Learner Engagement

Useful quotes from the literature for use at learner engagement workshops

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"When they find optimal challenges, people work to conquer them." - Deci & Ryan (1985) on intrinsic needs.

"A situational interest can become a personal interest as the organismic integration process functions to bring it into coherence with one's self." Deci (1998, p.157)

Student motivation can be facilitated by providing "tasks, material, and activities that are relevant and useful to students." (Pintrich 2003, p.672).

"What is called for is an approach to making course content meaningful to students that does not reinforce the instrumentalist view of learning." (Newbury, 2012, p.59).

"In adopting a critical enquiry approach [the teacher is confined to] asking questions; and through this persistent questioning students are led to clarify their thoughts, to sharpen their criticisms and to develop their own, distinctive views... and makes course content personally meaningful. Newbury, 2012, p.65).

Student engagement is the "level of academic challenge, time on task, and [participation] in other educationally purposeful activities." (Kuh, 2001, p.12)

Student engagement has been defined as:

- participation in educationally effective practices, both inside and outside the classroom, which leads to a range of measurable outcomes" (Kuh et al., 2007)
- the extent to which students are engaging in activities that higher education research has shown to be linked with high-quality learning outcomes” (Krause and Coates, 2008, 493)
- ‘the quality of effort students themselves devote to educationally purposeful activities that contribute directly to desired outcomes’. [p.493] Hu and Kuh (2001, 3)
- "...creating for learners a sense of belonging through involvement, engagement and connectedness with their university experiences." (Kift and Nelson, 2005)

1. Enhance students' self-belief: "Education is about students constructing their own knowledge... Self-belief is reported as a key attribute in motivation. Yorke and Knight (2004) found that the self-theories learners bring to their learning impact motivation, agency and engagement." Zepke and Leach (2010)
“...where learners believed they had the personal resources to complete a task, their self-efficacy grew and consequently so did their engagement. Fazey and Fazey (2001) reported that self-perceived competence is a key motivator for engagement. “Zepke and Leach (2010)

2. Enable students to work autonomously, enjoy learning relationships with others and feel they are competent to achieve their own objectives: "Ryan and Deci (2000) recognize that motivation is not a unitary concept. They identify intrinsic motivation, which refers to doing something because it is inherently interesting or enjoyable, and extrinsic motivation, which refers to doing something because it leads to a separate outcome. Intrinsic motivation assists self-determination but only because it leads to a separate outcome. Intrinsic motivation assists self-determination but only contextual conditions exist to promote feelings of competence or self-efficacy. Such feelings in turn encourage the exercise of choice and self-direction, leading to a greater feeling of autonomy." (p.170) Zepke and Leach (2010)

"When institutions provide opportunities for students to learn both autonomously and with others, and to develop their sense of competence, students are more likely to be motivated, to engage and succeed." (p.170) Zepke and Leach (2010)

3 Recognize that teaching and teachers are central to engagement: "...if the teacher is perceived to be approachable, well-prepared and sensitive to student needs, students are committed to work harder, get more out of the session and are more willing to express their own opinion." (p.171) Zepke and Leach (2010)

"Bryson and Hand (2007) concluded that students are more likely to engage if they are supported by teachers who establish inviting learning environments, demand high standards, challenge, and make themselves freely available to discuss academic progress." (p.171) Zepke and Leach (2010)

"Kuh et al. (2006) found that teachers who provided deep learning experiences promoted student engagement. Hockings et al. (2008) support this view, finding that 'disengaged' students appear to take a 'surface' approach to learning – copying out notes, focusing on fragmented facts and right answers and accepting those." (p.171) Zepke and Leach (2010)

4 Create learning that is active, collaborative and fosters learning relationships: "...active learning in groups, peer relationships and social skills are important in engaging learners." (p.171) Zepke and Leach (2010)

"Moran and Gonyea (2003) found that peer interaction had the strongest predictive capacity for engagement and outcomes." (p.171) Zepke and Leach (2010)

"Zhao and Kuh (2004) found that learning community experience was positively associated with student gains in personal and social development, practical competence, greater effort and deeper engagement. Similarly Krause (2005) found that working in learning communities enhanced students' sense of belonging, particularly when they were full-time students." Zepke and Leach (2010)
5 Create educational experiences for students that are challenging, enriching and extend their academic abilities: "the evidence is compelling that enriching experiences and academic challenge are successful in engaging students. Teachers can... challenge students to 'stretch further than they think they can' (Kuh et al., 2005: 178)." (p.171) Zepke and Leach (2010)

"Kuh et al. (2005) found that ‘tough’ assessment tasks enhance rather than hinder engagement as long as such challenges are associated with detailed, swift and focused feedback. “ (p.171) Zepke and Leach (2010)

“Teachers need to create rich educational experiences that challenge students' ideas and stretch them as far as they can go." (p.171) Zepke and Leach (2010)

“Institutions need to be adaptable, developing a culture that is welcoming to all students.” (p.172) Zepke and Leach (2010)

8 Adapt to changing student expectations: "Students appear to be less engaged as they increasingly study part-time.” (p.172) Zepke and Leach (2010)

“Students expect study to fit their lives; they do not want to fit their lives to institutional expectations.” (p.173) Zepke and Leach (2010)

