P57 – The demographics and academic progression of Indigenous and first-generation university students: a quantitative analysis

AUDITORIUM – MONDAY 15:30-16:30

Dr. Rod Lastra and Dr. Lori Wallace

Extended Education, University of Manitoba

Dr. Lori Wallace is currently a Professor in Extended Education, University of Manitoba, and served as Dean of Extended Education from 2006-13. Current publications include institutional policy for online/blended learning, online student demographics; and the educational outcomes of Indigenous and disadvantaged learners.

Dr. Rod Lastra is currently a Program Director with Access & Aboriginal Focus Programs within Extended Education, University of Manitoba. He completed his Ph.D., in Biological Sciences from the University of Manitoba. Current research activities include the development of preparatory mathematics and science curriculum as well as developing bridging programs in environmental science and ecology.

Summary

Presentation of the results of a quantitative study on the demographics and academic progression of self-identified Indigenous students at a Canadian university, 2006-2014. What are the trends in these students’ demographics,
academic choices, and academic progress? Which factors are associated with academic progression and success?

Abstract

Results of the first phase of a research project designed to better understand the demographics and academic progression of self-identified Indigenous students, and students in an Access Program at the University of Manitoba, Canada from 2006 to 2014. (The Access Program provides a variety of supports to students who have traditionally not had the opportunity to pursue degree studies because of social, economic, cultural reasons or lack of formal education.) Research questions include: What are the trends in these students’ demographics, academic choices, and academic progress? Which factors are associated with academic progression and success? Profiles and data to be presented include demographics as well as variables related to academic preparation, choices and persistence (e.g., academic preparation prior to admission, admission status, course loads, programs of study, and patterns of academic performance including GPAs, and graduation statistics. While universities have considerable experience supporting Indigenous and first-generation learners, there have been few published analyses of the demographic profiles and academic progression of these populations. The current study will add to the scholarship relating to first-generation students in higher education by providing an analysis of trends, identification of factors associated with overcoming barriers and achieving academic success for these groups, and development of recommendations to enhance student support and success.

P8 – An analysis of the end of stage student experience in a UK University: What can we learn?

ROOM A– MONDAY 15:30-16:30

Matthew Portas
Students’ feedback on their learning experiences plays a vital role in shaping the future of contemporary Higher Education institutions. We analyse feedback from students to determine the key factors that best relate to their overall student experience. This information can be used to improve the student experience during their study.

Abstract

Authors: Portas M, Anderson J, Massey, B (student researcher), Davison L (student researcher), O’Hare L

Students’ feedback on their learning experiences plays a vital role in shaping the future of contemporary Higher Education institutions. Indeed the National Student Survey (NSS) not only informs institutions like ours on what we do and what needs to be improved but it also acts as a metric for us to be benchmarked against other UK Higher Education Institutions. Such information can help to deliver learning that is appropriate to the students’ level of study. It may also aid us to aid in assisting the transition of students between levels of learning.

At Teesside University the Level 4 and Level 5 end of stage surveys (Year 1 and Year 2 of a 3-year degree for full-time students) provide a potentially powerful tool to analyse current students’ experiences whilst we have time to improve their learning experience with us. These tools are based on the UK National Students Survey that Year 3 full-time students complete and can help us to understand what is important to students so that we can target
interventions where they will have maximum impact that is specific to their level of learning. However, to date evaluation of this data with a systematic and thorough analysis is sparse. Here we report our initial findings from a survey that replicated the NSS questions with full-time Year 1 and Year 2 students (N = 827) and provide some thoughts for further investigation. The data were analysed by relating questions about teaching, assessment and feedback, academic support, organisation and management, learning resources and personal development to a question that asked students to rate their overall satisfaction of their experience.

We then identified higher scoring and lower scoring areas and also identified these areas were higher or lower impact on overall satisfaction. At both years 1 and 2 students rated ‘rated the course is well organised and is running smoothly’ and ‘staff have made the subject interesting’ as lower performance and higher impact. Strategically, these areas our institution may wish to focus on developing to improve the students’ experiences. At year 1 higher score higher impact scores were given to personal development and assessment arrangements. These were also higher score at year 2 but had power impact on overall experience. Higher scoring but of lower impact at years 1 and 2 were learning resources, while questions around feedback were lower scoring but also lower impact. Further results will be discussed in the presentation. In addition, the team consider the reasons why aspects of the student experience appear to impact on overall satisfaction and explore verbatim comments for additional insight.

This more sophisticated approach to analyses of end of year student experience data help us to more clearly identify what students relate most to when they decide whether their overall experience is positive or not. With this data we can work with our students to help and shape their learning experience while they are still studying with us and before they complete the publically available NSS at the end of year 3.
ST10 – What do our (future) students need? – From the first steps to everyday student life

ROOM C – MONDAY 15:30-16:30

Victoria Reszler

University of Graz, Austria / Educational and Student Services / 4students

Victoria Reszler studied German Language and Literature at the University of Graz and works for the Educational and Student Services at the University of Graz. She has been part of 4students, the student information service, since 2011.

Summary

4students is the student information service of the University of Graz and the first contact point for prospective students, first year students and continuing students. In the session we want to give an overview on the services offered by 4students, present the results of our questionnaire concerning student’s needs and talk about our experience in “what works”.

Abstract

Since 2011 4students – the student information service of the University of Graz – has drawn up a questionnaire concerning students’ needs before entering university, during the first weeks on campus and for their future university life. Based on these results, 4students constantly adapts its services and develops new ones – aligned with the student life-cycle. In the paper session we want to give an overview on the services offered by 4students, present the results of our questionnaire and talk about our experience in “what works” (based on data).

First stage of the student life-cycle (orientation, awareness, perception): Each year 4students organises two major events for future students. At the Open
House Day more than 2000 visitors, among them mainly school classes, visit the University of Graz in order to inform themselves about the academic programmes as well as the university environment. In the course of the Trial Study Days, future students can attend courses of almost all academic programmes and learn more about organisational structures, services for students and the university campus. In addition to these events, 4students offers a peer mentoring programme for first-generation students to prepare them for their new life at university, as they don’t have close family members who have experience in studying. 4students also developed and now constantly updates two online-portals concerning student information and study programmes (http://www.uni-graz.at/en/studying/ and http://studien.uni-graz.at/en/degree-programmes/).

Second stage (admission, first steps): During the official admissions period, 4students offers an information desk in front of the admissions office with the purpose of answering all questions concerning the academic programmes and student life in general. In order to familiarize with the university, future students can attend the Welcome Day at the beginning of the semester, which offers workshops, information events and an introduction to all study-related service points for new students. As a reaction to all the students’ different requirements, 4students also produces podcasts on topics such as admission to university and enrolling for programmes.

Third stage (studying, continuing): The 4students:live workshops are especially aimed at continuing students. These workshops are supposed to help them to get along with their studies by supporting them in many different areas, such as scientific writing, study techniques and doing research.

As a “one-size-fits-all” approach is very unlikely to succeed – particularly when considering the growing diversity of students – 4students uses different methods when it comes to offering services and providing information to new students. As mentioned before, there are a lot of event formats adjusted to the student life-cycle. Moreover, 4students offers help by answering questions concerning studying and student life via phone, e-mail, Skype and Facebook every day. Apart from the large range of information available on our websites, there is also printed material containing information about the academic programmes, first steps at university, the campus and so on.
Due to an increasing demand, 4students gradually extended its range of services over the past few years and by now has virtually taken over the marketing of the academic programmes of the University of Graz.

**ST34 – Lessons from Engaging First Year Initial Teacher Trainee (ITT) students in co-creating curricular that embed equality and diversity.**

**ROOM C – MONDAY 15:30-16:30**

Maxwell A. Ayamba, Sheffield Institute of Education, Sheffield Hallam University

Maxine Greaves MBE, Sheffield Institute of Education, Sheffield Hallam University and Wal Warmington, Centre for Academic Success, Birmingham City University

Birmingham City University and Sheffield Hallam University

Maxwell A Ayamba: Environmental Journalist/Researcher. He is currently a PhD student at Sheffield Hallam University. He has published academic papers on the environment and Black and Minority Ethnic communities in England. He has 11 years of practical experience working directly in communities to promote educational engagement and participation in Further and Higher Education

Maxine Greaves MBE: Equality and Community Engagement Manager for the Faculty of Development & Society, with comprehensive knowledge of the qualifications framework and pre requisites for entry to Higher Education programmes. Lead co-ordinator in a collaborative project to progress innovative educational provision for participants from diverse backgrounds

Wal Warmington: Wal Warmington is Lecturer Learning and Academic Development at Birmingham City University. His research interests include: race/racism in Higher Education; international students’ experiences; mentoring
and peer support. He recently co-authored a book chapter on: ‘Student Engagement: Enabling Success through Dynamic Partnerships’ in ‘Student Engagement: Identity, Motivation and Community’

Summary

Lessons from engaging with First Year Initial Teacher Trainee (ITT) students in co-creating curricular that embed equality and diversity. This session will examine how relevant discussion and support systems can help further a critical understanding of issues around equality and diversity that contributes to the personal development of students.

Abstract

With regards to student engagement and belonging, UK Higher Education Institutions (UKHEI’s) face a range of challenges as they attempt to relate to, retain and support students on their courses (Thomas, 2012; Warmington, Hodge, Sela & Kainth, 2013). For those studying to teach within a multi-racial society developing an understanding of equality and diversity is critical if, once trained, such societal educators are to positively influence the education of others. For trainee teachers this is particularly acute given the challenge of weaving such issues into their lived experiences and emerging pedagogical practice.

If involved in co-creating specific aspects of the curriculum design and approval process, a range of equality principles can be embedded and strategically aligned to their module learning outcomes. These can be furthered through developing understanding of learning processes, critical self-reflection, action planning and goal setting that demonstrate how diversity adds value to their personal and professional practice.

This session will examine how relevant support systems can help further a critical understanding of issues around equality and diversity that contributes to the personal development of students.

Issues & Questions for participants:
How do concepts of equality and diversity shape our understanding of ourselves and in our relationships with others?

In terms of actions and outcomes how do such concepts apply to our organisations and communities?

References


ST37 – Promoting students’ academic study skills – a flexible online course model

ROOM C – MONDAY 15:30-16:30

Niina Räsänen

Student and Learning Services, University of Eastern Finland, Finland

Ms. Niina Räsänen works as a coordinator at the University of Eastern Finland. Among other duties she develops and coordinates academic study skills courses for the students. She also deals with the student tutor education and the orientation for the student starting their academic studies.
Summary

To promote students’ studying ability and to provide teaching equally on and off the campuses we have created an adaptable academic study skills course model. The lectures of this diverse course are broadcasted online and the course assignments are done in the online learning environment. The feedback has been encouraging.

Abstract

The University of Eastern Finland (UEF) is one of the largest in Finland with 15,000 degree students at three campuses located triangular approximately 150 kilometres away from each other. The well-being of students is one of the primary concerns of the university. UEF and the Student and Learning Services provide students a modern and constantly developing studying environment.

In order to improve student’s study skills and to provide teaching equally both on and off the campuses we have created a flexible online course model. The course Academic Study Skills prepares students for their new phase of live at the university and offers an induction to academic studying. The course is for 2 ECTS credits and it consists of lectures and learning assignments. The course is evaluated as pass/fail and credited after the students have completed the required assignments.

