

Keynote Speech of the Ruhuna Quality Assurance Sessions 2023

Student Engagement in Quality Assurance: National and International Perspectives

Senior Professor Nilanthi de Silva

Vice-Chancellor, University of Kelaniya, Kelaniya, Sri Lanka

Students are the primary stakeholders and beneficiaries in any university. Feedback from students regarding their experiences and understanding can inform quality improvements, aid strategic decision making, better shape the services and facilities to meet student needs and result in increased student satisfaction. Being listened to and having a role in making changes in an organization can be very motivating for students and may improve their active participation, achievements, progression, and retention. Moreover, good opportunities for participation in enhancing the quality of their own education will produce more confident, more cognizant and more resilient students.

Each university has its own unique identity, and its own strategic plans and policies. Therefore, every university should have its own policy to enable the views of students, individually and collectively, to inform the university's quality systems, in order to improve the student educational experience, both for current and future cohorts.

There are some key factors that a university should consider in developing its own policy on student engagement, and strategies for implementation of such a policy. This includes factors that pertain to the students themselves, as well as their teachers, the nature of the educational programme for which the students are enrolled, the learning resources available to them including the built environment, and their social environment, such as family and community factors.

Aspects of university life that could be considered as within the scope of student engagement in QA, include induction and orientation of new students; monitoring and evaluation of teaching-learning activities; programme design, delivery, and organization; learning resources; student welfare and well-being; university infrastructure development; community outreach; development of the university's strategic and action plans; and any other areas identified by the students.

Since all of these have impact on the learning experience of a student, a university policy on student engagement in QA could make provision for student participation in any, or all of these functions. Such a policy should ensure that such student participation is representative of the entire student body, inclusive of gender and articulate clearly, the level of contribution expected of student representatives.

The speaker's experience at the UGC's Quality Assurance Council, in developing guidance on formulating university policy on student engagement in QA, and in adopting this concept at the University of Kelaniya, will be presented for discussion.