Effective student engagement in internal Quality Assurance and University management

Nik Heerens - NIAD-UE Forum, Tokyo - 22 July 2013

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Overview presentation

Student engagement in internal quality assurance and university management:

- What is it?

- Why is it important?

- In which areas should students be involved?

- How to make it work?

What does student engagement mean?

1. To talk of student engagement is to recognise that students are active participants in and directors of their own education experience. *Engagement* can be distinguished from other related terms such as *consultation, involvement,* and *participation*, because it depicts a higher level of association, responsibility, empowerment and control afforded to the student.

2. ***"Students are active partners with shared responsibilities for their own learning and achievement. Indeed, one of the defining characteristics of higher education is the extent to which it relies on this active participation in, and student ownership of, the learning process" (QAA Scotland, 2008).***

3. *Student engagement exists in two separate but related contexts:* the participation of students within institutional management and quality processes and students' engagement with their own individual learning experience.
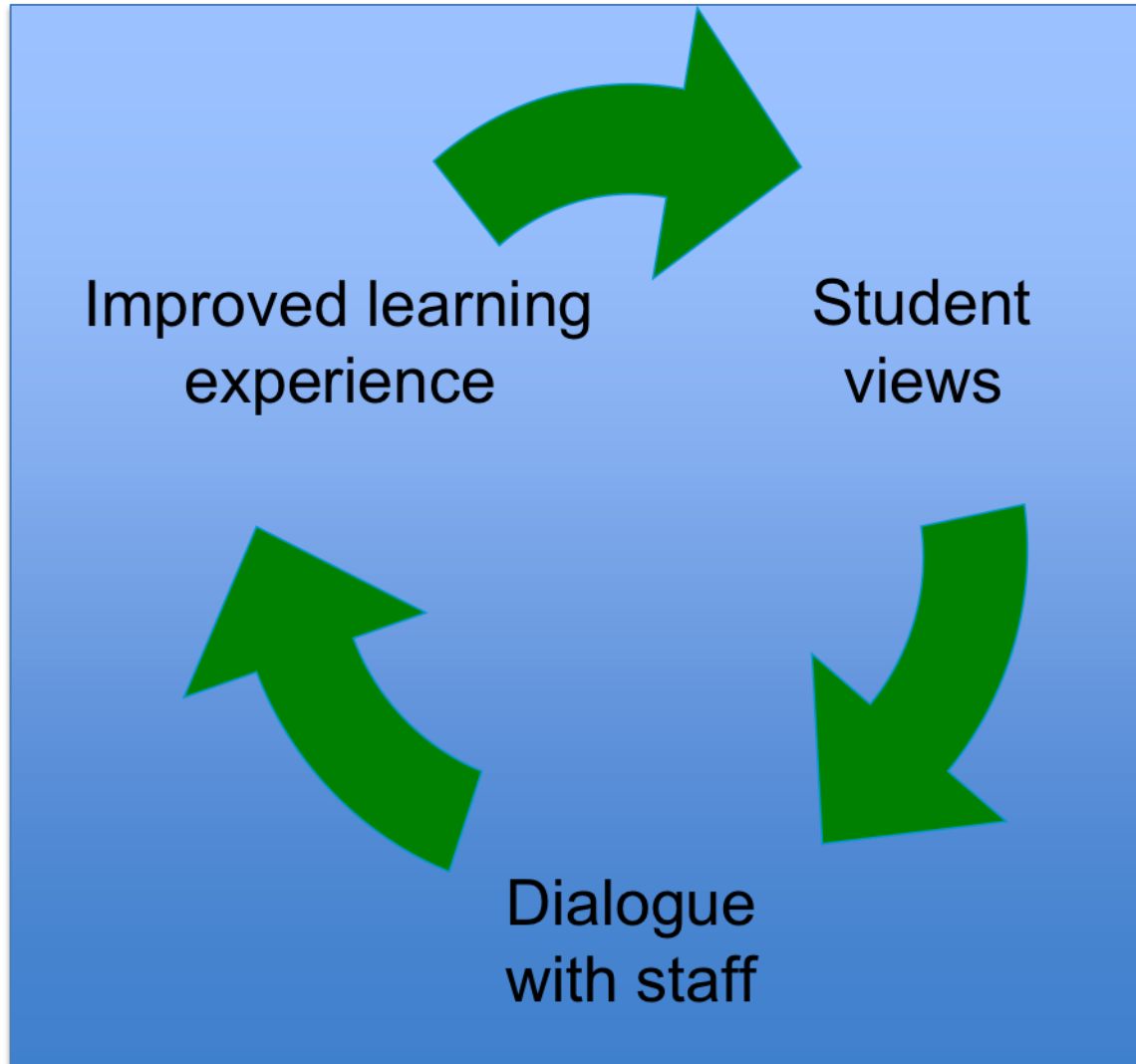
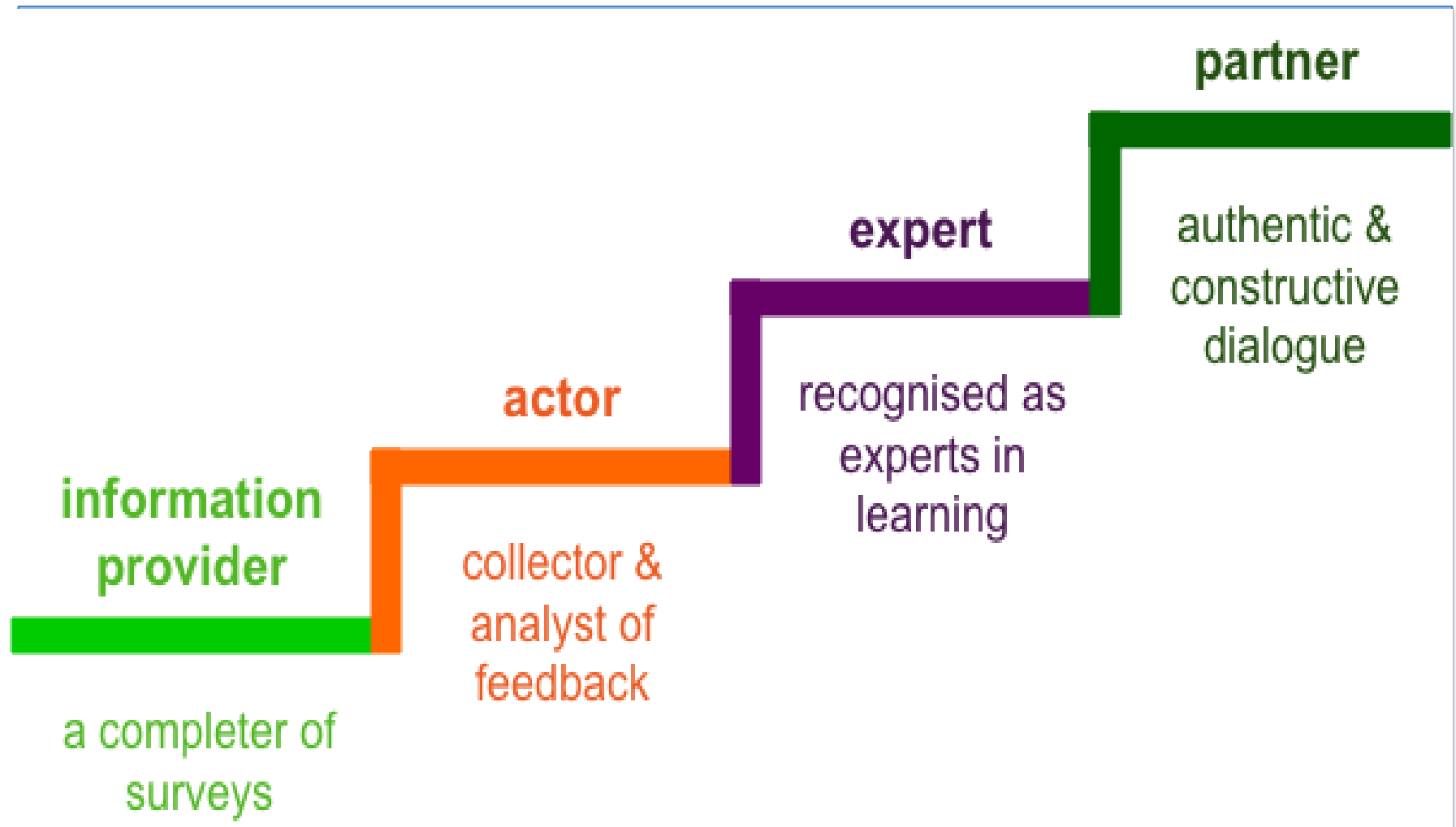# What are the benefits of effective student engagement in internal QA and University management?