The Academic Study Skills course introduces different studying techniques such as academic reading and writing and basic studying skills like participating in the lectures, taking notes and preparing for the exams. The course gives an overview of the technical/online studying environment and ethical studying at the academic community. Students also learn about study planning, stress management and reflecting their own learning.

The optional lectures are broadcasted online during the late afternoons and therefore should not overlap that much with other studies. To access the online lectures students need only an internet connection, loudspeakers and/or headset. Lectures can be also viewed afterwards as recordings. Some of the lectures can also be participated at the campuses in the class rooms. These arrangements make it flexible to participate in the teaching. Students can take part in the lectures with the online chat. The teachers are advised to activate students with
different kinds of online student orientated methods (chat conversations, questions, votes).

The learning assignments in the online learning environment play an important role in students’ learning. The assignments involve both individual work and group effort. Diverse assignment types, for example interviews, online conversations and learning by doing -method have been used to promote the learning outcomes. The course supports also the students own field of study. The students are expected to visit their departments and get to know the facilities. Students are also obliged test a new studying method suitable for their studies and to practice study scheduling. The students get feedback on their personal and group assignments during the course. The course tutors from different fields of study are responsible for this written feedback.

The course feedback from the students has been encouraging. The feedback indicates that the course has enhanced the students’ academic study skills. It seems that preparing for the exams and stress management will be among the most popular and useful aims in the year 2014. The students have considered the course to be useful and supportive at the beginning of their study path. According to the feedback the studying atmosphere of the course has been supportive and students’ understanding of the course subjects have increased during the course.

**ST21 – Meaningful student counselling enhances study experience in Chemistry**

**ROOM C – MONDAY 15:30-16:30**

Piia Valto

Department of Chemistry, University of Jyväskylä, Finland

-University teacher in the Department of Chemistry at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland
The paper presents the design and evaluation of student counselling model at the Department of Chemistry, University of Jyväskylä. The model focuses on the importance of students’ first study year incorporating meaningful group and 1:1 learning and guiding sessions and personal support via enthusiastic, qualified student advisors.

Abstract

The first year of university studies in chemistry are challenging for many students and their experiences during that year have a strong impact on their subsequent studying. The interaction between students, the Department and teaching personnel is also important. The Department of Chemistry at the University of Jyväskylä has made several developments on study counselling and student engagement in the curriculum. Especially at the Bachelor level we highlight study counselling combined with student welfare issues and personalized study plans.

Here, we will focus on description and evaluation of our holistic working model for student counselling throughout their first year of study. The main objectives of our study counselling model are:

– increases students engagement to chemistry studies and the University

– offers personal support and continuous guidance
– confirms students’ own responsibility regarding their studies and study success

– help to strengthen students’ self-image and to develop the professional identity

– strengthens students’ self-efficiency and study motivation

Our model emphasizes continuous, student-focused (personal student advisor) and collaborative group counselling work (tutoring groups) which is managed by enthusiastic and qualified teaching personnel. In our student counselling model, we also highlight the importance of awareness of student welfare issues. We have developed a course entitled “KEMY001 Personal Study Plan,” (1 ECTS credits) which continues throughout the first three years of the chemistry studies. Moreover, this gives a working tool for the personnel to supervise the progress of the students throughout the whole Bachelor studies.

The main objective of this presentation is to describe the design and evaluation of our student counselling model. Also, we have evaluated the impact of the study counselling model on students’ drop-out rate after first year studies and study success by looking statistic of the chemistry students between years 2009-2014 (N=398, number of students). The drop-out rate after first study year has decreased from 51 % to 28 % during our enhanced study counselling work. Also, the students’ study success measured by performing 55 ECTS credits per year has increased over 30 % during that time. Therefore, it can be concluded that based on our assessment of the model and students’ feedback, enhanced study counselling increases the number of students continuing their studies after first year and also improves their studying success.

**W59 – Putting the ‘experience’ in to the second year experience**

**ROOM E – MONDAY 15:30-16:30**

Workshop – 60 minutes
Andrea Lyons-Lewis

School of Social Sciences, Division of Sociology, Nottingham Trent University

Andrea Lyons-Lewis is a Senior Lecturer in Sociology at Nottingham Trent University. As part of this role she is the Service Learning Co-ordinator and Year 2 Tutor for the BA Criminology Course. Andrea has a long standing interest in teaching & learning and has previously done research on active and independent learning and academic practices within the discipline. She is also an activist involved with Nottingham Citizens, an umbrella organisation, which fosters engagement in civil society.

Summary

This interactive workshop will explore the nature of the ‘second year experience’ in our various institutions. Our work on a ‘service learning’ module will provide an example of an innovative second year experience, where, working with civil society organisations we’ve attempted to engage students as active citizens.

Abstract

Traditionally in the UK the second year has been a ‘lost year’ and these ‘middle children’ (Gahagan and Hunter, 2006) have been the focus of limited attention by universities as well as by those researching higher education. At Nottingham Trent University we have introduced a ‘Service Learning’ module for second year students on BA Criminology and one of our key aspirations for this module is to promote not just deeper engagement with the course and the discipline, but also to foster active citizenship.

In this interactive workshop I’d like to engage participants in a conversation about the ‘second year experience’ in their institutions; share examples of our students’ posters to stimulate discussion about the learning journey the students have been on and use a model from Morton (1995) with participants to explore if we should be promoting active citizenship and how this might be achieved. These 3 activities will be the focal point of the workshop allowing participants, in discussion with fellow delegates, to reflect on and share their own practices.
We believe that education is a public good and that it should have wider benefits than to meet the needs of the globalised labour market. We want to develop active citizens who ‘critically engage with and seek to affect the course of social events’ (Ross, 2012:7). These ideas are not new; whilst we are deeply indebted to John Dewey (1859-1952) for his ideas about experiential learning, he was also most insistent that the purpose of education was to foster democratic engagement. Freire (2010) too saw education as the path to political consciousness.

With this in mind, we re-designed our second year with a Policing Pathway and a Generic Pathway. Students on the Generic Pathway, take a 40 credit point Service Learning Module in the second term, which I co-ordinate and which is the focus of my attention here. Long established in the USA, service learning seeks to ‘bridge higher education and communities and to integrate the worlds of scholarship and application in order to strengthen each and transform both’ (Rice, 2010:1). In essence, it is a form of student work experience in that learning takes place off campus but is distinctive due to its focus on meeting authentic community needs, reciprocal partnerships and experiential learning.

Students on the module in 2014/15 are working with organisations including the local crime and drugs partnership, domestic violence charities, organisations promoting alcohol free night life, women’s centres and more. Whilst it is the early days of their projects, students’ excitement is palpable. After this first ‘pilot’ it would be beneficial for us to share this experience with colleagues from across Europe to see how we could all learn from each other to enhance the ‘second year experience’.


Freire, P, 2010, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, New York: Continuum


Morton, K
W13 – Inside Peer Assisted Learning – How do students arrive at uni?

DANCE ROOM – MONDAY 15:30-16:30

Workshop – 60 minutes

Dr. Julia Sacher

Centre for Teaching, Learning and Career; Bielefeld University, Germany

Julia Sacher has a background in Linguistics, Interaction Analysis and Conversation Analysis. She is a staff member of the project “starting together with Peer Assisted Learning (PAL)” and responsible for the training and qualification of the students.

Summary

At Bielefeld University, Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) is employed to help first year students to getting used to university life. In the workshop, Videodata from “inside” the PAL-sessions serve as a starting point for discussion about how to prepare students for their respective roles.

Abstract

Beginning to study and getting used to university life is a challenge for each student. At Bielefeld University in Germany, the project “starting together with Peer Assisted Learning (PAL)” has been implemented to help students face the challenges of their first term(s) at university. Thus, the PAL-projects addresses the following questions: How do I learn in a lecture? How to find out which
content is more important, which less? What are efficient ways of note-taking? How do I solve problems, and how does my discipline work?

PAL answers these questions as follows: In the introductory courses, the last 30 minutes are reserved for so called PAL-sessions. In these sessions, specially trained PAL-Teamers (2nd- and 3rd-semester students) meet with their PAL-group (10-20 students) to facilitate discussions, talk about learning strategies etc. Crucial for the PAL-Teamers’ job is that they don’t teach – they only manage the processes that emerge from their group.

In the workshop, I want to present authentic videodata and transcriptions from the PALsessions in Bielefeld. A microanalytic perspective will be employed (e.g. as described with respect to the conversation analytic paradigm by Sacks 1984, ten Have 2007, Antaki 2011). This perspective will enable the participants of the workshop to describe and reconstruct what happens inside a PAL-session and thus serve to sensitize for the fine-grained details of student interaction.

This microanalytic perspective will serve as the starting point for data-driven discussion on two sets of questions. The first set is this: How can students best be trained to become PAL-teamers? Which are the communicative challenges they face? How can they learn to structure processes? How does one identify a process, after all?

The second set of questions focuses on the students’ side: How do students’ ways of thinking and learning develop during the PAL-sessions? How do they get socialized “into” the disciplines via discoursive activities? And what can criteria be for evaluating their development on an interactive level?

The structure of the workshop is as follows:

Introduction: PAL at Bielefeld University

Input: What is a “microanalytic perspective”?

Participants: Work in two (or four) groups with video data, respective focus on question sets 1+2
Discussion + Synthesis

References:


Parallel session 2

16:45-17:45

P2 – Exploring the Social Relations of International Students

AUDITORIUM – MONDAY 16:45-17:45

Blair Matthews

Centre for English Language and Foundation Studies, University of Bristol

English for Academic Purposes Tutor, University of Bristol.

Summary

The international student experience has had a significant impact on institutions and individuals alike. This paper explores the social experiences of international
students during their sojourn and how participants evaluate their social resources during their time abroad.

Abstract

The growth in the number of non-EU students participating in higher education in the UK has had a significant impact on the character and make-up of university campuses. However, studies on the experiences of international students tend to emphasise the challenges students face, particularly regarding acculturation and adaptation (Sovic, 2008; Sawir et al. 2008; Russell et al., 2010). International students are said to exist in an abstract ‘third space,’ not fully integrated as part of the local culture, yet distanced from their own (Burnapp, 2006; Montgomery, 2010). Nevertheless, the international student experience can be transformational for those who travel abroad to study, both in terms of learning and outlook (Gu, Schweisfurth and Day, 2010).

This paper explores how overseas students negotiate this third space, in particular looking at the relationships that individuals make (or not) and how students manage and evaluate their social resources during their time abroad. In a study of a cohort of international foundation students (n=127) at a large UK university, social network analysis was used to analyse observable changes in social structures at two different points during the sojourn: immediately post-arrival and after 12 weeks. These analyses were supported by a series of in-depth interviews with a sample of students (n=5).

Results show that the movement of individuals from their home country to host country is highly efficient in network terms (1 or 2 steps), but on arrival those connections decay almost immediately. Initial networks are characterised by complexity and intense interaction as participants establish networks in their new environment. After 12 weeks, networks settle down but remain relatively segregated. The resultant social structure can be predicted by home culture and institutional structures such as programme of study and accommodation.

