FYHE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL

The International Journal of the First Year in Higher Education
ISSN: 1838-2959
Volume 4, Issue 2, pp. 1-14
August 2013

Feature Article—keynote presentation*

Student engagement: A complex business supporting the first year experience in tertiary education

Nick Zepke
Institute of Education, Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand

Abstract

At the heart of this paper is the idea that student engagement is a complex business. It examines a number of conceptual engagement frameworks that show how this complexity can enhance the first year experience of students in higher education. Eight propositions emerge from the complexity. Some are present in all conceptual frameworks; others feature only in a few or are implied rather than stated. But each offers some suggestions for teachers and institutions to engage students. Some propositions will look familiar. Chief among these are propositions that offer practical ways to improve engagement in the first year. But other propositions emerge from less well harvested research fields. They emphasise the importance of discipline knowledge, student wellbeing, outside influences on student learning and flexibility in the face of changing student expectations. But overarching the eight propositions is the realisation that so many of the ideas produced by engagement researchers are generic. It is up to teachers and institutions to interpret and shape such ideas for specific and unique contexts, subjects and, most importantly, learners.

Please cite this article as:
Zepke, N. (2013). Student engagement: A complex business supporting the first year experience in tertiary education. *The International Journal of the First Year in Higher Education, 4*(2). 1-14. doi: 10.5204/intjfyhe.v4i2.183

This article has been peer reviewed and accepted for publication in *Int J FYHE.* Please see the Editorial Policies under the 'About' section of the Journal website for further information.

© Copyright of articles is retained by author/s. As an open access journal, articles are free to use, with proper attribution, in educational and other non-commercial settings. ISSN: 1838-2959

*Feature article—keynote presentation details

Associate Professor Nick Zepke delivered his keynote presentation 'Student engagement: A complex business supporting the first year experience in tertiary education' at the 16th International First Year in Higher Education Conference in Wellington, New Zealand on the 8th of July, 2013. Central to the keynote is the idea that student engagement is a complex business.

The presentation examined a number of conceptual frameworks that show how this complexity can enhance the first year experience of students in higher education.

The keynote is reproduced in article form by the author for the journal issue.

Biography

Associate Professor Nick Zepke (pictured) works in the Institute of Education at Massey University, New Zealand. He researches adult, higher and lifelong education in three interrelated areas: learner centred teaching, policy studies, and futures studies. Since 2006 research into improving students' outcomes has dominated, particularly in the areas of student retention and engagement. His work has been both practical and theoretical. He has disseminated this research widely through his teaching and published it in respected international and local journals, commissioned reports, an edited book, book chapters and conference proceedings.

Profile[1]

I have an overarching interest in adult, higher and lifelong education. This has generated research outputs in three interrelated areas: (i) learner centred teaching in tertiary settings, (ii) policy studies in tertiary education and (iii) futures studies in adult, higher and lifelong education. Together these areas of activity form a coherent research and teaching programme. Since 2006 this has included research into 'hard' tertiary student outcomes such as retention, persistence and completion and 'soft outcomes' such as distance travelled and student engagement; policy and leadership studies in adult, vocational and tertiary education; the effects of power and diversity on classroom practices and possible effects of policies and practices on the future. These intertwined interests are viewed through a critical theory lens, with both modern and post-modern tints. My interests involve empirical research generated through funded projects such as TLRI and the Ministry of Education, theoretical explorations and literature syntheses - all with the goal of making a difference for tertiary student learning. My work has often been collaborative and I have led research teams of up to 16 researchers. Publication of research has been in international and New Zealand journals, commissioned reports, a book and in conference proceedings.

