EMERGING TRENDS IN STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN THE 21ST CENTURY CONTEMPORARY WORLD

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Abstract

Student engagement in higher education is becoming a top priority but challenging agenda item in the 21st century of higher educational institutions. The digital natives in our classes are no more like students 20 years ago. While major curricula reforms of this era focus on providing students with capabilities of learning new and innovative skills and knowledge for effective living in the 21st century of swift technological revolution, educators are confronted with the challenge of engaging students for effective learning to achieve this goal. Academics and administrators have begun to tackle and rethink of how to enhance the engagement of students in this era of technology where students are hooked to Facebooking, sending and receiving messages, tweeting, googling, chatting and doing many other things while lecture is going on. This situation is subjecting teachers to new and multiple pressures of how to keep learners focused on the classroom activities and stay connected to the lecture. Therefore, the 21st century curriculum and teaching requires a paradigm shift in the minds of curriculum developers, teachers and a shift in the ways that instruction is delivered in order to keep students engaged to promote learners participation in the learning and teaching processes. Thus, this paper is to explore emergent curriculum trends which have significant implications on how teachers should teach, what kind of curriculum and teaching methodology should be in place in order to engage students so that effective teaching and learning take place.

Key words: Contemporary, digital native, student engagement, trend

Introduction

This paper focuses on the student engagement strategies of the 21st century learners. It will examine how ICT use and student connectedness has brought challenges to student engagement of the 21st century teaching and learning and explores the ways of enhancing the student engagement of the millennia learners.

The primary objective of this study was to identify the emerging trends in student engagement and devise strategies to be used in order to enhance the engagement of the digital millennia. The researcher was inspired by the fact that ICT use in the classroom is imposing challenges on student engagement specifically in higher education. There is a change in trends of student engagement. The main reason for researching on this subject is the inadequacy of many studies on the direct and indirect impacts of ICT use in the classroom management in higher education and the increasing changes in trends of teaching and learning practices in the 21st century. The methodology used in this study was secondary data analysis with reference to current literature on emerging trends in ICT use and student engagement. In Implications for educational practices are discussed towards the end.

Student Engagement

Engagement refers to a total involvement "being wholly involved." The word "engagement," is derived from a French word *engagé,* which, is used to describe a writer or an artist's total moral commitment to the arts (Kisber, 2007). Thus, engagement is participation that is "more than an action." It is "an emotional attachment and investment" (Sturge Sparkes, as cited in Kisber, 2007). Student engagement implies, or suggests, an intensity of their participation in the learning processes. Student engagement is an important condition for the teaching learning process. Student engagement is what leads them to success.

The main and literal focus of student engagement is to increase achievement, positive behaviors, and a sense of belonging in students so that they remain in school and get the maximum out of the classroom instruction. Taylor and Parsons (2011), observed that engagement can be – academic, cognitive, intellectual, institutional, emotional, behavioral, social, or psychological. Student engagement in higher education is becoming an increasing concern for institutions of higher learning (Kisber, 2007).

Research show that young people who are

always encircled by and interacted constantly with ICT develop a different approach to learning and knowledge management from students who have not had this opportunity (Pedro, as cited in Law, Pelgrum, & Plomp, 2008). The students' use of ICT and their connectedness in the 21st century teaching and learning has a potential influence on students' engagement in a way that may not be controlled. Thus, it is important to explore various strategies available for teachers to enhance the engagement of the "new millennium learners.

