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Student Engagement Across Pacific Asia

Steps Toward a Shared Framework

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Introductory Chapter

The Asian Higher Education Century: Building Bridges to the Future

While higher education has been led by the West for hundreds of years, the coming century has long been forecasted as belonging to Pacific Asia. The presented edited volume is a first step toward building bridges between Pacific Asian universities that are destined to be part of this future. The overarching aim is to support the region's universities in learning from each other, rather than exclusively relying on Western sources of innovation with regard to teaching and learning. Asia has a strong mixture of longstanding and vibrant new institutions, many of which are taking progressive approaches to supporting learning in their institutions. However, without some form of shared measurement of the impact of these initiatives, opportunities to learn from each other's failures and successes are missed.

This edited volume is a first step toward a shared understanding of student engagement across Pacific Asian Universities at two grain sizes: Degree Program and University. It therefore not only seeks to bridge universities but also bridge two siloed means of explaining the university learning experience. These two theoretical approaches to understanding the student experience were until recently separated by the Atlantic, with American approaches to quality assurance focusing on student attrition and engagement, and European approaches focusing on the quality of learning environments in courses and degree experiences. The last two decades have seen the two approaches find new Asian champions, surprisingly enough within ostensibly the same country: Mainland China and Hong Kong, respectively. As Greater China is both a current higher education epicenter (Hong Kong) and also a big part of its growing future (Mainland China), there are national dividends to be had just by bridging this division and supporting cross-border exchange. Other key players in Pacific Asian higher education will then be in a strong position to share in the profits of this exchange and contribute to its continued growth.

The chapters that follow begin by reviewing the two theories of university student engagement and their practical implications (Zeng, 2024; Zeng et al., 2021; Fryer

et al., 2021; Fryer et al., 2020). With these foundations set, a model chapter which presents an example for how the validity of a new quality assurance instrument, which pairs university engagement (Chinese College Student Survey; Luo, et al., 2009) and program engagement (Student Learning Experience Questionnaire; Zhao et al., 2017), can be assessed for its institutional effectiveness. Seventeen subsequent empirical chapters follow this model chapter, validating the unified measure in 17 Pacific Asian institutions of higher education. Following contextual validation, correlational and difference testing results present how students in universities from the Philippines to Japan experience higher education. Two commentaries each provide a unique perspective on the institutional and national findings presented, suggesting both critical convergences and gaps exposed by the transnational work. The book is concluded by a summary of the findings and the laying out of future directions for building on the efforts presented herein (King, 2024). This book is just the beginning of a longer discussion that needs to be had if the Pacific Asia's leadership in higher education is to have international impact.

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Contents

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Chapter 1
An Integrated Quality Assurance Framework for Assessing Undergraduate Students' University Experiences Across the Asia Pacific

Lily Min Zeng

1 Introduction

Higher education has been widely acknowledged as a necessary condition for economic development (Bigalke & Neubauer, 2009; Neubauer & Gomes, 2017). Its rapid expansion around the world in recent decades has raised public concerns, attracted the attention of policymakers, and spurred efforts at the national level in some countries for quality assurance (Harrison et al., 2022; Stensaker, 2007). An audit culture has emerged in tandem with this growing emphasis on higher education institutions' accountability for the student experience they provide (Biesta, 2004). In the Asia-Pacific region, higher education has been particularly massified in the past two decades as a means of economic development as well as competitiveness in an increasingly competitive global market (Neubauer & Gomes, 2017). The same trend for quality assurance and enhancement is observed in countries or individual higher education institutions in this region.

Such a trend has aroused the interest of researchers as well (Choi & Rhee, 2014). Existing research into student learning has consistently demonstrated that pedagogical practices employed within higher education institutions play a significant role in students' educational outcomes (Gibbs, 2012). A recognition of this connection led to the widespread adoption of institutional surveys and the theories underpinning them in individual universities or entire countries to assess student experiences for quality assurance and enhancement. This assessment is most effective when the instruments are grounded on robust theories and validated measurement tools in the relevant contexts. They would allow educators to draw reliable conclusions and make informed decisions. This chapter discusses two survey instruments that have gained

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broad acceptance around the world, developed in American and British/Australian contexts, reviews the quality assurance and enhancement efforts made by individual institutions or nationwide in the Asian-Pacific region, and explores the challenges associated with adopting these instruments in the Asian-Pacific region, and proposes an integrated approach to quality assurance and enhancement.

