

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

**The impact of student engagement on satisfaction, retention and success of
MBA students**

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**A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of
Master of Business Administration**

**College of Law and Management Studies
Graduate School of Business and Leadership**

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2016

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I, Katherine Moodley, declare that:

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Acknowledgements

This has been a long journey, one that demanded numerous hours of sacrifice. I wish to thank my family for being my anchor and support system over this stressful period. A special gesture of gratitude goes to my Mother, Premi Moodley, for all the support and motivation over the years. Thank you for being my pillar of strength and giving me the courage to persevere through the challenges presented to me over this course. I will forever be grateful.

This journey would not have been possible without the Goddess Adi Parashakti for providing me with strength during these difficult times.

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Anesh Maniraj Singh, without whom this dissertation would not have been possible. Thank you for your guidance, encouragement and advice. You have been an inspirational philosopher and mentor to me.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank my friends and colleagues who have shown immense support and always lent a helping hand in times of need.

Lastly, thank you to all the Master of Business Administration (MBA) students who took their time to complete the questionnaire.

ABSTRACT

Student engagement is a construct that has been significantly associated with achieving student outcomes in Higher Education Institutions (HEI's). It is a multi-dimensional construct that comprises of different perspectives such as behavioural, cognitive, emotional and agentic dimensions. Each of these perspectives are further divided into benchmarks that facilitate and measure student engagement. Student engagement can provide institutions with recommendations to better improve practices and streamline processes in order to provide students with a holistic learning environment. However, it should be noted that student engagement is a collaborative process that requires a joint effort from students, faculty members and the institution. The purpose of this study was to identify the relationship between student engagement and academic outcomes such as satisfaction, retention and success at the University of KwaZulu-Natal Graduate School of Business and Leadership (GSB&L) and to assess the level of engagement amongst MBA students. Furthermore it examined the possible shortcomings in the implementation of student engagement in the GSB&L. Data was obtained from MBA students registered at the GSB&L and more evidence was gathered from the literature review. Data was collected through a structured questionnaire from one hundred and thirty-four participants and was analysed by means of descriptive and inferential statistics. The research findings revealed that the more satisfied students were, the more likely they were to engage in their learning process. However, it was noted that there was no relationship between student engagement and retention. The shortcomings were attributed to little or no student faculty interactions or support from the GSB&L. Most students that were engaged in the classroom reported achieving academic success. It has been recommended that teaching staff incorporate diverse perspectives, ideas from different modules and students' strengths and weaknesses when teaching. This will make the subject matter more relevant and would increase student satisfaction and success. Despite retention not having any association with student engagement, respondents identified areas for improvement such as administrative support and meeting students' expectations. It was recommended that staff and the management of the GSB&L engage with students in order to create a holistic learning environment. The research is limited in that it focused on one business school. It doesn't provide an extensive view of student engagement at all business schools in South Africa. Future research should examine other business schools.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS USED

AUSSE – Australian Survey of Student Engagement

GSB&L – Graduate School of Business and Leadership

HEIs – Higher Education Institutions

KZN – KwaZulu-Natal

MBA – Master in Business Administration

NSSE – National Survey of Student Engagement

PhD – Doctorate of Philosophy

SA – South Africa

SASSE – South African Survey of Student Engagement

SPSS – Statistical Package for Social Sciences

UKZN – University of KwaZulu-Natal

USA – United States of America

CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Student engagement is a widely recognized concept that has been linked to academic achievement such as student satisfaction, retention and success in Higher Education (Kahu, 2013). Student engagement is noted as an excellent measure of academic outcomes. It is used to improve academic achievement and identify areas for improvement in institutions. The purpose of Higher Education is to generate knowledge (Brewer, Gates and Goldman, 2001). Many students come to an institution with a final educational product in mind, namely a degree or certificate. The aim is personal economic advancement, that is, success in the labour market. This results in social mobility, improved economic status and a higher salary. Higher Education can be seen as an investment with a future payoff with the benefits of college such as student lifestyle and peer interactions.

The Graduate School of Business and Leadership (GSB&L) is a Business School situated at the Westville Campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). It is considered as a premier university of choice for many students as it provides a holistic learning environment. In order to maintain its high standards and reputation, UKZN currently has to consider new avenues for the improvement of learning, development and processes.

This chapter will provide an outline for the study by providing an overview of the concept of student engagement and provides a rationale for why such a study was undertaken by the researcher. The chapter lists the objectives, research questions and limitations of the study. The research questions are aimed at gathering information regarding the current problem. Furthermore, it provides a summary of the research design and sampling method.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM

In the 21st century, Higher Education has become increasingly competitive (Altbach, Reisberg & Rumbley, 2009). Students compete for limited places in institutions. Universities compete for reputation, ranking and funding. Although competition is healthy as it leads to excellence, in some cases it can be detrimental to the academic experience and values. This is the rationale behind research into student engagement. Student engagement refers to the active involvement of a student in their learning. It is shown to have a positive relationship with student satisfaction, retention and success.

Brewer, Gates and Goldman (2001), are of the view that students voluntarily attend Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) at a personal cost as they wish to acquire knowledge beyond secondary schools. Therefore, students are seen as customers purchasing a service or item in a market. Students are seen as customers of Higher Education Industry and are purchasing an investment, they invest mental and financial resources and reap the benefits of a higher salary. There are thousands of institutions with different characteristics tailored to meet the different needs and demands of students (Brewer, Gates and Goldman, 2001). This results in greater competition between institutions. Higher Education is a multidimensional good, each individual has a varied demand or preference therefore the university that can best satisfy a student and aid them in their success is chosen.

Every passing day leads to some new technology or innovation being discovered which ultimately has an impact on education. Christensen and Eyring (2011) are of the view that many companies are disrupted by a new innovation that transforms a product or process that is complex and expensive, simpler and cheaper. In Higher Education, this new innovation is online courses. Online courses are cheaper and more accessible that can aid students in improving their qualifications and switch careers with ease. Most institutions have to adhere to the latest trends to stay ahead of the competition. Christensen and Eyring (2011) are of the view that universities should rather opt for continuous innovation to attain their mission. Student engagement has previously been used in high schools and not many universities so it is a relatively new concept.

Shin and Harman (2009) argue that the 21st century has faced rapid socio-economic changes which have resulted in Higher Education Institutions facing tremendous challenges in governance, curriculum, mission focus, external relationships, research and funding. By diagnosing the threats and opportunities in Higher Education which can provide a framework for future interventions. Many Higher Education Institutions have focused on enhanced access, privatization, governance, internationalization and world-class rankings.

Globalization is defined as the context of economic and academic trends that are a component of the 21st century (Altback and Knight, 2007). It is the economic, social and political forces that push Higher Education to accomplish internal involvement. This results ultimately in the attainment of wealth, knowledge and power. One of the key outcomes of Globalization is market competition in Higher Education Institutions which resulted in a need for quality assurance systems in Higher Education. Quality assurance systems serve a variety of purposes, but one of the most important is international exchange agreements. These challenges have given us insight into the current problems experienced by institutions.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Any investment in human capital, including Higher Education has a positive effect on the growth rate of income in African countries. According to Gyimah-Brempong, Paddison and Mitiku (2006:510) “Modern growth theory suggests that human capital has a positive impact on economic growth.” This means that if educational attainment in countries increase with a level of income, this will result in Higher Education becoming vital in the growth process.

It is true that the amount of educated human capital is low in African countries as compared to the rest of the world, largely due to the inefficiencies within the educational system or the emigration of educated people. It is imperative that a country increases inputs at all levels of education, this can only be achieved by increasing student satisfaction, retention and success. African countries tend to spend a large portion of their resources on Higher Education, producing a pool of high caliber students. However, a large number is lost to other countries through emigration.

As an educator and student, I have noticed the plummeting graduation rates of high school and university students. I decided to do this study in order to provide faculty and administrators with pertinent information about student engagement and its association with student satisfaction, retention and success in tertiary institutions. Furthermore, student engagement and its association with student satisfaction, retention and success has not been reported or discussed by student representatives at the GSB&L. There were a general level of dissatisfaction amongst students, especially when problems were encountered which resulted in little or no interaction from faculty members. It is important that UKZN evaluates the level of student engagement and its association with student satisfaction, retention and success to determine if there is a relationship between these two variables in order to successfully provide the required support to students. This study seeks to determine how the GSB&L could improve student engagement to attain student satisfaction, retention and success whilst caring for diverse student needs. The question that arises is— “what is the impact of student engagement on satisfaction, retention and success on MBA students”.

1.4 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

Student engagement has become a widely renowned construct that has gained the attention of many academics due to its association with student satisfaction, retention and success. Although, there are many international studies on student engagement, few are concerned with student satisfaction, retention and success or conducted at university level. There is insufficient literature relating to student engagement and its relationship to student satisfaction, retention and success. Moreover, no studies have been conducted with respect to student engagement amongst MBA students. It is very rare that students are asked for their perceptions on their learning whilst they are studying at a university. This study will therefore contribute to the field of academic development by providing research that pertains to student engagement and its relationship between student satisfaction, retention and success.

Due to the competitive environment that the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) operates in, it has to ensure that it provides a holistic learning environment to its students. This study has been undertaken using the Graduate School of Business and Leadership (GSB&L), based at UKZN, as

its location. Hence, the GSB&L will benefit directly from this study. The research undertaken will provide insight about student engagement and its relationship with student satisfaction, retention and success. It will also provide recommendations that the university can utilize to improve academic outcomes.

The participants of the study were all students of the GSB&L at the time of the study. The study will be beneficial to students as it provides a platform in which they can express their opinions about their learning experience at the GSB&L. Their participation will provide suggestions for improvement to the various stakeholders at the GSB&L.

The findings of this study is generalized and could be utilized by other universities to draw conclusions about their level of student engagement, and therefore provide them with an opportunity to improve these aspects of student engagement.

1.5 AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this study was to determine the impact of student engagement on academic outcomes. The following were the objectives to address the aim and the research questions for the study:

1. To establish the relationship between student engagement and student satisfaction.
2. To establish the relationship between student engagement and student retention.
3. To establish the relationship between student engagement and student success.
4. To identify the areas that can be improved to increase satisfaction.
5. To identify the areas that can be improved to increase retention.
6. To identify the areas that can be improved to promote success.
7. To identify the areas that can be improved to promote student engagement.

1.6 FOCUS OF THE STUDY

The students of the GSB&L pay exorbitant fees for their MBA. It is in their best interest to be exposed to the highest quality and standards that the GSB&L has to offer. Moreover, students expect to learn a new skill that will better equip them in the labour market.

The focus of this study was limited to all the currently registered students of the GSB&L as at 12 September 2016. This study will provide findings confined to student engagement and its association to student satisfaction, retention and success and suggest improvements to the GSB&L

This study is unique to the GSB&L as it will gain insight into the level of engagement in students, and its association with student satisfaction, retention and success which may provide a starting for other South African universities to explore the field of student engagement and its academic outcomes.

1.7 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The focus of this research is delimited to one Business School based at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, in KwaZulu-Natal. It is only based on the views of MBA students registered at the GSB&L.

1.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

A key limitation was the lack of literature available on student engagement and its association with student satisfaction, retention and success in tertiary institutions. Although there have been international studies investigating student engagement at a secondary school level, none were focused on postgraduate programs like the Master of Business Administration (MBA). There is evidence of student engagement surveys conducted by many universities abroad and in South Africa, however, those surveys were focused on the different perspectives of student engagement rather than the state and factors that influence student engagement, satisfaction, retention and success. There was insufficient research on evaluations and assessments to improve student engagement as well as student satisfaction, retention and success at universities. These limitations are discussed further in Chapter 5. The selection of the sample was only limited to MBA students.

1.9 SUMMARY

Higher education can benefit a great deal from student engagement especially in a rapidly changing socio-economic climate. Universities are now considered as a marketplace that provides its customers with a service, namely a degree or diploma. Those universities that are better recognized for their ability to achieve academic outcomes are better equipped to compete in the global market.

This chapter has provided the background of what the researcher intends to investigate under the topic of the impact of student engagement on satisfaction, retention and success on MBA students.

It has also depicted the problem statement, the aim of the research and objectives pertaining to the investigation. In the second chapter, the researcher looked into literature on student engagement and provided a holistic view of the topic and chapter three provides the details on the research design and the methodology the researcher utilized. Chapter four presents the results of this study and provided a discussion of the analysis of the data obtained. The study concluded with chapter 5 which incorporated a summary of the overall findings, commendations and possible recommendations and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Classrooms have become diverse in nature due to students having mixed abilities and therefore increasingly challenging in addressing the needs and challenges that many students face (Harper and Quaye, 2009). Students are no longer the same in term of competencies, hence faculty need to be strategic in fostering an ethos that encourages learning. A degree has become an important prerequisite for self-sufficiency and good citizenship which can ultimately boost the economy, unfortunately many students leave before completing their degree (Kuh et al., 2008). Harper and Quaye (2009) are of the view that the relationship between engagement, outcomes and retention are closely related but it is also necessary to understand the environment that facilitates these conditions. It is evident that students who are engaged actively in stimulating activities during and outside the class are more likely to graduate.

This chapter discusses the concept of student engagement in tertiary Institutions. It provides insight into the importance of student engagement and its role on improving achievement, retention, student satisfaction and faculty infrastructure and how it can be used as a tool for providing recommendations in tertiary Institutions.

2.2.1 DEFINITION OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Literature on defining student engagement is a “mixed bag,” due to the wide range of understandings and it varies in nature from the student to the institution, locally and internationally (Trowler, 2010). Axelson and Flick (2011) as well as Atnip (2015) are of the view that, student engagement is the level of involvement or interest a student displays in their learning and the connection they share with their university, class and peers, whereas Reeve (2012) is of the view that student engagement is the active involvement of a student in their learning.

There are numerous definitions of student engagement but for the purpose of this study, we will define student engagement as the level of participation by students in their own learning.

2.2.2 DEFINITION OF STUDENT SATISFACTION

In a university, its main customer is the college student therefore student satisfaction is important. Sumaedi, Bakit and Metasari (2011), reported that psychologists found a positive correlation between student satisfaction and self-confidence which successively helped students develop useful skills and acquire knowledge. On the other hand, student dissatisfaction can be detrimental to student activities, such as a bad grade, an unpleasant relationship between the student and the staff and faculty. Student satisfaction is an important issue and should be considered in the evaluation of course and program effectiveness. For the purpose of this study, we will define student satisfaction as the learner's perception of the value of educational experiences in an institution (Bolliger and Halupa, 2012).

2.2.3 DEFINITION OF STUDENT RETENTION

Hart (2012), is of the view that there has been great debate over the terms retention and success, although they are interchangeable concepts, they are used to characterize a student that completes a module and continues to complete the program. Retention can be defined as a collection of behaviours, attitudes, skills needed by the student to successfully complete a course. (Boston, Ice and Gibson, 2011). Factors associated with student retention include satisfaction, a sense of belonging, motivation, support, time management skills, and increased communication with faculty members (Hart, 2012). If persistence factors are not sufficiently present, the student may be at risk of withdrawing from a course. Factors that will enhance retention or create barriers to completion of a program need to be understood in order to improve interventions that can be of value to faculty.

2.2.4 DEFINITION OF STUDENT SUCCESS

In an attempt to help students overcome barriers to success and to improve academic outcomes, tertiary institutions have implemented a variety of student support services (Cho and Karp, 2013). Baldwin, Bensimon, Dowd and Kleiman (2011), define student success as achieving academic success or obtaining academic goals which extend beyond merely passing in a course. Student success is the heart of institutional effectiveness and the mission of many tertiary institutions.

2.2.5 THE LINK BETWEEN THE FOUR VARIABLES

There has been a rapid influx of undergraduate as well as postgraduate students in many tertiary institutions however, this has led to concern over the retention and success of students. Educational administrators at institutions, are eager to promote student achievement, one way of achieving this is by increasing student engagement which can accomplish academic outcomes such as retention success and satisfaction. According to Boston, Ice and Gibson (2011), retention is critically important, not just for student success, but also for the success of these institutions.

In this competitive era, students have numerous options available for them, universities have to focus on their students' satisfaction; because it will be beneficial for the university, such as students' trust, loyalty, and economic returns. Sumaedi, Bakit and Metasari (2011), are of the view that a students' satisfaction should always be a priority by the institution due to intensive competition among tertiary institutions, internationalization, higher expectations, an increase in tuition fee, and the classification of education as a marketable service. Hence, in order to generate student satisfaction, faculty should consider and improve their students' perceived quality and price. Bolliger and Halupa (2012), are of the view that student satisfaction is one of the five pillars of quality in education however, it is a complex construct as it comprises of many factors which ultimately lead to higher levels of motivation, engagement, learning, performance, and success.

Sumaedi, Bakit and Metasari (2011), argued that the most important variable in student satisfaction was the responsiveness of the faculty to student needs. The results showed that students perceived quality affect student satisfaction. Furthermore, that research also found that empathy and

assurance is the most contributing dimensions towards students' satisfaction. The results showed that the student satisfaction is significantly influenced by the perceived quality dimensions that have a correlation with the academic factors such as success.

In the recent years, administrators in high schools, colleges, and universities have been concerned about the retention of students in their programs. Student retention is one of the most widely studied areas in higher education. According to Mbuva (2011), the term "retention" sounds negative, but it is important policy makers, educators, and parents spend a great deal of money in education demanding very little if nothing from our students; hence, studies have been organized to measure student success and learning effectiveness.