''Universities are communities of learning achieved through a partnership between staff and students. A committed partnership between students, as active participants, and the staff at an institution will open up possibilities for authentic and constructive dialogue, offering the opportunity for more holistic and reflective feedback and enhancement of learning.'' (Cross Sector group on student engagement England & Northern Ireland).
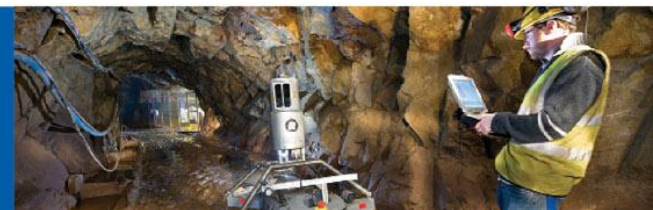
Feedback cycle

Dialogue between staff and students at the heart of quality improvement

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Improved learning experience → Student views → Dialogue with staff → (cycle)

partner

expert

actor

information provider

a completer of surveys

collector & analyst of feedback

recognised as experts in learning

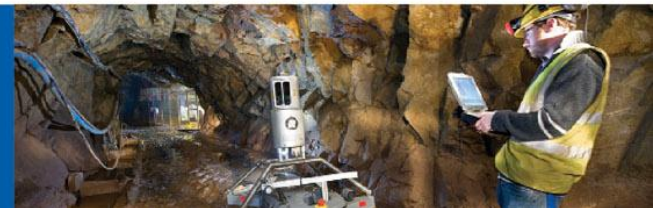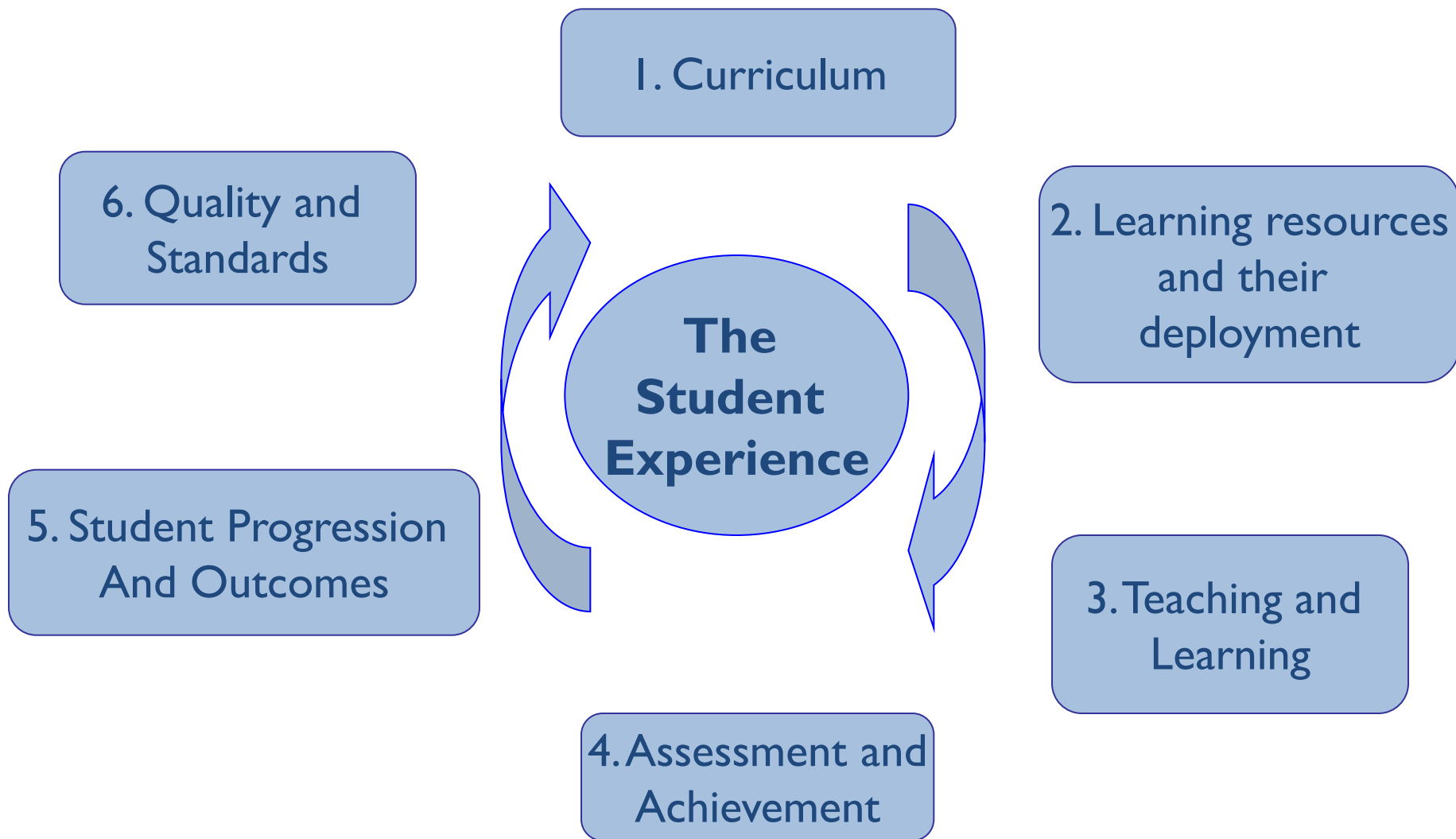authentic & constructive dialogue

