

Enhancing Student Satisfaction in Higher Vocational Education: A Teacher Support and Learning Engagement Perspective

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Abstract

Student satisfaction is commonly treated as a proxy for educational quality in higher vocational education, and it doubles as a record of how students themselves judge their learning. Working from the ideas of teacher support and learning engagement, this study asks what colleges can do to raise satisfaction. Its answer is the Support-Engagement-Experience-Satisfaction (SEES) Practical Framework, derived from theoretical analysis and the existing literature. Four components make up the chain, in order: teacher support supplies the educational foundation, learning engagement the active process, learning experience the connecting mechanism, and student satisfaction the educational outcome. Supportive teaching should encourage students to take part in learning, and genuine engagement should generate experiences shaped by practical work, skill acquisition, and career relevance. Those experiences, in turn, lead students to evaluate their education favorably. For higher vocational colleges, the framework points to a process-oriented way of joining supportive teaching, active participation, and positive experiences in pursuit of higher satisfaction, and it provides a base for empirical work in other vocational settings.

Keywords

Student Satisfaction; Teacher Support; Learning Engagement; Learning Experience; Higher Vocational Education.

1. Introduction

Student satisfaction has become hard to avoid in any discussion of higher education, and the reason is simple: it reflects what students think of their own learning. Institutions moving toward student-centered teaching and quality assurance now carry two expectations at once. They need adequate resources and services. They also need learning environments in which students can participate actively and develop. Satisfaction is bound up with the quality of students' encounters with their surroundings and with what they experience while learning.

The issue matters all the more in higher vocational education. There, theoretical knowledge, practical training, and career preparation are tightly interwoven, and students are expected to join practice-oriented activities and build competencies they can carry into their future occupations. Better facilities or institutional services alone are not enough to improve satisfaction. The learning process deserves closer attention, above all the support students receive and how far they actually engage with learning.

Of all the resources that shape students' experiences in higher education, teacher support ranks near the top. Teachers who offer instructional guidance, constructive feedback, and chances for meaningful interaction help students learn more effectively. A recent systematic review reports that perceived teacher support correlates closely with engagement and other favorable academic outcomes [1]. Engagement itself is now widely treated as a multidimensional feature of learning, covering behavioral, cognitive, and emotional participation [2, 3], and stronger

engagement has been linked to better outcomes in higher education [4]. Together, these findings point to teacher support and learning engagement as two related ways of understanding how students' educational experiences can be improved.

Satisfaction, teacher support, and learning engagement have each drawn growing attention, yet translating the findings into practical guidance for vocational education remains unfinished work. Existing evidence clarifies how support, engagement, and satisfaction relate to one another, and it points to engagement as a possible link between support and satisfaction [5]. What is less clear is how these elements can be built systematically into the daily practice of higher vocational colleges whose goal is higher satisfaction. That question is what this study takes up. Working from the perspectives of teacher support and learning engagement, it develops a practical framework built around supportive teaching, active participation, and the connections between the two that improve students' educational experiences.

2. Understanding Student Satisfaction in Higher Vocational Education

Student satisfaction refers to students' overall judgment of their educational experiences, that is, how far their expectations and learning needs have been met along the way. No single institutional provision determines it. Rather, satisfaction grows out of students' perceptions of teaching, learning opportunities, academic support, and the wider environment, along with the interpersonal contacts they form. Recent work has stressed the experiential side of the construct, arguing that perceptions of experience and personal growth do much to shape overall evaluations [6]. What emerges from this ongoing interaction is a comprehensive assessment that covers the whole of students' educational experience.

Satisfaction in vocational colleges cannot be understood apart from what makes vocational learning distinctive. These institutions stress the integration of theoretical knowledge with practical skills and preparation for employment. Students judge their experiences on two grounds: classroom teaching, and whether learning activities build usable competencies and forge meaningful links between education and future work. Studies of satisfaction show that perceptions of competence development and of the learning environment weigh heavily in students' overall experience, while research on vocational education points to the need to connect theoretical instruction with applied training [7]. Practical learning experiences and perceived educational value carry particular weight here.

Efforts to raise satisfaction in vocational colleges must attend to the processes through which students actually experience teaching and learning. Better facilities, services, and institutional conditions still matter, but they will not carry far if students receive little learning support or sit passively through their courses. A genuinely student-centered approach asks institutions to think about how educational resources become real learning experiences, through everyday teaching and through students' own participation. Two dimensions stand out: the resources and assistance available to students, captured by the idea of teacher support, and how actively students take part and how much effort they invest, captured by learning engagement. Examining the two together offers a solid starting point for practical strategies aimed at satisfaction.