2 Two Major Approaches to the Measurement of Students' Learning Experiences for Quality Assurance and Enhancement

The instruments used for quality audits internationally are based on two basic conceptual models: one deeply rooted in student engagement and one guided by student learning theory (Yin & Ke, 2017; Zeng et al., 2021). They were first developed in the higher education sectors of American and British/Australian countries and have quickly expanded to other countries' higher education systems. The two models speak to very diverse but equally significant facets of educational practices.

The two models offer frameworks to develop survey instruments to examine students' experience in courses or programmes (course experience survey) or what students actually do during their overall university experience (the engagement survey) (see Table 1). When applied in individual higher education institutions, they provide implications for evidence-based quality assurance and enhancement (Kuh, 2009; Webster et al., 2009). When implemented on a national basis, the results also produce national benchmarks of good educational practice (Coates, 2010; Howson & Buckley, 2017; McCormick, 2009). For individual teachers, the surveys helped focus teachers' attention on the important aspects of university education (Coates, 2010). For students who responded to such surveys, the survey prompted them to reflect on what they've invested and gained from their university experience (Kuh, 2002).

2.1 Student Engagement

One of these models has its roots in the American higher education context. It places a strong emphasis on student engagement, a concept that has been discussed for around ninety years by higher education researchers (Kuh, 2009). Student engagement is commonly referred to nowadays as the amount, type, and quality of effort that students put into their studies as well as the broader university experience (Kuh, 2009). A wide range of perspectives, including sociological, psychological, cultural, educational, and economic viewpionts, have each been applied by different researchers to establish this concept (Kuh et al., 2006; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). The earliest work addressing student engagement was perhaps Tyler (1936, 1966) studies on the essential role of time on task for student outcomes. Based

Table 1 Indicators/scales/subscales in NSSE and CEQ

NSSE (Center for Postsecondary Research Indiana University School of Education, 2022)			CEQ (Wilson et al., 1997)
Indicators	Scales	Sub-scales	Scales
	Academic challenge	*Higher-order learning*	
		Reflective and integrative learning	
		Learning strategies	
		Quantitative reasoning	
Engagement indicators	Learning with peers	*Collaborative learning*	
		Discussions with diverse others	
	Experience with faculty	*Student-faculty interaction*	
		Effective teaching practices	*Good teaching*
			Clear goals and standards
			Appropriate assessment
			Emphasis on independence
			Appropriate workload
	Campus environment	*Quality of interaction*	
		Supportive environment	
High-impact practices	Service learning		
	Learning community		
	Research with faculty		
	Internship or field experience		
	Study abroad		
	Culminating senior experience		
			Generic skills

on Tyler's work, Pace (1984) advanced the investigations on student engagement and defined student engagement as the quality of student effort. Similar to Pace's definition, Kuh (2009, p. 683) described student engagement as the time and effort students spent specifically on the activities that were empirically proved to relate to the desired outcomes of higher education. Other scholars have had a slightly different emphasis on the type of effort students should invest in for engagement.

Astin (1984) pointed out the importance of the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience. Pascarella (1985b) and Tinto (1993) highlighted the importance of students' interactions with faculty, peers, and the variety of facilities that universities offer. They argued that these engagement elements were important in fostering students' overall university experiences and ensuring student retention as well as learning and cognitive development. Findings on the dimensions of student engagement that were related to desired educational outcomes include quality of effort (Pace, 1984), student identity (Chickering & Reisser, 1993), faculty-student interaction (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Tinto, 1997), inclusive university environment (Kuh, 2002), and clearly communicated expectations for performance (Kuh, 2001; Pascarella, 2001). What all these researchers have in common is the recognition of students as the centre of education where students are in charge of their own learning instead of being passively affected by the environment. Student engagement is postulated as one of the key determinants of the achievement of educational outcomes such as students' practical competence and skills transferability, critical thinking, cognitive development, psychosocial development, moral development, accrual of social capital, and so on (Astin, 1986; Hagel et al., 2011; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Thomas, 2012; Tinto, 1997; Trowler & Trowler, 2010).