Balakrishnan and Coetzee (2013) are of the view student retention remains a significant problem at many institutions, since anyone can register for a particular course and the consequences for failing a course are minute. This results in a large number of students enrolling for courses without ever participating or dropping out at any given time. A student who never checks their progress in a program increases their risk of dropping out of the class only after the fourth week (Balakrishnan and Coetzee, 2013). It is evident from studies that students are losing the will to complete courses. The discussion and analysis on student retention can assist in providing opportunities for student success as well as increase collaboration within and throughout an institution. Students and faculty both are part of the solution to improving undergraduate and postgraduate education. Institutions develop and implement many policies and practices that govern student achievement and ultimately student retention and graduation.

Cho and Karp (2013), are of the view that there are positive associations between student success and second-year persistence. This indicates a positive relationship between university retention and academic performance. Students' academic success is vital to the institution because it is an excellent measure of its mission to educate and prepare students for life beyond university whereas, drop-outs may indicate an institution's inability to meet student needs, a failure to prepare and support student progress, and lose a paying customer. It is vital to incorporate success strategies, such as orientation course, academic success centers, advising interventions, tutorial programs,

and counseling. These are all investments by the institution to improve student opportunities for success.

Students should always remain highly motivated. Faculty should help students graduate on time by creating positive learning environments, intervention programs, supporting students, developing student goals so they are attainable and utilizing sports and other activities to motivate students. However, no single strategy can guarantee success in all tertiary institutions. Each institution must know the population it serves and develop strategies and plans that complement the political realities and technical capabilities of each institution. Finally, change happens in a classroom, not a boardroom. Faculty and staff must be key players in the dialogue on student engagement and its association with student satisfaction, retention and success in order to address learning barriers.

2.3 HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE 21st CENTURY

In order for many countries, to attain economic growth, one of the critical factors is driving student success, participation and ultimately graduation (Zepke and Leach, 2010). Student engagement enables students to gain employment and contribute to the economic growth.

Atnip (2015) is of the view that an institutions primary objective should be to engage students in order that they persist in their educational journey and complete their studies. In order for institutions in the 21st century to attract and retain students, they will have to focus mainly on student engagement. The 21st century has a diverse amalgamation of students and therefore diverse learning styles and needs (Atnip, 2015). This challenges faculty to create a conducive learning environment for all students. The onus is on everyone to use the data collected from such studies to identify possible changes that need to be made in order to ensure success for all (Atnip, 2015). There is literature on student retention, teaching strategies and student support, however, an institution needs to understand how these factors can be applied to their students and faculty to better understand student experience and perceptions. According to Atnip (2015), students and faculty need to come to some consensus regarding engagement and implement effective changes

to improve retention and learning which can be used as a pedagogical tool that facilitates learning communities.

Most research between student engagement and learning outcomes are based on a single institution that does not consider a student's background and therefore are not generalizable (Kuh et al., 2008).

2.4 EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

The South African education system is failing the South African youth as a large number still remain illiterate and innumerate. Of a 100 students that start school, 40 pass Grade 12 and 12 qualify for tertiary education (Spanull, 2013). This impacts negatively on the economy as it increases the unemployment rate in South Africa. Spanull (2013) is of the view that tertiary institutions have high entry requirements and low-participation results which impedes on the youth, as better educated individuals have increased chances of employment.

Higher education is seen as an investment for the promotion of economic growth, development, innovation and global competition as it prepares students for the labor force, however, there tends to be a mismatch between graduates and skills (Badat, 2010). The onus is placed on tertiary institutions to provide programs and qualifications that equip students with the necessary skills required by employers. Badat (2010) is of the view that education promotes health, well-being and human rights to ensure that citizens become productive members of society. Education is also influenced by society and politics which relates to ethical behavior, it causes one to reflect on their practices and traditions. Higher education must promote diversity (Badat, 2010). In this day and age, tertiary education is accessible to everyone despite race, gender, religion and sexual preferences and therefore education should encourage tolerance and acceptance of differences.

Approximately half of all undergraduates that enter a university will not graduate in the stipulated time (Roberts and McNeese, 2010). This leads to a retention problem that affects both students and institutions which results in them incurring debt. Students value meaningful experiences which will increase their interest in academics as well as add value to their student life. According to

Roberts and McNeese (2010), the first step of student engagement is peer interaction which leads to academic achievement and social reinforcement. Research indicates that students with an increased level of involvement leads to increased retention rates in tertiary institutions (Roberts and McNeese, 2010).

Harper and Quaye (2009) are of the view that weak institutions are ones that let students engage on their own but essentially, the onus falls on all the role-players. Lecturers are required to create suitable classroom experiences and students are required to engage with peers in order to attain specific outcomes. Harper and Quaye (2009) argue that hostile environments can result in students dropping out, being disengaged and unable to meet specific outcomes. Lessons have to be tailored to take into account the student's background, experiences and interest with broad and specific outcomes.

2.5 HIGHER EDUCATION AND STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Students level of engagement decrease as they progress from primary to secondary school with 25% - 40% showing signs of disengagement in secondary schools, the consequences are severe as they are less likely to graduate, experience unemployment, poverty, deteriorating health and the involvement in criminal acts (Fredricks and McColskey, 2012). People that are destitute are often faced with no other choice but to turn to a life of crime in order to support their families. Reeve (2012) is of the view that faculty need to adopt an autonomy-supportive teaching style as it indicates students' levels of motivation, engagement and functioning. Monitoring engagement and motivation is a vital tool but also difficult for staff to implement. Fredricks and McColskey (2012) are of the view that many academics, faculty and Institutions are focused on student engagement as a tool in addressing achievement, boredom, alienation, dropout rates and employability.

Trowler and Trowler (2010) conclude that student engagement is an area for research when Institutions have an interest in enhancement, however the recommendations cannot be generalized to other Institutions. It does not take into account the context of the Institution and if it works in one place it may not in another. There was a lack of research on student engagement with respect to curriculum design and delivery (Trowler and Trowler, 2010). This can negatively impact on a

student's level of engagement as they will feel isolated or overwhelmed because they will not have a feeling of belonging.

2.6 BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN INSTITUTIONS AND STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Trowler (2010) is of the view that many studies are usually small-scale with the focus on the use of student engagement on learning. It primarily deals with students and the overall improvement in their work or satisfaction. Most literature are usually conference papers that are small-scale studies that examine teaching and learning strategies with groups of students (Trowler, 2010). It aids faculty by equipping them with areas of improvement. According to Trowler (2010), there are numerous conference papers as well as journal articles that focus on tools that can facilitate student engagement in the classroom. Literature supports the view that extra-curricular activities enrich learning experiences and by exposing learners to different and new experiences they learn about themselves and their peers. Trowler (2010) is of the view that there is a lack of research on student engagement with respect to institutional governance.

2.7 BENCHMARKS OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Student engagement comprises of six benchmarks. These benchmarks are derived from a survey with 42 items that focus primarily on student experience and are shown to foster student engagement (Strydom, Mentz and Kuh, 2010). The benchmarks are:

2.7.1 Degree of academic challenge

Whether the academic work is creative and challenging. According to Umbach and Wawrzynski (2005), institutions that challenged students on various academic levels reported high levels of student engagement, which resulted in student success. Students are more likely to engage in activities that challenge their thinking and experience.

2.7.2 Active and Collaborative learning

Students learn more when they are involved in the learning process and this stimulates them to be more active and reflect on their learning. Active and collaborative learning were positively correlated with academic challenge and faculty interactions and this led to student success (Umbach and Wawrzynski, 2005). Students sometimes learn better when in groups. Kuh et al., (2008) is of the view that cooperative learning facilitates collaboration between students in order to derive meaning in activities. This allows students to work together to find meaning.

2.7.3 Cognitive activities which are of a high-order

Campuses that employed cognitive activities which were high-order reported that students were more engaged in their learning and educational practices became more effective (Umbach and Wawrzynski, 2005). This is a scaffolding approach where lecturers expose students to various degrees of difficulty moving from low-order questions to high-order questions. Hagel, Carr and Devlin (2012) are of the view that there is a gap in understanding the measurement of engagement whether it should be refined or to include certain aspects to improve validity also the use of different ideologies should be examined further in order to examine the effect of student engagement on objectives such as learning, academic achievement and retention.

2.7.4 Student-faculty interactions

Learning should occur inside and outside the classroom, students learn from experts on ways to address problems. According to Umbach and Wawrzynski (2005), faculty that interacted more frequently with students reported increased levels of active and collaborated learning as learners felt more challenged and engaged. Faculty must utilize effective teaching practices to address student's shortcomings in academic programmes in order to foster student success (Kuh et al., 2008).

2.7.5 Enriching academic experiences

Enriching academic experiences are the number of engaging activities that learners are exposed to and encouraged to participate in. It is vital to expose students to co-curricular activities that provide a learning environment that is unique and enriching which resulted in a positive correlation between student-faculty interaction, academic challenge and lastly active and collaborative learning (Umbach and Wawrzynski, 2005).

2.7.6 A supportive environment

An environment that is conducive to learning and of a high standard tends to foster collaboration. Umbach and Wawrzynski (2005), is of the view that an environment that is student-centered and adopts practices that relate to a student's level of engagement and perceptions is one that is ultimately successful, all that is required is recruiting and training staff to maintain such an environment. Faculty must utilize the classroom in order to create a community of learning that is success-orientated by partnering with various stakeholders to foster culture-building strategies that align with the Institutions objectives as well students' style of learning style (Kuh et al., 2008).

2.8 TYPES OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Hagel, Carr and Devlin (2012) and Trowler (2010), are of the view that engagement is multidimensional and consists of: behavioral engagement which is a positive behavior towards academics and society; emotional engagement is an affective response towards relationships with people and lastly cognitive engagement which is a mental investment by students towards their studies. Reeve (2012) is of the view that, student engagement comprises of four interrelated aspects:

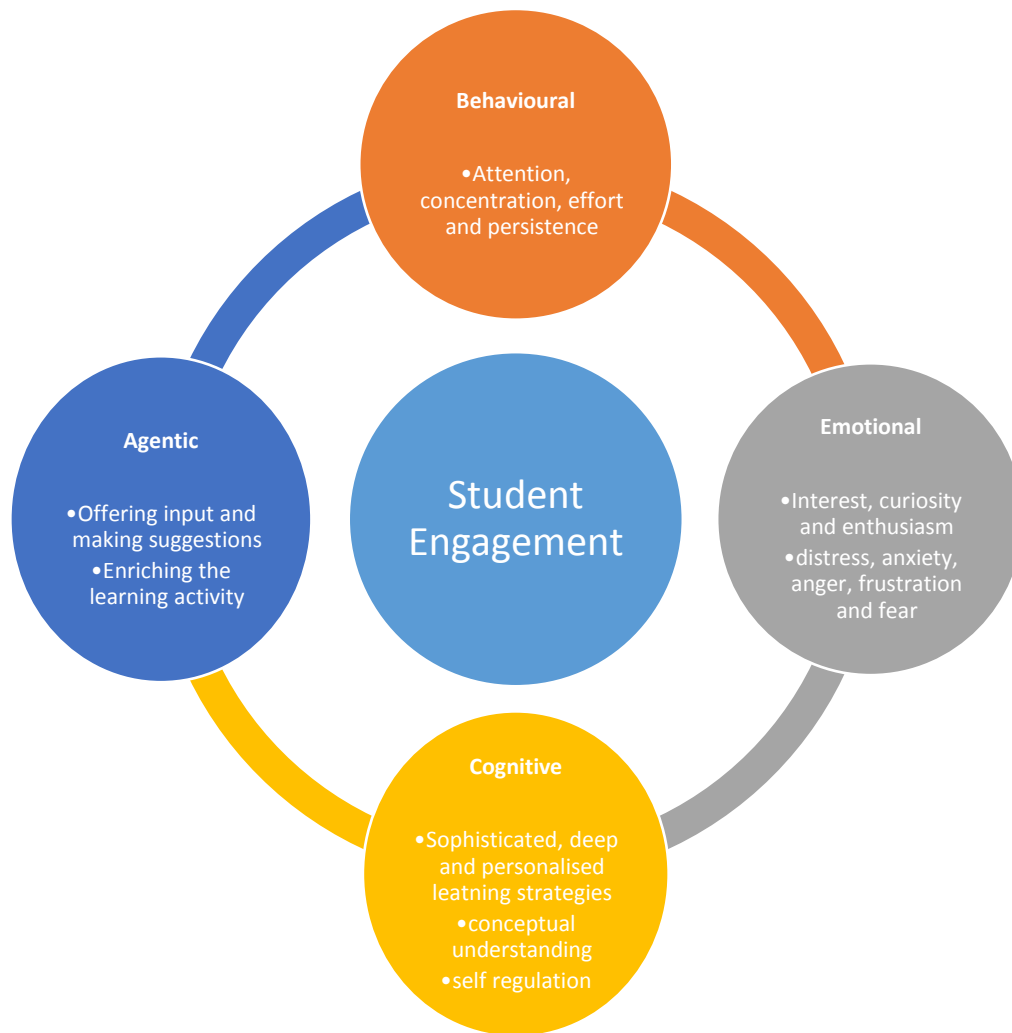


Figure 2.1: The Four Dimensions of student engagement

Source: Adapted from Reeve, J., 2012.

It is important to assess if a student was actively involved in an activity, one would have to examine their concentration and effort which is part of behavioural engagement, then their emotions associated with the task such as interest or distress which forms part of emotional engagement, the use of appropriate learning strategies which is part of cognitive engagement and lastly, the effort the student makes in enriching the learning process is part of agentic engagement. According to Reeves (2012), student engagement has appeared as a three-component variable in a variety of

literature but now a new four-component variable has been proposed with the addition of agentic engagement which also requires further research.

It is vital to consider these three dimensions as they can have a positive as well as a negative effect on the student as illustrated in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Examples of positive and negative student engagement

Dimension of Engagement	Positive Engagement	Non-engagement	Negative Engagement
Behavioural	Rarely absent, participates	Absent frequently without reason	Does not attend or disrupts the learning process
Emotional	Enthusiastic	Bored	Non-acceptance
Cognitive	Meets or exceeds academic expectations	Late, rushed or absent when tasks are given	Lack of interest, works when it suits him/her

It is evident from Table 2.1, that positive engagement has a positive association with all types of engagement, the student is more involved in the learning process, enthusiastic and meets or exceeds academic expectations whereas no or negative engagement had a detrimental impact on all types of engagement which resulted in a student not reaching their full potential. The student was bored or disruptive during learning the learning process and uninterested in tasks which resulted in late or rushed work.

2.9 APPROACHES FOR STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Strategies to promote engagement are those that clearly define the role of the learner, activities, and the process of learning. The process of learning needs to be made explicit by utilizing relevant topics and processes that are transparent and actively support learners, scaffolding of questions that vary from easy to difficult questions with good examples to promote student engagement (Taylor and Pearson, 2011). These strategies must be implemented by faculty and aligned with

the institution's objectives. Faculty may require additional training to ensure successful practices to better align institutions objectives and practices (Atnip, 2015).

2.9.1 Strategies of blended professionals

Blended professionals are those who utilize both their professional and academic expertise to develop effective educational practices by working with various team players (Trowler, 2010).

These professionals encompass various techniques to enrich the academic experience of students to facilitate student engagement.

2.9.2 Institutional engagement plan

Krause (2005), was of the view that student engagement can be enhanced by creating an environment that is stimulating, whilst maintaining high standards by monitoring and responding to diverse needs that facilitate social connectedness. These are self-management strategies that expose students to challenges and they have to utilize appropriate assessments which facilitate student engagement. These plans encompass a wide variety of teaching approaches that can be tailored to meet learning objectives.

2.9.3 Staff interventions

There are several strategies that staff can employ to increase student engagement and increase solidarity between students and lecturers, welcoming new members of faculty and by promoting a safe environment that is conducive to learning which will enable students to take charge of their learning and to be critical about the teaching environment. In addition, it facilitates participation (Mann, 2001). An institution needs to support its faculty so that they implement appropriate teaching strategies to encourage engagement.

Pianta, Hamre and Allen (2012) are of the view that the relationship between teachers and students is vital in understanding student engagement and can be assessed through observable methods to assist faculty with information about classroom practices, supportive feedback and appropriate

behavioral cues in order to facilitate student engagement. Relationships and interactions between teachers and students result in development. Student engagement is relational because one has to understand the relationships between behavior and classroom interactions (Pianta, Hamre and Allen, 2012). Classrooms are social systems which enable teacher-student interactions where the student is a constructor of knowledge and the teacher is a facilitator providing cues.

2.9.4 Instructional Practices

Taylor and Pearson (2011) put forward that instructional practices promote student engagement. It is vital that conceptual learning encompasses relevant problems that encourages active participation whilst meeting learning objectives. This means that students are interested and take responsibility for constructing knowledge, therefore learners become autonomous. Faculty need to provide support to students by fostering collaboration, encouraging the use of technology and promoting critical thinking in order to create a link between the learning experience and outside world. It is evident that if one wants to create an engaged environment they will make learning relevant and real, use technology as a means of communication and create a challenging environment that fosters a culture of learning.

2.10 FRAMEWORKS FOR STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Frameworks are like a blueprint that guide professionals to make an informed and theoretically correct decision (Bamber et al., 2009). They extend beyond articles and textbooks. According to Trowler (2010), textbooks and articles lack explicit theory and connection to higher education. Frameworks should aid lecturers in finding common ground between their context and appropriate strategy. Trowler (2010) is of the view that frameworks comprise four elements, namely: data derived from practice, theory, concepts and questions posed to academics. Some of the theories that facilitate student engagement will be examined below:

2.10.1 Transitional Pedagogy

Many institutions still face challenges such as co-ordination, coherence and integration (Kift, Nelson and Clarke, 2010). Transitional pedagogy is an approach that facilitates student engagement by developing a sense of belonging utilizing strategies in the curriculum. It involves students, staff and the institution to develop student-centered activities and a central curriculum (Kift, Nelson and Clarke, 2010). A curriculum which is relevant to students and can be used to address a diverse student body that will enable faculty to meet the different needs and abilities of students whilst still being controlled by the institution.