ICT Use

Taylor and Parsons (2011) and Wang (2012) note that as a result of globalization and technological advancement students have changed over the last twenty years; they appear to have "different" needs, goals, and learning preferences than students in the past. The millennial learners have grown up in the technology saturated environment with the internets, computers, laptops, mobile phones, and many other ICT products, making it necessary for teachers to know these facts and integrate technology to cater for the needs of these digital generation (Wang, 2012). The 21st century classroom teaching requires the knowledge of the basics of technological operation such as the use of internet, word processor, database, spreadsheet, and presentation software. The teaching, learning, and curriculum require the knowledge of models of teaching, the nurture and use of information processing skills such as problem-based learning and constructivism (Thorsen, 2009). The globalized digital era is imposing significant challenges on teachers to integrate the emerging social media to support learning

Change is a vital part of curriculum dynamics and such changes need to be studied and managed for a better future (Olibie, 2013). Teaching is the implementation of the curriculum and thus, as curriculum changes, the teaching also changes. Olibie (2013, p. 161) notes:

> There is a growing recognition that education and the curriculum should prepare students for workplace, citizenship and daily living. Hence teaching and learning processes are being focused on how to prepare students for learning, living and thriving in the dynamic, cluttered, chaotic information environment of these first decades of the 21st century as well as how to prepare students for a changing world.

This calls for the need to emphasize for teachers to use integrated curriculum, multiple learning approaches and involve in transformational teaching in order to engage students in the learning and teaching processes (Thorsen, 2006). As a result of a rapidly changing technological advancement, students have changed over the last twenty years; and they appear to have "different" needs, goals, and learning preferences than students in the past. The 21st century students are engaged in Facebooking, sending and receiving messages, tweeting, googling, chatting and doing many other things while lecture is going on, and they seem to be disengaged from what is going on in the classroom. Thus, "educators must continue to seek to understand and apply specific, well-considered, if not agreed upon, strategies that support *student engagement in learning* both in and beyond the classroom" (Taylor & Parsons, 2011, p. 5).

Although there is no single solution for engaging all students teachers need to have motivational strategies to enhance student engagement.

Developing a Curriculum that is meaningful and relevant to the needs and interests of students and teaching methodology that motivates learners to learn are the two important aspects of engaging student (Zyngier, 2007). According to Olibie (2013) there is a change in trends on the need for teachers to use segregated curriculum, several learning styles and engage in transformational teaching that promotes student engagement. In order to remain as part of the global change process, it is important for teachers to maximize

Emerging Trends in ICT Use and Student Engagement

The emerging trends in curriculum and teaching call for new skills, knowledge and ways of learning to prepare students with abilities and competencies to address the emerging trends of an uncertain, changing world. There are many trend changes in the field of teaching and learning. Teachers should be watchful of these trend changes such as changes from notebooks to notepads, changes from blackboard to whiteboard, from whiteboard to smart board, changes from desktop to laptop and from laptop to palmtop, to wrist top. There are also trend changes in educational software packages. Early educational software packages were mainly text based simple software applications such as word

processors and databases and used only simple graphics. Nowadays software is much more sophisticated (Akker, Kuiper, & Hameyer, 2003), and there are many digital tools such as tutor, technology-based tutorial, intelligent tutoring system, WebQuest, mind tool, visualization tools, simulations and animations, hypertext and hypermedia, and web conferencing that support learning (Cennamo, Doss, & Ertmer, 2014). Time and space may not allow the detailed discussion of these tools, but if integrated into the classroom practices appropriately, these tools could promote student engagement in the teaching and learning processes.

Based on these emerging trends in ICT, there is a need for teachers to use integrated curriculum, multiple teaching methodologies to meet the needs of different learning styles of the 21st century learners and engage them in transformational teaching and learning processes (Olibie, 2013).As part of the global change process, teachers need to maximize the utilization of technology by integrating cooperative learning and differentiated curriculum strategies, and linking them with the utilization of wireless hand-held ICT devices. They should be able to embrace sophisticated technology to offer diverse instructional experiences and the competence to present information in a varied forms that contribute to the students' engagement. Teachers should show competency in retrieving through simple word searches. Their capability in communicating and sharing information globally with students through classroom workstations and district servers is as part of the 21st century student engagement strategy (Olibie, 2013). Research reveals that modifying the pedagogical experience of learners in order to meet their needs and interests is important (Zyngier, 2007; Olibie, 2013).