[1] Profile from Massey University staff page, http://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/expertise/profile.cfm?stref=857530

Introduction

Research on student engagement leaves big footprints in the tertiary education landscape. This is highlighted by the number of articles found by reviewers of engagement research. For example, Wimpenny and Savin-Baden (2012) found 2,530 articles published between 2000 and 2012 about student engagement. Trowler (2010) identified more than 1,000 items dealing with the subject. In their review of Australasian research on the first year experience, Nelson, Clarke, Kift and Creagh (2011) found almost 400 empirical and conceptual studies produced between 2000 and 2010. Zepke and Leach (2010) included almost 300 research reports in their synthesis of the engagement literature. Kuh (2009) confirmed the pre-eminence of engagement in the higher education learning and teaching literature by suggesting it is ever-present in discussions about higher education policy, in research literature about teaching and learning, and even in the non-academic media. In her summary of findings from a large research project in the United Kingdom, Thomas (2012) found that student engagement is so prominent because it unequivocally connects with student success. “It has become increasingly clear that ‘success’ means helping all students to become more engaged and more effective learners in higher education, thus improving their academic outcomes and their progression opportunities after graduation (or when they exit higher education)” (p. 10).

It is this connection with student success that makes student engagement a valuable focus for thinking about students’ first year experience in higher education. Researchers have developed a number of conceptual frameworks to explain student engagement in the first year experience. In Australasia, Nelson, Kift and Clarke (2012) adapt Biggs’ Presage-Process-Product (3P) model to suggest a transition pedagogy that serves also as a model for student engagement. Their version of the 3P model recognises the major factors involved in engagement—from input factors such as what students, institutions and teachers contribute, through the process of transforming learning experiences to output or success factors. Coates (2007) constructs a four cell matrix that recognises the importance of academic and social factors for engagement applicable to online and face-to face learning. He maps student attitudes to engagement as collaborative, intense, independent or passive. Solomonides, Reid and Petocz (2012) offer a relational framework to identify some of the factors helping learners to make sense of their experiences. A sense of engagement emerges when students gain a sense of being and transformation by being professional and commanding discipline knowledge. Leach and Zepke (2012) offer a multi-dimensional view of engagement. They synthesise student engagement using multiple lenses tracing student, teacher, institutional and external environment perspectives.

Researchers in the (US) States have been influential contributors to our understanding of engagement and student success. The American National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) (Kuh, 2009) and various offspring surveys such as the Australasian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE) offer a framework for thinking about engagement that focuses on what students do to succeed and how teachers and institutions can contribute to success. The NSSE family uses five general engagement scales to survey how students respond to academic challenge, active learning, interactions with teachers,

supportive learning environments and enriching educational experiences. While Tinto (2010) focused initially on student retention and success, his emphasis on success factors translates well to engagement. His framework emphasises high expectations, academic and social support, frequent feedback on performance and student involvement (engagement) in educational communities. Tinto suggests that a "key concept is that of educational community and the capacity of institutions to establish supportive social and academic communities, especially in the classroom, that actively involve all students as equal members" (p. 73).

Engagement research in the United Kingdom (UK) seems to run different lines. Solomonides et al. (2012) suggest that in the UK, the emphasis seems more on understanding a student's own sense of what learning is in a constructivist framework than the American view which interprets engagement more within a predetermined and generic pedagogical framework. For example, Trowler's (2010) literature review views engaged learners as co-constructors of learning in the classroom while also emphasising their involvement in structure, processes and identity building in the wider community. Bryson and Hardy (2012) offer a framework comprising a number of influences on engagement. These include students feeling a sense of relevance in what they learn; of suitable challenge; of a balance of choice, autonomy, risk, growth and enjoyability; of appropriate trust relationships with teachers and of on-going dialogue with them; of a strong sense of purpose and strong social networks.

... engagement as a conduit to student success

These selected conceptual frameworks highlight the great variation in views about student engagement. They offer both connected and distinctive perspectives. For example, they connect in the way they perceive engagement as a conduit to student success. They focus on learners, their learning and assume a student centred pedagogy in which teachers and institutions play a supporting but vital part. They would generally accept a definition of engagement offered by Fredricks, Blumenfeld and Paris (2004) from the school sector that engagement results from appropriate student academic behaviour, positive emotions towards learning and a willing commitment to learning tasks. There is also a shared understanding that engagement has multiple properties: students' investment in learning, supportive institutions and classrooms, as well as an enabling external environment (Yorke & Longden, 2008). These frameworks are connected because they offer generic operational advice for improving student engagement through teachers' work (McMahon & Portelli, 2004).