Yorke (p.2006) said differentiate “…between students’ performance goals and learning goals. The former are adopted by surface learners, the latter by engaged learners.” (p.173) Zepke and Leach (2010)

9 Enable students to become active citizens: “What is needed is a democratic–critical conception of engagement …[which]… is participatory, dialogic and leads not only to academic achievement but to success as an active citizen.” Zepke and Leach (2010)

10 Enable students to develop their social and cultural capital: “Social and cultural capital is won with a sense of belonging, with active relationships with others, with knowing how things work around here.” (p.173) Zepke and Leach (2010)

Trowler (2010) identifies five different ways of conceptualising student engagement in learning: student attention in learning; student interest in learning; student involvement in learning; student (active) participation in learning; ‘student-centredness’ – student involvement in the design, delivery and assessment of their learning. in Trowler (2010, 10)

Trowler (2010) identifies three concerns about how to generate a sense of belonging for individual students: engagement towards individual student ‘belonging’; identity attached to representation (module/course/discipline/institution/student role); engagement of groups such as ‘non-traditional’ students. in Trowler (2010, 10)

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"Many articles, conference papers and chapters on student engagement do not contain explicit definitions of engagement, making the (erroneous) assumption that their understanding is a shared, universal one. In addition, studies tend to measure that which is measurable... in Trowler (2010, 17)

"a sound body of literature has established robust correlations between student involvement in a subset of ‘educationally purposive activities’, and positive outcomes of student success and development, including satisfaction, persistence, academic achievement and social engagement" (p.2) Trowler (2010)

"Coates (2007, 122) describes engagement as “a broad construct intended to encompass salient academic as well as certain non-academic aspects of the student experience”, comprising the following: active and collaborative learning; participation in challenging academic activities; formative communication with academic staff; involvement in enriching educational experiences; feeling legitimated and supported by university learning communities.” in Trowler (2010, 7)

**Engagement for what?** "The majority of literature on student engagement is concerned directly or indirectly with improving student learning.” Other literature is concerned with improving: throughput rates and retention; equality/social justice; curricular relevance through student co-design; institutional reputation and commercial benefit and resource management. (Trowler 2010, p.22 - 28).

“Students reporting an intense form of engagement are highly involved with their university study ... They tend to see teaching staff as approachable, and to see their learning environment as responsive, supportive and challenging.” (Coates, 2007, p.132-133)

“An independent style of engagement is characterised by a more academically and less socially orientated approach to study ... Students reporting an independent style of study see themselves as participants in a supportive learning community. They see staff as being approachable, as responsive to student needs, and as encouraging and legitimating student reflection, and feedback. These students tend to be less likely, however, to work collaboratively with other students within or beyond class, or to be involved in enriching events and activities around campus.”(Coates, 2007, p.133-134)

“Students reporting a collaborative style of engagement tend to favour the social aspects of university life and work, as opposed to the more purely cognitive or individualistic forms of interaction ... High levels of general collaborative engagement reflect students feeling validated within their university communities, particularly by participating in broad beyond-class talent development activities and interacting with staff and other students.” (Coates, 2007, p.134)

“It is likely that students whose response styles indicate passive styles of engagement rarely participate in the only or general activities and conditions linked to productive learning.”(Coates, 2007, p.134)
"With knowledge of student engagement characteristics, pedagogical approaches could be developed to enhance the involvement of those students reporting more passive styles of engagement." (Coates, 2007, p.136)

"Informal „out-of-class” learning experiences and interactions with peers are reported to have a positive impact on student satisfaction and learning and are also known to build students’ sense of self-worth and confidence." (Goodwin et al. 2010, p.387)

"The proliferation of social networking communities (SNCs) and other ubiquitous, Web 2.0 technologies provide students with a myriad of opportunities for informal interaction and engagement beyond both the classroom walls and the physical environment. For example, SNCs such as Facebook have been used for socially-based learning." (Goodwin et al. 2010, p.388)

"The conditions in each domain (physical or virtual) differentially affects how interactions can occur and the ways in which individuals can work with each other... proximity and co-presence are common triggers for informal interactions in face-to-face environments, especially if people have shared purpose for being somewhere." (Goodwin et al. 2010, p.388)

"a sense of copresence – a sense of „being there with others” – involves mutual awareness of other people’s availability for engagement." (Goodwin et al. 2010, p.388)

"The study found that the nature and degree of social relationships between classmates impacted on how they chose to communicate with each other." (Goodwin et al. 2010, p.389)

"In a face-to-face scenario, the cues and clues of physical proximity and copresence made it easier to gauge people’s openness to engagement “...because you engage ... people’s reactions on their face a lot more, so you can be a bit more careful with how you sort of present stuff ... it’s pretty subtle”. These findings seem to confirm Zhao and Elesh’s suggestion that “...copresence for social contact requires prior acquaintanceship..." (2008, p. 578).” (Goodwin et al. 2010, p.390)

"Students’ existing social relationships are a key determinant of how social networking technologies are used among groups of students." (Goodwin et al. 2010,p.391)

"This study showed that students were engaging in informal learning in their OOCI particularly in the area of assignment preparation and discussion, which suggests there is potential for harnessing technologies to foster informal student learning experiences." (Goodwin et al. 2010, p.391)

References


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