STUDENTS AS CHANGE AGENTS
BELIEFS AND VIEWS ABOUT THE ROLE OF
STUDENTS IN INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

CARD SORT ACTIVITY

For the cards, go to the NUS Student Engagement Hub
http://www.nusconnect.org.uk/pageassets/campaigns/highereducation/student-engagement-hub/resources/tools/SE-cardsort.pdf

Purpose

The purpose of this activity is to enable pairs or small groups to discuss their beliefs and views about the role of students in institutional change, to support participants in clarifying their thinking in this area and to understand where there may be differences of opinion. The activity can be used with staff or with students, or with mixed groups.

Instructions

1. Take a full set of 40 cards.
2. Working in pairs or trios, lay out all the cards under five headings:
    Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral/don't know, Disagree, Strongly disagree
3. The most important aspect of this activity is to discuss your views and to come to an agreement about where each statement is best placed. There are no right or wrong responses.
4. If there are other groups working on the same activity, compare some of the responses; the extremes of the scale are often the most interesting.

The task can be achieved in about half an hour, but some groups may need longer, especially if there is a lot of discussion or if there are clashes of views.

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A SUMMARY OF CARD SORT CATEGORIES

Having worked on the activity, it may be of interest to some people to see all the statements listed and to note that they fall under six headings.

A General engagement

1. It is important for students to engage with improving their learning experience.
2. Institutions should encourage students to engage with change.
3. Academic staff do not always want to listen to students' ideas for change in learning and teaching.
4. Student satisfaction is the best measure of an institution's success.
5. Students should be considered as customers.
6. A collaborative partnership between staff and students is likely to be the most effective means of bringing about change.
7. The potential for student engagement, commitment and enthusiasm in bringing about change is not currently made use of.
8. Students having a 'voice' is not the same as students engaging with change.
9. Students should not be expected to engage with improvements in learning and teaching.
10. Students are always concerned with the easiest way to get good marks rather than with the depth of their learning.

B Engaging with institutional change

1. Student engagement with change should be a normal part of institutional thinking.
2. Students should be enabled to participate in changing learning and teaching.
3. Students cannot be involved in widespread enhancement because they do not understand institutional strategy.
4. Students are not the best people to bring about change because they do not understand how difficult institutional change can be.
5. Institutional change usually needs careful planning and subtle approaches and students are not good at working in this kind of way.
6. Only a very small number of students wish to engage with institutional change.
7. Students need institutional support in becoming effective 'change agents'.
8. Students tend not know how to work effectively to bring about institutional change
9. Institutional collaboration, with students as 'change agents', is easy to achieve.
10. Students do not need institutional support to be effective as 'change agents'.

C Student representation

1. A well- organised system of student representation is key to institutional development and change.
2. Student representatives take their responsibilities seriously.
3. Working through the student union is the best means for students to engage with change.
4. Student representation through institutional committee structures is the most powerful means of bringing about student-led change.
5. The more widely students are represented, the better will be the opportunities for change.

D Student voice and impact

1. Your institution is good at listening to the student 'voice'.
2. Your institution makes an effort to listen to all kinds of student voice.
3. Student feedback is acted upon and students are informed about changes.
4. Surveys are the most effective way of capturing student views on learning and teaching.
5. Students should be encouraged to design ways of gaining feedback from their peers.

E Breadth of engagement

1. So long as students engage well with their degree work, it doesn't matter if they don't engage with broader aspects of institutional affairs.
2. Whilst studying for a degree, students need to gain broader perspectives than just a focus on academic work.
3. The more a student engages with the broad range of activities available as a student, the better they will be prepared for employment.
4. Student societies are the best way for students to engage with their institution.
5. Engaging in the improvement of teaching and learning is a powerful means for students to understand processes of change.

F Improving learning and teaching

1. Students should be paid for undertaking activities to improve learning and teaching.
2. The most important form of student engagement is with their academic work.
3. Students should play a part in decision-making about learning and teaching in their subject area.
4. Students should not be engaged with change in learning and teaching because they don't know enough about good teaching.
5. Students tend to like conventional teaching and learning (e.g. lectures, essays).

For more information about the project please visit www.as.exeter.ac.uk/changeagents

Liz Dunne (E.J.Dunne@exeter.ac.uk)