But the frameworks are also distinct. The differences in American and European approaches have been noted. One example of this is that engagement research in the UK tends to focus on a qualitative perception of patterns of engagement, while in the US there is an emphasis on quantifying variables of engagement (Bryson & Hardy, 2012). Engagement surveys such as the NSSE family act as a snapshot for a reflective accountability process (McCormick, 2009); other research emphasises a holistic development approach (Solomonides et al., 2012).

Researchers like Nelson and colleagues (2012) describe engagement as involving the whole of an institution's curriculum practices, others, such as Yorke and Longden (2008) and Leach and Zepke (2012), include the external environment as an important factor in engagement. Much of the engagement research focuses on the pedagogy employed by teachers and institutions but Solomonides et al. offer a relational framework that reminds that for students, engaging discipline knowledge is as important as an engaging environment. Indeed, some frameworks emphasise the importance of discipline knowledge for engagement (Zepke, 2013), others are not so explicit about the role of content (Trowler, 2010).

In short, the conceptual frameworks in the engagement literature are simultaneously connected to each other yet also distinct. Heylighen (1999) suggests that such connections and distinctions are entwined in unpredictable ways. He observes that they help us perceive the complexity of a system. Such complexity is natural as connection is continuity, similarity and stability, necessary conditions for system maintenance; distinction enables diverse ideas to flourish, for change in the system to occur and for a decentralisation of ideas. But what shared meanings can we glean from the complex array of ideas about engagement discussed so far? Davis and Sumara (2008) suggest that emergence, a natural feature of complexity, enables new understandings to surface. Emergence often happens at the margins of a complex network, is not lineally derived from data and so is not usually predictable. The paper searches for emergence from the complex connections and distinctions in the conceptual engagement frameworks to generate engagement strategies that support the first year of study.

Emergence

A key emergent property from the engagement frameworks surveyed is that student engagement has a number of properties: students' investment in learning, supportive institutions and classrooms, as well as an enabling external environment (Leach & Zepke, 2012). Each is important for engagement and success but not in a "one size fits all" way. It is essential to know about the generic ideas offered by the frameworks and other engagement research. It is even more critical to understand how these ideas apply to our own context, how they can be adapted to suit our own students, teaching philosophies and content area. This paper now canvasses a number of generic ideas for enabling learners to succeed in their first year of higher education but with the understanding that they are but items on supermarket shelves that have to be prepared to suit in our own kitchen. The generic ideas will be organised as propositions under three headings: students' investment in their own learning, teacher and institutional support and enabling external environments.

Students' investment in learning

Students are at the core of engagement. They must invest cognitively, emotionally and actively in learning before they will succeed (Fredricks et al., 2004). As our survey of engagement frameworks suggests, investment opportunities are many, varied and complex. While students invest in their own learning, teachers, institutions and significant outsiders help facilitate and grow the investment. Emerging from the various frameworks are possible courses of action for teachers, institutions and others to support and grow the student investment process.

Student self-belief is vital for success

All students have strengths. To succeed they must recognise this and believe that they have enough strengths to succeed. This is particularly vital in their first year of tertiary study. But self-belief cannot be assumed. It is built and maintained in various relationships between learners and teachers, learners and learners, learners and institutions and learners and their communities. Within the classroom a strengths-based approach to learning and teaching assumes that while students have weaknesses they can learn to overcome them by enhancing their self-belief, by building their strengths. Strengths-based learning is rooted in appreciative inquiry that attempts to set aside the negativities people can bring to learning (Barton, 2005). For example, students must believe they bring cultural, age-related, educational and personality-related strengths, among many others to their learning. Take cultural strengths. Some students belong to cultures that value individualism and autonomy; others belong to collectivist cultures that value connection with others. Both strengths are useful in learning as long as learners and teachers believe that collaborative as well as autonomous learning can lead to success. Some students are practical problem solvers; others think deeply by reflecting on their experiences; yet others theorise from reading and some do all three. Students need to believe that all strengths they bring into the classroom are appreciated.

... they (students) must recognise this and believe that they have enough strengths to succeed. This is particularly vital in their first year of tertiary study.

Strengths can be built in many ways. For example, teachers and institutions can help by

- recognising and demonstrating, in word and deed, that they appreciate students' strengths;
- varying teaching and learning activities, and assessment methods so students have the opportunity to use and develop their particular strengths; and
- providing feedback that enables students to recognise and develop their strengths.