Qualitative interviews suggest that students have a strong desire to make friends and strong feelings towards the relations they make. Interviews also suggest that individuals reflect on their experiences and often make decisions in relational terms. As a consequence, the interaction between social structure (constraints) and agency (individual action) helps to build and elaborate social structures.
This paper concludes with a discussion on the role institutions play in shaping social structures, what structures we should encourage and how we can respond.

P35 – Does ‘matching’ help our students to make the right choice? The effects of a major policy change in Dutch higher education

AUDITORIUM – MONDAY 16:45-17:45

Dr. F. Rutger Kappe, Drs. Pierre Poell

Inholland University of Applied Science, The Netherlands

Dr. F. Rutger Kappe, professor student success Inholland/VU, chair of Dutch G5 research group

Pierre Poell, strategic policy advisor, chair of Lica (Lica is a community of practice of higher education staff responsible for optimal articulation between secondary education and higher education).

Summary

Joint research was performed on ‘matching activities’ in HE. The results of student (n>20.000) and teacher evaluations (n>500) as well as the effect of matching on the reduction of drop-out will be presented and discussed. The main research question is: ‘does ‘matching’ work and which (set of) ‘matching’ activities results in the best effect?’

Abstract

What kind of ‘matching’ helps students to make the right choice?
The effects of a major policy change in higher education

In many countries HE institutions are faced with a large amount of early drop-outs and low first year retention rates. In reaction to the fact that in the Netherlands nearly 35% of the student drop-out or switch to another program, two major changes in the enrollment rules were introduced:

– the final date for enrollment was moved forward from 1 September to 1 May;

– legally based ‘matching’ activities were introduced.

The goal of these ‘matching’ activities is to determine whether the student has chosen the right study. This should consequently lead to a reduction in drop-out rates and switching of study program in the first year.

The ‘matching’ procedure and content of the programs differ between the HEI’s due to the fact that they were free in how to set up ‘matching’ and can also choose whether participating is compulsory or not. One large HEI based their ‘matching’ on the work of Visser (2012) who showed that the first exam is the best predictor of student success. Others HEI’s used the theory of Tinto (1987) and emphasized the role the social and academic integration. Also two HEI’s relied on a digital psychological questionnaire which measured cognitive and non-cognitive skills (Poropat, 2009).

Joint research is performed on the matching activities of six large HEI’s in the Netherlands. The results of student (n>20.000) and teacher evaluations (n>500) as well as reduction of early drop-out rates will be presented and discussed. The main research question is: ‘does ‘matching’ work and which (set of) ‘matching’ activities results in the best effect?

P48 – The UK Engagement Survey and Student Doubters: Gaining a better understanding of our students through research.
One hour paper

Sarah Lawther

Centre for Academic Standards and Quality, Nottingham Trent University, UK

Sarah Lawther has extensively researched student transition, retention and engagement and is currently working to use these findings to improve the learning and teaching experience for students at Nottingham Trent University. Sarah is particularly interested in the use of mixed methods in research.

Summary

This session describes research that combines our findings from the UK Engagement Survey and research that explores the experience of students who have had doubts about being at university. This combination enables us to better understand student transition to the first year to inform our support of students.

Abstract

This session shares research that aims to better understand the student transition to the first year in order to inform our support of students at Nottingham Trent University (NTU).

Since 2009, as part of the HERE Project (2008-2011), NTU has conducted an annual survey during the spring term. This survey asks first year students about their experience at university including whether or not they have considered withdrawing from university. In 2014, this annual HERE Project survey was combined with the UK Engagement Survey (UKES).

The UKES survey, organised by the Higher Education Academy (UK), is a UK adaptation of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) that was developed in the US. Its aim is to “help institutions understand and improve their students’ engagement with their studies” (Buckley, 2014, p7), by providing a measure of student exposure to and participation in educational practices (McCormick, 2014, p6). It therefore provides an evidence base from which to
inform quality enhancement and allows institutions to benchmark their provision against the UK and international sector whilst remaining confidential. It was first piloted in the UK in 2013 with nine institutions (with 8,500 responses). In 2014, a second pilot took place with 32 institutions (25,533 responses), of which NTU was one.

This combination at NTU therefore not only allowed comparison with other institutions, but allowed us to look more specifically at the experiences of student doubters (those students who had considered withdrawing from university) and their engagement with their studies. Although there are limitations of the data, this research has identified useful insights into the experiences of students and a number of themes that are worthy of further exploration.

NTU respondents were more likely to say that they had found that their course had challenged them to do their best work than UKES respondents, and just over a third of NTU students reported finding it difficult to cope with their academic workload. However, NTU students also reported that they had spent less time preparing for taught sessions than UKES respondents.

The activities that NTU students reported were most useful were those that require little interaction with staff such as working independently, using online materials and attending lectures. Student doubters were much less likely to find seminars and course tutorials useful, but more likely to find one-to-one meetings with tutors useful, suggesting individual support is particularly important for these students.

Group work and the support of peers appeared particularly useful for our widening participation, black and minority ethnic (BME) and male students along with our student doubters. These student doubters were less likely to have asked questions or contributed to class discussions and more likely to have turned to peers for help to understand course material.

This session will report these findings in more detail together with relevant current literature and any implications the findings may have for practice.

References
Buckley, A., 2014. UK Engagement Survey 2014 The second pilot year [online]. Available at:


McCormick, Alexander. Associate Professor of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies, Indiana University, USA, Director, National Survey of Student Engagement. Foreword. UK Engagement Survey 2014 The second pilot year [online]. Buckley, A., 2014. Available at:


**ST66 – Developing Belonging: The value of Academic Mentors within the first year student experience**

**ROOM C – MONDAY 16:45-17:45**

Dr Michaela Keenan

School of the Built Environment, Ulster University

Michaela Keenan is Faculty Partnership Manager for Art, Design and the Built Environment. Pedagogic research interests include: the student experience; transition; induction; student retention; and student success. Michaela is a Senior Fellow of the HEA and Fellow of the Centre for Higher Education Research Practice.
Summary

This paper will explore how Academic Mentoring is effective in enhancing the student experience and in helping to improve retention. The Academic Mentor model is aligned to the creation of student belonging through the development of early staff-student contact which is nurtured particularly within the first semester of the first year study.
Abstract

This paper will explore how the introduction of a model of Academic Mentoring, which initiates contact between staff and student pre-induction and pre-entry, is effective in enhancing the student experience and in helping to improve retention. The Academic Mentor model is aligned to the creation of student belonging as a means of enhancing the student experience through the development of early staff-student contact and relationships which are nurtured through ongoing contact particularly within the first semester of study. Indeed, Tinto (2008) argued that in essence ‘access without support is not opportunity’.

Vallerrand (2008) related belonging to connectedness with Baumeister and Leary (1995) arguing that belonging is developed by regular and on-going contact which provides stability within the relationship. Belonging has also been a central element within the Higher Education Academy, ‘What Works, Student Retention and Success’ research whereby within Phase 1 it was noted that “meaningful interaction between staff-students” was one of the core elements when seeking to develop student belonging (HEA, 2012).

The School of the Built Environment, which traditionally and in-line with other similar Schools within the higher education sector in the UK, experienced significant levels of first year student attrition. The first step in our approach to implementing change was to recognise, as a team, that the first year student experience is both fragile and critical. Laying secure foundations as educators for our students is imperative both to secure their underpinning knowledge and also to work to prevent students avoidably exiting from their higher education journey. Since the introduction of the Academic Mentor model, attrition within the School has reduced significantly and early signs indicate that the model and shared team ethos to the first year experience is having a positive impact. This paper draws upon research evidence which includes: experience and learning from the discipline team who are part of the Higher Education Academy, Student Retention and Success Project Phase 2, first year belonging questionnaires and qualitative data from first year student focus groups.

Participants will be encouraged to discuss how this model could be enhanced and adopted across disciplines.

**ST38 - Improve Study Success, Prevent Study Delay**
ROOM C – MONDAY 16:45-17:45

Nova Ambachtsheer + Robin Terwindt

NHTV Breda University for Applied Sciences/Academy for Digital Entertainment

Nova Ambachtsheer: Lecturer Study Career Coaching, Course responsible, involved in Selection procedure, project Student retention, improve study success rates, Diversity & Inclusion officer, Competences development

Robin Terwindt: Lecturer, president of Board of Examiners, involved in curriculum development, student retention, institutional changes.

Summary

Improve Study Success, Prevent Study Delay

The goal for this project that started in 2013 was to improve the study success rate, to decrease the dropout rate, investigate causes for lack of study success and come up with a plan of action. The results are very promising. We implemented points of action to improve the success rate of the propedeutic phase, the main phase and the graduation phase of the education. Key words: ECTS, Information, Selection & Matching, Study coaching, Examination, MIS, role of lecturers, attendance

Abstract

Improve Study Success, Prevent Study Delay

The goal for this project that started in 2013 was to improve the study success rate, to decrease the dropout rate, investigate causes for lack of study success and come up with a plan of action. Right away, the need for an overall approach was recognized and the Board of examiners was involved to reorganize procedures, to simplify rules and regulations to get rid of the obstacles that were created during the years. A project leader started to research the possibilities to redesign a new “learning path” called Study Coaching, that would be integrated in the curriculum. The study coaching system was implemented very fast (in cooperation with BoE) and is different from other coaching/support programs, while it is the red thread in the curriculum. This is also recognized by the NVAO (accreditation organization for Dutch & Belgian Higher Education). The project is very successful, first year dropout rates are decreased (see table)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>2012/2013</th>
<th>2013/2014</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dropout rate IMEM year 1</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dropout rate IGAD year 1</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>35%</td>
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**ST43 – A multi-stakeholders’ approach to the transition from secondary to higher education: the case of teacher educations in Antwerp**

**ROOM C – MONDAY 16:45-17:45**

Boris Mets

Jo van den Hauwe

Expertise Network for Teacher Educations Antwerp (ELAnt)

University of Antwerp

Middelheimlaan 1

2020 Antwerp – Belgium

Boris.mets@elant.be

Boris Mets is coordinator of ELAnt, the Expertise Network for Teacher Educations Antwerp. He worked as a teacher in higher education and as a
researcher in the discipline of educational linguistics. In 2002-2009 he was responsible for the educational policy of the City of Antwerp. One of the topics in his current job is the transition from secondary to higher education, especially to teacher educations in adult education, university colleges and universities.

Jo van den Hauwe is project officer of ELAnt. He worked as a researcher in educational linguistics and second language learning and as a teacher educator.

Summary

In Antwerp, schools will face a shortage of teachers the next decade. Therefore, the municipality brings together a broad range of stakeholders in order to find solutions, especially ways to attract more students to the first year of teacher education and to involve these stakeholders in the organization of the first year. What can be learned from this multi-stakeholders approach?