Student engagement surveys were developed in the US based on these theoretical foundations. The College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ) was first introduced by Pace in 1979 to investigate how much undergraduate students are exposed to the effective teaching approaches described in the literature and actually take part in the activities that generate learning (Gonyea et al., 2003). The Center for Postsecondary Research and Planning at Indiana University then adopted this survey tool, and since that time, its influence has grown significantly in and outside the US. Within the US, the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), which is mostly derived from CSEQ, has been conducted annually in the US by Indiana University to assess and track the quality of educational programmes since 2000 (Coates, 2006; Kuh, 2009). Scales were added in 2013 to reflect more recent interests in education, including deep learning strategies, academic engagement (e.g. writing assignments, amounts of reading and writing, and the use of technology), and emerging high-impact practices (e.g. quantitative reasoning, collaborative learning, etc.) (McCormick et al., 2009). Outside the US, NSSE has also attracted a lot of interest across the globe (Coates & McCormick, 2014). Since 2007, it was validated and adopted in the higher education sectors in Australia and New Zealand (Australasian Survey of Student Engagement; Coates, 2010), South Africa (South African Survey of Student Engagement; Strydom et al., 2010), the UK (United Kingdom Engagement Survey; Howson & Buckley, 2017), China (NSSE-China; Luo et al., 2009; Shi et al., 2014), South Korea (Choi & Rhee, 2014), Japan (Aihara, 2011, 2016), and Ireland (Irish Survey of Student Engagement; StudentSurvey.IE, 2018). Since the educational practices known as leading to high levels of student engagement were included as the key constructs of the instruments, the engagement

survey helped the institutions, teachers, and students to focus on the academic, interpersonal, and extracurricular activities that will yield desired student outcomes and student experience could be improved (Coates, 2006; Kuh, 2002).

2.2 Course Experience

The development of the second type of widely used type of instrument was guided by student learning theory. Similar to the student engagement instruments, the survey instruments based on student learning theory also measure good practices that are believed to lead to desired educational outcomes. Student learning theory postulates that students' perceptions of their learning experiences with the curriculum, teaching, and assessment are the primary drivers of their approaches to learning and the quality of their learning outcomes (Martön & Säljö, 1976; Wilson et al., 1997). The key dimensions of students' perceptions of their learning experiences include Active Learning, Good Teaching, Appropriate Workload, Appropriate Assessment, and Choice for Learning Content, etc. Between the two typical approaches to learning, the deep approach represents an emphasis on understanding and meaning-seeking while the surface approach indicates an emphasis on memorisation and reproduction.

Studies showed that students were more likely to adopt a deep approach to learning and learn more effectively in the programmes when they thought the academic departments had adopted good teaching practices (e.g. active learning and appropriate workload) (Prosser & Trigwell, 1999; Ramsden, 1991, 2003). In contrast, students' adoption of a surface approach was normally correlated with students' perceptions that the academic departments failed to apply good practices in the programmes (e.g., perceived heavy workload, inappropriate assessment, and restricted choice for learning the content) (Kreber, 2003; Ramsden, 1991; Wilson et al., 1997). Correlationships were also discovered between students' perceived course experiences and learning outcomes such as grade point averages, satisfaction, and the acquisition of general skills (Lizzio et al., 2002).

Based on this line of studies, teaching and learning environment factors that were important to student learning approaches and outcomes were used to develop the survey instruments for quality assurance. The Course Perception Questionnaire (Ramsden & Entwistle, 1981) originated in the UK context and was perhaps the first instrument developed. It was then adopted for qualitative assurance at the institutional level or national level in different contexts. In the 1980s, the Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ) was developed based on the Course Perception Questionnaire to measure perceived teaching quality in degree programmes nationally and annually in Australia (Wilson et al., 1997). As part of the quality assurance system, the National Student Survey (NSS) was introduced in the UK in 2005 based on CEQ and is run annually (Howson & Buckley, 2017). Earlier this century, CEQ was adopted by Hong Kong universities for quality assurance and enhancement as well (e.g. Webster et al., 2009). Apart from CEQ's application as a tool for quality assurance and enhancement, it has also been widely used by individual researchers to investigate the associations

between students' perceptions of the learning environment and other key variables in different disciplinary areas or educational levels in different parts of the world: Canada (Kreber, 2003), Mainland China (Price et al., 2011; Yin et al., 2016), Japan (Fryer et al., 2012), the Netherlands (Jansen et al., 2013), and in postgraduate business education (Sun & Richardson, 2016).