Students' motivation grows from self-belief

Ryan and Deci (2000) identify a trinity of motivational factors that are vital for student engagement. They found that engaged students work autonomously, enjoy learning relationships with others and feel they are competent to achieve their own objectives. Of the three, feeling competent is the most important for motivation (Ryan & Deci). This enhances students' self-belief, and strengths-based teaching becomes an important building block. Set tasks that are challenging but within students' capabilities help them to build feelings of competence. Timely and focused feedback builds competence when it tells students what they have done well and what they can do to improve. Some students have strengths and preferences to work alone. But autonomy does not just mean working independently; it can mean

working interdependently and belonging to a group does not detract from autonomy. Group projects can include individual tasks that require an autonomous contribution. A sense of belonging, or being in learning relationships with the teacher and other students, also enhances engagement. While perhaps less important than competence and autonomy (Ryan & Deci), belonging is still important to student engagement and can be enhanced through working in groups.

Motivation grows where

- tasks and activities enable students to feel competent—not glossing over weaknesses, but framing tasks in ways that will build on strengths;
- feedback on completed tasks is timely, specific, reinforces strengths and provides guidance on how to address weaknesses; and
- group activities encourage interdependence, a sense of belonging, as well as room for an individual to work autonomously, and the collective to value individual contributions.

Self-belief and motivation grow students' social and cultural capital

Students, who feel competent, respected and working in mutually respectful relationships, are able to grow the social and cultural capital they have when they begin their first experiences of higher education (Gavala & Flett, 2005). Non-traditional students especially often must still develop the social and cultural capital needed to succeed in mainstream education. They do not command the group memberships, relationships, networks of influence and support, the forms of knowledge, skills and education that will give them the capital to engage and succeed. Social and cultural capital is won when such students feel a sense of belonging, when they enjoy constructive relationships with others, when they feel they have strengths they can contribute to the mainstream, when they feel like a "fish in water" (Thomas, 2002, p. 431).

To enable students to build social and cultural capital, an engaging teacher:

- frequently acknowledges the strengths non-traditional learners bring to learning;
- caters, at least some of the time, to attitudes, expectations, behaviours and approaches to learning valued by students from diverse cultures with diverse knowledge and skills;
- gives non-traditional as well as traditional students a window for sharing their ideas about what makes them similar to and different from others; and
- maintains standards, but finds new, appropriate ways for non-traditional students to achieve them.

Teachers and institutions are vital enablers of engagement

A number of the frameworks put the teacher and/or the institution at the centre of student engagement (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt & Associates, 2005; Nelson et al., 2012; Tinto, 2010). According to Trowler (2010), this view dominates student engagement research. It is chiefly concerned with the *how* of teaching and learning for engagement. This view is necessary, but does not offer a sufficient

understanding of the teachers' and institutions' roles in student engagement during the first year of higher education. This section canvasses some practical ideas that emerge from the frameworks for enhancing the first year experience but also proposes three teaching and institutional roles not so often surfaced in engagement or first year experience discourses.

There are many practical ways to improve engagement in the first year experience

One of the continuities in the frameworks is a listing of a generic set of organisational knowledge, skills and attitudes to foster engagement. These lists suggest, for example, that engaging teachers are welcoming, supportive of learning, facilitate students learning collaboratively and respect students coming from diverse backgrounds (Kuh, 2009). Hockings, Cooke, Yamashita, McGinty and Bowl (2008) found that students who are expected to reflect, question, conjecture, evaluate, and make connections between ideas are most deeply engaged. Teachers expecting high academic standards, supporting students to achieve these standards, and challenging them to "stretch further than they think they can" (Kuh et al., 2005, p. 178) enhance engagement. Active and collaborative learning experiences also help (Kezar & Kinzie, 2006). Learning community participation seems to be positively and significantly related to student engagement (Pike, Kuh, & McCormick, 2011). The nature and quality of institutional support for learning offer further perspectives. An overview of what engaging institutions do is provided by Kuh et al.. In researching the practices of 20 successful higher education institutions in the US, they found cultures that focused on student success, fore-grounded learning, established high expectations, aimed for continuous improvement, invested money in support services, asserted the importance of diversity and difference and prepared students for learning in higher education.