2.10.2 Self-determination theory (SDT)

Self-determination theory (SDT) is a theory based on motivation which aids one in understanding and enhancing student motivation and ultimately student engagement which is influenced by both of these variables (Reeve, 2012). It provides a solid base for classroom engagement and positive practices. Reeve (2012) is of the view that SDT focuses motivational resources that lie within students and provides faculty with effective practices when teaching in order to facilitate student engagement. SDT examines students' inner interactions with the classroom environment which results in student engagement. SDT still requires further research on its contribution to student engagement (Reeve, 2012).

2.10.3 Flow theory

According to Hagel, Carr and Devlin (2011), Flow theory is derived from psychology and can best describe the actions that are involved during activities. These activities can be active, which focuses on the concentration and absorption of information, or challenging which has clear objectives such as autonomy. The Flow theory is a student-centered approach. Student engagement is not about exposing students to useful activities and experiences but rather these activities must be of a high standard and depth (Hagel, Carr and Devlin, 2011). Students can easily lose interest if they are not stimulated mentally.

2.11 INTERNATIONAL BEST PRACTICES

Student engagement was established using the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). This is a measure of student behaviours which is connected with learning and development outcomes that contributes to the success within an Institution (Axelson and Flick, 2010). Axelson and Flick (2010) suggest that institutions can utilize data from the NSSE to compare themselves to other Institutions and as a means for improvement. This is a clear indicator that student engagement is a multidimensional facet that consists of emotional, behavioral and cognitive engagement. Harper and Quayle (2009) states that the NSSE has five measurements for constructive educational practice, namely, level of academic challenge, active and collaborative learning, student-faculty interaction, enriching educational experiences and supportive campus environment. These measurements facilitate student engagement and can also be utilized to establish the level of student engagement at an institution as well as provide recommendations for areas that require improvement.

2.11.1 Student engagement for belonging

Thomas (2012) is of the view that students require a sense of belonging in tertiary institutions which ultimately leads to student engagement which can be facilitated through purposeful activities. Student engagement leads to the development of interconnected relationships as illustrated in Figure 2.2.

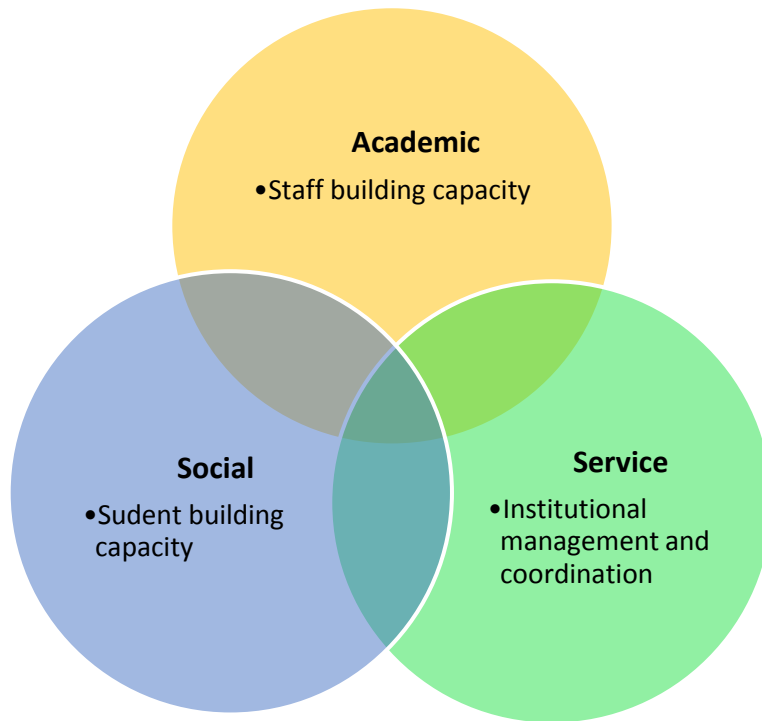


Figure 2.2: The interconnectedness of student engagement

Source: Adapted from Thomas, L., 2012.

In Figure 2.2, a student should be exposed to engagement that promotes a sense of belonging throughout one’s life cycle. In the academic, social and service spheres engagement and sense of belonging is facilitated by the institution, which must be beneficial to the students (Thomas, 2012). According to Thomas (2012) staff and student capacity building is seen as a partnership where students are engaged and staff are the ones who develop engaging activities. The responsibility for belonging and retention lies with everyone and success is ultimately acquired. It is evident that student engagement is a joint effort by students, staff and the institutions as a whole. Thomas (2012) is of the view that both engagement and a sense of belonging can lead to retention and success. This will cause institutions to rethink their practices, policies, objectives and processes so that it fosters a sense of belonging. The academic sphere is vital to academic success and retention, it calls for transformation in institutions (Thomas, 2012).

2.11.2 Engagement for interest

Sun and Rueda (2012) were of the view that by improving student interest in learning will reduce student anxiety and they will be more emotionally engaged. Lecturers need to expose learners to various styles of learning in order to keep them interested and this will increase student engagement as illustrated in Figure 2.3.

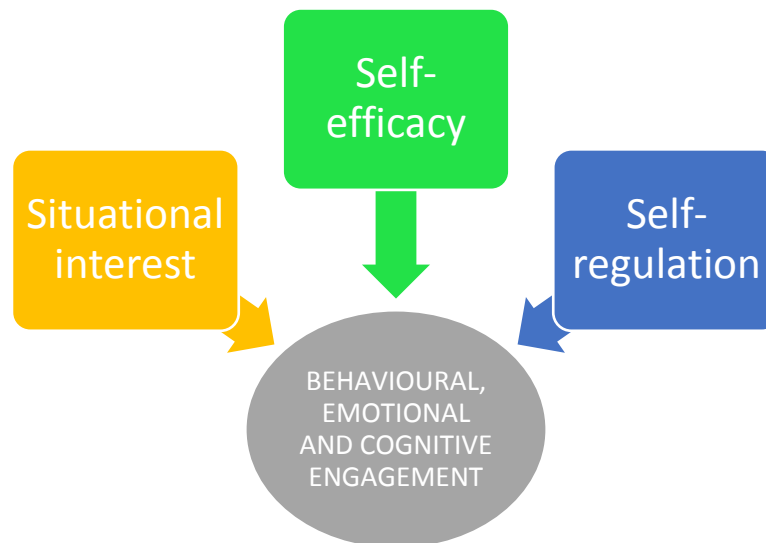


Figure 2.3: Relationship between learning variables and student engagement

Source: Adapted from Sun, J.C. & Rueda, R., 2012.

Figure 2.3, describes the relationship between motivational and learning variables with respect to the different types of engagement. In an educational environment, self-efficacy, interests and self-regulation share a correlative relationship within an individual's behavior and environment. According to Sun and Rueda (2012), computer self-efficacy had no effect on student engagement whereas students with high-levels of self-regulation were highly motivated. Lastly, interest had a positive correlation with all types of engagement. It is therefore imperative that one considers an individual's behavior and environment to determine the impact it has on student engagement.

2.11.3 Engagement in diverse backgrounds

Pike and Kuh (2005) are of the view that in order to examine diverse backgrounds, university experiences and learning outcomes a structural model with variables need to be developed such as the model illustrated in Figure 2.4.

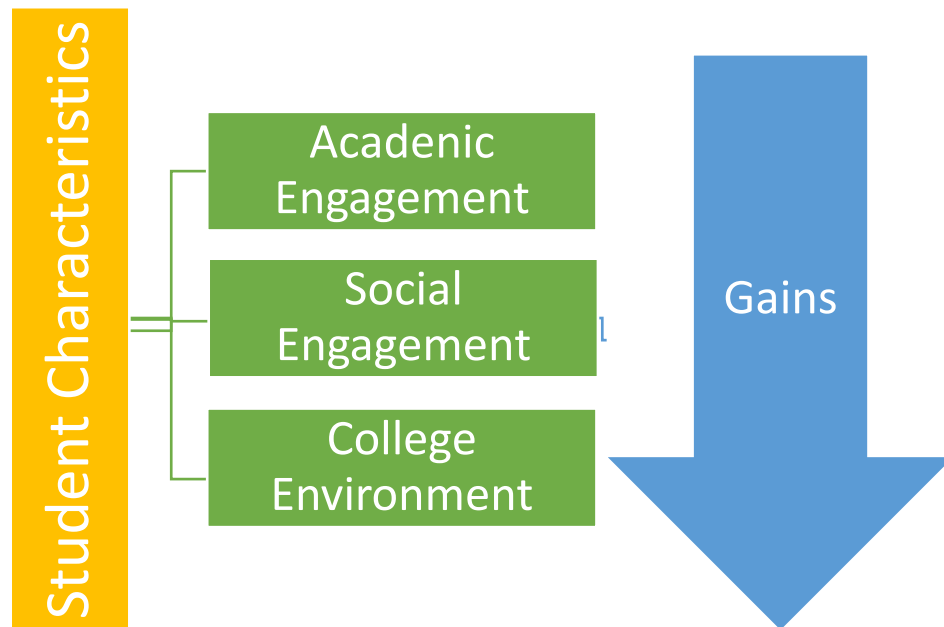


Figure 2.4: A conceptual model of student engagement

Source: Adapted from Pike, G. R. & Kuh, G. D., 2005.

Illustrated in Figure 2.4, is a model that can be used to assess the college environment, the learning environment and its impact on outcomes. In order to achieve gains, academic and social engagement needs to be intergraded in a conducive learning environment. This formulates a meaningful whole. Pike and Kuh (2005) argue that there is a large amount of literature that links student engagement with purposeful activities in order to achieve academic goals. It is important to note that although faculty cannot change the diverse backgrounds of students it can put in place interventions that support retention and success by changing students' views of tertiary institutions and the activities in which they are given (Pike and Kuh, 2005).

2.11.4 Linking student engagement and course redesign

Blended learning is aimed at engaging students in reflection and discourse. According to Vaughan (2010), the main objective of blended-learning is to create a community of inquiry where the onus is on students to create understanding via participation. Blended learning can be used to redesign the way one teaches and learns that will ultimately increase efficiency and convenience.

There has been a transformational shift from teaching learners how to disseminate information to learners constructing knowledge by interacting with peers, content and their lecturers (Vaughan, 2010). According to Vaughan (2010), the role of technology has changed from providing content to a tool that enables learners to collaborate and communicate when constructing information. An example of blended learning is best illustrated below in Figure 2.5:



Figure 2.5: A blended learning initiative to faculty development

Source: Adapted from Garrison, D. R., Anderson, T. & Archer, W., 2000.

In Figure 2.5, there are three elements to the framework: cognition, social and teaching. The cognitive element is focused on the ability of lecturers in creating inquiry based opportunities in teaching. The social element of the model focuses on the community to support and maintain the inquiry process. The teaching element is further heightened by blended learning.

Learning communities, also known as blended learning, have received a vast amount of attention from academics as they tend to humanize the learning environment (Zhao and Kuh, 2004). There are many types and definitions of learning communities, however, they all share common characteristics. According to Zhao and Kuh (2004), a learning community could be groups of students enrolling for the same classes, this ensures they are in contact and work together on common activities. It is vital that faculty teach students skills that can be applied across disciplines. If learning communities are fostered they can encourage social and intellectual links between students which leads to active and collaborative learning (Zhao and Kuh, 2004). Such practices tend to promote concepts such as diversity, tolerance and academic development. Zhao and Kuh (2004) are of the view that students who actively participate in activities connect with peers which results in retention and success. Integration of activities in a meaningful way can convert experiences into real learning. Zhao and Kuh (2004) put forward that learning communities encourage students to make interdisciplinary connections which promotes an academic community where they identify, explore and integrate their learning together.

According to Strydom, Mentz and Kuh (2010), student engagement has had a positive impact on student participation and educational practices irrespective of the type of institution. It is therefore imperative that institutions monitor policies and practices that direct students to appropriate activities to reach their objectives of student success and an effective Institution. The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) was adopted in 1998 and piloted in the US with 75 colleges participating in 1999 to investigate levels of engagement. In 2008, 1300 institutions participated with more than 1.4 million students (Strydom, Mentz and Kuh, 2010). Clearly, these institutions have found the study as a useful tool to increase student success as well as the effectiveness of an institution. The NSSE is a study that causes many students to reflect on their intellectual, social and personal practices in everyday learning (Strydom, Mentz and Kuh, 2010).

Kuh (2008) is of the view that the NSSE is used to assess students that engaged in good educational practices and that they gain from their time at university. Institutions that expose their students to a variety of valued activities can claim to be of a higher quality (Kuh, 2008). The emphasis of any good Institution should be educational practices that encourage faculty and students on tasks and activities that meet learning objectives.

Most studies were conducted in Australia and the United States, the national surveys provided a foundation for student involvement and its use in higher education instruction and management however, there is a lack of literature on student engagement in governance (Trowler, 2010). Trowler (2010) is of the view that comparative studies need to be conducted in Australia, the United States and South Africa. Moreover, there should be studies pertaining to student engagement and governance as well as curriculum design, studies focused on student engagement with the student being central and key to the study and was a local study.

McCormick and McClenney (2012) are of the view that the main purpose of the NSSE was to create a connection between research and practice especially in higher education, the data can be utilized as a basis of improvement in teaching and learning approaches in order to achieve desired outcomes. It is a valuable tool as it focuses on improvement. Institutions can use the data from the NSSE studies to adopt best practices that suit their institutional and student needs as well as solve possible problems that they may encounter (McCormick and McClenney, 2012).

McCormick and McClenney (2012) are of the view that the NSSE focuses on improvements in undergraduate programs. There is no simple answer on how best to improve student learning and achievement, it requires changes of different magnitude along with a committed faculty. It is therefore necessary to persist and implement appropriate practices that facilitate student engagement.

Hagel, Carr and Devlin (2012) argue that student engagement has become a central theme in attaining quality education since the introduction of the Australian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE) based on the NSSE that was used in the United States of America (USA). It proved to be a vital tool in measuring engagement and allowed one to draw a comparison between the two

countries (Hagel, Carr and Devlin, 2012). The role of education is to prepare students for life after school. According to Hagel, Carr and Devlin (2012), student engagement facilitates this as it involves students in activities designed by teachers and is monitored by government to facilitate engagement and prepare students for their respective roles in society.

There were some shortfalls in the AUSSE as it did not capture vital concepts of student engagement as the tertiary education system in the USA differs from that of Australia therefore it is necessary to adapt the survey to the suit the context of the country. The survey provides a variety of improvements. However, not all may be applicable to a university so one should be cautioned and lastly it is was not evident as to whether engagement is the same across disciplines or it varies (Hagel, Carr and Devlin, 2012).

2.12 BENEFITS OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Student engagement is an indicator of personal development and learning (Carini, Kun and Klein, 2006). Student engagement is not just focused on learning but rather it focuses on equipping individuals with life-long skills that can be utilized after university. According to Carini, Kuh and Klein (2006), student engagement was beneficial to learning outcomes such as critical thinking and improved grades. There is abundant literature primarily concerned with the use of student engagement and its relationship in improving learning. Student engagement has benefitted both students and lecturers. Trowler (2010) proposed that students and lecturers were more connected, there were increased interactions on subject matter, there was sharing of values and approaches which lead to greater teaching satisfaction and interactive students.

Most institutions are concerned with student retention and throughput rates due to the financial costs attached to drop-out rates as well as extended time frames in completing a degree. Most universities have shifted their focus on inclusion of diverse student groups and ensuring they have equal chances of success. According to Trowler (2010), by enabling students to be part of curriculum design, it will make the curriculum more relevant to them. Students are more likely to engage with subject matter if they consider it important and are able to relate to content. Institutions

can benefit from their positive reputation as well as financially. In today's economy, many are concerned about 'value for money' especially students as well as funding bodies.

An engaging university is one that is of superior quality and this can therefore be used as a marketing device. Institutions have benefitted from student engagement by making data available for measurement purposes and using the data as a tool for improvement (Trowler, 2010). Although constructivism is a theory of learning, it is largely concerned with teaching and learning and is suitable to higher education (Trowler, 2010). Different educational ideologies form frameworks of theories that explain educational arrangements and behavior in certain contexts. They are conceptual tools. Different ideologies determine the way engagement was understood and implemented in many institutions.

Taylor and Pearson (2011) are of the view that historically, student engagement was aimed at promoting positive behavior to increase achievement and also to create a sense of belonging so that the student will be reluctant to drop-out. Student engagement focused on students in high school and was seen as a tool to re-engage students that were disadvantaged or likely to drop-out. Recent studies have shown that student engagement increases students' abilities to learn and teaches them skills for life (Taylor and Pearson, 2011). Student engagement remains a rich area of research, however, it is necessary that appropriate strategies are utilized that facilitate and promote engagement are adopted in and beyond the learning environment.

The function of student engagement is that it facilitates and explains the motivation and achievement relationship, changes in student engagement influence changes in the classroom environment as well as student motivation thus the four-components of engagement represent the actions taken by a student to meet their needs (Reeve, 2012).