2.3 Key Similarities and Differences Between the Two Major Instruments

There are parallels and discrepancies between these two major instruments, with the discrepancies being much greater (Zeng et al., 2021). Regarding similarities, both instruments measure good educational practices and examine what type of student learning is promoted during university experiences. There are significant overlaps between Effective Teaching Practices, a sub-scale of Experience with Faculty in NSSE, and the CEQ items. For example, one such item from NSSE is "clearly explained course goals and requirements", which is similar to an item from Clear Goal and Standards in CEQ, "you usually have a clear idea of where you are going and what's expected of you". For another example, both Academic Challenge in NSSE and Appropriate Assessment in CEQ assess whether or not teachers are interested in testing students' memory. However, student engagement questionnaires seem to have mapped more closely with Bloom's taxonomies to measure the levels of understanding students are facilitated to achieve while CEQ seems to focus more on the assessment practices such as whether assessments are focusing on facts, how feedback is provided, etc. (Wilson et al., 1997).

Apart from this, there are more significant variations between the two in the range of good practices covered and the angles at which they are measured. Although both are based on good educational practices, they differ in what the key determinants are for the achievement of educational outcomes. Course experience questionnaires focus primarily on the best teaching practices in a course or programme. Typical scales of these questionnaires include Good Teaching, Appropriate Assessment, Appropriate Workload, Clear Goals and Standards, and Emphasis on Independence (Wilson et al., 1997). Student engagement questionnaires encompass much broader experiences students have in and outside a course or programme during university education, such as Academic Challenge (Higher-Order Learning, Reflective & Integrative Learning, Learning Strategies, Quantitative Reasoning), Learning with Peers (Collaborative Learning, Discussions with Diverse Others), Experience with Faculty (Student-Faculty Interaction, Effective Teaching Practices), Campus Environment (Quality of Interactions, Supportive Environment), Participation in High-impact Practices (Kuh, 2009). CEQ has a much narrower focus on good teaching practices. But it measures a slightly broader range of dimensions of teaching than student engagement questionnaires. A further difference between the two is that they approach the assessment of students' university experiences from different

perspectives. Student engagement questionnaires focus on student behaviours to understand their experiences. Students' actual participation in academic activities (e.g. quantities, time, frequencies, etc.) or the availability of academic practices are assessed as indicators of their engagement (e.g., "During the current school year, about how many papers, reports, or other writing tasks of the following lengths have you been assigned?"). Course experience questionnaires are intended to obtain students' perceptions of the course (e.g. "It seems to me that the syllabus tries to cover too many topics") or students' perceptions of the demand of a course (e.g. "It would be possible to get through this course just by working hard around exam times").

2.4 Key Concerns About the Two Instruments

Both student engagement and course experience are considered meta constructs (Ben-Eliyahu et al., 2018; Fredricks et al., 2004; Trowler, 2010). Therefore, one of the criticisms of both instruments has been the scope of the dimensions they cover. According to Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004) and supported by many other researchers (e.g. Harper & Quaye, 2009; Trowler, 2010), student engagement is characterized by three major dimensions: behavioural, emotional, and cognitive engagement. Behavioural engagement draws on the literature on student conduct and on-task behaviour. It tracks students' involvement in academic activities, social interactions, and compliance with behavioural norms (e.g., attendance, no disruptive behavior, etc.). Emotional engagement is based on studies of students' attitudes, interests, and values. This concept refers to students' affective reactions to teachers, classmates, academic activities, and universities such as interest, enjoyment, commitment, or a sense of belonging. The concept of cognitive engagement is based on the idea of investment, student motivation, and self-regulated learning. It is a psychological indicator of engagement indicating students' dedication to learning activities. While student engagement instruments do partially measure cognitive engagement defined by Fredricks et al. by inviting students to rate the effort they invested in the good practices (e.g. whether they combine ideas from different courses when completing assignments), they are criticized for placing too much emphasis on behavioural indicators (e.g. quantities, time, frequencies, etc.) (Zepke, 2014). Other aspects of cognitive engagement and emotional engagement are not covered in the student engagement instruments. The major criticism that course experience questionnaires face has been not assessing the psychosocial environment in the classroom (Dorman, 2014). Fryer and his colleagues also pointed out that there are many other important psychological factors from a wider scope of learning and teaching research worth integrating into the theoretical basis of CEQ (e.g. motivations to learn, interest, and students' regulatory behaviours) (Fryer et al., 2012, 2016).

