

Non-formal education, life Long Learning (chair: Anikó Kálmán)

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MEASURING ENGAGEMENT AMONG ADULT LEARNERS IN NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

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Engagement is one of the most important factors determining not only academic outcomes like student achievement, preventing dropouts, and school completion but also social and psychological outcomes like connectedness, attachment, bonding, and membership in a group. A growing body of research shows positive relationships between learner engagement and psychological outcomes, such as higher levels of subjective and psychological well-being, and positive mental health outcomes. Learner engagement has been measured at all formal educational levels, including preschool, elementary, secondary, and post-secondary/tertiary. As a result, various measurement tools have been created while keeping the student's educational level in mind. However, the literature lacks instruments focusing on measuring the engagement of adult learners in non-formal education. Thus, this study analyses engagement models and instruments for higher education students in the literature to determine the most common factors and components as well as whether they can be used to assess adult learners' engagement in non-formal settings. Recent research indicates that, whether college-age or older, adult learners' engagement is viewed as comprehensive and holistic, including psychological, social, and cultural factors, as well as a variety of dimensions and settings such as in-class and out-of-class activities, clubs, sports teams, and student government, besides relationships with instructors and peers. The most frequently included indicators emphasized in measurement tools (the National Survey of Student Engagement [NSSE], the Student Course Engagement Questionnaire [SCEQ], the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale-Student Version [UWES-S-9], the Higher Education Student Engagement Scale [HESES], and the Student Engagement Scale [SES]) are; engagement with peers and teachers, as well as with other faculty or institution members such as instructors, teachers, or lecturers, in addition to established sub-scales like emotional, behavioral, psychological, and academic engagement. NSSE assesses students' overall perceptions of their educational experiences rather than focusing on specific classes. HESES is similar to NSSE in that it considers students' connections with each other and their participation in activities outside of the classroom. Also, SES takes into account both in-class and out-of-class engagement. On the other hand, SCEQ and UWES-S-9, which both focus on studies, can be considered targeting micro levels because they are concerned with events that occur inside and immediately outside the classroom. HESES, NSSE, and SES view student engagement as an ecosystem of students, educators, service staff, and institutions that create enriching educational experiences. As a result, these three instruments can be used to measure the engagement of adult learners in non-formal settings. More research into the validity and reliability of these instruments in this context is still necessary.