Reyes et al., (2012) are of the view that student engagement promotes academic success because engaged students participate in class, complete class activities, display an interest in learning and are motivated. Faculty have to consider the social and emotional variables of learning in order to provide a student with engaging activities. Learners that lack engagement have no goals, low grades, are disruptive, drop out and are passive learners that become bored and anxious (Reyes et

al., 2005). A learning environment that is emotionally supportive will allow students to perform better because they are provided with emotionally engaging activities. According to Reyes et al. (2012), emotionally supportive environments are those that comprise of learning and motivation.

According to Taylor and Pearson (2012), there is a shift in paradigm from didactic to constructivism, teacher-centered to learner-centered and from individual learning to collaborative learning. In order to encourage engagement many teachers have to examine the way they teach and the type of activities used.

2.13 STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA (SA)

In 2006, permission was obtained from the NSSE (Indiana University) to adapt the survey to the South African context. The South African Survey of Student Engagement (SASSE) provided information on the activities that students engaged in such as: literacy, time management, personal growth and student satisfaction at a university (Strydom, Mentz and Kuh, 2010). The study, however, was only conducted at the University of Free State. Strydom, Mentz and Kuh (2010), was of the view that SA requires improved retention and graduation rates in order to supply the country with the human capital it requires to sustain the economy. The SASSE has psychometric properties that provide a strong foundation for student engagement that will allow SA to develop benchmarks which can be compared to international studies (Strydom, Mentz and Kuh, 2010).

Strydom, Mentz and Kuh (2010) state that the South African tertiary system faces two challenges, namely graduation rates and student success. Many international studies indicated a positive correlation between student engagement and student learning which ultimately led to the improvement of institutional processes. The SASSE can be used as a tool to guide policy makers at tertiary institutions to increase student throughput and success (Strydom, Mentz and Kuh, 2010). Strydom, Mentz and Kuh (2010), stated that due to apartheid many students that entered university were from disadvantaged backgrounds and were likely to drop out. This meant that institutions had less influence in preparing students for university life. Universities now have to deal with declining resources, diverse student needs, increased accountability as well as maintaining quality (Strydom, Mentz and Kuh, 2010).

2.14 STUDENT ENGAGEMENT WITH MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION (MBA) STUDENTS

Entrepreneurship and business skills are important to the economic growth and stability of South Africa as it will provide the country with a skilled labour force capable of creating new business (Fatoki, 2010). This is vital to the economy as new businesses means economic prosperity and job creation. Fatoki (2010) is of the view that although there are increased enrolment rates at tertiary institutions, there is a low rate of employment in graduates. A rapidly growing economy is one that requires a skilled labour force therefore unemployment among graduates should be low. People exposed to entrepreneurship tend to have greater creative freedom, high self-esteem and more control of their lives (Fatoki, 2010). Entrepreneurship equips students with the necessary skills to start their own company hence they are more confident. In order for entrepreneurship intention to occur one has to expose learners to entrepreneurship education and eliminate obstacles such as lack of capital, competency, support and risk, those with better financial training are able to secure financial funding (Fatoki, 2010). It is important that the focus remains on equipping students studying courses such as a Master's in Business Administration (MBA) Degree with appropriate skills so that they become productive citizens which we are in dire need of.

It is imperative that lecturers allow learners to be active in engaging with knowledge construction, capabilities and competences and the learning process is student-centered as it allows learners to be more open, learn via analysis and association, reflect, be tolerant of others views and lastly interact with peers (Vazquez and Ruas, 2012). Master in Business Administration (MBA) students can therefore utilize student engagement to achieve desired learning objectives. According to Vazquez and Ruas (2012) MBA students want to know and be involved in the way they learn, therefore it is necessary to understand what MBA students value in order to examine their level of engagement with respect to different experiences which facilitates their learning. Figure 2.6, below illustrates the role of continuous learning in developing capabilities and competences in MBA students:

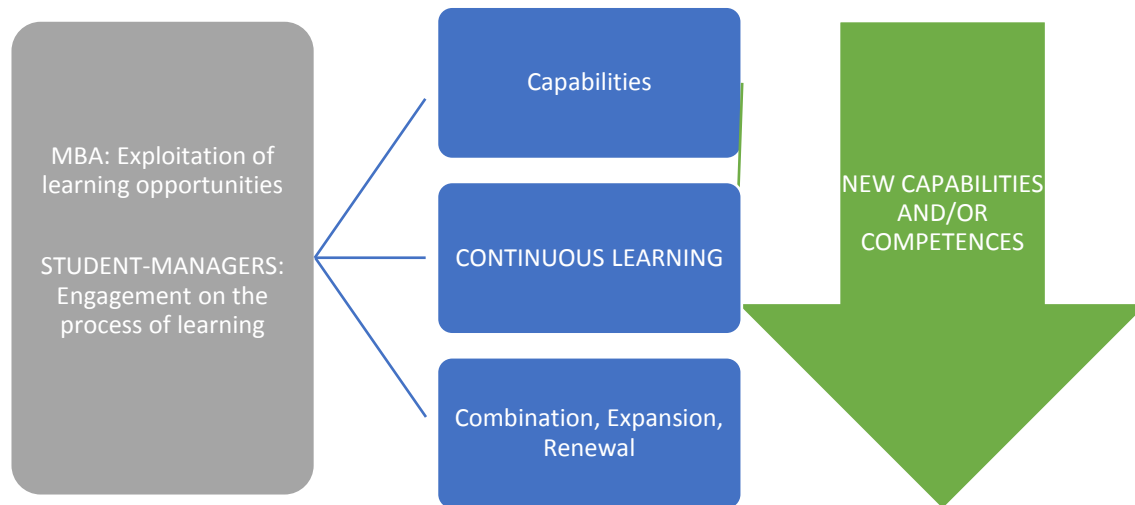


Figure 2.6: The role of continuous learning in developing capabilities and competencies

Source: Adapted from Vazquez, A. C. S. & Ruas, R. L., 2012.

Figure 2.6, demonstrates that not all student-managers develop competences in a specific period and that capabilities form a foundation for competences, this therefore highlights the role of continuous learning in developing these skills. The key factor for engaging students are renewing capabilities and expansion. Vazquez and Ruas (2012) was of the view that MBA students develop competences through capabilities that are adaptable and pliable. There should be a link with pedagogy and management practices by exposing MBA students to relevant content and experiences. According to Vazquez and Ruas (2012), a good MBA program is one that affords its students opportunities and experiences that link capabilities, content and competencies to address daily challenges that they may encounter at work. Continuous learning is a teaching approach that challenges students to engage actively in their education process to develop such competencies and capabilities.

2.15 SUMMARY

In a rapidly changing socioeconomic and political climate, it is necessary that tertiary institutions examine their practices to better equip students with the skills necessary to function in such an environment, especially if South Africa wants to compete globally. Government will have to invest heavily in the skilled labour force, this can only be accomplished by examining educational practices. By adopting and adjusting international best practices to a South African context, institutions can utilize student engagement as a tool for improving the educational system. Retention and success are a major challenge to most tertiary institutions it is therefore imperative that institutions utilize appropriate teaching strategies such as student engagement which makes content more relevant, interesting and challenging to students. Students also need to feel part of the institutions and should be included in decisions pertaining to the institutions such as governance and curriculum design.

Student engagement is a vital tool that indicates student achievement. It is evident from the literature that engaged students become good students by being exposed to effective teaching practices that supports and maintains student engagement. Faculty should focus on all dimensions of engagement as this will complement existing policy and provide learning opportunities that will enhance the quality of education students are exposed to. It is important to note that student engagement is a multidimensional concept and it cannot be used in isolation if its full potential is to be realized. The number of studies on the student engagement at tertiary institutions in South Africa were quite limited especially with respect to measurement and definitions. There was a scarcity of research on student engagement and student satisfaction in postgraduate programs such as the MBA in South Africa. Therefore, a study focusing on student engagement and student satisfaction will assist UKZN and other tertiary institutions to improve student learning and provide recommendations that will ultimately enhance the student experience and this will also lead to greater retention rates. The next chapter presents the methodology used for conducting the research for this study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Research methods are those techniques and procedures utilized by a researcher to collect data in order to answer a research question. The scientific and systematic process of collecting information on a specific topic is generally referred to as research methodology (Kothari, 2009). Mackenzie and Knipe (2006) are of the view that research is not a linear process therefore the researcher needs to be familiar with research methods as well as research methodology.

The objective of this chapter is to discuss the research method that was employed to obtain results for this study. This chapter will provide vital insight into the processes required to conduct valid research utilizing an appropriate research methodology.

3.2 ORGANISATIONAL BACKGROUND

In 1974, the University of Durban-Westville launched a business school under the discerning guidance of Professor Joop Venter, Professor Narendra Bhana and Professor Kanti Bhowan which led to the birth of the MBA program (UKZN, 2016a). The Graduate School of Business and Leadership (GSB&L) is currently situated on the Westville Campus of UKZN. In 2004, there was a merger between the University of Durban-Westville and the University of Natal, thus forming UKZN. It is considered as a premier university of choice for many students as it provides a holistic learning environment. The mission of the University is to strive for academic excellence, innovation, engage with the community and to redress the disadvantages of the past (UKZN, 2016c). UKZN is ranked as one of the top five universities in South Africa as well as one of three African Universities ranked among the top 500 universities worldwide (UKZN, 2016c). The university is recognized for its outstanding research and teaching, as well as degrees obtained from the university are recognized internationally (UKZN, 2016b).

The university believes in the holistic development of students, their staff and facilities. The university strives to continuously improve their relationships with students and academic staff in order to maintain standards of excellence and this can only be accomplished by engaging with students. In order to measure and evaluate the institutions “holistic learning,” environment at the Graduate School of Business and Leadership (GSB&L), a survey was conducted amongst MBA students.

3.3 AIM

The aim of this study was to determine the impact of student engagement on satisfaction, retention and success of MBA students.

3.4 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the research conducted are:

1. To establish the relationship between student engagement and student satisfaction.
2. To establish the relationship between student engagement and student retention.
3. To establish the relationship between student engagement and student success.
4. To identify the areas that can be improved to increase satisfaction.
5. To identify the areas that can be improved to increase retention.
6. To identify the areas that can be improved to promote success.
7. To identify the areas that can be improved to promote student engagement.

3.5 TYPES OF RESEARCH

A concise problem is one that gives the researcher direction for conducting an investigation (Sreejesh, Mohapatra and Anusree, 2014). This means that the researcher will collect relevant data and resources to be utilized efficiently because the type of research is dictated by the aim of the research question. Sekaran and Bougie (2013) are of the view that the type of research can be classified into four categories, each with its own purpose as shown in Figure 3.1.

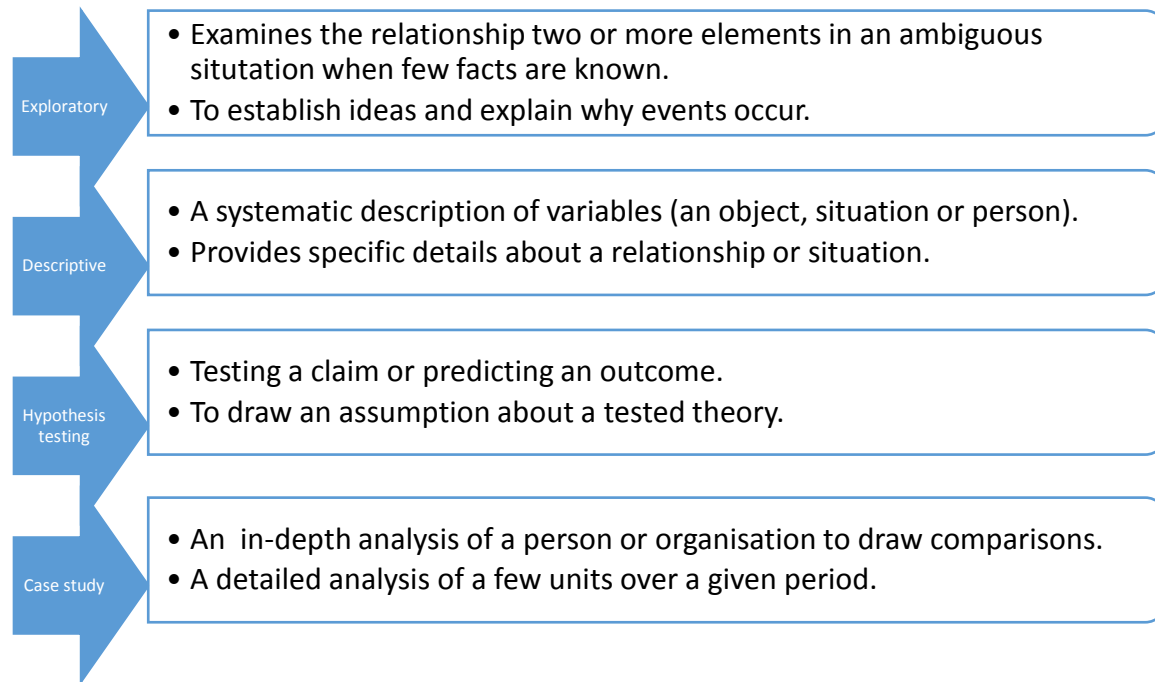


Figure: 3.1 Different type and purpose of research

Source: Adapted from Sekaran, U. and Bougie, R. 2013.

Figure 3.1 clearly illustrates that the aim of the research question governs the type of research. In Chapter 2, literature was examined and the purpose of the study was to determine the impact of student engagement on satisfaction, retention and success of MBA students. It is descriptive in nature because the researcher focused on analyzing what was the relationship between student engagement and each of the following academic outcomes: student satisfaction, retention and success of MBA students at the GSB&L.

3.6 RESEARCH APPROACH

Lee (1992) suggested that research approaches are the mechanical procedures in which data is collected and analysed. There are two basic research approaches described by Creswell (2013):

1. Qualitative research – This research approach is used to explore meanings and understandings that an individual or group has pertaining to a particular problem.

2. Quantitative research – This research approach is used to examine objective theories by determining the relationship between variables.

Table 3.1 indicates the differences between the two research approaches.

Table 3.1: Qualitative and Quantitative research approaches

Research Aspect	Qualitative Research	Quantitative Research
Worldview	Constructivist/transformational view i.e. multiple realities.	Postpositive view i.e. a single reality.
Research Purpose	Understanding a problem from the participants' viewpoint.	Establish relationships between variables.
Research Methods and Processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Procedures are flexible and the design emerges as data is collected. No hypothesis is required. ➤ Inductive in nature. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ A hypothesis and procedures are established prior to the commencement of the study. ➤ Deductive in nature.
Researcher's Role	The researcher participates in the social setting.	The researcher is objective and observes rather than participating or influencing the study.
Generalisability	Universal and context-free	Detailed and context-based

Source: Adapted from Creswell, J.W. 2013.

In Table 3.1, it is evident that qualitative and quantitative research approaches are dissimilar therefore the choice of either depends on the type of research being conducted. This study aims at finding out if there is a relationship between student engagement and student satisfaction, retention and success. The chosen method to collect data was a quantitative approach as it enabled the researcher to gather information from a large number of participants, it allowed for comparison and generalisability, it provided numerical or rating information that could be statistically analysed to determine the relationship between two variables.

3.7 SAMPLING

Sreejesh, Mohapatra and Anusree (2014) described sampling as a process of utilizing a small portion of a population to draw conclusions about the whole population. According to Sekaran and Bougie (2013, p.240) a population is defined as the “entire group of people, events, or things of interest that the researcher wishes to investigate.” In essence, a sample is a subset of a population.

3.7.1 Need for sampling

It is impractical to collect data from the entire population due to time constraints, costs, geographical limitations, population size and the use of human resources rather use a sample that can produce reliable results (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013). Sreejesh, Mohapatra and Anusree (2014, p.19) are of the view that, “a well-defined sample has the same characteristics as the population as a whole, and therefore, when research is conducted on such a sample, the results obtained will represent the characteristics of the whole population.” The reason for sampling ultimately arises due to selecting respondents that are representative of the entire population in order to produce a cross-section that exhibits features of the whole population (Kothari, 2009). This means that there will be no difference between the sample and the population in terms of the variables being tested.

3.7.2. Sampling design

“A sample design is a definite plan for obtaining a sample from a given population,” (Kothari, 2009, p.55). It is a technique that the researcher utilizes in order to select items for the prospective sample. Kothari (2009) identified two types of sample designs namely, probability sampling and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling is one in which every person has a non-zero chance of selection, therefore it is totally random whereas a non-probability sample is one in which a person being selected is unknown and the researcher decides who is selected based on judgment or convenience.

Figure 3.2 illustrates the various options that one can undertake in a sample design. According to Sekaran and Bougie (2013) the researcher must select a sample design which is reliable, appropriate and satisfies their research objectives.