An engaging or "core" pedagogy should ensure that what teachers and students
do involves connecting to and engaging with the students' cultural knowledge;
owning or ensuring all students should be able to see themselves as represented in
the work; responding to students' lived experi ences and actively and consciously
critiquing that experience; and empowering students with a belief that what they do
will make a difference in their lives and giving them the opportunity to voice and discover their
own authentic and authoritative life (Zyngier, 2007, p. 113).

Strategies of Student Engagement in the 21st Century

Olibie (2013) notes that the emerging trends in curriculum and teaching to engage students requires teachers to understand curriculum theory and processes, provide discriminated variation; facilitate learner centered instruction; utilize various instructional strategies, develop global citizens and lifelong learners, and integrate technology in developing the curriculum and delivering instruction

Thus, we must better understand these students to determine how to best engage them in learning. Devising strategies to engage the students is not enough but also teachers should know the changing trends in the socio-economic world, in the family groups, peer group, and in the broader global market (MacBeath, 2012). Although there could be many strategies which could be used to enhance student engagement, we focus our discussion on two major strategies: Integrating ICT support instructional materials in in our teaching and modifying our teaching methodology.

Integrating ICT support instructional materials in our teaching. According to Cennamo, Doss, and Ertmer (2014), ICT offers a powerful resource for engaging students in genuine experiences, usually increasing both their motivation and their learning. Realistic instructional methods can support the development of critical thinking skills by providing opportunities for students to engage in holistic, multifaceted, and stimulating activities that promote learner self-sufficiency and active learning.

Supporting student creativity with technology integration. As technology provides diverse experiences to learn even when the actual classroom instruction is not taking place, students come to their class with a lot of information. To engage every student, , it is important that teachers pay attention to the affective needs and diverse cognitive learning styles of individual students, and thus provide them with some autonomy to explore further in their learning.

Modifying our teaching methodology for technology integration. The 21st century teachers are faced with the challenge of engaging students for their academic achievements (Smaldino, Lowther, & Russell, 2008), because of the changing learning styles of the 21st century learners who are surrounded by ICT

tools which provide a lot of avenue of learning as well as possible disruptions of attentions in the classroom (Wang, 2012). To overcome these challenges, teachers have to go beyond traditional practices and integration of technology in their classroom instruction. In order to do this, This researcher suggest the ASSURE Model (Smaldino et al., 2008), the step by step process of creating lessons that effectively integrate the use of technology and media to engage students and improve instruction. ASSURE Model is a six stage process; Analyzing learners, Stating standards and objectives, Selecting strategies-technology, media, and materials, Utilize technology, media, and materials, Require learner participation, Evaluate and revise.