Abstract

Antwerp is a city with 500,000 inhabitants in the north of Belgium. The primary and secondary schools in Antwerp (Belgium) face a huge challenge: there is a spectacular increase in the number of pupils, while a lot of teachers drop out, looking for jobs in other economic fields or leaving Antwerp schools for schools in the suburban areas surrounding Antwerp. Schools that have the reputation to be “easier” to work in. The result is a shortage of teachers in primary education and certain fields of study in secondary education. The Antwerp municipality took the initiative to bring together a broad range of stakeholders to face the challenge. Members of school boards, officials in the field of employment counseling, researchers, HR professionals and representatives of teacher education institutions. Starting from a labour market analysis a number of actions were taken, meant for different target audiences: teacher educators, starting teachers, school board members, young people in the transition from secondary to higher education and students in teacher education. The initiatives proposed are mainly in the field of communication, but another main topic is the question: “How do we motivate students from their first year on to work in schools in urban environments?”

The session will address following questions as starting points for discussion:
1. What actions were taken and what are the results so far?

2. What can we learn from this example about involving stakeholders from other fields than higher education in the transition from secondary to higher education.

3. What in this example is typical for the context of teacher education? What general lessons can be learned?

4. What could we learn from initiatives which are not specifically meant for students in teacher education?

**ST69 – Assisting first-year students Design Their Destiny. Experiences from Mathematics Teaching Programs for First-Year Students**

**ROOM C – MONDAY 16:45-17:45**

Amir Massoud Hashemi*

Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences University of Bergen

*Department of Computer and Mathematical sciences Faculty of Engineering and Business Administration Bergen University College

Amir Massoud Hashemi is Assistant Professor at Faculty of Engineering University College Bergen. He majored in applied mathematics in 1995 at the University of Bergen, and has since taught mathematics and statistics at the various engineering specializations at the University of Bergen. Hashemi has also been affiliated with the Department of Mathematics at the University of Bergen until 2013, and has been a guest lecturer at the Universidad Politécnica de Valencia since 2001.
Summary

The feeling of success is very important in the very first session for students [4]. It is essential that course program leads student to develop good study habits. Here it is reflected briefly on these changes and generally the importance of the role of the lecturer and teacher assistants on students’ motivation and desire to attend teaching activities and learn effectively.

Abstract

Higher education institutions face challenges in keeping first-year students active, engaged and motivated. The importance of planning the course program for first year subjects to cover students’ needs both academically and socially is discussed here. This work focuses on the importance of lecturers’ roles in dealing with first-year students and their academic needs. This study is a result of my experiences, as subject coordinator and lecturer, obtained from 2005 to 2013 teaching mathematics for science students at University of Bergen. Lecturer and faculty administration collaboratively have attempted to improve the educational and social activities in the first mathematics course for first-year science students at the University of Bergen.

New research reveals one in every fourth student at the University of Bergen withdraw their course during the first year [1]. Amongst Mathematics, Science and Technology Studies (MST) mathematics can be a contributing factor for withdrawing in their studies [2].

A recent article on this study presents effects of modifying of teaching programs on students’ performance and engaging and motivating less active and weak candidates [3]. The main focus in such changes has been to engage students to study systematically and to improve students’ motivation to learn mathematics. Final exam results and students’ satisfaction reflected in the course evaluation feedback has also been an indicator for coordination, innovation and management of teaching, Students’ attendance in teaching activities(classes, seminars and groups) has been important in these changes.

Literature

http://www.dn.no/talent/2014/03/26/hver-fjerde-uiibstudent-dropper-ut-innen-ett-ar


**P30 – Working with students to shape the transitional experience to university education in a trans-disciplinary course.**

**ROOM E – MONDAY 16:45-17:45**

Quigley, Terry; Harding, John

School Creative Arts & Technologies / Ulster University

Terry Quigley

Terry Quigley is a Lecturer in Creative Technologies and Design. He holds a Ba (Hons) Visual Communications and MSc Computing and Design, both from Ulster University. His research interests include info-graphic visualisation, graphical user interface design (GUI) and user experience design (UX), and exploring novel technologies within teaching and learning. He holds an HEIF
Academic Fellowship Award (2012) and is an active member of the Research Institute Art & Design (RIAD).

John Harding

John Harding is a graduate of both the Sonic Arts Research Centre (SARC) University Belfast, and the Times Higher Education Award winning institution; Teeside University. John is heavily involved in a diverse range of emerging technologies and research in various fields of study including: Advanced Audio Production, Developmental Psychoacoustics, Electronics, New Interfaces for Musical Expression, Visual and Audio Programming, Sound Synthesis and Signal Processing and Trajectorybased Spatialisation.

Summary

CT is a trans-disciplinary course offering a broad range of topics from music technology, visual arts to computer programming. It was found that due to this, all students in semester one, year one, experienced low levels of confidence at some stage during the transitional period.

This paper reports on the interventions and outcomes implemented by staff and students of Creative Technologies (CT) aimed at improving year one attrition rates and improving the student experience during the transitional period to university study, which can be particularly difficult within a trans-disciplinary course.

Abstract

This paper reports on the interventions and outcomes implemented by staff and students of Creative Technologies (CT) as part of the UK wide What works? Student Retention & Success Programme, aimed at improving year one attrition rates and improving the student experience during the transitional period to university study. Staff identified issues with year one attrition rates on the course which were directly related to difficulties experienced by students during the transitional period to university study.

CT is a trans-disciplinary course offering a broad range of topics ranging from music technology, visual arts to computer programming. It was found that due
to this, all students in semester one, year one, experienced low levels of confidence at some stage during the transitional period. As a response, staff worked together with current and previous year one students to identify specific elements of their transitional experience that could be improved.

Once these elements were identified, staff and students worked in collaboration over a 12 week period to design, implement and evaluate a series of interventions to the existing student program aimed at enhancing the student experience and increasing their sense of belonging during the difficult transitional period of university study within a trans-disciplinary course.

This process helped the team establish four specific aims on which to focus;

1. Build positive staff-student relationships.

2. Help students develop team-working skills.

3. Increase students’ sense of belonging to the course / university and develop and consolidate their interest in the subject area.

4. Improve student experience and increase their confidence and performance across a range of disciplines.

During the next phase of the project the team designed four interventions responding to each specific aim;

1. Overnight field trip

2. Team based hackathon activity

3. Created a shared space for students

4. Manage active learning during transitional period for module CRE104

The overall impact of these interventions was immediately reflected by a drop in the course attrition rates. In 2012/13, 10% of year one CT students dropped out.
In 2013/14 after this study 0% of students dropped out from year one. In a wider context there are of course other influencing factors which could be attributed to this statistical improvement such as the induction process, admissions, marketing, student profile etc, however, there were no notable differences in these processes from the previous years.

Overall students were positive about the interventions and felt they achieved, to varying degrees, their intended aims. The results from the goal-free questionnaires indicated students benefitted from their partnership with staff throughout the process and expressed appreciation at the level of effort, time and consideration staff contributed to improving their university experience which in itself increased their motivation and sense of belonging.

All students agreed that having a deeper understanding of module rationale and active learning strategy in relation to the management and delivery of content, collaborative work, assessment and feedback contributed to fostering a sense of community within the class.

Learning from this process has resulted in all staff who teach modules within the early transitional period to work with students to manage active learning strategies together with student partners in order to identify areas of good practice.

**P41 – PUSHING BOUNDARIES: DEVELOPING STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND ‘STUDENTS AS PARTNERS’ IN FIRST YEAR**

**ROOM E – MONDAY 16:45-17:45**

Colin Bryson, Ruth Furlonger and Fae Rinaldo-Langridge

Combined Honours Centre
Newcastle University, UK

Colin is a lecturer who believes in students as partners. He introduced a holistic student engagement strategy in 2009. Ruth is a recent graduate from Combined who was truly engaged as an undergraduate in this agenda and subsequently now works as a staff member to take that forward.

Summary

This paper evaluates an initiative to develop strong student engagement, and thus foster transformative learning (Bryson, 2014). Within a context where there is already a holistic student strategy in place and the ethos and practices of students as partners, we introduced first year students to the pedagogies of partnership.

Abstract

The notion of student engagement (SE) has been embraced by universities in recent years, certainly so in the UK. We believe that SE is fundamental, as it is the pre-requisite of transformational student learning (Bryson, 2014); and that ‘becoming’ is the true purpose of HE (Fromm, 1978). However the transition to university often results in SE during first year being more about settling in rather than students becoming strongly engaged through participation in the sort of activities that induce transformative learning, such as ‘students as partners’ (Healey et al, 2014). Can the early stage of the student life-cycle accommodate such radical approaches? Are the students ready?

Multidisciplinary studies present an even more challenging transition as social and academic integration (Tinto, 1993) is made more difficult by issues of identity and belonging (Thomas, 2012). In Combined at Newcastle we have introduced a holistic SE strategy to address such issues. We have been successful at building a community and alleviating these tensions. However for first years there are fewer opportunities and less involvement in roles such as reps, mentors, ambassadors and consultants; that involve the true principles of partnership: co-ownership, equalisation of power relations, participative democracy and full membership of an educational community (Dewey, 1916; Freire, 1972). Prior to this initiative, students undertook a fairly traditional first year curriculum.
This paper evaluates our attempts to extend partnership approaches to the first year and takes a critical look at outcomes. In 2014 we introduced a compulsory module into the Combined Honours curriculum which focussed on interdisciplinary perspectives. Such a module was proposed by students and very much co-designed by students (but again second and third years). It is non-traditional in approaches to assessment and curriculum; emphasising student empowerment and reflective learning. Evaluation evidence was gathered through; interviews at beginning and end with students taking/not taking the module; a cohort survey eight weeks in and again at the end of the year; feedback gathered from peer mentors, and from focus groups as part of a review of the first year; in addition to feedback from the staff.

Interim analysis shows that this approach has had a more mixed reception compared to similar, earlier initiatives (in later stages of the degree). There was a polarity between students who have really engaged with this and students who expressed a sense of disempowerment and frustration (Mann, 2001) notwithstanding the advocacy of other students, including peer mentors. This creates major tensions in our ethos of mutuality and partnership! It would appear that an acclimatisation process is required; relationship and trust building, matching and adjusting expectations through discourse. That is not easy to achieve so early in the transitional period. Sharing and equalisation of power (especially when assessment is involved) and responsibility (when not all students desire more of that) is a fraught and challenging process. We will consider this case study in the light of previous literature and research (e.g. Cook-Sather et al, 2014), sharing lessons learned and discussing ways forward for the first year experience.

W15 – Students as Partners in Redesigning the First Year Experience

DANCE ROOM – MONDAY 16:45-17:45

Workshop – 60 minutes

Professor Stuart Brand
Luke Millard

Alexander Gittings (student)

School / Department / Institution

Centre for Enhancement of Learning and Teaching, Birmingham City University

Professor Stuart Brand is Director of the Learning Experience and head of the Centre for Enhancement of Learning and Teaching (CELT). He is well published in the field of student engagement and is a National Teaching Fellow in the UK and leads the university’s work around the student learning experience.

Luke Millard is Head of Student Engagement at Birmingham City University and is a Principal Fellow of the UK Higher Education Academy. His key areas of work are around Student Academic Partners, the First Year Experience and student surveys. He is the University’s lead for the HEA What works: student retention and success programme.

Alex Gittings is a first generation University student from Wolverhampton studying BSc (Hons) Computer Networks. In addition, he works at the Students’ Union as an ambassador and in CELT as a first year student intern assisting projects regarding first year experience.

Summary

This session will explore how students engaged in a process to help redesign the first year experience across three Schools; what the products were of this collaboration; the impact of these on student retention and success and how the products were embedded and grew from local to institution wide initiatives.