A useful summary supporting this proposition is provided by Chickering and Gamson's (1987) seven principles of good teaching:

- nurture positive student-teacher relationships;
- foster co-operation among students;
- promote active learning;
- provide prompt, constructive feedback on student work;
  - ensure students have sufficient time to do set tasks;
  - have high expectations of students; and
  - respect diverse talents and ways of learning.

Disciplinary knowledge engages students

Transition pedagogy is a well-documented term for one of the frameworks discussed earlier (Kift, Nelson, & Clarke, 2010; Nelson et al., 2012). It espouses institution-wide policies and practices for a holistic curriculum approach comprising six principles: design, transition, engagement, diversity, assessment and evaluation. Disciplinary knowledge is undoubtedly embedded in a number of these principles, but does not feature explicitly. Yet, students enrol in higher education to gain subject or discipline knowledge to achieve life goals. To help them achieve these requires "a teaching approach which

begins to satisfy simultaneously a tacit demand for content, for understanding of content, for relevance and applicability of that content ...” (Walker, cited in Entwistle, 2010, p. 68). It is important then to include an explicit consideration of content in a transition pedagogy. This is distinctive in only a few frameworks (Solomonides et al., 2012). Entwistle (2003) offers a conceptual framework bringing content and pedagogy together to achieve quality learning. He pictures content selection, organisation and assessment as one side of the teaching and learning process. On the other side is pedagogy, involving the design and use of the learning environment. But his framework also acknowledges the distinct contributions of both teachers and learners to quality learning. Teachers teach content and co-ordinate learning environments; learners engage with the content and the learning environment. The framework suggests that quality learning is achieved when teachers and learners together deal with content in pedagogically suitable ways.

To do this, teachers could

- recognise that dealing with disciplinary knowledge in a pedagogically engaging way is a vital element for a successful first year experience;
- consider the special kind of practice that needs to emerge at the intersection of discipline and pedagogy when planning for an engaging first year experience; and
- investigate the value of threshold concepts which acknowledge the close link between content and learning-teaching and are “akin to a portal, opening up a new and previously inaccessible way of thinking about something” (Meyer & Land, 2003, p. 1).

Engaging teaching considers student wellbeing

With the exception perhaps of Bryson and Hardy (2012), the importance of wellbeing for student engagement is not often discussed in the engagement literature. According to Field (2009), successful learning requires learners to be and feel well physically, socially and emotionally. While teachers and institutions are not solely responsible for student wellbeing, they can help students keep well by maintaining a culture that fosters wellbeing. According to Forgeard, Jayawickreme, Kern, and Seligman (2011), such a culture ensures that an individual has clear goals, a belief that these goals are achievable, offers suitable activities to further goals, provides constructive feedback on progress to goals and enables learners to retain a sense of personal control over learning. This characterisation of wellbeing echoes views on engagement. Field observed that successful learning impacts positively on feelings of wellbeing. “There is, then, a growing body of evidence on the relationship between learning and well-being, as well as on the impact of learning on factors that help promote well-being [sic]” (p. 11). The connection between learning and wellbeing is further illuminated by indicators of personal wellbeing. Such indicators include having positive emotional feelings, a satisfying life, vitality, resilience and self-esteem, enjoying autonomy, competence, engagement and feelings of value. Social wellbeing includes engaging in supportive relationships with family, friends and supporters such as teachers and peers; and trusting other people while enjoying respect and a sense of belonging (New Economics Foundation, 2009).

Wellbeing indicators such as these echo implicitly strategies offered in many of the

engagement frameworks discussed in this paper:

- helping learners develop their self-esteem, resilience and positive emotions;
- enabling feelings of autonomy, competence and engagement; and
- reinforcing positive relationships with students, teachers and significant others.

Enabling external environments

In general, engagement and first year experience researchers focus on what teachers and institutions can do to enhance learning inside the classroom. While occasionally mentioned, influences that happen or originate outside the walls of the academy are neglected in many frameworks. The framework offered by Yorke and Longden (2008) is one exception. They found that seven factors explained disengagement and early departure. While five of these factors related mainly to institutional issues such as poor quality teaching, and to personal considerations such as choosing the wrong course, two factors originated outside the institution: problems with finance and employment; and problems with social integration into aspects of institutional life due to their background. This suggests that teachers and institutions need to take note that influences on engagement from outside the institution can be important. The paper offers two foci that occur outside the institution.

