, 2017)
- Causal link between student involvement in curriculum design and enhanced learning (Brooman, Darwent & Pimor, 2015)
- Collaborative relationships with students for the creation of meaningful learning experiences (Nel, 2017)

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## METHODOLOGY



## METHODOLOGY

- Qualitative research paradigm:
  - Exploratory study
  - Coherent sequence of events about a particular factor in a specific context (Neuman, 2011)
  - Enables understanding and interpretation of people's actions and behaviour (Wiid & Diggines, 2013)
- Data to be generated over a month from SRC members and student leaders from various associations
  - Focus group discussions
  - Broad and open ended questions



## METHODOLOGY

- Questions will be focused on 3 components:
  - The general experience of participants with the project renewal
  - The role the participants think they can play in the project renewal
  - The nature of academic experiences that participants think are worth listening to.

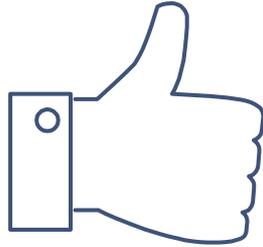
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## RECOMMENDATIONS



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- Integration of students' voices on project renewal discussions transforms students from passive to participatory citizens in HE
- In UKZN, it will be vital to realise that students perceptions are essential in teaching and learning
- This serves an opportunity to regard education as a practice of freedom for critical and creative discovery and participation in their University's transformation



# THANK YOU

Any questions?

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