Aside from this concern, another observation is that the two major instruments are too dependent on western literature. This could potentially lead to at least two problems. The first issue is that good practices may not be universal. Different cultures

may have different perspectives on what constitutes good teaching. Conceptualizations of the concepts and the development of the instruments reflect the values held in the contexts in which they were developed. For example, asking questions and collaborating with peers (collaborating with peers for assignments, working through course materials with peers, and explaining course material to peers) have been favoured as indicators of engagement in the student engagement questionnaires. Participants are asked to indicate the frequency with which these experiences occur. These items are derived from the pedagogical assumptions that being silent in class and learning through individual effort are undesirable practices, which may result in lower achievement levels. Silence in class and introspection, however, may be indicative of sensitivity and understanding rather than disengagement in Chinese culture (Cain, 2012; Hagel et al., 2012; Jin, 2012). Cain (2012) found that some Western students also prefer silence in the classroom. In the same vein, research has indicated that the tendency for working with others is only one type of learning preference (Riechmann & Grasha, 1974), one type of personality trait (Jung, 1991), or one kind of intelligence (Gardner, 2000). Some students are confident about their abilities to learn and prefer to work independently, develop their own ideas about the course content, work at their own pace during the courses, and decide for themselves what is important (Jung, 1991; Riechmann & Grasha, 1974). The students with these preferences may also prefer to work independently on assignments and course materials (Riechmann & Grasha, 1974), both are measured in NSSE. Research has demonstrated that a more independent approach does not necessarily lead to lower achievement (Macfarlane, 2014). Apart from the different views on specific teaching/learning practices, studies in the Asian context have also identified some concepts that were absent in the western context. For example, two unique dimensions, knowledge delivery, and conduct guidance had been reported by the students and teachers as the important components of good teaching in the Asian context (Gao & Watkins, 2001; Jin & Cortazzi, 1998; Kottler et al., 2000; Lin et al., 1994). The use of quality assurance instruments to fashion good educational experiences in a generic way has been criticized by researchers for failing to give teachers and students the autonomy to select what works for them (e.g. Chanock, 2010; Hagel et al., 2011, 2012; Macfarlane, 2014; Yates, 2009; Zepke, 2014). Therefore, forcing good practices on individuals with different learning preferences would be illogical or even dangerous.

Linking the concern that good practices may not be universal, another potential concern with this reliance on western literature is that relationships between the constructs may not be universal. Across different contexts, it may also differ in terms of what factors may better predict students' educational outcomes. For example, a previous study has explored the factors that contribute to research students' development of generic skills and satisfaction with their research experiences in the Hong Kong context using the Student Research Experience Questionnaire (SREQ), a research student version of CEQ (Zeng, 2021). It was found that none of the SREQ constructs contributed significantly to students' perceptions of their development in generic skills in the Hong Kong context. A significant contribution was found in the two newly added scales that were developed from the indigenous study in the Hong Kong context (communication with supervisor and peer support). Another

study conducted in Hong Kong earlier also demonstrated that Chinese students' learning experiences were not entirely parallel to those of American students. While the American literature has an emphasis on both social and academic integration (i.e. Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Pascarella, 1985a), academic integration was found to be the only factor that had a significant direct path to students' satisfaction and a significant total effect on students' persistence intention (Zeng, 2006). These inconsistent findings suggested the relationships between constructs may differ in different contexts.