Adapt to changing student expectations

Engaging institutions and teachers, no matter how successful, are never satisfied with their performance. They change practices in response to evidence. There is evidence that political and social conditions are changing; and institutions and teachers must adapt to these changes. McInnis (2003) observed a new reality in higher education with students increasingly studying part-time. In Australia, for example, James, Krause and Jennings (2010) found that more than half the students surveyed thought that paid work interfered with their academic performance. Such students expected study to fit their lives; not fit their lives around study. McInnis suggests that engagement can no longer be assumed; it must be negotiated with students. James et al. found that half of the students in part-time employment offered family reasons for seeking employment. Some wanted to gain greater financial independence from their family; others, and this was particularly so for aboriginal students, were supporting their families. Together, these studies suggest that non-institutional, external factors are important influences on engagement. Teachers and institutions must keep abreast of changing circumstances.

Coping with these new realities is not easy, and teachers and institutions will have to adapt by

- recognising that many students are employed. While they will dance a fine line between maintaining standards and accommodating these students, some flexibility should be possible around the amount of content, assessment deadlines, and attendance requirements;
- recognising that many students, particularly non-traditional ones, have family and community

responsibilities. Again content, assessment deadlines and attendance requirements may need to be negotiated; and

- negotiating items like content, assessment deadlines and attendance requirements.

Teachers and institutions must be very clear about their expectations. Engagement is not for negotiation, only the way that engagement takes place.

Enable students to become active citizens

Student success in much of the neo-liberal western world tends to be defined by narrow indicators like retention and completion. Success is frequently connected to statistical measures such as the NSSE and AUSSE which provide formative accountability measures (McCormick, 2009). These focus engagement on easily measured behaviours that blind educators to wider educational outcomes leading to citizenship both in and beyond the academy (Trowler, 2010). This blindness affects the first year experience as students are introduced to quite narrow knowledge and experiences. Under these circumstances, it seems relevant to investigate how engagement for active citizenship can enrich the first year experience. The answer is infused with diverging ideological assumptions that generate diverse views about the purposes of curriculum. One view aligns with what Toohey (1999) labelled traditional disciplinary and system-based approaches and what Barnett and Coate (2005) labelled the project of reproductive knowing. Such approaches conform to the prevailing neo-liberal ideology that allows learning about civic structures and practices. A second set of curriculum purposes echoes Toohey's cognitive and experiential approaches and are akin to Barnett and Coate's project of acting constructively. Students here would be able to participate in educational and other democratic processes. A third approach aligns with Toohey's and Barnett and Coate's radical socially critical approaches to curriculum. These enable learners to challenge the status quo as not advancing wellbeing and social justice.

To enable all three approaches, teachers can teach students to

- make legitimate claims about knowledge in a world of uncertainty and negotiate challenges to such claims;
- act constructively in the world by identifying ethical and political issues affecting their subject; and
- become aware of themselves and their potential to effect change in a world that is open, fluid and contested.

Conclusion

At the heart of this paper is the proposal that student engagement is a complex business. It discussed a number of frameworks that attempt to conceptualise engagement. While these frameworks share a number of similarities, they also portray differences. It is untenable to assume that out of such complexity, some neat, lineal proposals for action might emerge. Instead, the paper looks for ideas that often emerge at the margins of thinking about engagement and not at the centre. So the paper relies on *emergence*, a feature of complexity theory, to offer some insights about how teachers and

institutions might work to engage students. Non-lineal *emergence* revealed eight propositions. Some are grounded in all frameworks; others feature only in a few or are implied rather than stated. But each offers some suggestions for teachers and institutions to engage students. Because a number of propositions emerge from all frameworks, they will look familiar to students of engagement. Chief among these is the proposition *there are many practical ways to improve engagement in the first year experience* as much of the research tries to discover such ways. But others emerge from less well trodden research fields. Propositions emphasising the importance of discipline knowledge, wellbeing, outside influences on student learning and flexibility in the face of change are among these. But overarching the propositions is the realisation that so many of the ideas produced by engagement researchers are generic. It is up to teachers and institutions to interpret and shape such ideas for specific and unique contexts, subjects and, most importantly, learners.