3. The Role of Teacher Support in Enhancing Student Satisfaction

Teacher support forms part of students' everyday experience of education, covering the academic, instructional, and relational help they perceive from their teachers, emotional care included. Its influence runs through more than course content; guidance, feedback, and accessibility all count, as does personal contact. Where teaching is supportive, students tend to feel that their academic needs are recognized and that help is available when they struggle. Recent studies single out perceived teacher support as a resource tied to participation,

motivation, and favorable learning experiences [1]. For satisfaction specifically, the quality of that support is a major ingredient in how students experience and rate their education.

Teacher support carries special weight in vocational education, where students must join theoretical knowledge to practical tasks and occupational competencies. Effective support here is about more than explaining content. It means demonstrating procedures, offering individualized guidance, and giving timely, constructive feedback, all while helping students see why what they learn matters for their future jobs. The emotional and relational side counts too: teachers who are approachable and responsive make it easier for students to ask for help, admit difficulties, and take part in practice-oriented activities with confidence. When support matches students' academic and practical needs closely enough, teaching stops being a one-way transfer of knowledge, and students come to value their education more highly.

Using teacher support to raise satisfaction calls for attention to both how much support is available and how good it is, across the whole learning process. Academic guidance should help students grasp objectives and work through difficulties. Instructional support should build knowledge and practical skills, feedback should show students their progress and their gaps, and emotional encouragement should sustain a positive teacher–student relationship. Above all, support should not turn students into passive receivers. Its real value lies in creating conditions under which students participate more actively and more independently. None of this is to say that support works alone. It sits at the base of satisfaction and doubles as a lever for the active learning experiences through which satisfaction grows.

4. Learning Engagement as a Pathway to Student Satisfaction

Learning engagement describes how actively students involve themselves in learning and how much of themselves they bring to it: effort, participation, interest, and cognitive resources. Current research treats engagement as multidimensional, spanning behavioral, cognitive, and emotional forms of participation. Engaged students tend to show up consistently, interact deeply with course content, and work hard toward their learning goals. Studies in higher education link engagement to favorable outcomes, among them satisfaction and academic success [8]. That makes engagement part of the educational experience itself, not merely a desirable behavior.

Engagement matters most where learning depends on doing, which is exactly the situation in vocational education. Students are routinely asked to apply theory to practical tasks, join project-based or collaborative work, and build competence through repeated practice while solving occupationally relevant problems. Passive absorption of knowledge cannot carry any of this; students have to take part. As they invest more behavioral, emotional, and cognitive effort, their sense of participation grows stronger and the worth of their education becomes clearer. Recent evidence adds that engagement and learning satisfaction move together in higher education [9].

Practically speaking, institutions raise satisfaction by arranging conditions that make sustained, meaningful engagement possible. Teaching should open the door to active participation, collaborative problem solving, and contact with authentic occupational tasks through project work and practical training. Yet engagement is not a matter of simply adding more classroom activities. It becomes meaningful only when students see learning activities as relevant, manageable, and tied to their educational and career goals. Vocational colleges can improve students' experience by designing environments that invite involvement and by making sure teacher support lets students take part confidently and effectively. Engagement is the channel through which supportive teaching turns into richer learning experiences and, finally, into higher satisfaction.

5. The SEES Practical Framework for Enhancing Student Satisfaction

The discussion above leads to the Support–Engagement–Experience–Satisfaction (SEES) Practical Framework, proposed here as a systematic way of improving student satisfaction in higher vocational education. The framework treats satisfaction as the product of a progressive educational process rather than a direct response to institutional services or teaching conditions. Four components fit together in sequence. Teacher support forms the educational foundation; learning engagement, the active process; learning experience, the connecting mechanism; and satisfaction, the educational outcome. The underlying logic is simple: effective support sets the stage for participation, active engagement gives rise to meaningful experiences, and those experiences feed students' satisfaction. Converted into practice, the SEES framework turns existing research on support and engagement into a scheme that vocational colleges can use to guide improvement.

5.1. Teacher Support as an Educational Foundation

Teacher support sits at the base of the SEES model, for the simple reason that teachers shape many of the conditions under which students learn. Effective support is more than subject-matter transmission. It covers academic guidance, instructional assistance, emotional encouragement, and constructive feedback; together they reduce learning difficulties and clarify what is expected, and students grow comfortable seeking help and joining in. The point carries extra weight in vocational education, where students constantly have to integrate theory with practical tasks and occupational demands.