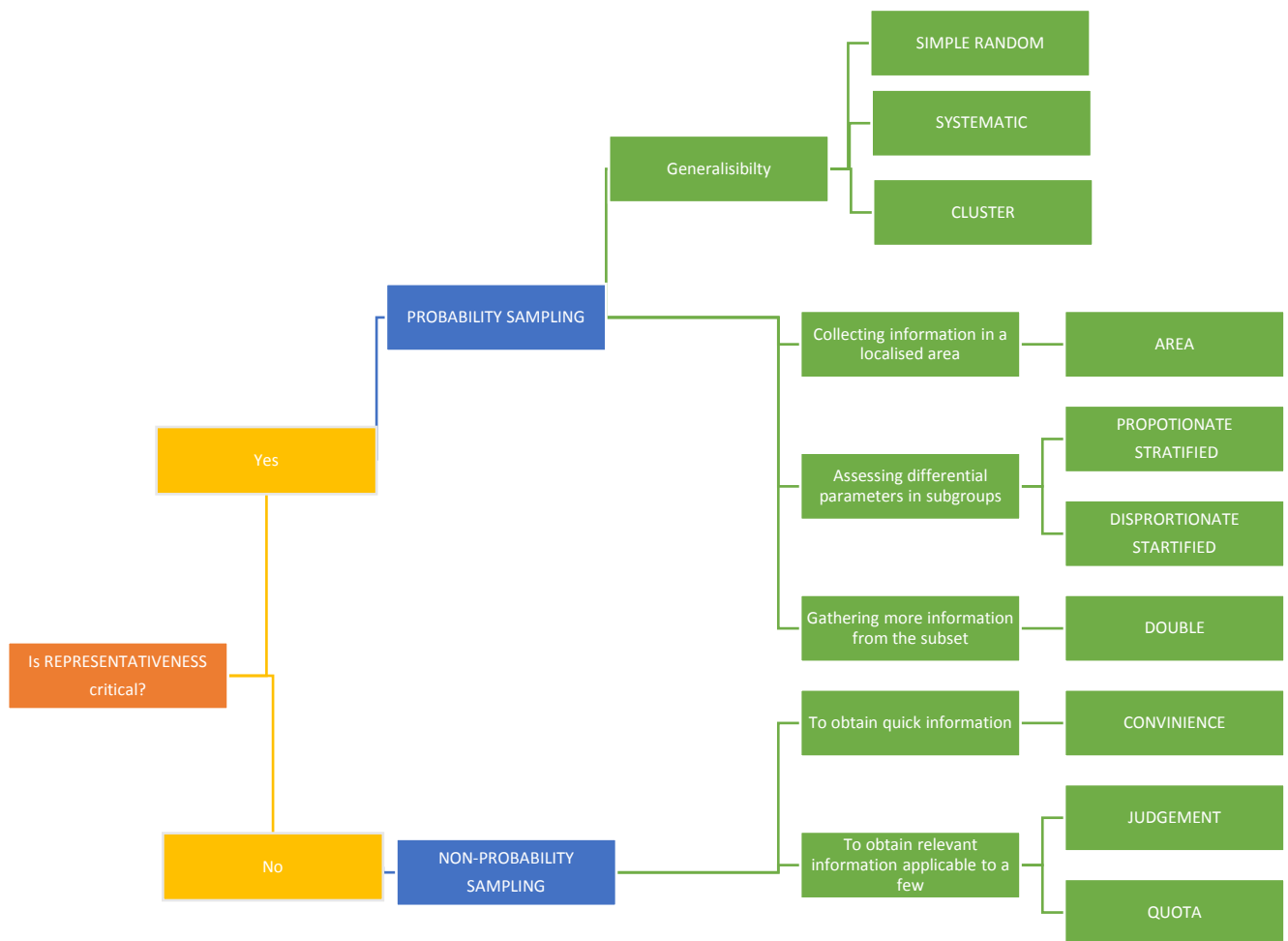


Figure 3.2: Flowchart of sampling design

Source: Adapted from Sekaran, U. and Bougie, R. 2013.

Sreejesh, Mohapatra and Anusree (2014) are of the view that the greater the sample size, the greater it's precision. However, large sample sizes are not feasible nor practical, therefore probability sampling techniques are feasible and effective. Kothari (2009) suggests that one should consider a simple random sampling design because it is unbiased and one can estimate the sampling error. This study evaluated the relationship between MBA student engagement and the student satisfaction, retention and success at the GSB&L. Initially, purposive sampling was used as only MBA students were chosen out of the entire university population. A representative sample was required. Therefore, based on Figure 3.3, a simple random sample design was appropriate. It allows for greater generalizability and is the most convenient as each participant has an equal probability of being selected (Kothari, 2009).

3.7.3 Participants in the study

The population for this study included all the students registered at the GSB&L for the current academic year as at 12 September 2016. The study was located at the GSB&L which is situated at the Westville Campus of UKZN.

3.7.4 Sampling frame

Sampling frames identify the components of a population. The sampling frame for this study was all the students currently registered at the GSB&L for the current academic year as at the 12 September 2016. This list was extracted from the student database of the GSB&L.

3.7.5 Sample size

The population for this study comprised of 197 elements according to the student database of the GSB&L for the current academic year as at 12 September 2016. Each element is a student at the GSB&L. Sekaran and Bougie (2013, p.268) provide a generalized scientific table for determining an appropriate sample size based on the size of the entire population. This table was used to determine a sample size of 131 participants that was required for this study.

Sample size determination is the process of deciding the appropriate number of observations to incorporate in a statistical sample (Creswell, 2013). The sample size is a key feature of the researcher’s study in which the goal is to make inferences about a population from a sample. It should be noted that the sample size chosen is affected by the level of precision and the margin of error the researcher requires.

3.8 DATA COLLECTION

Data collection refers to the manner in which data is collected to answer the research question (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013). According to Kothari (2009), there are two types of data – primary data and secondary data. Data that is collected afresh for the study is called primary data whereas secondary data is data that has already been collected by a person or organization (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013). Sreejesh, Mohapatra and Anusree (2014) are of the view that secondary data is advantageous as it saves time and money opposed to collecting primary data. However in the absence of secondary data, primary data will have to be collected.

Kothari (2009) identified primary data sources and has obtained data by administering questionnaires or observations, interviews, panels and focus groups whereas secondary data are those obtained from archives, company records, publications or industry analysis (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013). Table 3.2 illustrates primary data collection methods as well as the advantages and disadvantages of each method.

Table 3.2: Primary data sources

Primary Data	Advantages	Disadvantages
Focus Groups (Qualitative)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilizes experts on a given topic. • Inexpensive, reliable data in a short period, quick analysis. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is not representative of the whole population therefore it cannot be generalizable.
Panels (Qualitative)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A good measurement of changes over time. • Direct information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is not representative of the whole population therefore it cannot be generalizable.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High drop-out rates leads to mortality bias.
Interviews (Qualitative)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides in-depth information. • Identifies problems and possible solutions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviewer can be biased. • Expensive and time-consuming. • Not suitable for a large sample size.
Questionnaires (Quantitative)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Various methods of collecting responses especially when samples are dispersed geographically. • Inexpensive, instant feedback. • Ideal for a large sample size. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low response rate for emailed questionnaires.

Source: Sekaran, U. & Bougie, R. 2013.

As illustrated in Table 3.2, questionnaires are ideally suitable for a large sample size and therefore it is the most suitable method of data collection for this study as the sample required 131 respondents. It also is an inexpensive method and provides the researcher with instant feedback especially where there are time constraints.

3.8.1 Description and purpose of the instrument

Sreejesh, Mohapatra and Anusree (2014) are of the view that a questionnaire that is designed properly can elicit relevant information from a respondent. There are various types of questionnaires but this study focuses on structured and unstructured questionnaires. A structured questionnaire has a number of responses which the interviewee is restricted to choose from, whereas an unstructured questionnaire is open-ended and allows the respondent to express their own thoughts regarding a topic (Sreejesh, Mohapatra and Anusree, 2014). Figure 3.4 illustrates the various types of questionnaires that can be administered.

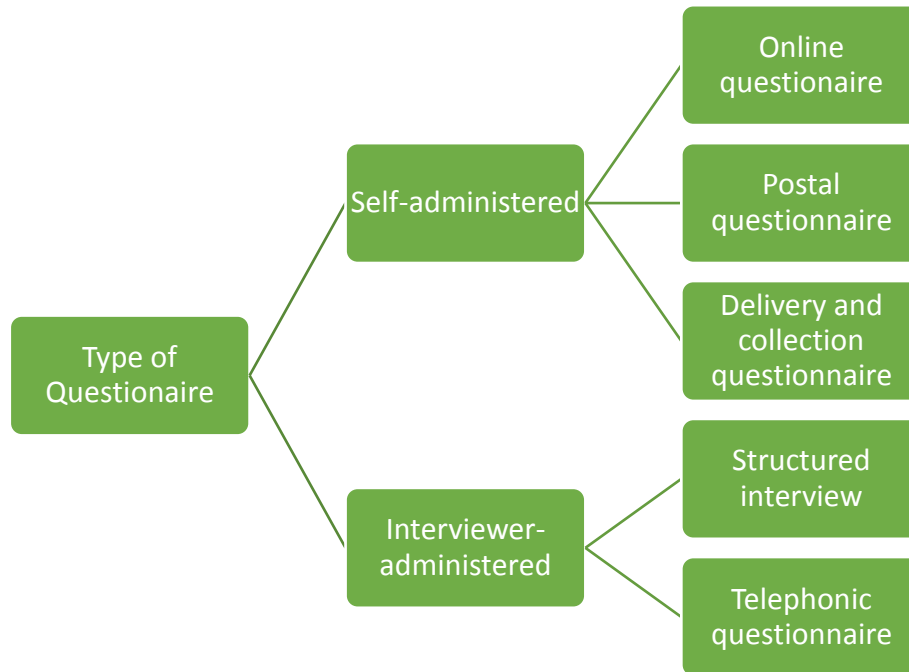


Figure 3.3: Types of questionnaires

Source: Sreejesh, S., Mohapatra, S. & Anusree, M.R. 2014.

It is evident from Figure 3.3 that self-administered questionnaires can be conducted electronically, therefore an online questionnaire was suitable as it was inexpensive and almost every person has an access to a smartphone, that is, internet access. The other methods were unsuitable due to time and cost constraints.

3.8.2 Construction of the instrument

Kothari (2009) states that questionnaires are used extensively in economic and business surveys largely due to the fact that it is a data collection method that is low cost even when participants are geographically spread, unbiased, ideal for large samples, respondents who are not generally approachable can respond at their convenience and think about their responses. Sreejesh, Mohapatra and Anusree (2014) suggest that the design of a questionnaire should encompass the following:

1. *General form* – questions must have the same wording and order. There must be limited alternatives and respondents opinions.
2. *Question sequence* – should be clear and have a logical flow as they are likely to influence the respondent’s attitude and cooperation.
3. *Question formulation and wording* – questions should be easy to understand, simple and convey one thought at a time that conforms to the respondent’s thinking.

The design of the questionnaire was formulated to meet the aim and objectives of the study. A copy of the questionnaire is provided in Appendix 3. Table 3.3 describes the relationship between questions in the questionnaire and the research objectives for this study.

Table 3.3: Linking questions to research objectives

Sec tion	Objective	Question number
1	Demographic details.	1, 2, 3, 4
2	To establish the relationship between student engagement and student satisfaction.	9, 10, 11, 12
3	To establish the relationship between student engagement and student retention.	7, 8, 11
4	To establish the relationship between student engagement and student success.	5, 6, 11
5	To identify the areas that can be improved to increase satisfaction.	12, 13, 14
6	To identify the areas that can be improved to increase retention.	21, 22, 23
7	To identify the areas of that can be improved to promote success.	15, 16, 17, 18
8	To identify the areas of that can be improved to promote student engagement	19, 20, 24, 25, 26

Table 3.3 illustrates the ample range of questions that address each research objective in order to collect sufficient and mandatory data.

Sekaran and Bougie (2013, p.211) state that a scale is “a tool or mechanism by which individuals are distinguished as to how they differ from one another on the variables of interest to the study.” There are four types of scales, namely the nominal scale which assigns subjects to categories; the ordinal scale, which denotes differences among categories which allows them to be ranked, the interval scale that has both nominal and ordinal characteristics and the ratio scale, which represents the magnitude and proportions between differences (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013). Table 3.4 represents the type of scales used in the design of the questionnaire for this study.

Table 3.4: Types of scales used in the instrument

Scale	Type	Data type	Question number
Rating	Dichotomous	Nominal	1, 7, 13, 19, 21, 24
	Multiple choice (single response)	Nominal	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 10, 11, 14, 16, 22, 23, 26
	Multiple choice (multiple responses)	Nominal	8, 20
	Linkert scale	Interval	9, 15, 17, 25
Ranking	Forced choice	Ordinal	12, 18

Table 3.4 illustrates the various types of scales used in the construction of the questionnaire.

3.8.3 Validity and Reliability

3.8.3.1 Validity

Sekaran and Bougie (2013) are of the view that validity determines the accuracy to which an instrument measures a particular concept. This means that validity is concerned primarily with

whether the instrument fulfills its purpose. Sreejesh, Mohapatra and Anusree (2014) identified the four types of validity that exists:

1. Face validity – it the easiest and basic type of validity. It determines the effectiveness of an indicator to measure a construct.
2. Content validity – it determines if a necessary number of variables is provided for a particular scale.
3. Criterion validity – it determines the degree to which an instrument analyses a criterion in a variable.
4. Construct validity – it determines the degree to which an instrument represents and connect with the underlying theory.

3.8.3.2 Reliability

Sreejesh, Mohapatra and Anusree (2014) are of the view that reliability is “the degree to which measurements of a particular instrument are free from errors and as a result produce consistent results.” This means that if an outcome is tested the results will be same every time therefore the instrument is considered reliable. According to Sekaran and Bougie (2013), reliability can be increased in four ways:

1. *Test-retest reliability* – reliability is increased by repeating the same measure a second time.
2. *Parallel-form reliability* – when two measures testing for the same construct are positively correlated.
3. *Interim consistency reliability* – is a test of the regularity of respondent’s answers to each item that is measured.

4. *Split-half reliability* – indicates the relationship between two halves of an item that is being measured.

3.8.3.3 *Relationship between validity and reliability*

According to Sekaran and Bougie (2013), validity and reliability are a measure that confirms the scientific precision that the study has followed. Sreejesh, Mohapatra and Anusree (2014) are of the view that a good questionnaire produces good results and is based on its relevance and accuracy.

3.8.4 Pretesting of questionnaire

An instrument should be pre-tested so that any flaws that are detected can be rectified prior to administering the instrument (Sreejesh, Mohapatra and Anusree, 2014). Sekaran and Bougie (2012) are of the view that, pre-testing of the questionnaire involves a minute number of respondents in order to determine the appropriateness and comprehension of each question. This allows the researcher to eliminate poor grammar, leading questions, questions sequenced incorrectly and awkward responses.

The pre-test group consisted of 10 third year students of the GSB&L from the UKZN Westville campus. The issues identified by the pre-test group of the questionnaire were as follows:

1. The branching logic did not function properly as it was not set up correctly. Therefore, all options appeared instead of the specific options and this was time consuming.
2. Some questions required selecting multiple options and the questionnaire only allowed them to select one option.

The above errors were corrected and a final version was developed as a data collection instrument for the research study.

3.8.5 Administration of questionnaire

The questionnaire was administered in a manner and environment that facilitated honesty with respect to respondents' answers. The administration of questionnaires was solely handled by the researcher and conducted via the online survey (<http://mbastudentengagement.questionpro.com>) on QuestionPro. The respondents were contacted prior to the start of their evening lectures as well as direct mail with a covering letter encouraging them to participate in the study

3.9 DATA ANALYSIS

After the data is collected, the researcher will analyse the data in order to deduce conclusions. Sreejesh, Mohapatra and Anusree (2014) are of the view that data analysis transforms data into a set of reports or conclusions that allows the researcher to gain insight and make an informed conclusion, however if irrelevant data and inappropriate methods are used in the analysis it will result in unreliable data.

The questionnaire used in this study was set up on QuestionPro. QuestionPro is an electronic data collection method which collects data every time a respondent clicks on the link emailed to them. The data is automatically saved on an electronic database on a remote server over the internet. QuestionPro was selected due to the fact that it is easy to set up and versatility as it assigns a numeric code to each variable that can be exported to other programs such as Microsoft Office or the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for further analysis (QuestionPro, 2016). Furthermore, descriptive statistics enabled the researcher to summarize and describe the data and a Chi-square test was conducted to summarize the relationship between two categorical variables, the p-value indicated the level of significance between the two variables and.

3.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

An informed consent letter was attached and requested electronically prior to the start of the questionnaire from each respondent. All necessary documents were shown to respondents during the evening lectures. A gatekeeper's letter (Appendix 4) seeking permission to conduct the study

at the GSB&L was obtained from the Registrar at UKZN. Ethical clearance was granted by the UKZN for conducting the study (Appendix 5). A letter seeking respondents' consent (Appendix 2) was also provided and individuals were made aware of their right to remain anonymous as well as withdraw from the survey at any given time.

3.11 SUMMARY

This chapter presented key concepts involved in research methodology and its perspective role in business research. It described the process of how questions in the data collection instrument were synthesized to meet the research objectives. This chapter highlighted the population of interest along with the reasoning behind the selection of an appropriate sampling design strategy to facilitate data collection for the research. A suitable sample size was derived utilizing the basic principles of research design. After the collection of data from the survey, the analysis, presentation and discussion of data will be provided in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter explained the logic behind the research method and research instrument. The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings by analysing and discussing the results obtained from the survey. The first section of the results analyses the demographic profile of participants whereas the second section investigates the findings of the study in relation to the objectives of the study.

As explained in Chapter 3, simple random sampling was selected for the sampling design therefore, the findings can be generalized to the entire population. Initially, 151 respondents started the survey, but only 134 respondents completed the survey, which was above the minimum sample size of 131. This resulted in a completion rate of 89%. The average time taken to complete the online questionnaire was seven minutes which was lower than the estimated time of ten minutes.

4.2 TREATMENT OF DATA

An initial examination of the data revealed some incomplete questionnaires which were deleted prior to the data analysis process by utilizing the “started but not completed” data filter in QuestionPro. The data was then screened to ensure that responses were from students currently registered at the Graduate School of Business and Leadership of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The findings are presented in graphical and tabular formats to better understanding.