The AASURE Model instructional design effectively integrates ICT and media to engage students in learning. The model was developed by Heinich, Molenda, Russel, and Smaldino and integrated using Gagne's nine procedures of instruction (Smaldino et al., 2008). The ASSURE model enhances a purposeful look at emerging technological trends and student engagement. It takes into consideration that instruction will not be delivered using traditional methods of lecture/text book only. It allows for the possibility of integrating out-of-class resources and technology. Instructional technology is helpful for designing lessons using different kinds of media. into the course materials. The ASSURE model is a useful planning tool; it guides the instructor on how to choose and use media and technology in instruction to promote student engagement (Smaldino et al., 2008).
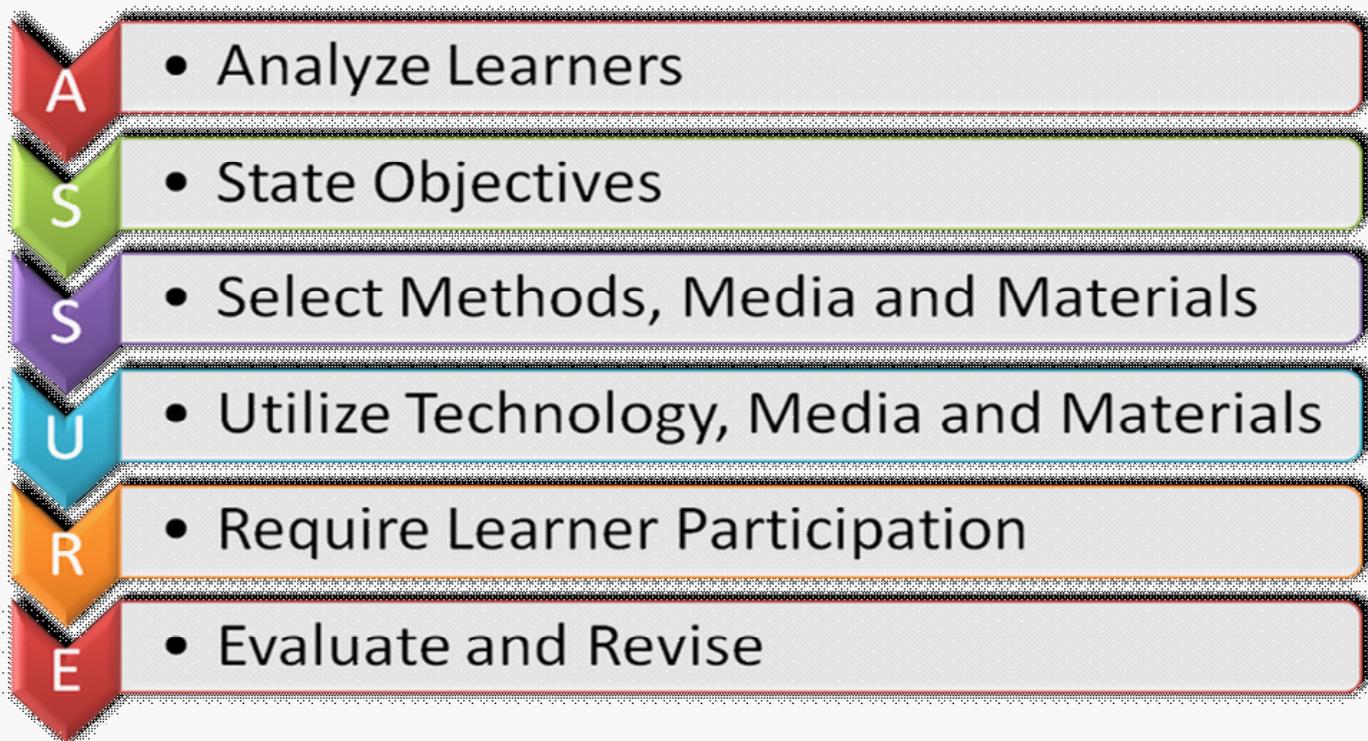

Fig. 1. The ASSURE model (Smaldino, Lowther, & Russell, 2008).

Conclusion and Recommendations

Traditional teaching methodologies such as lecturing, asking questions and giving answers may not lead to student engagement as they use to be before the birth of ICT. Thus, this approach need to be replaced by more innovative approaches such as cooperative learning, group work, and problem posing that elicits critical analysis. Teachers should make a paradigm shift in their roles as knowledge experts to a learning facilitator since their ICT savvy students have a lot to share with each other and their teachers. To engage students, integration of ICT is not a choice but mandatory in the 21st century teaching and learning process. Therefore, teachers need to develop a culture of ICT use. Acquainting ourselves with the emerging technologies to support instruction, and updating our knowledge and skills to use them may promote the engagement of the 21st century connected learners.

As the 21st century teachers strive to integrate technology in their teaching and at the same time engage students in the class activities, it is important that they use ASSURE model to effectively implement the ICT integration in their teaching. The ASSURE model

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The ASSURE model is a useful planning tool; it guides the instructor on how to choose and use media and technology in instruction to promote student engagement (Smaldino et al., 2008). The Model requires lecturers to be constant learners of ICT and the types of students coming to their classroom. Use this model as your manual when planning to deliver effective instruction that engages your learners

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