References

Barnett, R., & Coate, K. (2005). *Engaging the curriculum in higher education.* Maidenhead, UK: Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University Press.

Barton, W. (2005). Methodological challenges in the study of resiliency. In M. Ungar (Ed.), *The handbook for working with children and youth: Pathways to resilience across cultures and contexts* (pp.135-147). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Bryson, C., & Hardy, C. (2012). The nature of academic engagement: What the students tell us. In I. Solomonides, A. Reid, & P. Petocz (Eds.), *Engaging with learning in higher education* (pp. 25-46). Oxfordshire, UK: Libri Publishers.

Chickering, A., & Gamson, Z. (1987). Seven principles for good practice in undergraduate education. *AAHE Bulletin*, *39*(7), 3-7.

Coates, H. (2007). A model of online and general campus-based student engagement. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, *32*(2), 121-141. doi: 10.1080/02602930600801878

Davis, B., & Sumara, D. (2008). *Complexity and education: Inquiries into learning, teaching and research.* London, UK: Routledge.

Entwistle, N. (2003). Concepts and conceptual frameworks underpinning the ETL project. *Occasional Report 3*, *Enhancing teaching-learning environment in undergraduate courses*. Retrieved from http://www.etl.tla.ed.ac.uk/docs/ETLreport3.pdf.

Entwistle, N. (2010). Taking stock: An overview of key research findings. In J. Christensen Hughes & J. Mighty (Eds.), *Taking stock*: *Research on teaching and learning in higher education* (pp. 45-81). Montreal, Canada: MacGill-Queens's University Press.

Field, J. (2009). *Well-being and happiness*. *Inquiry into the future for lifelong learning.* Thematic paper 4. Leicester, UK: National Institute of Adult Continuing Education.

Forgeard, E., Jayawickreme, M., Kern, M., & Seligman, M. (2011). Doing the right thing: Measuring wellbeing for public policy. *International Journal of Wellbeing*, *1*(1), 79-106.

Fredricks, J., Blumenfeld, P., & Paris, A. (2004). School engagement: Potential of the concept, state of the evidence. *Review of Educational Research*, *74*(1), 59-109. doi: 10.3102/00346543074001059

Gavala, J., & Flett, R. (2005). Influential factors moderating academic enjoyment/motivation and psychological well-being for Māori university students at Massey University. *New Zealand Journal of Psychology, 34*(1), 52-57.

Heylighen, F. (1999). *The evolution of complexity*. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer.

Hockings, C., Cooke, S., Yamashita, H., McGinty, S., & Bowl, M. (2008). Switched off? A study of disengagement among computing students at two universities. *Research Papers in Education*, *23*(2), 191-201. doi: 10.1080/02671520802048729

James, R., Krause, K-L., & Jennings, C. (2010). *The first year experience in Australian universities:*

Findings from 1994 to 2009. Melbourne, Australia: Centre for the Study of Higher Education, University of Melbourne.

Leach, L., & Zepke, N. (2012). Student engagement in learning: Facts of a complex interaction. In I. Solomonides, A. Reid, & P. Petocz (Eds.), *Engaging with learning in higher education* (pp. 231-256). Oxfordshire, UK: Libri Publishers.

Kift, S., Nelson, K., & Clarke, J. (2010). Transition pedagogy: A third generation approach to FYE – A case study of policy and practice for the higher education sector. *The International Journal of the First Year in Higher Education,* 1(1), 1-20.