Abstract

Birmingham City University has a first year institutional retention rate above 90% which is in line with many UK Universities. However, hidden within that
figure are some programmes with less impressive outcomes. Those areas became the focus of a change initiative as the University sought to raise the prominence of the first year experience as providing the foundation for future student success.

Developments arose out of the What Works: Student Retention and Success change initiative co-ordinated by the UK’s Higher Education Academy. This national development across 13 Universities invited universities to bid to participate who wished to focus upon the first year experience with an aim to ‘identify and implement whole-institutional approaches to improve student retention and success’. https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/workstreams-research/themes/retention-and-success/what-works-student-retention-and-success-change

Within the UK, BCU has a reputation for its student engagement work and the ethos of ‘students as partners’. As a result, the institutional approach to redesign first year programmes had to marshall the student voice. Each course identified students who would work with staff to reshape the first year experience. Initially, three half day workshops were provided to enable the space and time for thought and process to be shaped and programmes were encouraged to work collaboratively and share ideas. The three areas selected were Media, Radiology and the Built Environment.

The national What Works initiative tasks Universities to:

– improve the strategic approach to the engagement, belonging, retention and success of students

– implement or enhance specific interventions in the areas of induction, active learning and co-curricular activities in three selected discipline areas

– evaluate the impact in both formative and summative ways.

These aims were reflected in the process with which our faculty and students engaged and has now impacted beyond the initial programmes. We will show how local initiatives that demonstrated real impact led to institutional initiatives.
Our session will explore the process of change at Birmingham City drawing upon the experiences of students and faculty. Student co-design led to processes changing, pedagogy being revised and a greater focus on some of hygiene factors that impact on student perceptions. We will explore some of the interventions from improved expectation setting and e-mentoring to a new approach to Welcome week and picnics in the park.

Developing the work of Thomas (2012) we will also explore how belonging, engagement and student self-confidence have been impacted by our interventions and draw upon the national data from the What Works initiative to inform our discussions with you. The session will be delivered by a student-staff team comprising a first year computing student, the University’s Director of Learning Experience and Head of Student Engagement who will share their experiences and invite participants to engage in some vibrant debate around the issues raised.

Parallel session 3

TUESDAY 09:00-10:00

P61 – Peer – mentoring programme at the University of Latvia – who are the beneficiaries?

AUDITORIUM – TUESDAY 09:00-10:00

Dr. Agita Šmitiņa

Dr. Inta Jaunzeme

Student services of the University of Latvia
Agita Smitina, Dr.sc.admin, Career counsellor. The main professional interests are related to social psychology, educational psychology, and also different activities of student guidance in higher education institutions. Leads seminars for students about career development, communication, stress and time management. Doctoral Thesis has been written about Improvement of Student Guidance at Higher Education Institutions in Latvian.

Inta Jaunzeme, Dr.sc.admin., Deputy Director of Student services. The main fields of responsibilities are student service development at university, management of guidance activities for prospective and 1st year students, online resource (website and intranet) development, expertise in career management and guidance in education sector, research on students transition from school to university.

Summary

In order to support first-year student’s faster adaptation in social and academic environment, Student Service organizes mentors training course “Psychological Aspects of Peer Mentoring” and supervision of students. The paper analyses current situation in peer-mentoring programme provision and presents the results of the training course implementation, student benefits and needs in mentoring process.

Abstract

The aim of the paper is to present development of peer mentoring program at the University of Latvia, implementation and results from two year experience. Research is based on results of annual 1st year students’ questionnaire (n=578, 2013; n=710, 2014), development of training programme “Psychological Aspects of Peer Mentoring”, focus group interviews in 2013-2015 (n=120) and data that was received from mentors and mentees questionnaire in 2015.

Higher education institutions are looking for more appropriate and effective model to support students’ transition from school to university and adapt to the new environment. Traditionally, mentoring in higher education institutions has either occurred informally or as a planned program where young students are matched with experienced students (mentors) in a formal or informal program (Darvin, Palmer, 2009) Educational psychologists and researchers indicate that peer mentoring in higher education is regarded as an effective intervention to
ensure the success and retention of vulnerable students (Terrion, 2007, Ross-Thomas, Elaine, and Bryant, 1994, etc.). Many universities have therefore implemented some form of mentoring program as part of their student guidance services.

The case of the University of Latvia shows that peer mentoring programme is a part of student services provided by faculties and Student service department. The programme has positive impact on student skills development if staff of the university has a good cooperation with Student Council. Roles and responsibilities in provision of peer-mentoring programme are divided between students and Student services counsellors. Students are responsible for delivering information and coordination of mentors and mentees. Student service counsellors provide supervision of programme development and mentors training. Since 2013 each year 60 mentors take part in the training programme, which contains guidance, and communication skills development, self-assessment, case studies and experience exchange among students from different faculties. Students have to choose the training as an elective course with 2 credit point workload.

Beneficiaries from the programme are the mentees, mentors and the university. Researchers (Penner, 2001) indicates that there are many benefits for the mentor – for example, enrichment through seeing someone else grow and succeed, creativity generated by issues and ideas generated by someone younger and newer, friendship. For the organization benefits could be also stronger individuals offering higher quality performance, increased connectivity and caring, support to formal employee orientation and development programs, greater spiritual protection for persons and the organization. Results from focus group interviews in 2013 and 2014 showed that students who participated in the programme improved their skills, attitude towards their role in guidance and gave a useful feedback for service and programme development. Assessing the results of peer-mentoring programme, cooperation with students’ council and mentors training course, we conclude that activities have to be accessible for students from all faculties. To provide qualified support, university have to organize mentors training and supervision, and involve into process the academic staff.

References


**P22 – Guidance Path for First Year Students Engineering Science towards Midterm Tests**

**AUDITORIUM – TUESDAY 09:00-10:00**

An Vanfroyenhoven, Prof.dr.ir. Tinne De Laet

Tutorial Services/Faculty of Engineering Science/ KU Leuven

An Vanfroyenhoven received the M.Sc. degree in mathematics from the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (KU Leuven), Belgium in 2001. After being a teacher in a secondary school (Sancta Maria Leuven, 2001-2010) and a teaching assistant at the department of Mathematics (KU Leuven, 2010-2012) she started working for the tutorial services of the Faculty of Engineering Science (KU Leuven) in 2012.

Tinne De Laet received the M.Sc. degree in engineering science and the Ph.D. degree in mechanical engineering from the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (KU Leuven), Belgium in 2005 and 2010 respectively. After being a postdoctoral Fellow of the FWO she became a tenure track professor and the Head of the Tutorial Services of Engineering Science of the KU Leuven in 2013.
Summary

Tutors of the Faculty of Engineering Science will report on a guidance path that they have elaborated for first year students towards a midterm test. The following topics will be covered: the results of a survey conducted among these students, two organized information sessions, and the student evaluation of these sessions.

Abstract

Each year 500 first year students enroll in the studies Bachelor of Engineering Science at the KU Leuven. The first evaluation moment in the two-semester system takes place in the middle of the 1st semester. Each student is assigned a set of exams, Calculus and Mechanics or Algebra and Chemistry. These exams are non-binding written midterm tests consisting of open questions, except for Mechanics where multiple choice questions are used. The level of difficulty of the questions is similar to the expected level of the exam in January.

At the conference we will report on a guidance path that we have elaborated for the first year students towards this midterm test. The following topics will be covered: the results of a survey conducted among these students, the two information sessions, and the student evaluation of these sessions.

The tutors of the Faculty of Engineering Science experience through their personal contacts with the students the need for more guidance towards the midterm tests. A survey amongst the students on the expected difficulties and the desired support, points out that they don’t really know what the professor expects and how to prepare for the exam. They also admit having difficulties in planning their work.

In the first session we focus on: ‘How to prepare for an exam?’, ‘What level of learning does the professor expect?’ and ‘How to formulate a correct answer to a question?’ Using midterm questions and students’ answers of the previous year (Hendry et al. 2011) we try to give an insight in the expectations of the professors. Combined with tips and tricks involving making notes and structuring course material we help them with the preparation towards the midterm tests and the final exams. Additionally, a student counselor deals with the subject planning.
The second session takes place after the midterm test. At that moment the students already know their results and had the possibility to have a look at the marking of their exam. Learning from their own mistakes and those of their colleagues is the aim of this session (Robinson et al. 2013). In general the students’ answers lack structure and they do not draw clear and substantive figures that support their reasoning. Based on the students’ answers the tutor highlights the good practices as well as the answers that didn’t match the expectations.

The students, who attended the non-compulsory evening sessions in large numbers, filled in an evaluation form after each session. Most students recommend the session to future students.

In the future we want to reflect on the following questions: Is a plenary session the best way to support the students? Are two sessions with a similar format necessary? Which timing makes the sessions most effective? How can we measure the effect of the sessions on the study behavior and the study results?

References


**P62 – Measures to reduce dropout – the more the better?**

**ROOM A – TUESDAY 09:00-10:00**
One hour paper

Paper + 2x show and tell, 60-minute slot (for structure, see abstract)

Elisabeth Hovdhaugen*, Eirik Welo**, Tor Egil Førland***

*Department of Education, UiO/NIFU

** Faculty of Humanities, UiO

*** Department of Archaeology, Conservation and History, Faculty of Humanities UiO

Hovdhaugen holds a PhD in Sociology, and the theme for her thesis was dropout and completion in HE. She currently works as a senior researcher at NIFU (Nordic Institute for studies in Innovation, Research and Education) and as assistant professor at the Department of Education, University of Oslo.

Welo is appointed Vice Dean for Studies at the Faculty of Humanities, University of Oslo, and will hold this position until the end of 2018. He holds a position at the University of Oslo in Ancient Greek.

Førland is professor in History and the Head of Department of Archaeology, Conservation and History at the University of Oslo.

Summary

Retention rates among first year students at the Faculty of Humanities have been low for quite a while, but the institution have recently been working actively with the issue. Some departments have tried out many different forms of measures where others have chosen to bet on a few measures that they have implemented.

Paper-abstract:
The Faculty of Humanities at the University of Oslo have struggled with relatively low retention rates among their first year students for quite a while, and as a result of this the completion rates for bachelor students is low. However, attention to the issue of student retention is high, both at the faculty administration level and at all the seven departments at the faculty. However, there are variations in the approach different departments have chosen, in their strive to battle low retention rate and to foster enhanced engagement among first year students.

Some departments have tried out many different forms of measures where others have chosen to bet on a few measures that they have implemented. Measures that are related to progression or mastering of studies or how the studies are organized or structured are most common in numbers: most departments deploy these measures. However, at some departments are pedagogic measures, exemplified by ‘signature lectures’, quite common, and there are also a range of socializing measures that have existed for quite a while at all departments.

Based on the departmental self-evaluation reports of measures to battle low retention and dropout, it is hard to determine which of all these approaches have worked better. However, this is also partly related to the general focus on battling low retention rates at all departments in the Faculty of Humanities. The institutional engagement that all departments at the Faculty of Humanities display is genuine and display a devotion and a creativity in working to reduce dropout and enhance retention. This engagement in itself is important, as it function as a signal to students that they are at a department that actually care and that wish to see the students through to graduation.

