

See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/346714541>

# Conceptualizing Student Engagement and Its Role in Meaningful Learning and Teaching Experiences Conceptualizing Student Engagement and Its Role in Meaningful Learning and Teaching...

Chapter · December 2020

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-4658-1.ch008

CITATIONS

2

READS

66

2 authors:



Joan Nyika

The Technical University of Kenya

49 PUBLICATIONS 74 CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE



Fredrick Madaraka Mwema

University of Johannesburg

104 PUBLICATIONS 329 CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE

Some of the authors of this publication are also working on these related projects:



Surface engineering: machining of hard materials [View project](#)



MACHINING OF TITANIUM ALLOYS [View project](#)

## Chapter 8

# Conceptualizing Student Engagement and Its Role in Meaningful Learning and Teaching Experiences

**Joan Nyika**

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8300-6990>

*Technical University of Kenya, Kenya*

**Fredrick Mwema**

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6116-5587>

*Dedan Kimathi University of Technology, Kenya*

### **ABSTRACT**

*Student engagement is a crucial aspect of learning as it promotes understanding, enables learners to become responsible community members, and plays a crucial role in curriculum development. The concept has varied definitions that depict it as confusing and vague as exposed in this chapter. To demystify this confusion and vagueness, this chapter focuses on the levels of engagement and its associated formations rather than what it is. Three levels of engagement are discussed in relationship to their roles in promoting understanding of knowledge by learners, curriculum designing, and in formation of communities where knowledge, academics, students, and educational institutions interact. The discourse on student engagement conceptualization in this chapter reconciles its existent tensions with the value for education investments. Engagement is depicted as essential in promoting successful learner-instructor relations towards academic excellence and for reputable educational institutions. However, power imbalance of involved stakeholders impedes its optimal use by learners.*

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-4658-1.ch008

## **INTRODUCTION**

Engagement, which describes a collection of behaviours differentiating students involved actively in their learning communities compared to their peers who are less involved, is becoming a common term in the education sector (Barbara & Gloria, 2011). It also describes the type of cognitive interaction between the learner and instructional content. The engagement may be in form of participating in discussion or attending a lecture to deliberate or compare information against what was previously known, practising on a set of predefined facts or participating in peripheral issues to the targeted focus of instruction (Ashwin & McVitty, 2015). In the examples, the novel information, predefined facts, deliberations and lectures are the instructional contents.

Engagement in the examples also explains the aspects of instructional content, which the learner interacts with, if and how the interaction happens (whether cognitive or otherwise). Kahu (2013) terms student engagement as the trending buzzword in higher learning institutions where the theory, research and debate on the concept has intensified owing to its perceived role in successful academic achievement. Similarly, Bond et al. (2020), highlighted that learner engagement was linked to better knowledge retention and persistence while disengagement was associated with a high rate of drop out especially in secondary and tertiary education level. Although learner engagement enables knowledge acquisition, the term and concept is not synonymous to learning. The learner, the instructional content and how the two components relate to each other influence engagement. Authors such as Trowler and Trowler (2010) emphasized the role of student engagement claiming that its, “value is no longer questioned” (p. 9). The concept is defined by the authors as the, “interaction between the time, effort and other relevant resources invested by both students and their institutions intended to optimise the students experience and enhance the learning outcomes and development of students and the performance, and reputation of the institution” (Trowler & Trowler, 2010, p. 3). In another alternative definition, Krause and Coates (2008) defined engagement as the input of students in learning activities with reference to resources, commitment and time. Student engagement has been positively correlated with better academic performance and higher student retention (Kahn, 2014).

Many education regulators and curriculum developers are interested in adopting and quantifying student engagement outcomes and using the concept as a proxy for quality learning. This is because at the actual learning process, there is no certainty on whether the engagement process is occurring or otherwise, as it cannot be quantified. Additionally, learners vary in what type and how much of the engagement helps them to grasp the content taught. These factors make it difficult to determine what is learnt while the cues used to impact learnt information and those cues applied by learners to grasp knowledge learnt largely influence knowledge retrieval. These trends necessitate a clear understanding of the concept on engagement, its conceptual framework, degrees of its incorporation in learning and its role in curriculum delivery as Kahu (2013) highlighted.

Additionally, engagement is multifaceted being an all-encompassing meta-construct whose objective is to merge varied components of research that contribute to understanding of student success (Kahn, 2014). While various researches on student engagement agree it is essential, the nature of the concept is contentious. In particular, the lack of a clear distinction between the consequences, antecedents and engagement state is evident considering that these aspects overlap. It is from this challenge that this book chapter explores the concept of student engagement and its contexts, variations and roles in promoting successful learning and teaching experiences based on various documented opinions. The aim of the chapter is to enhance understanding of the concept and its use in promoting positive learning experiences.

14 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the product's webpage:  
[www.igi-global.com/chapter/conceptualizing-student-engagement-and-its-role-in-meaningful-learning-and-teaching-experiences/268515?camid=4v1](http://www.igi-global.com/chapter/conceptualizing-student-engagement-and-its-role-in-meaningful-learning-and-teaching-experiences/268515?camid=4v1)

This title is available in Advances in Educational Technologies and Instructional Design, InfoSci-Books, InfoSci-Computer Science and Information Technology, InfoSci-Computer Science and IT Knowledge Solutions – Books, InfoSci-Education Knowledge Solutions – Books, InfoSci-Education, InfoSci-Select. Recommend this product to your librarian:  
[www.igi-global.com/e-resources/library-recommendation/?id=84](http://www.igi-global.com/e-resources/library-recommendation/?id=84)

## Related Content

---

**Levels of Aspiration to Use Digital Tools and Performance in an Educational Technology Course**  
Lukuman Kolapo Bello and Lateefat Folake Hamzat (2020). *International Journal of Teacher Education and Professional Development* (pp. 60-72).

[www.igi-global.com/article/levels-of-aspiration-to-use-digital-tools-and-performance-in-an-educational-technology-course/243391?camid=4v1a](http://www.igi-global.com/article/levels-of-aspiration-to-use-digital-tools-and-performance-in-an-educational-technology-course/243391?camid=4v1a)

**Studying Abroad to Inform Teaching in a Diverse Society: A Description of International Elementary Education Teaching Experiences at Ball State University**

Carolyn Walker Hitchens, Patricia Clark, Anthony Kline, Winnie Mucherah, Scott Popplewell and Kendra J. Thomas (2017). *Handbook of Research on Efficacy and Implementation of Study Abroad Programs for P-12 Teachers* (pp. 52-70).

[www.igi-global.com/chapter/studying-abroad-to-inform-teaching-in-a-diverse-society/171775?camid=4v1a](http://www.igi-global.com/chapter/studying-abroad-to-inform-teaching-in-a-diverse-society/171775?camid=4v1a)

**Improving Indian Teachers' Readiness to Adopt New Methodologies: Role of Learner-Centered In-Service Training**

Nandini Narayanan (2020). *International Journal of Teacher Education and Professional Development* (pp. 102-120).

[www.igi-global.com/article/improving-indian-teachers-readiness-to-adopt-new-methodologies/243394?camid=4v1a](http://www.igi-global.com/article/improving-indian-teachers-readiness-to-adopt-new-methodologies/243394?camid=4v1a)

**School Ready: Helping Families to Plan, Practice, and Prepare for School**

Cheryl Ann Slattery (2018). *International Journal of Teacher Education and Professional Development* (pp. 48-57).

[www.igi-global.com/article/school-ready/196555?camid=4v1a](http://www.igi-global.com/article/school-ready/196555?camid=4v1a)