

Developing and listening to students' voice through (re)building Student-Staff Liaison Committee (SSLC)

Wei Lin Poh PhD & Arslan Hojanazarov
(w.poh@hw.ac.uk) (ah2140@hw.ac.uk)
School of Social Sciences

Introduction:

SSLC allows for students and staff representatives to meet and discuss matters pertaining to learning and teaching in an open and respectful manner. Although there are key principles to govern this process, there are many challenges that diverts SSLC representatives from achieving a meaningful discussion and resolution of issues.

In 2024-2025 Academic Year, in response to a new school policy, we transitioned from a staff-led to student-led SSLC meeting. This project reflects on a collaborative effort in making this shift, identifies contextual (e.g., Malaysian) nuances that affects the process and outcomes of this shift as well as areas for improvement. A focus group discussion highlights factors promoting student engagement and motivation to further enhance and sustain a student-led SSLC.

Literature Review:

- Rowland (2000) highlighted that student systems feedback, such as use of questionnaire, limits effective staff-student communication.
- To understand students' learning experience, Graham (2010) reported we should **facilitate students' voice by teaching them to communicate in a way that they would be listened to**. Connecting as people rather than seeing a person filling in a role enhances the effectiveness of this staff-student relationship.
- Examples of student-staff partnerships including co-designing teaching activity, co-creating work sheets and resources (Bovill, 2019). Studies reported this partnerships garnered positive outcomes such as **enhanced engagement, enhanced a sense of belonging** (Cook-Sather, Bovill and Felten, 2014; Hill et al, 2019; Mercer-Mapstone et al, 2017).

Objectives:

The aims of building a student-led SSLC are

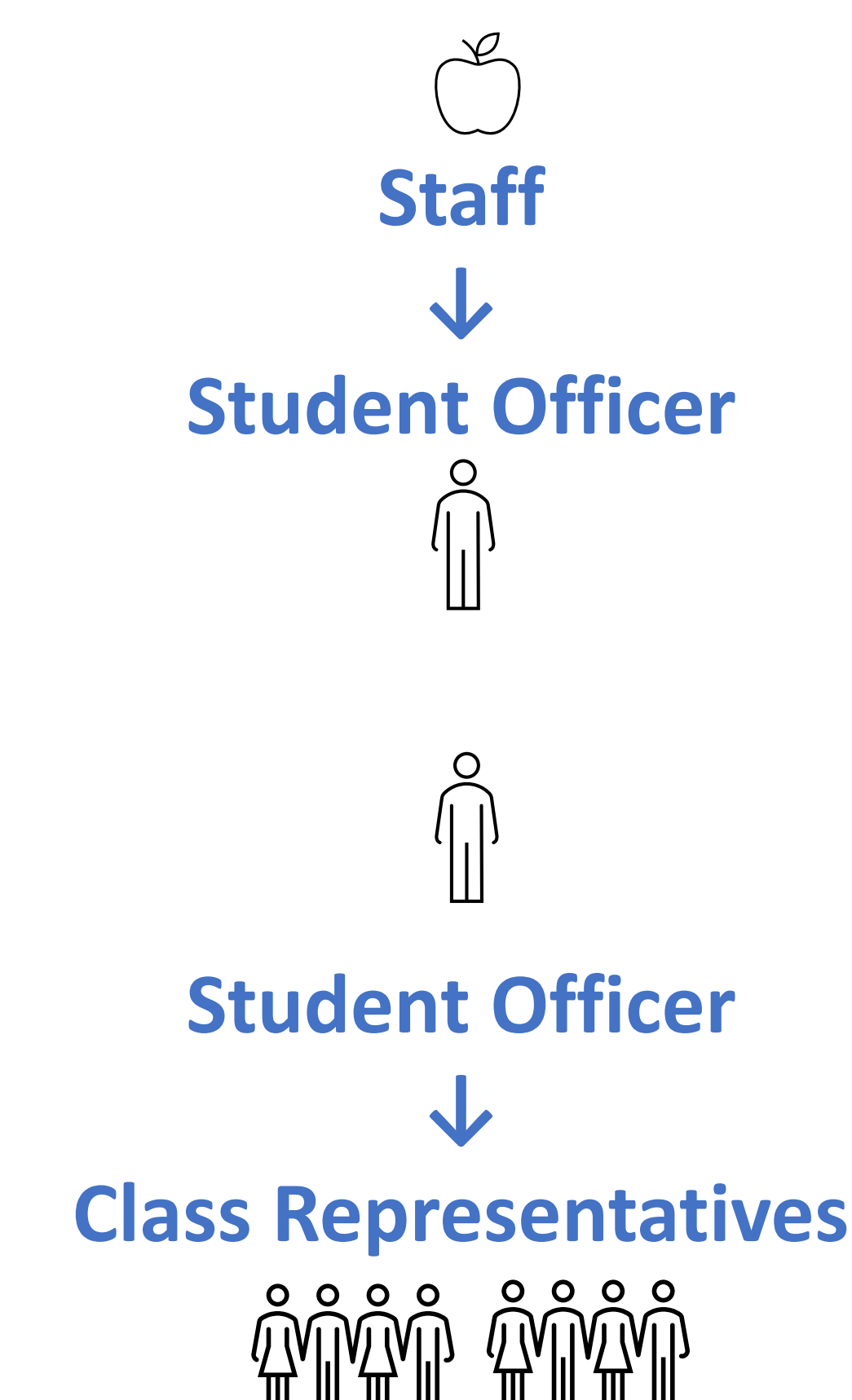
- To enhance student voice through cultivating a sense of agency in students
- To enhance their communication and leadership skills as student representatives learn to articulate their feedback
- To facilitate a sense of cohesion and community among students and staff