4.3 RELIABILITY OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The reliability (internal consistency) of the questionnaire was tested by attempting to calculate Cronbach's alpha. For this purpose, data was extracted from QuestionPro and put into the statistical analysis package, SPSS, which returned a Cronbach's alpha value of 0,930 suggesting that the items have relatively high internal consistency.

4.4 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

4.4.1 Distribution of demographic information

The demographic profile of the respondents, are illustrated in Table 4.1. Since the respondents were university students, as explained in the previous chapter, establishing the age of respondents was deemed irrelevant to the study.

Table 4.1: Demographic profile of the respondents

Demographic Characteristics		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	69	52
	Female	65	48
Race	Indian	34	25
	Black	85	63
	Coloured	6	5
	White	9	7
Degree of Study	Diploma	5	4
	Bachelor's Degree	60	45
	Honours/Postgraduate Diploma	46	34
	Master's Degree	23	17
	Doctorate	0	0
Year of Study	First Year	31	23
	Second Year	59	44
	Third/Final Year	44	33

The majority of respondents were males (52%) as compared to females (49%). As illustrated in Table 4.1, the majority of respondents were Black (63%) and Indian (25%). It was observed that the majority of respondents had a Bachelor's Degree (45%) followed by an Honour's/Postgraduate Diploma's (34%). There were very few respondents pursuing a Master's Degree (17%), with even fewer Diploma's (4%) and no Doctorate of Philosophy (PhD) Degrees (0%). It was noted, that the vast majority of respondents were in their second year (44%) of study followed by third/final year (33%) respondents, however there were few first year (23%) respondents. Most first year students were preoccupied with assignments and tests during the period that the questionnaire was administered.

4.5 DATA ANALYSIS

Kahu (2013) is of the view that there are four approaches aimed at understanding student engagement, namely a behavioural perspective that constitutes effective teaching practices, a psychological perspective that constitutes an individual process, a socio-cultural perspective that considers an individual's context and a holistic perspective which combines all perspectives. Each of these perspectives formulated the basis for the objectives of the research. The data collected from the online survey was analysed according to the objectives of the study. The data is presented utilising simple visual representations followed by a discussion on the key findings of the study. This section also formulates deductions based on the interpretation of the data.

4.5.1 Objective One: The relationship between student engagement and student satisfaction

4.5.1.1. Current level of student satisfaction

By using a nominal scale, the respondents' current level of satisfaction at the Graduate School of Business and Leadership was investigated. The responses of the respondents are illustrated in Figure 4.1.

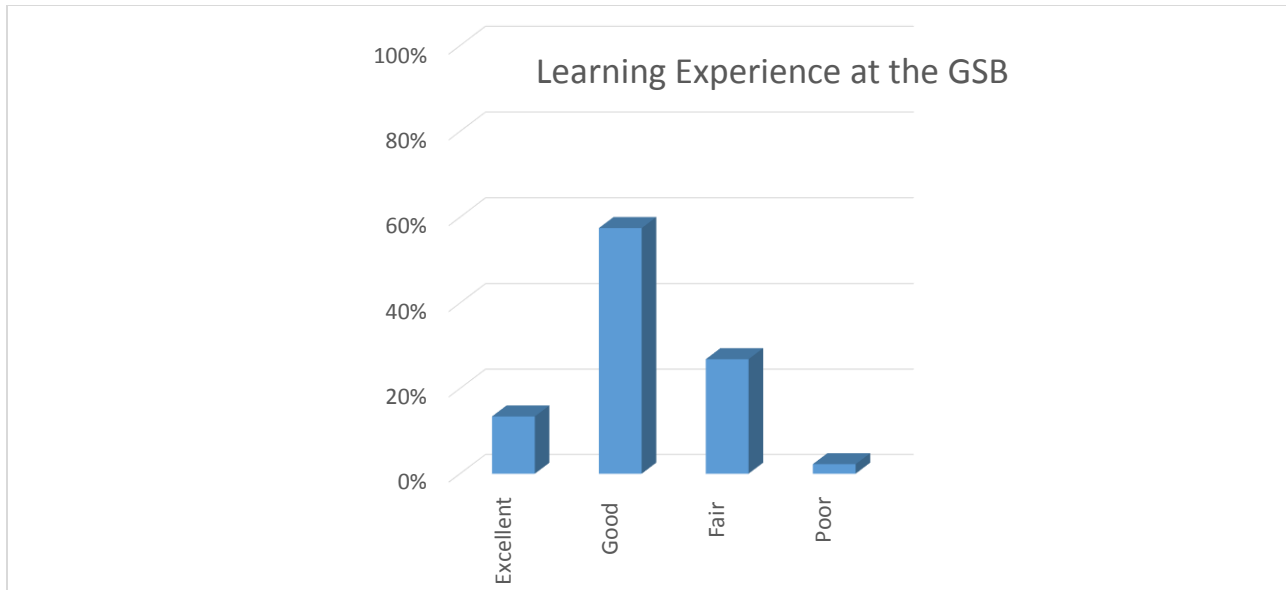


Figure 4.1: Current level of student satisfaction

As illustrated in Figure 4.1, 57% of the respondents thought that the learning experience at the GSB&L was good therefore they were satisfied, whereas 2% thought that the learning experience was of a poor standard therefore they were not satisfied. These findings demonstrate that the majority of respondents were satisfied with their current learning experiences this notion was further expressed by Reyes et al. (2012) who stated that emotionally supportive environments are those that comprise of learning and motivation

The responses were probed further to establish students' emotions to attending lectures. The results are depicted in Figure 4.2.

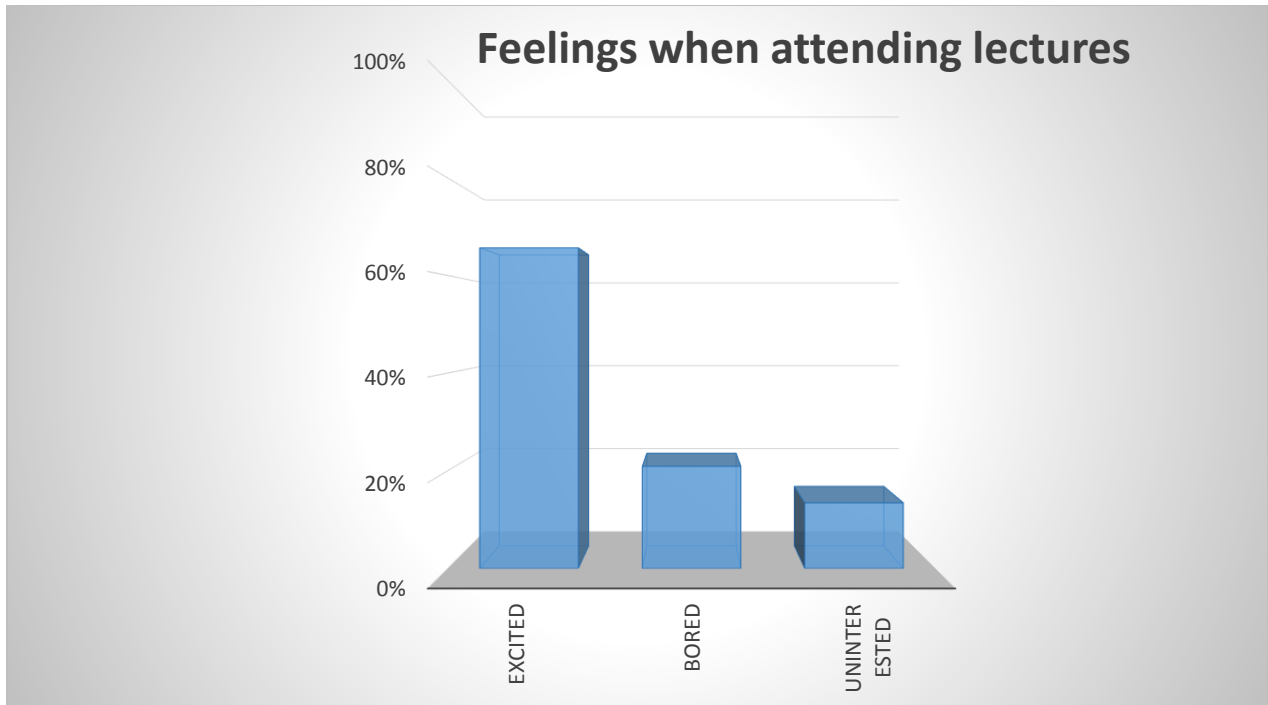


Figure 4.2: Feelings when attending lectures

As seen in Figure 4.2, the majority of respondents' (66%) were excited when they attended lectures. Hence, it can be concluded that students were satisfied with their learning experiences whereas few respondents were bored (21%) and disinterested (13%). It can also be determined from analyzing Figure 4.1 and Figure 4.2 that there was a positive association between the level of satisfaction and emotions during the respondents learning experience at the GSB&L this was supported by Pianta, Hamre and Allen (2012), who stated that if one had to understand student engagement they had to understand the relationships between behavior and classroom interactions because they are a collective.

4.5.1.2. The relationship between student engagement and student satisfaction

Kahu (2013) argues that more research is required to explore the relationship within the framework of student engagement in order to strengthen our understanding of the various elements that constitute student engagement, such as emotions. In order to establish if there was an association between student satisfaction and student engagement, the results from the questionnaire were

tabulated to indicate the frequency as well as percentages to determine if there was any correlation between the two variables. The results are illustrated in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Student satisfaction and learning experience at the GSB&L

Variables		Frequency	Percentage
Rate learning experience at the GSB&L	Excellent	18	13
	Good	77	58
	Fair	36	27
	Poor	3	2
Attending lectures makes me feel	Excited	88	66
	Bored	28	21
	Uninterested	18	13
Reflecting on your classroom experience, which of the following have you done?	Asked questions or participated in class discussions	57	43
	Attended class without completing reading exercises	14	10
	Asked for help from another student to better understand course material	14	10
	Explained course material to another student	17	13
	Prepared for exams by discussing course material with fellow students	28	21
	Given a presentation for a module	4	3

A comparison between student satisfaction and engagement is illustrated in Table 4.2. The results indicated that only 13% of the respondents rated their learning as excellent whereas 58% of respondents had a good experience. The majority of respondents (66%) felt excited when attending lectures. Respondents were asked to reflect on their classroom experience, 43% of the respondents asked questions or participated in class discussions followed by 21% of respondents who stated that they prepared for exams by discussing course material with fellow students. According to Pike and Kuh (2005), there is a large amount of literature that associates student engagement with

purposeful activities in order to achieve academic goals. Furthermore, Strydom, Mentz and Kuh (2010), noted that student engagement had a positive impact on student participation and educational practices.

In order to establish if there was an association between student engagement and student satisfaction, a cross tabulation was conducted between the two variables utilizing QuestionPro software. Table 4.3 illustrates the results.

Table 4.3: Cross tabulation between student engagement and student satisfaction

		How would you rate your learning experience at the GSB&L?				
		Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	
Reflecting on your classroom experience, which of the following have you done?	Asked questions or participated in class discussions	8 14%	32 56%	17 30%	0 0%	
	Attended class without completing readings exercises	2 14%	6 43%	6 43%	0 0%	
	Asked for help from another student to better understand	2 14%	8 57%	1 7%	3 21%	
	Explained course material to another student	2 12%	12 71%	3 18%	0 0%	
	Prepared for exams by discussing course material with fellow students	2 7%	18 64%	8 29%	0 0%	
	Given a presentation for a module	2 50%	1 25%	1 25%	0 0%	
	Total	Count	18	17	36	3
			13%	57%	7%	2%
n = 134	Chi – squared =36.713	P = 0.001				

From Table 4.3 it is evident that the Chi-square test revealed a p value of 0.001. A probability of 0.05 or smaller means that one can be 95% certain that the relationship between two variables could not have occurred solely due to chance alone. Hence, the results from Table 4.3 indicate that there is a significant relationship between student engagement and student satisfaction this is supported by Thomas (2012) that found students required a sense of belonging in tertiary institutions which lead to student engagement which was facilitated through activities. Therefore, it can be determined that student satisfaction is influenced by student engagement or vice versa. According to Trowler (2010), the benefits of student engagement were limitless, it comprises of increased cognitive ability, practical skills that were transferability, student satisfaction, increased self-esteem, morals and ethics, improved grades and persistence. However, Sun and Rueda (2012) noted that improved student interest in learning reduced student anxiety and resulted in emotionally engaged students.

4.5.2. Objective two: The relationship between student engagement and student retention

4.5.2.1. The current level of student retention

The current level of student retention was investigated using a nominal scale, responses were further probed if they responded that they would not consider studying at the GSB&L. This will provide greater understanding as to ascertain the rationale behind such a negative response. The results from the questionnaire are illustrated in Table 4.4 below:

Table 4.4: Reasons for studying at GSB&L

Variables		Frequency	Percent
If you could start over again, would you consider studying at the UKZN GSB&L	Yes	105	78%
	No	29	22%
Reasons for not coming to GSB&L	The content lacks academic challenge	3	10%
	There are little or no student faculty interactions	13	45%

	There is a lack of support	13	45%
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The results in Table 4.4, indicated that the majority of respondents would consider coming back to the GSB&L, if they were given the option to start afresh. Those respondents who stated that they would not consider the GSB&L, if they were given the chance to start afresh, stated the main reasons for this was largely due to: there being little or no student faculty interactions and lack of support from the GSB&L. These can be identified as possible areas for improvement at the institution.

4.5.2.2. *The relationship between student engagement and student retention*

In order to determine if a relationship existed between student engagement and student retention, a cross tabulation was conducted between the two variables. Table 4.5 shows the results obtained from the cross tabulation.

Table 4.5: Cross tabulation between student engagement and student retention

		If you could start over again, would you consider studying at the UKZN GSB&L?		
		Yes	No	
Reflecting on your classroom experience, which of the following have you done?	Asked questions or participated in class discussions	44 77%	13 23%	
	Attended class without completing readings exercises	9 64%	5 36%	
	Asked for help from another student to better understand course material	13 93%	1 7%	
	Explained course material to another student	14 82%	13 18%	

	Prepared for exams by discussing course material with fellow students	21	7
		75%	25%
	Given a presentation for a module	4	0
		100%	0%
Total	Count	105	29
		78%	22%
n = 134	Chi – squared = 4.867	P = 0.432	

The p value of 0.432, seen in Table 4.5, validates that there is no significant relationship between student engagement and student retention however, Quaye (2009) highlighted that engagement, outcomes and retention were closely related but largely influenced by the institution. While 78% of the total respondents were likely to remain at the GSB&L, 22% of the total respondents were not likely to return to the GSB&L. This however, had no effect on student engagement. It can be determined from the results illustrated in Table 4.4 that there is no relationship between the two variables. It should be noted that Roberts and McNeese (2010) found that students with an increased level of involvement were associated with increased retention rates in tertiary institutions.

4.5.3 Objective three: The relationship between student engagement and student success

4.5.3.1 Current level of student success

It was vital to ascertain the current level of success amongst respondents in order to determine if there was some association between student engagement and student success. The results obtained from the questionnaire are illustrated in Figure 4.3.

