CRADLE suggests…
Student engagement in contemporary and digital contexts

ABOUT STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Student engagement is considered a factor in student success. Both educators and students can have an impact on engagement. There are many facets to student engagement, including behavioural, cognitive, and emotional components, with a holistic model now favoured by some researchers. Engagement can occur at an institutional level, within a classroom, and at a task level. At a classroom level, educators have the ability to influence engagement at all levels, through the way that they set up and manage learning activities.

Centre for Research in Assessment and Digital Learning

CRADLE suggests is a series of briefings from the Centre for Research and Assessment in Digital Learning (CRADLE), which translates our own research into practice-based possibilities.

THE RESEARCH

Within engagement research, student voices are infrequently heard, and previous research tends to focus on face-to-face contexts only. We interviewed and surveyed students in Deakin initial teacher education courses (across Cloud and physical campuses) on their perceptions of what is important for them to participate and engage in learning.

PROMOTING STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

A number of educator strategies are likely to promote engagement:

Identify and make explicit the relevance and authenticity of learning content and activities

Students found more purpose for and motivation to learn when they could see how the activity or content could be applicable in their future perceived role. Where possible, link learning to potential applications and contexts.

Create opportunities for belonging and interactions, especially in digital environments

Students who were enrolled in the Cloud especially valued meaningful and constructive interactions with peers and tutors. Interactions could occur face-to-face off-campus, or through online groups created in social media. Both formal and informal discussions and meetings can be encouraged through the provision of opportunities such as Blackboard Collaborate sessions, and the linking up of students who share location, interest or context.

Build in feedback – with both peers and tutors

Students participated in learning activities as a way to gain feedback information from their learning environment. Activities such as group discussion and peer feedback can enable students to compare their progress to peers, and check their understanding with their tutor in a formative sense.

Be mindful of students' workload, time management and anxiety

Students found they needed to prioritise their attendance, participation, and time spent on activities according to their overall workload and high-stakes assessment submissions. 'Real life' also got in the way of the rigid structure of teaching periods. This may require educators to take a programmatic/global approach to scheduling, but also encourage students to plan ahead, including requesting extensions in advance.

CRADLE TEAM MEMBERS

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FIND MORE

1. Tai J, Bellingham R, Lang J & Dawson P. (2019) Student perspectives of engagement in learning in contemporary and digital contexts. *Higher Education Research and Development*, 38(5), 1075-1089.