Different ways of involving students

The outcome and the process of student engagement

- *The outcome of engagement* is continually useful feedback and ideas coming from students; these can encourage staff, who can learn from, respond to and employ them in enhancing the quality of education

- *The process of engagement* is an inherently reflective activity, which increases students' competences (e.g. analytical, negotiation, research and presentation skills) and make them better learners, better individuals and better citizens

1. Curriculum

6. Quality and Standards

2. Learning resources and their deployment

The Student Experience

5. Student Progression And Outcomes

3. Teaching and Learning

4. Assessment and Achievement

How to make effective student engagement work in practice?

1. Support and encourage students to become more active, more interested and more responsible for their own learning

2. Encourage mutual understanding between students and staff

3. Engage with students to obtain feedback, perspectives and insights that will help to identify strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning processes and ways of improvement

4. Involve students in decision-making about their curricula, teaching & learning and all aspects of the student experience

5. Exchange examples of good practices of student engagement within and between universities

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Challenges to student engagement

From a students' point of view:

- Students need to be sufficiently aware of what student engagement means for them and how it will improve their overall learning experience

- Effective student engagement is largely dependent on how effectively staff can encourage and inform students throughout their student journey

- Correct conditions (policies, processes, buy-in, relationships) so that students can effectively engage

- In many cases students will need the opportunity and assistance to effectively reflect upon their learning in order to be able to comment on it successfully

Challenges to student engagement

From a staff point of view:

- Student Engagement means different things to different people and therefore achieving student engagement won't necessarily be the same for all

- Uncertainty about how to get the most out of student engagement both at the individual and representative level

- Past successes or failures with students can have an impact on how positively staff view student engagement

Improving student engagement: further issues to consider

- Are the right conditions in place for individual and representative engagement? – policies, procedures, opportunities

- Are different types of opportunities for engagement available for different types of students?

- Do students have the correct information or knowledge to be effectively engaged

- Is the timing of engagement right?

- Are students building on their experience of being engaged and having that opportunity to develop as co-creators or active learners?

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