How much value teacher support delivers also depends on how well it fits vocational learning. Teachers can improve their support by demonstrating practical tasks clearly, giving feedback while students practice skills, and linking course content to real occupational situations; adjusting guidance to individual needs matters too. Supportive interaction, in turn, makes it easier for students to voice difficulties and to take part in classroom and practical work without hesitation. Support is a means, not an end: it is a set of educational conditions that helps students become more active learners.

Teacher support earns its place in the framework through its capacity to activate engagement. Adding more assistance will not improve students' experience if they remain passive. Support has to generate opportunities, confidence, and motivation for students to put more into their learning. This is why teacher support stands at the starting point of the SEES model: it supplies the conditions under which stronger engagement can grow.

5.2. Learning Engagement as an Active Process

Learning engagement occupies the active middle of the SEES framework. It is the process by which students respond to and use the support available to them. Support can set favorable conditions, but its educational worth depends on whether students actually take part. Engagement is what turns students from passive recipients into active participants who bring effort, attention, interest, and cognitive resources to their learning. This matters especially in vocational education, where effective learning means working on practical tasks and refining occupational skills through continued practice, with knowledge applied to real situations.

Encouraging engagement means working on all three of its strands. Behavioral engagement grows through active participation in class, practical training, and task-based work. Emotional engagement is fed by supportive, inclusive environments where students feel interest, confidence, and belonging. Cognitive engagement develops when students solve real problems and build independent learning strategies, connecting theory to occupational use and reflecting on how they learn along the way. The strands reinforce one another, deepening students' involvement in vocational learning and raising what they get out of it.

The framework insists that engagement be meaningful rather than merely frequent. Adding classroom activities accomplishes little if students cannot see how those activities serve their learning needs, skill development, or future careers. Teachers and institutions should design opportunities that tie participation to authentic vocational tasks and to clear goals for growth. Once students take part in ways that let them apply knowledge and see their own progress, and once they grasp the occupational relevance of what they study, engagement becomes the process through which support turns into richer learning experiences. Those experiences are the next element of the framework: the connecting mechanism.

5.3. Learning Experience as a Connecting Mechanism

Learning experience plays the connecting role in the SEES framework, standing between students' active engagement and their satisfaction with vocational education. Support and engagement set up the conditions for effective learning, but their value shows up only in how students actually experience the process. Positive experiences arise when students find learning activities meaningful, supported, and connected to their future goals, with clear relevance to their development. At this stage, educational support and active participation are converted into students' judgments of the quality and worth of their education.

In vocational settings, positive experiences track closely with the practical, career-oriented character of the learning. Students are more likely to find their education meaningful when they can put theory to work, sharpen occupational skills through repeated practice, and see the connection between what they study and the jobs they will apply for; constructive feedback on performance adds to this. Progress, competence, and good teacher–student contact all reinforce the sense that the education is valuable and attentive to their needs. The quality of the experience depends less on participation itself than on whether participation yields real learning and visible growth.

Improving learning experience, the framework argues, requires alignment among teacher support, student engagement, and the design of vocational activities. Supportive teaching should enable students to take part effectively, while well-designed activities should offer chances to develop skills and feel achievement through authentic problem solving. When the pieces line up, students are more likely to judge their learning as meaningful, relevant, and rewarding. Positive experience carries support and engagement over into favorable evaluations of the whole educational process, and those evaluations are the immediate basis for higher satisfaction.

5.4. Student Satisfaction as an Educational Outcome

Satisfaction closes the SEES chain as the educational outcome: students' overall evaluation of their learning experiences in vocational college. It is not an isolated reaction to teaching quality or institutional services but the accumulated result of interactions with teachers, active participation in learning, and the quality of the experiences those activities generate. Students who receive appropriate support, engage meaningfully, and find their learning valuable and relevant tend to end up with favorable evaluations of their education.

In vocational education, these evaluations hinge on students' sense of practical competence, learning progress, and career relevance, together with the quality of teacher–student contact. Students are satisfied when they can see that their education builds useful knowledge and occupational skills, gives them chances to take part meaningfully, and prepares them for employment. Satisfaction here means more than enjoyment. The real question is whether students judge their experiences as valuable for their academic, professional, and personal development.