Show and tell, representatives from Faculty of Humanities, University of Oslo:

Eirik Welo

Vice Dean for Studies at the Faculty of Humanities

In recent years, the Faculty of Humanities has experienced low retention rates. In order to combat early student departure, the Faculty as a whole has tried a wide range of strategies. There is, however, still the need for better knowledge about effective measures. The Faculty aims at strengthening the retention rate
based on knowledge of targeted measures that are at the same time reliable and resource effective, and seeks to develop suitable strategies based on this.

Tor Egil Førland

Head of Department – Department of Archaeology, Conservation and History

In 2011–14 HF’s Department of Archaeology, Conservation and History ran a two-stage project aiming to monitor and improve bachelor student retention rates in history. The progress—every exam in every course—of all bachelor students admitted to the history program in 2008 was analyzed, giving a picture of at which point students slowed down or dropped out of the program. This first stage showed that the students failing to take exams (i.e. no ECTS credits) in the first semester had a vastly higher dropout rate from the program (96 %) than students who took at least one exam (50 % among those with 10–20 credits and 40 % among those who with the “expected” 30 credits or more). In the second stage, the Department attempted to reach no-show students by hiring senior students as mentors. The mentors failed to get the non-starters to attend courses, however, and after two years the mentor program was deemed a failure and was closed down.

ST9 – A Year in the Life of a University Student Support & Guidance Tutor

ROOM C – TUESDAY 09:00-10:00

Melanie Gill

School of Education, University of Brighton

Mel is a principal lecturer in the School of Education at the University of Brighton and the Student Support & Guidance Tutor for the School. She is also a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. Mel was a primary teacher and youth worker before joining the University in 2000.
Summary

This presentation explores and expands on data collected during 2013-14 in my Student Support & Guidance Tutor role for the School of Education at the University of Brighton. Most students’ issues are focused on stress and mental health, or learning support /dyslexia but many more issues will also be discussed. The focus will be on the first year experience.

Abstract

This is my sixth year as the Student Support & Guidance Tutor for the School of Education and this role comprises 0.5 of my Principal Lecturer post, with the other 0.5 encompassing a wider ‘Student Engagement Coordinator’ role as well as my teaching role. The SSGT role is split between offering individual one-to-one support and guidance, and facilitating voluntarily attended, group, academic writing support sessions. The support and guidance offered is often related to academic needs but also helps students manage and enhance their general wellbeing so that they can be as successful as possible whilst at University. The focus is on first year students, but is available to all. The role often involves supporting students to engage with Student Services to access the Disability & Dyslexia team or Counselling and Wellbeing team.

This research relates only to individual contact with students. In 2013/14 there were approx 2000 students enrolled in the School of Education and I had individual contact with 229, over 10% of the total. Data was gathered using online questionnaires and feedback from follow – up emails. This is the fifth year data has been gathered and trends are now able to be analysed. I will discuss the importance of providing support in the first year, to help ensure success and retention in the following years.

Most students’ issues are focused on stress and mental health, or learning support /dyslexia in line with last year. I found that more students this year had multiple and/or more serious issues and needed repeat appointments/contact. Numbers thinking about withdrawing or taking a break from their studies have increased by a quarter on last year. In many cases I have been able to offer support and guidance myself, but for others I have found it necessary to suggest referrals to Student Services or other staff.
It was encouraging to find that 5 out of the 28 online survey respondents (18%) stated that they had considered withdrawal from their course, but stayed on due to support from the SSGT. Another 2 gave similar feedback via emailed comments, implying that at least 7 students had been retained who might otherwise have withdrawn. This has huge financial implications in the current climate.

For the EFYE presentation I will focus mostly on first year student issues.

Background references:


Wilcox. P, Winn. S, and Fyvie Gauld, M. (2005) “It was nothing to do with the university, it was just the people”: the role of social support in the first year
ST51 – Peer tutoring and the tutor training at the University of Eastern Finland: Peer support as a systematical part of advising services for new students.

ROOM C – TUESDAY 09:00-10:00

Katri Ruth

Student and Learning Services, University of Eastern Finland, Finland

Ms. Katri Ruth (MA Psych) works as a Study Counselling Psychologist at the University of Eastern Finland (UEF). The focus of her work is to support student’s possibilities to meaningful studies on a personal and organisational level. Developing counselling system, including peer tutoring practices, is one of her duties at UEF.

Summary

The peer tutoring is a part of the advising system at the UEF. In order to develop the peer support into a tutoring system a clear structure, good networking as well as training for tutors are needed. The focus of the presentation will be in the peer tutor training.

Abstract

The University of Eastern Finland (UEF) is one of the largest in Finland with 15,000 degree students at three campuses located triangularly approximately
150 kilometers away from each other. 3,000 students are admitted to the UEF each year.

The peer tutor is a senior student who is trained to help the new students to join the academic community, adapt into the university system and student life. The purpose of the peer tutoring is to support the new students in the beginning of their studies including support in practical issues of studies. Tutors help new students to build social contacts and introduce the campus city, services and leisure time possibilities. In addition, peer tutors for international students help them to adapt into the Finnish culture and lifestyle. Peer tutors can help with the study planning by sharing their own experiences, but the university staff members are responsible for academic advising. Ideally, teacher-tutors and peer tutors co-operate.

Peer tutors contact the new students on the first day of the semester. The tutoring sessions are a part of the course “Starting Academic Studies” which is obligatory for all the students. The tutoring includes 10 small group sessions and in addition the peer tutors usually organize different social events and co-operate with the Student Union.

The peer tutoring is organized in co-operation with the UEF Student and Learning Services, the Faculties and the Student Union. UEF and the Student Union have a contract in which the responsibilities of tutoring are defined. The peer tutor training and development network includes also a representative from the Finnish Student Health Services, the Campus City, a university chaplain and senior tutors (experienced peer tutors). The training is the key element to insure the quality of tutoring. We train 260 tutors from 3 campuses every year. Tutoring training course (2 credits) comprises 31h contact training and 23h independent study including learning assignments, tutoring plans and tutoring report with a feedback on how the tutoring was organized and how it succeeded.

In the training, the tutor obtains practical knowledge and skills to act as a tutor. The training course gives in-depth knowledge about the UEF practices, services, curriculum and current issues which the new student should know about. Furthermore, the tutor understands the general goals of tutoring and the tutor’s responsibilities and role as a part of the overall advising system. In addition, the tutor learns about the principles of working in small groups.

The focus of my presentation will be in the peer tutor training, how we support building the competence of the peer tutors and what is the role of a counselling
psychologist in that. In addition, I will bring out some key points on how to improve tutoring as an integrated part of the university advising system.

**ST54 – Getting students on the team**

**ROOM C – TUESDAY 09:00-10:00**

Kjell Roymond Olsen (Student representative)

Harald Åge Sæthre (Project Manager)

Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences

University of Bergen

Kjell Roymond Olsen is a student representative cooperating with the faculty to improve the students chances of success throughout their time at MN-faculty. He is EFYE2015 student contact, and is active in several different committees and boards.

Harald Åge Sæthre works with different projects throughout the curriculum. His main goal is to recruit more and better students, see more students succeed with good results and to get highest possible retention. Sæthre has worked as a school teacher, but mainly as an academic adviser and leader of the Section of Student and Academic Affairs.

Summary

This project aimed to get more students to undertake voluntary duties and tasks by making a change in how we recruited and educated student representatives. The aim has been to achieve a competition between students to get various positions at the faculty, department and in the student democracy.

Abstract
Many institutions struggle to get students to undertake voluntary duties and tasks. The missing participation implies that an important group of resource persons cannot influence and have little opportunity to give their contribution. Contributions that can increase the quality of services institution offer their students. This project aimed to create a good circle by finding ways to recruit and educate student representatives. The aim has been to achieve a competition between students to get various positions at the faculty, department and in the student democracy.

Effects

– Just after two years we have got a situation where students compete about positions

– By implementing an annual cycle among student organizations we have strengthened the continuity

– Students are much more active, and never hesitate to neither come to our offices nor send us emails to get information, guidance and clarifications. And most important; tell us their view.

– Student representatives behave overall more like they are a part of the team.

What is done?

– In a week where freshers are encouraged to work with study and career planning, Staff members tell how important experience in voluntary duties and tasks are for future possibilities in the labor market. Then students that have different positions tell what they do and personal experiences they have with their voluntary work.
– All students in different honorary positions take part in a 2 days’ workshop outside the campus with accommodation. Here they learn more about the organization and get to know each other. Then they discuss what issues they will give priority, how they will follow up and how they will work together. With a little support from staff members, students organize and lead the workshop themselves. And they also arrange food and social activities in the evening themselves. In addition to this workshop the same group of students attend and organize their own meetings where they follow up these cases each semester.
ST64 – The University of Bergen Library’s role in helping students succeed

ROOM C – TUESDAY 09:00-10:00

Simon Mitternacht

University of Bergen Library

Ane Landøy is cand.philol from the University of Bergen (1990), and has worked since 2002 at the University Library as Head of department. Part of her interest is on Information Literacy among students, both Norwegians, and Romanian and Moldovan, where the University Library participates in development projects in academic libraries.

Summary

University of Bergen Library has developed a web resource www.sokogskriv.no for academically correct writing. In this presentation, the interaction between the library teaching and the web resource will be shown.

Abstract

In order for students to succeed from the first semester, all parts of the university need to work together. In this presentation we will focus on the university library’s role: How do we help students to make the transition through the year? How do we prepare students for subsequent studies? At the University of Bergen, the library focuses on ethical and correct use of information sources, especially for the new students, in order to combat plagiarism and for them to immediately become aware of the requirements in academia. The library has developed the resource “Search and write” freely available on the net (www.sokogskriv.no) where students find information about how to write academically. The interaction between the library teaching and the web resource will be shown. The face-to-face teaching and training of
students together in groups are important, and especially valuable for the new students, but the web resource with many additional features and gadgets are also necessary for a good student experience. The resource is openly available 24/7, and may be accessed as many times as the students like, whenever they feel a need.

**W12 – Are Digital Natives fully equipped for initiation into the University Tribe?**

**ROOM E – TUESDAY 09:00-10:00**

Workshop – 60 minutes

Joanne Smailes

Northumbria University

Joanne Smailes is a Teacher Fellow at the University of Northumbria, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK. Her research interests lie within the area of student engagement particularly technology focussing on entry level cohorts. Her subject specialism is teaching statistics/mathematics to non-mathematicians. Joanne also holds leadership roles in academic development of Faculty.

Summary

This session examines the concept of digital literacy and its impact on student experience; particular attention is paid to the common perception (or misconception) that students enter HE more technologically advanced than faculty. How, as educators, do we address the implications of such assumptions in first year programmes of study?

Abstract
Research is now beginning to question a number of the assumptions in regard to technology within learning, teaching and assessment. Ferreira (2012) observes the desire students place on face to face interaction with peers and lecturers as a contradiction to the current use of educational technologies. (Calvani et al., 2012) study of 14-16 year olds noted that although they illustrate high levels of technical competence they illustrate a distinct lack of higher order application of technology increasingly labelled as “digital literacy”.

