Chapter 20
Student Engagement:
Past, Present, and Future

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ABSTRACT

Student engagement is often considered a challenging term to define since it is a complex construct of several factors. Nevertheless, it refers to the degree of interest, motivation, or curiosity students demonstrate in their learning. This chapter explores how student engagement frameworks have evolved from a traditional didactic model (educator focused) to a modern co-created collaborative model (student focused) and has missed some key factors. To fill in the identified gaps on student engagement, a framework of learning stewardship is proposed.

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the key jargons used used more frequently in the field of higer education is 'student engagement. It refers to how students appear to be interested or involved in their learning. Trowler (2010) described student engagement as the mutual interaction of time, effort, and other related resources invested by both students and their institutions to improve the student experience and enhance student learning outcomes and growth as well as the institution's quality and reputation. Besides, student engagement is established on the credence that learning outcomes will improve when students are interested and inquisitive. Various approaches have been utilised persistently to measure such collegiality. Tertiary institutions employ qualitative and quantitative approaches to estimate student engagement. Some ex-

amples of such methods include student experience surveys and self-reports of their learning. Student engagement appears to impact the educator's quality of subject content delivery and a reflection of the institution's quality and reputation.

Though student engagement seems straightforward, it might present as complex forms in practice such as intellectual engagement, emotional engagement, behavioural engagement, physical engagement, social engagement, and cultural engagement. Furthermore, there is an overwhelming turmoil in the understanding around face-to-face and online student engagement with increasingly the latter being the crucial area warranting upgrading in tertiary education.

As education transforms into a student-centred archetypal, teaching strategies also change. For example, the integration of technologies into teaching has renovated the way educators employ instructional methods to help students attain appropriate learning outcomes. The methodological differences between directed and constructivist models have to be acknowledged in this context of student engagement – an educator as a mere transmitter of knowledge or a guide and facilitator who assists students explore their learning. In addition to educator aligned teaching strategies or approaches, the theory of student engagement highlights the importance of the role of environment and personality in student learning. It is to be noted that these theories cannot elucidate the variation in the engagement of students who study in the same class and environment. On the other hand, Vygotsky evaluated student learning environments and suggested that effective learning takes place when students interact with each other and the educator (Piaget, 2008). In other words, Vygotsky (1980) argues that the process of learning and the social environment are inseparable.

A conceptually-driven, cross-disciplinary literature search was conducted using PubMed, Google Scholar databases. Keywords such as student engagement, student involvement, and other secondary keywords were employed in the literature search. Articles retrieved from the literature were categorised based on the era of publication (historical evidence) and relevance to the focus of the review. The literature originating from the United States and the Australian education systems relating to higher education delivery and management settings were found to be the most predominant body. Nevertheless, recent literature review from the United Kingdom contained a reductionist view in the context of student engagement, albeit with some generational differences in the perspectives.

In contrast, political views are overwhelmingly liberal and innovative, underrepresenting the extremes of traditionalism and cultural reconstructivism. While in the literature on student engagement, the relative absence of traditionalism is unsurprising, the lack of works from a socially reconstructivist viewpoint has been concerning. The literature review also highlighted the scarcity in commentary associated with student engagement in governance. While most of the documentary discussed that the student's gain was the student's voice on student engagement, there was a lack of formal governance aspects incorporated into teaching practice.

This article reflects on the various practical and theoretical approaches educators have utilised in the past to promote student engagement. The objective of this review is to highlight the approaches from the Agrarian Age to the present information and technology guided teaching strategies. This review also proposes and reflects on future directions and a framework that would complement current strategic approaches on student engagement.

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