In the SEES model, satisfaction sits at the end of a progressive sequence. The chain starts with teacher support, which establishes favorable conditions; engagement then activates

participation; and positive experiences convert participation into perceived educational value. Raising satisfaction calls for coordinated attention across the whole learning process, not piecemeal fixes to individual factors. By tying support, engagement, experience, and satisfaction together, the framework gives vocational colleges a practical structure for guiding improvement.

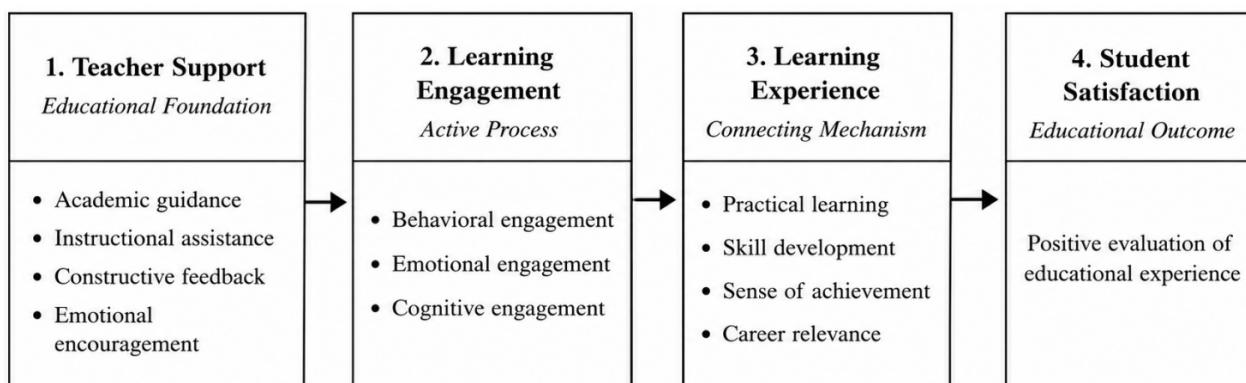


Figure 1. The SEES Practical Framework for Enhancing Student Satisfaction in Higher Vocational Education

6. Implications for Higher Vocational Education

One implication follows directly from the framework: satisfaction depends on the quality of teacher support across the entire learning process, and colleges should take this seriously. Teachers should be encouraged to go beyond transmitting knowledge and to offer sustained academic guidance, instructional help, and constructive feedback, with emotional encouragement along the way. Development programs can put more weight on supportive teaching, clear communication, and feedback strategies that adapt to students' varying needs. In practice-oriented courses, teachers should also make explicit the links among theory, technical skill, and occupational requirements, so that support speaks directly to students' learning and career development.

A second implication concerns the design of learning activities. Curricula and teaching should give students real chances to take part in project-based learning and collaborative problem solving, and to meet authentic occupational tasks through practical training. More activities for their own sake will not do; the point is to keep learning closely tied to skill development and future career demands. Timely feedback and chances to demonstrate progress reinforce students' sense of competence and achievement. Such practices help students see learning as meaningful, relevant, and valuable, improving the quality of their overall experience.

At the institutional level, satisfaction should be read as the outcome of an interconnected educational process, not as a standalone indicator captured at the end of a course or program. Colleges can use the SEES framework to check whether students receive adequate support, participate meaningfully, and build positive experiences before they ever look at satisfaction scores. Such a process-oriented view helps institutions pinpoint where improvement is needed and design strategies that target those spots. By coordinating support, engagement, and experience, vocational colleges can build learning environments more responsive to students' developmental needs.

7. Conclusion

This paper set out from two perspectives, teacher support and learning engagement, to examine how satisfaction can be improved in higher vocational education, and it arrived at the

Support–Engagement–Experience–Satisfaction (SEES) Practical Framework. The framework casts satisfaction as the product of a progressive process: teacher support lays the foundation, learning engagement reflects students' active participation, and positive experiences tie the educational process to students' overall judgments. By stressing the links among the four components, the SEES framework moves attention away from isolated factors and toward a more integrated, process-oriented way of raising satisfaction.

The framework offers vocational colleges a practical structure for improving students' educational experiences through supportive teaching, meaningful engagement, and practice-oriented learning. It also draws attention to the need to keep support and participation aligned with skill development and career relevance, achievement included. Because it was built from theoretical analysis and the existing literature, the SEES framework now awaits empirical testing. Future work could examine how well it holds across institutions and disciplines, and how its components actually shape satisfaction in practice, in varied contexts.

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