Conceptualizations of concepts within the survey instruments, such as student engagement and course experience, reflect the values held within the context in which they were developed. The instruments highlight the "good practices" and define at the same time what constitutes the quality of university experience. When they are applied in other contexts, the values they carry are disseminated as well (Zepke, 2014). It is problematic to force the values on good practices among people in a different context. As well, despite CEQ's rapid spread around the world, research has revealed some issues with its psychometric quality in Asian contexts. In the Asian context, Cronbach's alpha values were generally lower than those reported in western contexts (e.g. Fryer et al., 2012; Law & Meyer, 2011; Yin & Wang, 2015). The construct validity of the original CEQ was not fully supported in the Asian context (e.g. Fryer et al., 2012; Price et al., 2011; Webster et al., 2009). These findings indicate it might be problematic to rely too much on the American/British/Australian literature and adopt the instruments directly for institutional or national surveys in the Asian context. It is necessary to go beyond translation and psychometric consideration of the instruments. More indigenous and foundational studies on student experiences outside the American/British/Australian context are needed to enrich the overall literature in this field and to develop more appropriate survey instruments.

3 Siloed Efforts in Indigenizing and Restructuring These Measurement Tools for Quality Assurance and Enhancement in the Asia-Pacific Region

There has been some siloed effort in different parts of the Asia-Pacific region in adopting and indigenizing these measurement tools. There is a major focus on validation and localisation of the survey instruments, with references to American, British or Australian literature separately, but there is limited cross-referencing with each other. On a whole, student engagement questionnaires appear to have garnered greater interest in the Asia-Pacific region than course experience questionnaires. Perhaps due to its wider scope of the students' university experiences, universities in this region preferred this tool when looking for tools for benchmarking and quality assurance. Among all the initiatives, researchers in the South Korea and Mainland China, and Hong Kong SAR have reported more systematic efforts to integrate them into their local contexts.

In South Korea, major efforts were made to localise the student engagement questionnaires (e.g. K-NSSE) rather than CEQ (e.g. Bae et al., 2015; Cho & Jeon, 2019; Ko et al., 2015; Shin et al., 2012). Researchers suggested that NSSE is more applicable in the Korean higher education system than CEQ because it fulfills their objectives better, measuring more broadly students' university experiences and enabling international comparative analysis (Shin et al., 2012). In Japan, the related work seems to be driven by individual researchers due to individual interests only (NSSE: e.g. Aihara, 2014; CEQ: e.g. Fryer et al., 2012).

Similar to Korea, NSSE has been selected by Mainland China as a major tool for quality assurance. But Chinese scholars started much earlier. Having the largest population and the largest higher education system in terms of gross enrollment in the world, the higher education system in China has undergone major expansion since the beginning of this century (Shi, 2009). At the beginning of this expansion, while quantitative expansion and structural reorganisation had taken precedence in this process, universities struggled to achieve quality improvement and efficiency improvements in the meantime (Shi, 2009). To establish a formal quality assurance system in conjunction with the rapid growth of higher education, the central government has made the initiative at the state level to establish a basic structure for the evaluation of higher education institutions since 1990. Among the researchers, Luo et al. (2009) initiated an effort to validate NSSE in the Mainland Chinese context. Through years of testing, modification, and restructuring, the Chinese College Student Survey (CCSS) came into being for quality assurance in Chinese higher education (Shi et al., 2014; Xie et al., 2022). Three important psychological dimensions of engagement, namely emotional engagement, motivational engagement, and cognitive/perceptional engagement, were added to this new instrument (Shi et al., 2014). CCSS represents the largest cross-institutional higher education survey of student engagement in China now (Shi et al., 2014; Xie et al., 2022).