Digital Natives and Immigrants, terms established by (Prensky, 2001) are comparative terms which could be generally applied to faculty and students in respect to learning and teaching technology. The terms can also be viewed as slightly divisive as natives are assumed to possess advanced digital fluency. Are faculty, who would mostly be defined as digital immigrants, any less digitally fluent?

Technology is now at the heart of teaching and learning rather than supplemental. However, is technology establishing a new educational paradigm or simply replicating established methods? For example, (Lameras et al., 2012) remarks on the lack of research which coherently brings together technology with learning. (Davies, 2011) defines three levels of technology/digital literacy, the third of which is defined as Phronesis – an ability to best use technology according to a situation even if this includes not actually using technology.

This interactive workshop will explore the interrelated dilemmas that the use of technology in teaching and learning presents and its implications for ensuring that students induction and first year studies adequately prepares them for higher level of learning and more specialist technology use.

Workshop outline:

Introductions (2 mins)

Individual Exercise: Top Ten Technology Triangle (8 mins)

– Participants will be asked to categorise their own personal use of technology and categorise the top ten and how they are split between Home, Research, Teaching and Learning.
They will then be asked to define where the gaps, overlaps are in terms of use and provide a rationale of why the potential gaps may exist.

Discussion Topic (s): (10-15 mins)

– What is your impression of students’ skills in technology?

– Are there any gaps in knowledge between faculty and students?

Presentation: (10 mins)

– Presenter’s primary research

Plenary: (20-25 mins)

– What practical steps can be taken to improve digital literacy in first year programmes?

– Development of Action plan

References:


W17 – Peer Mentoring for target groups – What would be a valuable extension to our mentoring programme for First Generation Students?

DANCE ROOM – TUESDAY 09:00-10:00

Workshop – 30 minutes

Victoria Reszler

University of Graz, Austria / Educational and Student Services / 4students

Victoria Reszler studied German Language and Literature at the University of Graz and works for the Educational and Student Services at the University of Graz. She has been part of 4students, the student information service, since 2011.

Summary

In 2013 the University of Graz developed a peer mentoring programme for prospective and first year students who are the first ones in their immediate family to attend university. Now we want to open the mentoring programme for other target groups (e.g. international students). In this challenge workshop I want to discuss: What would be a valuable extension?
Abstract

In Austria, students with an educationally disadvantaged background are still underrepresented in higher education and are struggling with higher drop-out rates in the first year of studying. In 2013, the University of Graz intended to improve the support for so-called first generation students (FGS) by developing a peer mentoring programme for future and first year students who are the first ones in their immediate family to attend university. Since September 2013, two mentors (who are FGS as well) have been in charge of supporting FGS when entering university and moving through the first critical year of studying. The mentees have the opportunity to attend the programme already in their last school year, when they prepare for university until the end of the second semester. In the course of this mentoring programme, the mentees can take part in an individually arranged and guided trial study day, where the mentor takes them around the campus. They can visit the university’s departments, the libraries of the different institutes and participate in a course to get a realistic insight into the study programme they are interested in. Apart from that, the peer mentors offer individual guidance in person and via e-mail on topics such as getting started at university, student life, financial support, learning and writing skills, etc. The pilot project is running till December 2015 and now we have to ask ourselves – what now, what are the next steps?

Since there is no targeted support for international students who attend university as regular students or for students with a migration background, we are thinking about opening the mentoring programme also for this target groups.

Audience participation:

- Think of a mentoring programme for a particular target group. Which target group would you choose, who needs support, what would you offer? (discussion in group of approx. 4, then short presentation in plenum)

- What are the benefits of a mentoring programme for particular social groups and what are the negative aspects? (List pros & cons)

W40 – “Just because it works for you, doesn’t necessarily mean it’ll work for
me…”: Exploring the holistic support required for First Year students with disabilities in Higher Education

DANCE ROOM – TUESDAY 09:00-10:00

Workshop – 30 minute

Celeste Wolfensberger

University of Johannesburg

Celeste Wolfensberger is an Educational Psychologist and Team Leader for the Disability Services Unit at a university in South Africa. Passionate about providing the specialised support these students require to ensure academic success, her area of interest lies in Inclusive Education practices, particularly in Higher Education.

Summary

In this challenge workshop, the presenter wishes to explore what constitutes holistic support for first year students with disabilities. She will share with the audience, the unique challenges that exist when supporting students with disabilities within higher education. Drawing on actual case studies and contextual examples, the presenter will aim to facilitate a meaningful discussion of what holistic support to this population of student could look like, and draw upon the audience’s experiences to conceptualise what it could ultimately look like. Therefore the audience will be requested to share examples of how disability is supported in their own institutions, with the aim of learning and collaboratively explore alternate solutions to this multifaceted and often complex dimension of support within FYE.

Abstract
The holistic support required by students with disabilities (special needs), remains a specialised domain within the conceptualisation of the First Year Experience. Disability units within Higher Education Institutions often drive this support, and have undoubtedly contributed to the retention and in turn, the academic success of these first year students. The support that these units are expected to provide, is as varied and diverse as the physical, sensory, learning and psychological barriers that its first year students present with.

The ever-changing and diverse student population within tertiary education institutions continually challenge the interventions used by disability units. Often socio-economic, psycho-social and attitudinal barriers to disability need to be considered first, before academic support can be effectively be put in place.

In this challenge workshop, the presenter wishes to explore what constitutes holistic support for first year students with disabilities. She will share with the audience, the unique challenges that exist when supporting students with disabilities. Drawing on actual case studies and contextual examples, the presenter will aim to facilitate a meaningful discussion of what holistic support to this population of student within higher education currently looks like, and draw upon the audience’s experiences to conceptualise what it could ultimately look like. Therefore the audience will be requested to share examples of how disability is supported in their own institutions, with the aim of learning and collaboratively explore alternate solutions to this multifaceted and often complex dimension of support within FYE.

Parallel session 4

TUESDAY 13:00-14:00
P68 – Active, Creative and Critical Thinking: Engaging Year 1 Students Groups with Final Year Mentors Offers Enhanced Employability for ALL

AUDITORIUM – TUESDAY 13:00-14:00

Michaela Black

School of Computing & Information Engineering/Faculty of Computing & Engineering/ Ulster University

Dr Michaela Black is a current Fellow of CHERP and Senior Fellow of HEA. Currently a Senior Lecturer in the School of Computing and Information Engineering, Faculty Learning & Teaching Co-ordinator delivering a strong focus on Active Learning, developing Professional Skills, Employability and Entrepreneurship. Current project member for pedagogic work on HEA Student Retention and Success What Works Project for student belonging.

Summary

Year 1 students entering University have challenges impacting on their engagement and belonging. Some applicants may not have developed the vital soft skills such as Creative and Critical Thinking. We will offer an embedded model of student-staff collaboration on curriculum design highlighting how final and year 1 students design and develop engaging learning environments sessions.

Abstract

Year 1 students entering University have challenges, which have a strong impact on their engagement and belonging. Not all of these are related to the subject knowledge. A key proportion of applicants will have experienced courses which are very task orientated and have not developed the vital soft
skills to overcome discipline threshold concepts. One of these key skills is: *Creative and Critical Thinking.* (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tsui, 2002; Van Gelder, 2005)

Students really need to be able to:

- analyze a real problem with real end users;
- creatively design potential solutions;
- compare and critique these identifying what methodology and practices are better and understand why;
- and finally choose a solution and be comfortable getting it critiqued and receive formative critical feedback.

This is a very daunting experience as an enthusiastic and excited year 1 undergraduate entering classes often in excess of 100+ students. This can cause real retention issues.

This presentation will offer a staff and student mentor perspective of a very successful model, which was created from student-staff collaboration on curriculum design. The presentation will highlight how a standard lecture was replaced with an interactive group driven class, which is delivered in one room by staff and final year student mentors. The ecology of the class is a very active class requiring students to prepare in advance, engage with their group, share and compare problem solving using whiteboards under the guidance of a final year mentor. This allows the students to think aloud, share initial solutions, compare and discuss their strengths and limitations.

Results from year 1 students and mentors provide very positive qualitative and quantitative feedback with enhanced student learning gain, belonging and retention. Feedback from employers has enabled additional refinements to the planned activities to extend and promote additional soft skills. The final year mentors received positive employability feedback from potential employers, all securing employment earlier before completing their course, and now receive additional recognition through Ulster’s EDGE award.
P49 – Peer Mentoring as a way to support students thrive

AUDITORIUM – TUESDAY 13:00-14:00

Jenny Petrucci

The American University of Rome/King’s College London

BA in English and MA in Postcolonial studies. I am currently doing Doctorate in Education at King’s College London researching on First Generation College Students. I am working as Director of the First Year Program at The American University of Rome.

Summary

The Peer Mentor Programs will be discussed and further explored using the example of The American University of Rome.

Abstract

This session focuses primarily on the benefits of Peer Mentoring Programs within First Time in College Students. Starting from a theoretical approach about the way Peer mentoring has been evolving and changed over the past twenty years, this session will also provide the audience with a practical example of the Peer Mentor Program at The American University of Rome. Starting from the selection criteria for effective Peer Mentors, the speaker will move on to show examples of training activities. The role and tasks of Peer Mentors will be extensively discussed and explained. The presentation will conclude with possible improvements and further suggestions to put in place a Peer Mentor Program that could possibly have an impact on First Time in College students.

The Peer Mentor Program at the American University of Rome has been accessed multiple times through the use of qualitative as well as quantitative methods. The qualitative method has been carried out through the use of the
peer mentors’ weekly feedback whereas the quantitative method through the use of exit questionnaires submitted to all First Time in College Students. In the academic year 2012/13 97% of the students participating in the survey found the Peer Mentors helpful compared to the 35% of 2008/9. Since then various actions and improvements have been implemented in order to provide a more effective program. The First Year Seminar reported seeing the Peer Mentors predominantly as a source of information and support (51% and 33%) that was on their level, could see their point of view, and/or had ‘been there’ and understood. 8% of the students reported that the PMs were helpful with their research paper and a number found the positivity and energy of the PMs helpful. More work needs to be done in order to improve the academic support from the Peer Mentors.

P52 – Critical Associations and Continuity Anchors: The role of social relationships in how students make sense of the first year of University.

ROOM A – TUESDAY 13:00-14:00

One hour paper

Dr Diane Nutt and Emmi Hodgson

Teesside University, Middlesbrough, United Kingdom

Diane is chair of the European First Year Experience Conference Organising Committee, and the EFYE Network. She is based at Teesside University, UK. Emmi is a third year undergraduate student at Teesside, who worked as a student researcher on this project.

Summary

Family, friends and other associates play an important part in student transitions into and through University. This presentation discusses a recent qualitative
research project examining the role of social relationships in key transitions at two Universities. Research findings, and implications for staff working with first years, will be discussed.

Abstract

In this presentation we will explore findings from a qualitative research project, which took place at two Universities in the UK. The focus of the research was to explore the role of social relationships in first generation students’ sense of belonging at University. Research in the UK has highlighted the importance of ‘belonging’ to student retention and success (Thomas, 2012). The focus of this sense of belonging is primarily within the academic sphere, but making sense of the many factors which influence belonging is challenging. Recent work by Foster (2013) at Nottingham Trent has identified the role of family and friends in helping students stay at University, and their research has suggested that students’ accounts of the influences on their decisions are complex and they may underplay the role of social relationships.