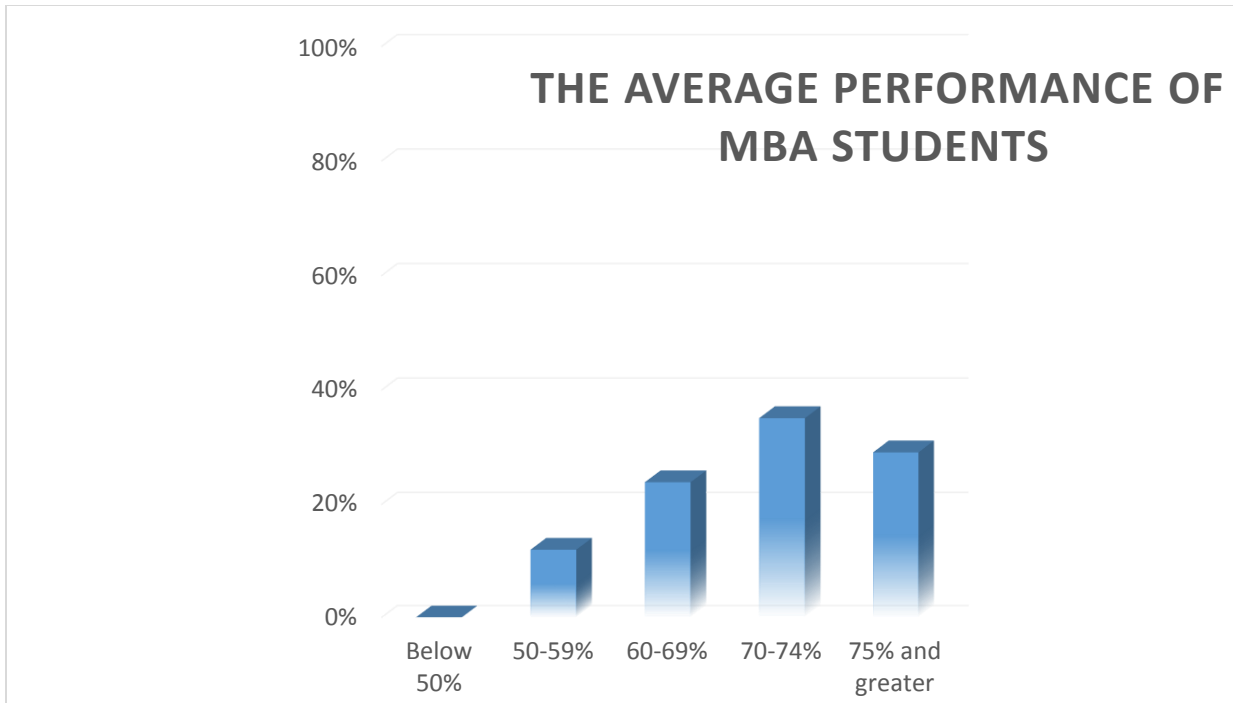


Figure 4.3: Performance on the MBA programme

According to Figure 4.3, it is evident that approximately two-thirds of the respondents performed quite well, that is 70% and above. It was further elaborated by Carini, Kuh and Klein (2006) that student engagement was beneficial to learning outcomes which resulted in improved grades. In order to further determine the respondents' current level of success, responses were probed to determine students' attitude towards academic work, as illustrated in Figure 4.4 below:

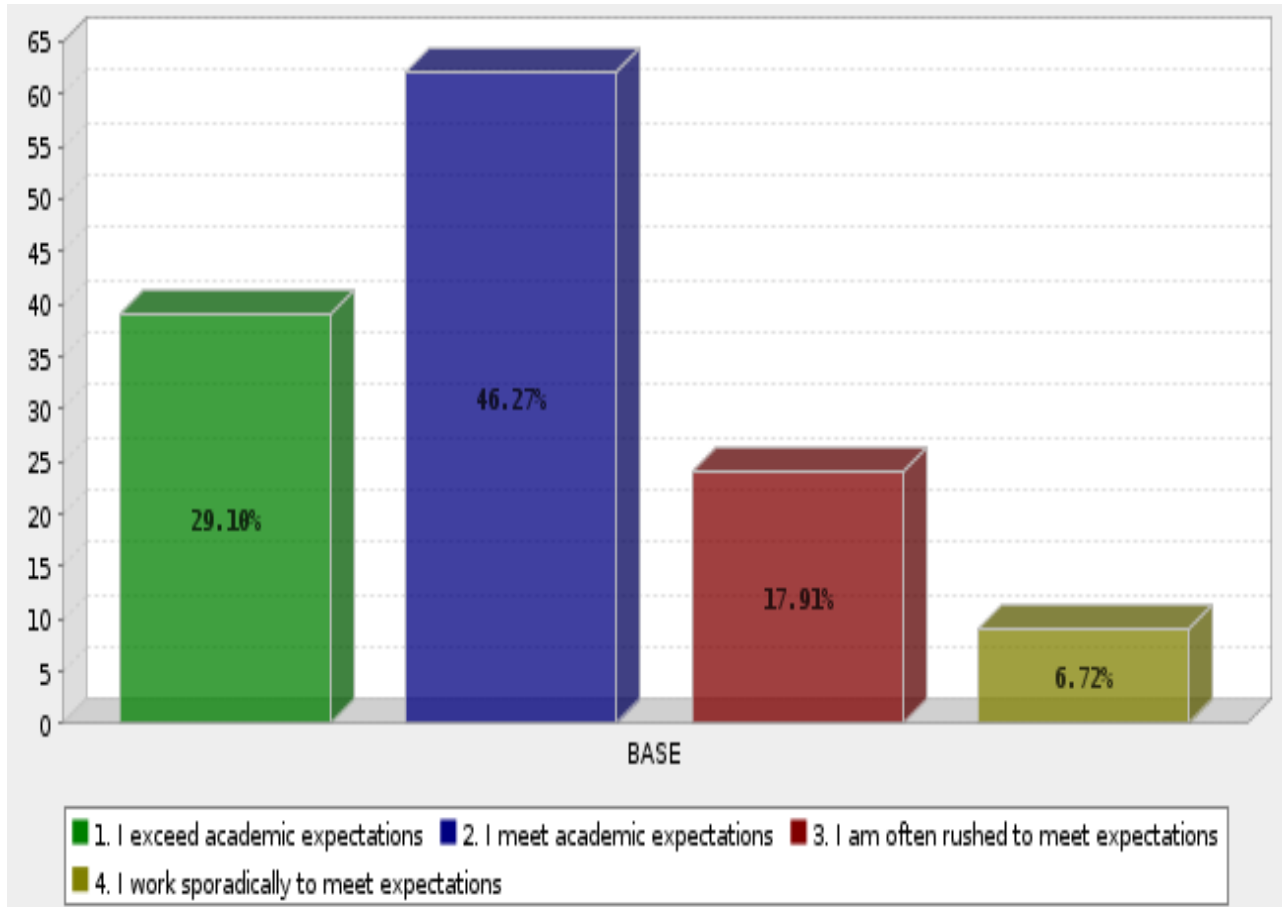


Figure 4.4: Distribution of attitude towards academic work

Illustrated in Figure 4.4, it was evident with regards to respondents' attitude, that about half of the respondents (46%) met academic expectations, 29% of the respondents exceeded academic expectations, 18% of the respondents were rushed to meet expectations whereas just 7% of respondents worked sporadically to meet expectations. It can be concluded from Figure 4.3 and Figure 4.4, that there was a positive association between respondents' performance on the MBA program and their attitude towards academic achievement.

4.5.3.2 *The relationship between student engagement and student success*

In order to determine if there was a relationship between student engagement and student success, a cross-tabulation was conducted between the two variables. The findings from the cross-tabulation are illustrated in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6: Cross-tabulation between classroom experience and average performance on the MBA

		What is your average performance on the MBA?			
		50-59%	60-69%	70-74%	75% or greater
Reflecting on your classroom experience, which of the following have you done?	Asked questions or participated in class discussions	5	15	20	17
		9%	26%	35%	30%
	Attended class without completing readings exercises	5	1	6	2
		36%	7%	43%	14%
	Asked for help from another student to better understand course material	3	3	1	7
		21%	21%	7%	50%
	Explained course material to another student	0	2	9	6
		0%	12%	53%	35%
	Prepared for exams by discussing course material with fellow students	1	11	11	5
		4%	39%	39%	18%
Given a presentation for a module	2	0	0	2	
	50%	0%	0%	50%	
Total	Count	16	32	47	39
		12%	24%	35%	29%
n = 134	Chi- squared = 34.944	P = 0.003			

It is evident from Table 4.6, the Chi-square test revealed that there is a significant relationship between classroom experience and student success this notion was further expressed by Reyes et al., (2012) that found that student engagement promoted academic success because engaged students are more likely to participate in class, complete activities, have an interest in learning and are motivated. The p value is 0.003, a probability of 0.05 or smaller means that one can be 95%

certain that the relationship between two variables could not have occurred solely due to chance alone. Student engagement is renowned for its influence on achievement and learning in Higher Education (Kahu, 2013).

4.5.4 Objective four: Areas that can be improved to increase student satisfaction

Respondents were asked what could be done in order to increase their level of satisfaction during classroom experiences. These results will be used as recommendations for the institution and are illustrated in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7: Most important learning experience

	Frequency	Percentage
Examining the strengths and weaknesses of my own view on a topic issue	37	28
Connecting my ideas from modules to prior knowledge and experiences	36	27
Considering diverse perspectives during discussions and in assignments	33	25
Combining ideas from different modules to complete an assignment	30	22
Relating my learning to societal problems issues	28	21

Table 4.7, shows that most respondents were asked to mention the most important learning experience. Responses stated that the most important experience was considering diverse perspectives during discussions and in assignments, combining ideas from different modules to complete an assignment was placed second followed by examining the strengths and weaknesses of my own view on a topic issue. This idea was further emphasized by Umbach and Wawrzynski (2005), whom highlighted that active and collaborative learning were positively correlated with student success Hence, it is vital to include students in the learning process as it will encourage them to be more self-regulated and also feel included in the decision making process. According to Kahu (2013) surveys can highlight the various avenues of improvement in student engagement

and responsibility lies with all parties: students, faculty, institutions and government. Moreover, Trowler (2010), stated that by enabling students to participate in the process of curriculum design, will result in the curriculum being relevant to students.

Respondents were further questioned to determine if they found course material challenging, this formulated part of the cognitive dimension of engagement and was a means to measure a respondent's persistence. The results are illustrated in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8: Experience regarding course materials

Variables		Frequency	Percentage
The course material challenging	Yes	113	84
	No	21	16
	Total	134	100
what way has the course material challenged you	Memorizing academic material	13	12
	Application of theories facts or methods to solve problems	51	45
	Evaluating a point of view decision or information	17	15
	Forming a new idea understanding from examining various pieces of information	32	28
	Total	113	100

As illustrated in Table 4.8, most of the respondents found the course materials were challenging. The main reasons for these answers, were application of theories facts or methods to solve problems (45%) followed by forming a new idea understanding from examining various pieces of information (28%). It can be determined that despite the course material being challenging it didn't discourage respondents as they still persisted academically this notion was further expressed by Umbach and Wawrzynski (2005), that found institutions that challenged students reported high levels of student engagement, which resulted in student success.

4.5.5 Objective five: Areas that can be improved to increase student retention

In order to determine if the institution can improve its retention rate, respondents were questioned to understand the rationale for either recommending the GSB&L to future students or not. The results are tabulated below in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9: Recommendation of GSB&L

Recommendation	Frequency	Percentage
Would you consider recommending the GSB&L to future students		
Yes	111	83
No	23	17
Total	134	100
Why would you recommend the GSB&L?		
Good academic support	30	22
Good administrative support	10	8
My expectations were exceeded	9	7
Good Institutional reputation	29	22
Good quality and high standards	32	24
Reasons for not recommending the GSB&L		
Little no academic support	13	10
Little no administrative support	24	18
My expectations were not met	20	15
Poor Institutional reputation	5	4
Poor Quality and standards	5	4

Table 4.9, indicates that most of the respondents stated that they would recommend GSB&L to future students. The top three reasons being: good quality and high standards, good institutional reputation, and good academic support. Those respondents who did not want to recommend the GSB&L to future students gave reasons such as little or no administrative support and their expectations were not met as the two most important reasons. The negative feedback serves as an area for improvement by policymakers.

4.5.6 Objective six: Areas that can be improved to increase student success

An institution's success is measured by the success of its students. This was further elaborated by Trowler (2010) who established that students and lecturers were more connected when there were increased interactions on subject matter, values and approaches which lead to greater satisfaction and interactive students. The number of students graduating every year is vital to an institution's reputation. Lecturers and students are part of the success process. Respondents were asked if they valued engagement with lecturers and the type of engagement they valued the most with lecturers (Table 4.10).

Table 4.10: Importance of engagement with lecturers

	Frequency	Percentage
Very unimportant	24	18
Unimportant	4	3
Important	54	40
Very important	52	39
Total	134	100
What engagement do you value the most with your lecturer/s?		
Discussing career plans	17	13
Working with a lecturer on other activities	14	10
Discussing topics ideas or concepts with a lecturer outside of the class	67	50
Discussing your academic performance with your lecturer	36	27

Illustrated in Table 4.10, more than three quarters of the respondents (79%) mentioned that it was important or very important to engage with lecturers this has been supported by Umbach and Wawrzynski (2005), whose research indicated faculty that interacted more frequently with students reported increased levels of active and collaborated learning as learners felt more challenged and engaged. The type of engagement they valued the most with the lecturer was

discussing topics, ideas or concepts with a lecturer outside of the class (50%) followed by discussing their academic performance with their lecturer (27%). Interaction with between a student and lecturer are vital to the learning process as it allows the student to clarify concepts as well as misunderstandings this is acknowledged by Atnip (2015), who highlighted that students and faculty need to agree on matters regarding engagement and implement effective changes to improve retention and learning. However, faculty may require additional training to better align institutions objectives and practices.

In order to determine if respondents were supported in their learning endeavours, they were asked to rate the support provided by the GSB&L and to state the way in which the GSB&L has provided support to them. The results are tabulated below in Table 4.11.

Table 4.11: Support received from GSB&L

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Rate the support provided by the GSB&L		
Excellent	15	11
Good	70	52
Fair	34	25
Poor	15	11
Total	134	100
In what way has the GSB&L supported you most?		
Providing resources to help me succeed	49	37
Providing learning support services tutoring writing center etc.	52	39
Providing opportunities to be involved socially	32	24

In Table 4.11, respondents were asked to rate the support provided by the GSB&L. Only 11% reported as having experienced excellent support but another 11% indicated the support experienced was poor. The two most important areas respondents received support from the GSB&L were: providing resources to help them succeed and providing learning support services such as tutoring and a writing center.

4.5.7 Objective seven: Areas that can be improved to increase student engagement

It was vital to determine if respondents were engaged with the institution as student engagement is not an isolated activity but rather a holistic approach. According to Trowler (2010), very few studies have been conducted on the relationship between student engagement and tertiary institutions. Respondents were probed to determine if they were engaged, the level of engagement with the GSB&L and the ways in which the GSB&L could improve the level of engagement. The findings are illustrated in Table 4.12.

Table 4.12: Engagement with the GSB&L

		Frequency	Percentage
Do you feel engaged with the GSB&L?	Yes	98	73
	No	36	27
	Total	134	100
How engaged are you?	Highly engaged	30	31
	Somewhat engaged	62	63
	Minimally engaged	6	6
What could the GSB&L do to get you more engaged?	Provide resources to help me succeed	31	30
	Provide learning support services tutoring writing center	46	44
	Provide opportunities to be involved socially	10	10
	Provide support for my overall wellbeing	7	7
	Help me manage my nonacademic responsibilities	6	6
	Invite me to events that address important social political or economic issues	4	4

In Table 4.12, almost three quarter of the respondents (73%) indicated that they felt engaged with the GSB&L furthermore, Harper and Quaye (2009) noted that weak institutions allowed students to engage on their own but essentially, the onus falls on all the role-players. Among them, less than a third (31%) said that they were highly engaged this notion was further expressed by Harper and Quaye (2009) whose study identified that hostile environments resulted in students’ lack of persistence, being disengaged and unable to meet academic outcomes. Respondents mentioned that the most important things that needed to be improved was to provide learning support services such as tutoring and a writing center (44%), followed by providing resources that could help respondents succeed (30%). These are areas that the GSB&L may consider focusing on in order to facilitate engagement.

Responses were further probed to determine if the GSB&L had contributed to the students’ success in terms of knowledge, skills and personal development. The results are noted in Table 4.13.

Table 4.13: Contribution made by the GSB&L

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
GSB&L contributed to their knowledge, skills and personal development		
Yes	127	95
No	7	5
Which way it contributed?		
I write speak and think clearly and effectively	69	52
Improved my analytical and computational skills	81	60
I can now work effectively with others	49	37
It has improved my values %26 ethical conduct	31	23
I have a better understanding of people of diverse backgrounds	37	28
I can solve real world problems	50	37
It has made me an informed and active citizen	28	21

The results in Table 4.13, indicated that almost all the respondents (95%) mentioned that GSB&L contributed to their knowledge, skills and personal development this was highlighted by Taylor

and Pearson (2011), whose study indicated that student engagement increased students' abilities to learn and taught them skills for life. When asked the way in which the GSB&L contributed to their knowledge, skills and personal development; the majority mentioned that it improved their analytical and computational skills (60%), followed by they write, speak and think clearly and effectively (52%), and they can solve real world problems (37%). It can therefore, be concluded that there is a positive relationship between student engagement and academic development this notion was supported by Krause (2005), who found that student engagement was enhanced by a stimulating environment which facilitates social connectedness. Kahu (2013) is of the view, that student engagement is no longer questioned, due to it being an excellent measure of student outcomes and a proxy for quality therefore it is a vital and essential construct. It is currently widely theorized and researched.

4.5.8. Key areas for improvement

The respondents were asked to indicate their recommendations on student satisfaction, retention, success and engagement. The results are illustrated in Table 4.14.

Table 4.14: Recommendations to improve student engagement

Recommendation	Frequency	Percentage
Would you consider recommending the GSB&L to future students		
Yes	111	83
Why would you recommend the GSB&L?		
Good quality and high standards	32	24
Reasons for not recommending the GSB&L		
Little no administrative support	24	18
What engagement do you value the most with your lecturer/s?		
Discussing topics ideas or concepts with a lecturer outside of the class	67	50
What could the GSB&L do to get you more engaged?		
Provide learning support services tutoring writing center	46	44

Table 4.14 illustrates that the key suggestions for improvement were support from the GSB&L, providing learning experiences and engagement with lecturers. Student engagement is a complex construct because it is composed of different dimensions, all of which are dependent on each other and interlinked this is further elaborated by Trowler and Trowler (2010) who concluded that student engagement is an area of research for betterment within institutions, however the recommendations cannot be generalized. The better one understands student engagement and what influences it, the better equipped they will be to meet student needs, enhance student experiences and improve educational outcomes (Kahu, 2013).

4.6 KEY FINDINGS

The research question for this study was to establish the impact of student engagement on satisfaction, retention and success of MBA students. This question was broken down into seven objectives. In order to determine whether the study has answered each research question sufficiently, a summary is provided in Table 4.15.