Higher education in Hong Kong SAR went through a major curriculum reform in the 2000s. With this major reform, quality assurance and enhancement became central on the agenda of every Hong Kong University funded by the University Grant Committee. The major efforts in Hong Kong seem to focus more on the course experience questionnaires. At the University of Hong Kong, the validation of CEQ in the Hong Kong context started in 2008 (Webster et al., 2009). Student Learning Experience Questionnaire (SLEQ), a modified version of the CEQ, is now running regularly for quality assurance and the renewal of curriculum and pedagogy at the University of Hong Kong (Zhao, 2018). In addition to the modification in the expressions to make them more comprehensible to the participants and more appropriate to the Hong Kong context, some new scales were also added (e.g. Active Learning), modified (e.g. from Appropriate Assessment to Assessment for understanding), or deleted (e.g. Appropriate Workload). Another university, Baptist University of Hong Kong also has its version of SLEQ running annually to monitor students learning experience and learning outcomes for the adjustment and improvement of its teaching and learning practices and environment.

4 Toward a Holistic and Inclusive Approach

4.1 To Become More Holistic

Both lines of research have argued for the impact of these surveys in supporting evidence-based quality assurance at both the university and national levels (Coates, 2010; Howson & Buckley, 2017; Kuh, 2009; McCormick, 2009). The two families of questionnaires have been and continue to be widely used in individual higher education institutions or nationwide for decades (e.g. the USA: https://nsse.indiana.edu/; the UK: https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/uk-engagement-survey-2020; Australia: http://www.graduatecareers.com.au/files/research/start/agsoverview/ctags/ceqo/; https://www.acer.org/au/ausse; Hong Kong: https://tlem.hku.hk/sleq/; https://chtl.hkbu.edu.hk/main/sleq/; Korea: https://cyber.sch.ac.kr/ko/certificate/nsse, etc.). Individual researchers have also invested interests in the two areas separately (e.g. Choi & Rhee, 2014; Fryer et al., 2012; Howson & Buckley, 2017; Jansen et al., 2013; Shi et al., 2014). As discussed earlier, university students' course experiences and engagement are both multi-dimensional. The two instruments differ in terms of the type and range of good practices they cover and the angles at which these practices are measured. Researchers have advocated that more diverse dimensions should be considered in the institutional surveys for a more holistic view of students' university experience (Barnett, 2005; Zepke, 2014). One of the ways to achieve this might be bringing together these two major lines of research. Furthermore, it is also critical to investigate the relationship between engagement and course experiences (or between behavioural engagement and perceptions) and compare their correlations with educational outcomes. By exploring the correlations between different dimensions and comparing the impact of different dimensions on the educational aims, we can identify the factors that are most important to the educational aims and support quality assurance in a more effective manner.

Despite the rich data available in both lines of research separately, few studies have explored the relationship between student engagement and course experience so far. There may be only two studies that have attempted to integrate the concepts of student engagement and course experience in one study, Yin and Ke (2017) and Guo et al. (2021). However, their studies have different foci and have used some instruments different from those discussed here. While Yin and Ke's study included CEQ, what they used to measure student engagement is the Motivation and Engagement Scale for University and College Students (Martin, 2012). This instrument differs significantly from the student engagement questionnaire discussed earlier in this chapter. Student engagement is defined at two levels in relation to motivation: maladaptive/adaptive motivation and maladaptive/adaptive engagement. Student attitudes that hinder their learning (e.g. anxiety, failure avoidance) and their problematic learning behaviors (self-sabotage, disengagement) indicate maladaptive motivation and engagement. Students' positive attitudes toward learning (e.g. self-belief, mastery orientation) and positive engagement in learning (e.g. persistence, task management) indicate adaptive motivation and engagement. Yin and Ke (2017)found positive correlations

between most CEQ constructs (except Appropriate Assessment) and students' adaptive motivation and engagement based on data collected from a Mainland Chinese university. When exploring the relationships between student engagement and course experience, Guo et al. used self-developed inventories to measure student engagement. Furthermore, their study focused primarily on the reciprocal relationship between students' academic achievement and self-concept. These innovative initiative helps bring different families of research together. Given that NSSE and CEQ are the two major instruments used widely in higher education around the world, it is worthwhile as well to bring them together to explore which predicts educational outcomes better, students' perceptions of their learning experiences or the more direct measurement of student engagement for better quality assurance.

