

Growing Through Voice:

How Meaningful Voice Opportunities Transform Student Growth and Engagement



Dhanushi Rodrigo
PhD Student, Atlantic Technological University (ATU) Galway, Ireland



What Do We Mean by “Meaningful Student Voice”?

- What does ‘meaningful student voice’ mean to you?
- Ask yourself this, in whatever capacity you maybe, as a student rep or even an alliance staff member.



What Do We Mean by “Meaningful Student Voice”?

- Meaningful student voice in my experience = feedback beyond surveys, beyond satisfaction scores

It is present when students have;

- Involvement in decision-making
 - Freely voice their opinions
 - Opinions are respected
 - Shared responsibility
 - Transition from feedback to dialogue to shared action and partnership.
- **Student voice becomes meaningful when it influences outcomes and grows the student.**



Why does it matter?

- Traditional feedback is transactional
- Student voice is relational, developmental, partnership-oriented
- When students are heard meaningfully, they grow in confidence, identity, agency

My experience

PhD Researcher | Student QA Reviewer | Sustainability Education Innovator



- PhD on **sustainability learning in agri-food supply chains**
- Publications and conference papers - sustainability, AI in education, and student engagement
- Student Quality Assurance Reviewer with Nstep and QQI, e.g., TrustEd
- LIFT facilitator

Innovation and leadership milestones

- €5,000 grant secured to develop a gamified sustainability learning tool
- Awarded 2025 Brian Cantor Scholarship Prize by WTUN
- Winner of WTUN innovation award 2025 for AI-enabled agricultural knowledge transfer
- Winner of TCS Sustainathon UK&I for Financial Literacy for Young Adults 2024
- NTUTORR Student Champion 2023-2025; EU Green Alliance Council Representative 2024-2025



What empowered my personal development and growth? > Shaped by experiences and nurturing ‘student voice’

My experience

PhD Researcher | Student QA Reviewer | Sustainability Education Innovator



- My development has been result of engaging in multiple systems.
- Personal: confidence, self-awareness, communication
- Professional: leadership, evaluative judgment, project management
- Academic: deeper engagement, reflective practice, learning

Example 1: QA reviewer experience

- Reviewing programme validations, learning outcomes, student feedback
- Assessing VLE accessibility
- Evaluating teaching strategies
- Reviewing supports for learners

Student growth outcomes:

- Evaluative thinking
- Understanding curriculum design
- Building confidence through involvement in decision-making
- Feeling valued as a partner
- Networking

Having a seat at the table develops your identity.

My experience

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Example 2: Researching student engagement, e.g., commuter students

- ‘Commuter student’ is not a single category
- International, mature, ethnic minority experiences differ
- Many students are silent because mechanisms don’t reflect their realities
- Engagement methods lack flexibility

Student growth outcomes:

- Student growth outcomes: voice opportunities must be contextual
- Inclusive mechanisms enables more students gain the chance to develop

You develop your own voice and give a chance to be a voice for others.

My experience

PhD Researcher | Student QA Reviewer | Sustainability Education Innovator



Example 3: NTUTORR student champion €5,000 project grant

- Creating game-based sustainability learning tool ('Eco Action Higher Lower') – by students for students
- Working with staff as equal partners

Student growth outcomes:

- Ownership and leadership
- Creativity and innovation

You are empowered to collaborate for change and be a creative change-maker.

How can institutions facilitate ‘meaningful’ student voice?

- Build structured roles for student decision-making
- Design real partnerships, not symbolic consultation
- Support students in developing skills through engagement
- Recognise student contributions (certificates, micro-credentials)
- Make engagement flexible for all types of learners (e.g., commuter and international learners)

Power in unity...

- Student voice is a transformative practice - it grows individuals, improves institutions, and strengthens communities



Thank you



Dhanushi Rodrigo

Dhanushi.Rodrigo@research.atu.ie

When students are heard, they grow. But to be heard, you need to meaningfully voice your opinion.
When students grow, the whole system grows.