Table 4.15: Summary of key findings

	Research Objective	Key findings	Section
1	To establish the relationship between student engagement and student satisfaction.	Only 43% of the respondents asked questions or participated in class discussions followed by 21%, who stated that they prepared for exams by discussing course material with fellow students. The Chi-square test revealed a p value of 0.001, there is a significant relationship between student engagement and student satisfaction.	4.5.1
2	To establish the relationship between student engagement and student retention.	The p value of 0.432, validates that there is no significant relationship between student engagement and student retention. While 78% of the total respondents were likely to remain at the GSB&L, 22% of the total respondents were not likely to return to the GSB&L.	4.5.2

3	To establish the relationship between student engagement and student success.	There was a positive correlation between respondents' performance on the MBA program and their attitude towards academic achievement. There is a significant relationship between classroom experience and student success. The p value is 0.003, one can be 95% certain that the relationship between two variables could not have occurred by chance.	4.5.3
4	Areas that can be improved to increase satisfaction	An important learning experience was considering diverse perspectives in discussions and assignments. Respondents found the course material challenging. Due to the application of theories facts or methods to solve problems or by forming a new idea understanding from examining various pieces of information.	4.5.4
5	Areas that can be improved to increase retention.	Most of the respondents highlighted that they would recommend GSB&L to future students. The reasons being: good quality and high standards, good Institutional reputation, and good academic support. Some respondents would not recommend the GSB&L, due to little or no administrative support and expectations were not met.	4.5.5
6	Areas that can be improved to improve success.	More than three quarters of the respondents (79%) mentioned that it was important or very important to engage with lecturers. They valued discussing topics ideas or concepts with a lecturer outside of the class. Only 11% of respondents reported having experienced excellent support. Respondents received support from the GSB&L as they provided resources to help them succeed and providing learning support services.	4.5.6
7	Areas that can be improved to improve student engagement	Majority of the respondents (73%) indicated that they felt engaged with the GSB&L. They needed to provide learning support services. Almost all the respondents (95%) mentioned that GSB&L contributed to their knowledge, skills and personal development. It improved their analytical and computational skills (60%), they write, speak and think clearly and effectively (52%), and they can solve real world problems (37%).	4.5.7

4.7 SUMMARY

This chapter presented the findings, analysis and discussion of the results obtained from the survey. The presentation of the demographic profile of respondents, was followed by the findings from questions that was aimed at addressing each objective. The findings were represented by means of visual representations and tables. A cross tabulation was conducted between two variables in order to establish a relationship between the variables.

This chapter outlined the key findings of the research objectives and provided a summary to determine if the research objectives were met. The following chapter will discuss the conclusions that were deduced from the findings of the survey as well as limitations and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Tertiary institutions are competing in a global market for world-class ranking, reputation, high standards and quality. Tertiary education is seen as a service that is offered to those who are eligible. The biggest challenge facing many institutions is attracting and retaining students. In order, to address current challenges institutions have to examine new approaches such as student engagement in order to better position themselves in the market place. Student engagement comprises of many positive academic outcomes such as improved levels of satisfaction, retention and success of students. Student engagement was associated with student satisfaction and success but had no effect on student retention.

The results from the data obtained from the questionnaires were analysed and presented in Chapter 4. Chapter five discusses the results of the findings in line with the literature review in Chapter 2. It summarises the data and provides conclusions pertaining to the study. Furthermore, this chapter present recommendations that the GSB&L could implement to improve student engagement. The limitations of this study are also noted in this chapter, and recommendations for further research are provided.

5.2 CONCLUSIONS FROM PRIMARY RESEARCH

The data analysis highlighted the key findings of the study. Based on the key findings, conclusions and recommendations have been deduced for each objective and are presented here.

5.2.1 The relationship between student engagement and student satisfaction

It is evident from this study that respondents are currently satisfied with their learning experience at the GSB&L. As illustrated in Table 4.2, most participants were extremely excited when they

attended lectures despite a few respondents that mentioned they were bored or uninterested when attending lectures. The majority of respondents rated their learning as being good, most students participated in class by asking questions or being part of class discussions. It was evident from the study that student engagement had no relationship with demographic information.

5.2.2 The relationship between student engagement and student retention

In Table 4.4, most of the respondents indicated that they would consider coming back to the GSB&L, if they were given the option to start afresh. Some respondents stated that they would not consider the GSB&L, because there was little or no student faculty interactions and lack of support from the GSB&L. These can be identified as possible areas for improvement at the institution. There was no significant relationship between student engagement and student retention as indicated in Table 4.5. However, the respondents stated the areas that required improvement which will ultimately increase the level of retention.

5.2.3 The relationship between student engagement and student success

As discussed in the earlier sections of this chapter in Figure 4.3, the research suggested that approximately two-thirds of the respondents performed well, that is 70% and above. It was evident from Figure 4.4 with regards to respondents' attitude, that all of the respondents met academic expectations, either they were rushed to meet expectations or worked sporadically to meet expectations. This indicates a positive correlation between respondents' performance on the MBA program and their attitude towards academic achievement. The data from Table 4.6, also revealed that there was a significant relationship between classroom experience and student success.

5.2.4 Areas that can be improved to increase student satisfaction

The research illustrated in Table 4.7, suggests that the most important learning experience was considering diverse perspectives during discussions and in assignments, combining ideas from different modules to complete an assignment and lastly examining the strengths and weaknesses of their own view on a topic issue. Hence, these are areas for improvement that should be

considered in the learning process as this will increase student satisfaction and success. Most of the respondents found the course material challenging because they had to apply theories, facts or methods to solve problems as illustrated in Table 4.8. They also had to examine various pieces of information to form a new idea. It is a possible avenue that lecturers should include more activities that are based on students' difficulties. It should be noted that despite the course material being challenging, respondents' were not discouraged.

5.2.5 Areas that can be improved to increase student retention

It is evident from the research in Table 4.9 that most of the respondents highlighted that they would recommend the UKZN GSB&L to future students. The reasons for this was that the institution maintained good quality and high standards, had a good institutional reputation, and provided good academic support. Those respondents who did not want to recommend the GSB&L to future students gave reasons such as little or no administrative support and their expectations were not met as the two most important reasons. The negative feedback can be utilized by the institution as areas for improvement. They can implement policies to facilitate these outcomes.

5.2.6 Areas that can be improved to increase student success

Research from Table 4.10 suggests more than the majority of the respondents mentioned that it was important or very important to engage with lecturers. The type of engagement that was valued the most with the lecturer was discussing topics ideas or concepts with a lecturer outside of the class, followed by discussing their academic performance with their lecturer. Interaction between a student and lecturer are vital to the learning process as it facilitates the acquisition of knowledge, the clarification of concepts and use of various learning techniques.

Respondents were asked to rate the support provided by the GSB&L. According to Table 4.11, only a few reported excellent support but the same number of respondents indicated the support experienced was poor. The two most important areas respondents received support from the GSB&L were: providing resources to help them succeed and providing learning support services

such as tutoring and a writing center. It is vital that the GSB&L provides more support to their students.

5.2.7 Areas that can be improved to increase student engagement

It is evident from Table 4.12 that, three quarters of the respondents indicated that they felt engaged with the GSB&L. Among them, only a third highlighted that they were highly engaged. Respondents identified areas such as learning support services and resources that could help them succeed as the two areas that required improvement. These are areas that the GSB&L may consider focusing on in order to facilitate engagement.

Table 4.13, illustrated that almost all the respondents mentioned that the GSB&L contributed to their knowledge, skills and personal development by improving their analytical and computational skills, they write, speak and think clearly and effectively, and they can solve real world problems. It can therefore, be concluded that the GSB&L has supported students in some way to succeed. There was a positive relationship between student engagement and academic development.

5.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

A researchers' priority is to address the problem statement competently, however it cannot address all matters of the study completely.

One of the major limitations encountered in this study was the lack of significant academic literature and research conducted on student engagement and its association with student satisfaction, retention and success on MBA students. There was limited studies conducted on student engagement and its association with tertiary institutions. Also, there was not much literature that focused on student engagement and its relationship with student satisfaction, retention and success. Since most research that was conducted with high schools in particular, it was difficult to draw a comparison between those results and the results obtained from this study.

This study was particularly concerned with student engagement and its relationship between student satisfaction, retention and success on MBA students. However, due to the absence of a study conducted on MBA students engagement, cross findings and correlations could not be established.

5.4 RECOMMENDATION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The findings from this study, together with the limitations, provide direction for future research. The recommendations are as follows:

- ❖ The research could be repeated yearly for comparative purposes.
- ❖ A qualitative research design could be utilized to further investigate the reasons behind the factors that contribute to student engagement at tertiary level. Also the perceptions of faculty members could be investigated regarding improvement in student engagement at the GSB&L.
- ❖ More research should be conducted in tertiary institutions around the world. The results of those studies coupled with this study, could be utilized as guide for improving student engagement at tertiary institutions.
- ❖ This study utilized a simple random sampling technique. Future studies could be conducted utilizing other types of probability sampling, like stratified random sampling to enable generalisability. This will reduce the sampling error from the technique that was used for this study.

5.5 CONCLUSION

The aim of the study and the research objectives for this study have been fulfilled. This study has established the relationship between student engagement and student satisfaction, retention and success on MBA students and has provided recommendations for areas of improvement. Student engagement is a holistic approach, therefore it requires a collaborative effort from the students, faculty members, support staff and the institution.

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Appendix 1: Introduction Letter

Introduction Letter

**UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND LEADERSHIP AND LEADERSHIP**

Dear Respondent

MBA Research Project

Researcher: Ms. Katherine Moodley (084 560 8213)

Supervisor: Professor Anesh Maniraj Singh (031-260 2017)

Research Office: Ms. P. Ximba (031-260 3587)

I, **Katherine Moodley**, an MBA student at the Graduate School of Business and Leadership and Leadership, of the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, invite you to participate in a research project entitled *“The impact student engagement on satisfaction, retention and success of MBA students.”*

The aim of this study is:

- To establish the relationship between student engagement and:
 - student satisfaction
 - student retention
 - student success
- Identify the areas that can be improved to:
 - increase satisfaction
 - improve retention
 - improve success
 - increase student engagement

Through your participation I hope to better understand the role and impact of student engagement on student success, retention and satisfaction at the Graduate School of Business and Leadership and Leadership. The results of the focus group are intended to contribute to key findings in the questionnaire.

Your participation in this project is voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw from the project at any time with no negative consequence. There will be no monetary gain from participating in this survey/focus group. Confidentiality and anonymity of records identifying you as a participant will be maintained by the Graduate School of Business and Leadership and Leadership, UKZN.

If you have any questions or concerns about completing the questionnaire or about participating in this study, you may contact me or my supervisor at the numbers listed above. The survey should take you about **10** minutes to complete. I hope you will take the time to complete this survey.

Sincerely

Katherine Moodley

Investigator’s signature _____ Date _____

Appendix 2: Informed Consent Letter

**UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND LEADERSHIP AND LEADERSHIP**

MBA Research Project

Researcher: Ms. Katherine Moodley (084 560 8213)

Supervisor: Professor Anesh Maniraj Singh (031-260 2017)

Research Office: Ms. P. Ximba (031-260 3587)

CONSENT

I _____(full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

DATE

Completion of this questionnaire will take approximately five minutes of your time and can be completed by any student registered at the GSB&L for the present academic year. Participation in this research is voluntary. If there are any questions that you rather not answer, you may omit them.

All information that you will provide through your contribution in this study will be kept confidential. Added to this, you will not be identified in any report or publication based on this research. There are no known or anticipated risks to participation in this study.

Thank you in advance for your co-operation in my research.

Katherine Moodley

084 560 821

Appendix 3: Questionnaire

1. Gender

- Male
- Female

2. Race

- Indian
- Black
- Coloured
- White

3. What is your highest level of education?

- Diploma
- Bachelor's degree
- Honours/Postgraduate Diploma
- Master's degree
- Doctorate

4. What is your level of study?

- First year
- Second year
- Third/final year

5. What is your average performance on the MBA?

- Below 50%
- 50-59%
- 60-69%
- 70-74%
- 75% and greater

6. In response to question 5, how would you rate your attitude towards academic work?

- I exceed academic expectations
- I meet academic expectations
- I am often rushed to meet expectations
- I work sporadically to meet expectations

7. If you could start over again, would you consider studying at the UKZN GSB&L?

- Yes
- No

8. Since you answered NO to Question 7, why would you not want to study at UKZN GSB&L again? Choose the THREE main reason.

- The content lacks academic challenge

- Learning is not active or collaborative
- Learning activities are of a low cognitive level
- There are little or no student-faculty interactions
- Academic experiences are not enriching
- There is a lack of support

9. How would you rate your learning experience at the GSB&L?

- Excellent
- Good
- Fair
- Poor

10. Attending lectures makes me feel?

- Excited
- Bored
- Uninterested

11. Reflecting on your classroom experience, which of the following have you done?

- Asked questions or participated in class discussions
- Attended class without completing readings/exercises
- Asked for help from another student to better understand course material
- Explained course material to another student
- Prepared for exams by discussing course material with fellow students
- Given a presentation for a module

12. As a MBA student, what do you consider most important to your learning experience. Rank your responses where 1 is most important and 6 is least important. Do NOT repeat numbers.

- Combining ideas from different modules to complete an assignment
- Relating my learning to societal problems/issues
- Considering diverse perspectives during discussions and in assignments
- Examining the strengths & weaknesses of my own view on a topic/issue
- Learning something that made me change my understanding on a topic/issue
- Connecting my ideas from modules to prior knowledge & experiences

13. Do you find the course material challenging?

- Yes
- No

14. Since you answered YES to question 13, in what way has the course material challenged you?

- Memorizing academic material
- Application of theories, facts or methods to solve problems
- Evaluating a point of view, decision or information
- Forming a new idea/understanding from examining various pieces of information

15. How important is it for you to engage with your lecturer/s?

- Very unimportant
- Unimportant
- Important
- Very important

16. What engagement do you value the most with your lecturer/s?

- Discussing career plans
- Working with a lecturer on other activities
- Discussing topics, ideas or concepts with a lecturer outside of the class
- Discussing your academic performance with your lecturer

17. How would you rate the support provided by the GSB&L?

- Excellent
- Good
- Fair
- Poor

18. In what way has the GSB&L supported you most? Select the top 3.

- Providing resources to help me succeed
- Providing learning support services (tutoring, writing center, etc.)
- Providing opportunities to be involved socially
- Providing support for my overall well-being
- Helping me manage my non-academic responsibilities
- Inviting me to events that address important social, political or economic issues

19. Has the GSB&L contributed to your knowledge, skills and personal development?

- Yes
- No

20. Since you answered YES to Question 19, how has the GSB&L, contributed to your knowledge, skills and personal development? Select THREE that apply most.

- I write, speak and think clearly and effectively
- Improved my analytical and computational skills
- I can now work effectively with others
- It has improved my values & ethical conduct
- I have a better understanding of people of diverse backgrounds
- I can solve real-world problems
- It has made me an informed and active citizen

21. Would you consider recommending the GSB&L to future students?

- Yes
- No

22. Since you answered YES to Question 21, why would you recommend the GSB&L?

- Good academic support
- Good administrative support
- My expectations were exceeded
- Good Institutional reputation
- Good quality and high standards

23. Since you answered NO to Question 21, why would you not recommend the GSB&L?

- Little/no academic support
- Little/no administrative support
- My expectations were not met
- Poor Institutional reputation
- Poor Quality and standards

24. Do you feel engaged with the GSB&L?

- Yes
- No

25. How engaged are you?

- Highly engaged
- Somewhat engaged
- Minimally engaged

26. What could the GSB&L do to get you more engaged?

- Provide resources to help me succeed
- Provide learning support services (tutoring, writing center, etc.)
- Provide opportunities to be involved socially
- Provide support for my overall well-being
- Help me manage my non-academic responsibilities
- Invite me to events that address important social, political or economic issues

Appendix 4: Gatekeeper's Letter



15 September 2016

Ms Katherine Moodley (SN 204004839)
Graduate School of Business & Leadership
College of Law and Management Studies
Westville Campus
UKZN
Email: moodleykatherine@gmail.com

Dear Ms Moodley

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Gatekeeper's permission is hereby granted for you to conduct research at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), towards your postgraduate studies, provided Ethical clearance has been obtained. We note the title of your research project is:

"The impact of student engagement on satisfaction, retention and success of MBA students".

It is noted that you will be constituting your sample by handing out questionnaires to students registered for the MBA programme from the College of Law and Management Studies on the Westville Campus.

Please ensure that the following appears on your questionnaire/attached to your notice:

- Ethical clearance number;
- Research title and details of the research, the researcher and the supervisor;
- Consent form is attached to the notice/questionnaire and to be signed by user before he/she fills in questionnaire;
- gatekeepers approval by the Registrar.

You are not authorized to contact staff and students using 'Microsoft Outlook' address book.

Data collected must be treated with due confidentiality and anonymity.

Yours sincerely

[Redacted Signature]

**MR SS MOKOENA
REGISTRAR**

Office of the Registrar

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, South Africa

Telephone: +27 (0) 31 260 8005/2206 Facsimile: +27 (0) 31 260 7824/2204 Email: registrar@ukzn.ac.za

Website: www.ukzn.ac.za



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Appendix 5: Ethical Clearance Letter



22 September 2016

Ms Katherine Moodley (204004839)
Graduate School of Business & Leadership
Westville Campus

Dear Ms Moodley,

Protocol reference number: HSS/1511/016M

Project title: The impact of student engagement on satisfaction, retention and success of MBA students

Full Approval – Expedited Application

In response to your application received on 13 September 2016, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol have been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully


.....
Dr Shamila Naidoo (Deputy Chair)

/ms

Cc Supervisor: Professor Anesh Maniraj Singh
Cc Academic Leader Research: Dr Muhammad Hoque
Cc School Administrator: Ms Zarina Bullyra]

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

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Appendix 6: Turnitin Report

 **Turnitin Originality Report**

The impact of student engagement on satisfaction, retention and success of MBA students. by Katherine Moodley

From Draft proposal (MBA dissertation 2016)

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