This poster highlights:

- Processes and challenges of this transition
- Focus group discussion at the end project to reflect on a student-led SSLC

Student-led SSLC strategy:

- Challenges:** Lack of structure to support students, understanding cultural context and minimal student engagement

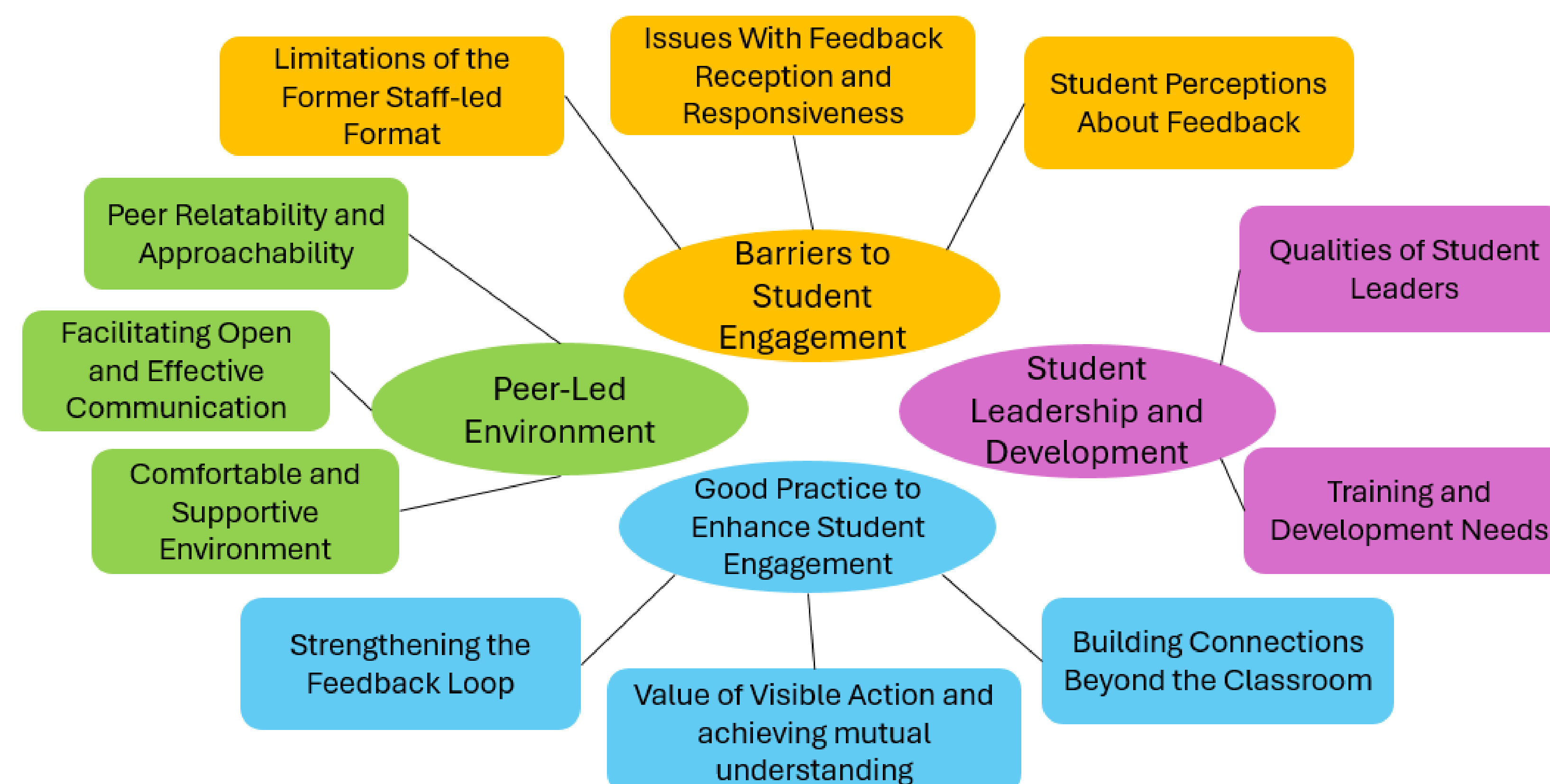


- Support provided:**
- Introduced discipline-specific SSLC, smaller setting to facilitate discussion
 - Supporting School Officer (SO)
 - Understanding their roles within the context of SSLC
 - Open communication - serve as contact point to reflect throughout the process of implementing the new SSLC process

- Support provided:**
- Building a sense of community with CRs
 - Class rep training session, informal and individual catch-ups
 - Preparing for SSLC
 - Emphasis on objectiveness in feedback
 - What did you like about your course?
 - What are some critical aspects of the course?
 - Propose a solution (to be discussed with staff)
 - Chaired SSLC and closed feedback loop with CRs

Focus group methods & mind map:

- Focus group following a semi-structured interview guide with follow-up questions. Qualitative Thematic Analysis (TA) of the data was conducted following the six-step approach outlined in Braun and Clarke (2006). The TA aims to answer the research question – **“What is the impact of a student-led Student-Staff Liaison Committee format?”**
- N = 4, CRs experienced both staff-led and student-led SSLC



Findings and key takeaways:



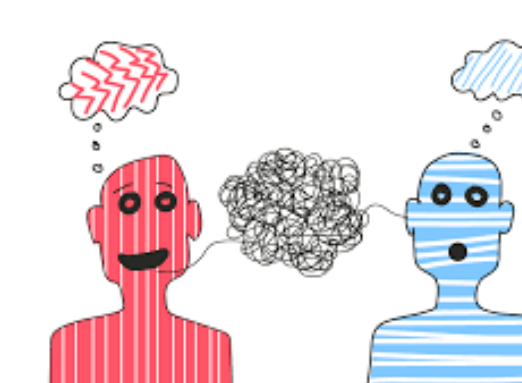
Theme 1: Peer-led environment

- Paved way for comfortable, supportive, and communicative environment
- Increased openness and relatability
 - Encouraged active participation



Theme 2: Student leadership and development

- SO chairing and moderating SSLC
- Key attributes and availability of SO support CRs



Theme 3: Reducing barriers to student engagement

- Understanding hierarchical dynamics and unclear feedback expectations that limits responsiveness
- Addressing cultural context to understand its intended improvements in a student-led model



Theme 4: Good practice to promote student engagement

- Support and mechanisms are essential to sustain effective participation
- Strengthening feedback loops, ensuring visible action on student input, building trust, and fostering informal connections with staff

What do students think?

*“I **enjoyed** the way that it was led this year a lot with a student officer being there, even just that, it made a difference for us with him being in class with us...”*

*“...since the student officer is my classmate. So, it was **comfortable**, when someone you know is leading of the SSLC, has shared the same experience as you. So, we felt **more relaxed... our feedback is easier to explain**”*

*“I think the outcome between the two policy is the same, but the **process is very different...there's a middle person [peer] telling us what to do...friendlier less subordinate**”*

*“...more willing to talk more and it [SSLC] has a **friendlier tone.**”*