Kezar, A., & Kinzie, J. (2006). Examining the ways institutions create student engagement: The role of mission. *Journal of College Student Development, 47*(2), 149-172. doi: 10.1353/csd.2006.018

Kuh, G. (2009). The national survey of student engagement: Conceptual and empirical foundations. In R. Gonyea, & G. Kuh (Eds.), *New Directions for Institutional Research* (no. 141, pp. 5-20). Published online: Wiley Periodicals. doi: 10.1002/ir.283

Kuh, G., Kinzie, J., Schuh, J., Whitt, E., & Associates. (2005). *Student success in college: Creating conditions that matter.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

McCormick, A. (2009). Toward reflective accountability: Using NSSE for accountability and transparency. In R. Gonyea, & G. Kuh (Eds.), *New directions for institutional research* (no. 141, pp. 97-106). Published online: Wiley Periodicals. doi: 10.1002/ir.289

McInnis, C. (2003, August). *New realities of the student experience: How should universities respond?* Paper presented at the 25th Annual Conference of the European Association for Institutional Research. Limerick, Ireland.

McMahon, B., & Portelli, J. (2004) Engagement for what? Beyond popular discourses of student engagement. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, *3*(1), 59-76. doi: 10.1076/lpos.3.1.59.27841

Meyer, J., & Land, R. (2003). *Threshold concepts and troublesome knowledge: Linkages to ways of thinking and practising within disciplines. Occasional Report 4.* Enhancing Teaching-Learning Environment in Undergraduate Courses Project. Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh.

Nelson, K., Clarke, J., Kift, S., & Creagh, T. (2011). *Trends in policies, programs and practices in the Australasian first year experience literature 2010-2010*. (The First Year in Higher Education Research Series on Evidence-based Practice, No. 1. Brisbane, Australia: Queensland University of Technology.

Nelson, K., Kift , S., & Clarke, J. (2012). A transition pedagogy for student engagement and first-year learning, success and retention. In I. Solomonides, A. Reid, & P. Petocz (Eds.), *Engaging with learning in higher education* (pp.117-144). Oxfordshire, UK: Libri Publishers.

New Economics Foundation. (2009). *National accounts of well-being: Bringing real wealth onto the balance sheet.* London, UK: Author. Retrieved from http://cdn.media70.com/national-accounts-of-well-being-report.pdf.

Pike, G., Kuh, G., & McCormick, A. (2011). An investigation of the contingent relationships between learning community participation and student engagement. *Research in Higher Education* , *52*(3), 300-322. doi: 10.1007/s11162-010-9192-1

Ryan, R., & Deci, E. (2000). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations: Classic definitions and new directions. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, *25*(1), 54-67. doi: 10.1006/ceps.1999.1020

Solomonides, I. Reid, A., & Petocz, P. (2012). A relational model of student engagement. In I. Solomonides, A. Reid, & P. Petocz (Eds.), *Engaging with learning in higher education* (pp. 11-24). Oxfordshire, UK: Libri Publishers.

Tinto, V. (2010). From theory to action: Exploring the institutional conditions for student retention. In J. Smart (Ed.), *Higher Education: Handbook of theory and research* (Vol. 25, pp. 51-89). New York, NY: Springer.

Thomas, L. (2002). Student retention in higher education: The role of institutional habitus, *Journal of Educational Policy*, *17*(4), 423-442.

Thomas, L. (2012). *Building student engagement and belonging in higher education at a time of change*: *Final report from the What Works? Student Retention & Success programme*. London, UK: Paul Hamlyn Foundation.

Toohey, S. (1999). *Designing courses for higher education*. Buckingham, UK: Society for

Research into Higher Education & Open University Press.

Trowler, V. (2010), *Student engagement literature review*. York, UK: Lifelong Education Academy. Retrieved from http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/documents/studentengagement/StudentEngagementLiteratureReview.pdf

Wimpenny, K., & Savin-Baden, M. (2012). Alienation, agency and authenticity: A synthesis of the literature on student engagement, *Teaching in Higher Education, 18*(3), 311-326. doi: 10.1080/13562517.2012.725223.

Yorke, M., & Longden, B. (2008). *The first year experience of higher education in the UK. Final Report.* Retrieved from http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/York/documents/resources/publications/FYEFinalReport.pdf

Zepke, N. (2013). Threshold concepts and student engagement: Revisiting pedagogical content knowledge. *Active Learning in Higher Education, 14* (2), 97-107. doi: 10.1177/1469787413481127.

Zepke, N., & Leach, L. (2010). Improving student engagement: Ten proposals for action. *Active Learning in Higher Education, 11* (3), 167-179. doi: 10.1177/1469787410379680.