4.2 To Become More Inclusive

The previous discussion of the universality of the values embodied in the two major instruments also indicates that a more democratic and inclusive approach is needed in measuring the quality of students' university experience (e.g. what effective teaching and learning is, what university experience should include). Both of these major approaches to assessing students' learning experiences for quality assurance and enhancement originated in western societies. The indicators included in these instruments are purposefully aligned with the desired educational outcomes or designed to address the typical issues arising in their own contexts to gain political support. The high profile of student engagement surveys comes from a political driver for student success, which is linked to students' attrition, employability, or satisfaction (Zepke, 2014). It must be noted, however, that while student attrition is a major concern in American higher education (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005), it is rarely an issue in Asian higher education institutions. CEQ appears to target indicators that are directly relevant to students' learning approaches to, satisfaction with, and outcomes (development of generic skills) of, their learning in university contexts (Wilson et al., 1997). When the assumptions about the core concepts in the instruments defined in their original contexts cannot account for cultural diversity in other higher education contexts (Krause, 2012; Zepke, 2014), it is not enough to only assess the reliability and validity of the scales to address the conceptual problem with the instruments. It needs to look into the diverse values held in different contexts regarding what quality university experiences mean and what good practices are. Some values about teaching and university education in the Asia Pacific university context might be different from those in the West. For example, using the data collected through CCSS which was adopted from NSSE, Shi et al. (2014) found that Chinese students had significantly lower mean scores in Active and Collaborative Learning and Student and Faculty Interaction than their American counterparts. But their mean scores in Enriching Educational Experience and Supportive campus environment were significantly higher. They argued based on their further qualitative study that what led to the lower level of Student and Faculty Interaction was the

social norms of Chinese society. Students were not that keen on discussing examination scores with teachers since they believed such interaction was frowned upon in Chinese society. The researchers did not report on whether or not this discrepancy in Student and Faculty Interaction between two groups of students had caused a major difference in their achievement of the educational outcomes. Questions might be asked, if such kind of Student and Faculty Interaction is not regarded as a "good practice" in the Chinese context, are there any Chinese "good practices" that could be added to the student engagement questionnaire? What are students' perceptions or related behaviours regarding those "good practices" in the United States of America or other regions? More inclusive perspectives that reflect different local contexts and values in a measurement inventory would not only make the research area more democratic in terms of what is "good" (King & McInerney, 2014; King et al., 2018). It will also enable meaningful comparisons across different regions to enable higher education sectors to learn from one another.

5 Future Directions

The above discussions have indicated that students' university experiences are multidimensional and people from different contexts attach different values to different educational practices. However, the two widely used instruments for quality assurance in the higher education sector around the world are criticised as not having covered sufficiently the major dimensions or integrated different perspectives from different contexts. Therefore, this chapter proposes to adopt a more holistic and inclusive approach to the measurement of students' university experience. To be more specific, bring together two lines of research (student engagement and course experience) to develop an integrated instrument to measure students' university experience. It could aim at developing an inventory of scales including the measurement of the good practices valued by learners and educators from different contexts so that universities could explore the applicability of these practices in their contexts. The next step could aim at longitudinal and cross-region/institutional studies. Such an integrated and holistic approach to higher education may, in the long run, help universities from around the world to learn from each other in terms of factors and values that are essential to higher education in different contexts. Meanwhile, as Fryer et al (2012) pointed out the current studies in this field have failed to catch up with the increasing numbers of studies that integrated student learning experience with a wider range of learning and teaching theories, it might be important as well to look more openly other dimensions proved to be vital to higher education in more contemporary studies. By integrating the two major families of studies, embracing more perspectives on "good practices", and updating with more contemporary literature, the survey instruments will be able to provide broader relevant information about students' experiences, evidence on more diverse educational practices, and more actionable implications for universities to address more contemporary educational challenges for the improvement of higher education quality. In the Asia Pacific

region, there has been considerable effort in different regions/institutions in indigenizing the NSSE and CEQ in the local contexts–as discussed earlier–which provides an essential basis to start this holistic and inclusive approach to the measurement of students' university experience. To make a step forward from what the previous researchers have achieved, studies could be carried out across different Asian Pacific higher education institutions using validated and localised measurement tools and by encouraging studies based on good practices that are unique to these contexts.

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Part I
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