Second year students from the two universities were interviewed about their first year experiences using a network mapping approach (Wallman, 1983; Nutt, 1999) and the notion of ‘critical associations’ (Davies and Heaphy, 2011). The network map method encourages discussion around all social relationships in an individual’s life, and provides the opportunity to unpack both the positive and negative aspects of social interaction. Interview questions focused on actual situations within the first year experience and explored the roles of family, friends and others in dealing with these situations. The ‘critical associations’ concept relates to identifying key relationships which have particular influences on an individual’s choices and actions. In interviewing first generation students, we were also interested in exploring the acquisition of cultural and social capital (Bourdieu, 1979, Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, Skeggs, 1997, Thomas, 2012) in attending University.

This presentation will discuss some of the findings from the research, and in particular one aspect of those findings relating to how the research respondents talked about their sense of self and the liminality of University life. Their accounts of the transition they are/were going through seemed to emphasise their University experience as a ‘time out’ from before (childhood, college and school, living with their parents/families) and after (work, settling down, getting on with life). Their social relationships were important players in how they managed the transition and their sense of self in this ‘in-between’ time (Palmers,
et al. 2009 call this ‘a betwixt space’). People in their lives acted as critical associations in the transitions they experienced, and as ‘continuity anchors’ grounding them in their roots. But this was more complex than a simple tension between family and old friends versus new friends at University.

In this paper, we will discuss how these relationship processes influence the transition into and through the first year, and the potential implications for staff in Universities who work with first year students.

We would like to acknowledge Sarah Lawther at Nottingham Trent University for her help with this project.

References


Davies, K. and Heaphy, B. (2011) Interactions that Matter: researching critical associations, Methodological Innovations Online, 6 (3), 5-16

Foster, E (2013) Student Transitions: a Rights of Passage Approach, workshop presented in the Enhancing Student Transitions Series, Teesside University, June 2013


'working class’ women’s perspective on social class, London: Taylor and Francis


**ST65 – The Alternative Crit: peer feedback in art and design**

**ROOM C – TUESDAY 13:00-14:00**

Rachel Dickson

Belfast School of Art, Ulster University

Rachel Dickson is a graduate of the Royal College of Art, and is currently Associate Head of School of Belfast School of Art. Pedagogic research interests include student engagement, transition, induction, peer mentoring, student employability, and assessment and feedback. As a practicing artist, research interests explore ideas of memory, the narrative of objects, and the space between art and craft. Rachel Dickson is a Senior Fellow of the HEA and Fellow of the Centre for Higher Education Research Practice.

**Summary**

This paper will explore the implementation of a peer feedback project in art and design as an alternative to the traditional ‘crit’. A range of evidence exists on the benefits of providing students with the opportunity to give feedback to, and receive it from their peers. Peer feedback can demystify assessment strategies, develop skills in self-driven improvement in the quality and depth of work produced. It is vital in preparing students for the demands of progression from year one to two, and onwards.
Abstract

This paper will explore the implementation of a peer feedback project within BA Hons Contemporary Applied Arts (ceramics, jewellery and silversmithing). The design, implementation, attitudes and responses of students frame the context of the introduction of a more formalised approach to peer feedback within the art and design learning and teaching environment. Student consultation and input will be addressed.

There is a range of evidence of the benefits of providing students with the opportunity to give feedback to, and receive it from, their peers. Peer feedback can demystify assessment strategies, develop skills in self-driven improvement in the quality and depth of work produced, and recognising high quality outcomes in the subject area (Sadler, 1989). The involvement in, and the participation in developing a peer feedback session can also enable students to ‘take an active role in the management of their own learning’ (Liu and Carless, 2006). The QAA has stated that encouraging students to reflect on their own performance as well as receiving feedback from their peers is worthwhile, and even more so “when opportunities for self-assessment are integrated in a module or programme” (QAA, 2006). The process of formalised peer feedback should work more successfully when responsibility is equally shared, where each student both gives and receives feedback, where the feedback occurs on a ‘real’ project, and where ground rules have been explained to students including explanations and value of constructive and formative feedback.

Within art and design, various teaching methods are utilised, including lectures, seminars, individual and group tutorials and critiques. Students will have the opportunity to receive a range of feedback in many forms. As teaching is usually studio-based, many discussions are informal both between staff and student and student to student. This has many positive aspects, including continual informal, formative feedback. However, when students are required to provide feedback to their peers within a ‘crit’, often there is a lack of confidence in providing constructive criticism to their friends. The pilot peer feedback project aimed to overcome this tentative response through formalising the process and introducing elements of confidentiality.

Peer feedback can take many different forms (Hounsell, 2008), through students commenting on a tutor’s written feedback, they can provide criteria on which a piece of work is assessed, or they can comment/ give feedback on work which accompanies a tutor’s written feedback. Peer feedback can take another form,
which was employed in this project. Students are asked to assess and give written feedback to another student, on a piece of artwork and oral presentation. Module Feedback Forms are chosen at random, and the assessor remains confidential. This allows for honest, constructive and more rounded feedback. Each student will both give and receive feedback, and as a consequence, will have a richer understanding of the assessment process and its requirements.

In consultation with students, the process was implemented and through feedback from students, further sessions were requested. It is extremely encouraging to see that students responded positively to peer feedback and recognised its value to their learning and development, and the benefit of alternative forms of feedback. Peer feedback is now used as an alternative to ‘the crit’, and has been introduced to all year groups of the program.

**ST33 – An holistic approach to supporting students in their academic departments**

**ROOM C – TUESDAY 13:00-14:00**

Holly Ilett (Emma Palmer)

University of Hull

Holly Ilett is a Student Success Adviser at The University of Hull, and has been undertaking this role located in the Business School since August 2013.

**Summary**

This Show and Tell will introduce the University of Hull’s approach to addressing student retention and success through the implementation of the role of Student Success Advisers. The innovative configuration and independence of the team enables the SSA’s to facilitate individually tailored support for students alongside academic and support colleagues.
Abstract

This Show and Tell presentation will introduce the University of Hull’s approach to addressing student retention and success through the implementation of a new role of Student Success Advisers. The innovative configuration and independence of the team enables the SSAs to facilitate individually tailored support for those students alongside academic and support colleagues. The team have a focus on widening participation, and actively support the transition, progression and retention of students; as well as improving the student experience within the academic sphere.

The Show and Tell will focus on sharing the experiences of the Student Success Advisers within the first 18 months in post. It will describe how the team bridges the gap between the student, academics and university support services, and manages the collaboration of support for students.

ST1 – Peer mentoring and the first year experience.

ROOM C – TUESDAY 13:00-14:00

Dr Aiden Carthy

Institute of Technology Blanchardstown

Aiden has fifteen years lecturing experience at third level institutions in Ireland. His primary research interests are in the areas of emotional intelligence and the first year experience. He has been actively researching and publishing in both areas for the past number of years.

Summary
Evaluation of a pilot peer mentoring programme that was conducted with first year business students at a third level teaching institution in Dublin, Ireland.

Abstract

The transition from secondary level learning to independent study can be difficult to negotiate and many students also experience emotional pressures as they adjust to a busy social environment at college. Many third level institutions are exploring ways to improve the first year experience and one such approach that has gained increasing interest in recent years is the provision of peer mentoring. This paper outlines and evaluates a pilot peer mentoring programme that was conducted with first year business students at a third level institution in Dublin, Ireland. Three first year groups were chosen for participation in this study due to on-going low levels of engagement and high levels of attrition. A novel 3600 approach was formulated, whereby students where provided support by mentors, lecturers and support staff. In order to measure the efficacy of the programme, feedback was elicited from participants and key academic variables (GPA and attrition rate) for participants and a matched sample that did not receive coaching were also compared. Results revealed that GPA increased significantly for one of the three student groups involved and that the attrition rate decreased significantly for one of the three groups. This show and tell outline the exact details of the mentoring programme that was employed and lessons learned as a consequence of conducting this pilot study and recommendations for the future will also be presented.

ST20 – Focussing on Students: Reflections on Student-Inspired Pre-Arrival and Induction Experiences in Computer Science

ROOM C – TUESDAY 13:00-14:00

Emily Foster, Dr David Grey
Department of Computer Science, University of Hull, UK

Emily Foster is a Student Experience Officer currently working with the Department of Computer Science.

David Grey is an academic and the Director of Learning and Teaching for the Department of Computer Science, with responsibility for all aspects of teaching provision and student success.

Summary

We report on tailoring Departmental pre-arrival and induction to the needs of Computer Science students based on student surveys and best practice, and the benefits of a dedicated individual within the Department solely focussed on the success of students who are often unwilling to engage with central support services

Abstract

The Computer Science Department of the University of Hull has recruited well for many years and puts a lot of effort into its recruitment activities and supporting students through the recruitment process. Recent institutional reviews have praised the department for the sense of ‘tribal’ identity and belonging that it instils in its students. However student progression and retention remains a problem, particularly at the end of the first year, and the university appointed a Student Experience Officer (SEO) to work within the Computer Science department with a focus on improving the student experience and student success.

Using simple post-induction questionnaires the SEO was able to identify a number of areas of concern for new Computer Science students, both pre-arrival and during the transition to study at university. This paper reflects on our experiences of addressing those issues by simply listening to students needs and tailoring our induction process to better meet these through the application of policy and best practice identified by other institutions. In particular, we focused on improving pre-arrival information and personal communication from staff, streamlining administrative processes, introducing social activities and small group interactions to foster peer relationships between staff and students, and introduced support activities to engage students and help them through the
difficult first weekend. We also involved student mentors to support induction activities and facilitate orientation. Evidence from post-induction surveys, student experience surveys, the volume and nature of enquiries to the SEO and anecdotal evidence from staff and students indicates that the combined effect of a number of relatively minor changes can help new students feel much more supported and can have an important impact on the ease with which students make the transition into university life.

Our experiences suggest that providing support at departmental level is particularly relevant to the Computer Science discipline which attracts many introverted students who are unlikely to seek assistance and support from centralised support services. We highlight the value of having a dedicated member of staff to focus on the student experience and deal with student issues. We identify ways in which this support complements and strengthens existing pastoral support mechanisms provided by personal supervisors.

W58 – Meet Our Mentors: Student-Designed and Delivered Transition Mentoring and Community Building through Social, Academic and Integrated Service Provision

ROOM E – TUESDAY 13:00-14:00

Workshop – 60 minutes

Kerry Gough, Neil Hollins, Ross Whitehouse, Emily Brammeier

Birmingham City University

Summary
The Birmingham City University Level Up programme features a series of enmeshed university life hacks to enable success that have been co-designed by our students, and our academic and support staff, whilst working alongside our Students’ Union. These interventions enhance our students’ first year experience of academic and social life with us through the provision of pre-entry transition mentoring, active inductions and welcome events, embedded personal tuition, integrated welfare support, and academic and social mentoring interventions. Our workshop offers an opportunity to work with a team of staff and students from our Level Up programme in order to consider its potential for development and use within your home institutions and contexts. Together, we level up!

Abstract

The Level Up programme and its cycle of university life hacks, or short-cuts for getting the best out of that experience, represents the result of a student designed and delivered series of interventions which have been implemented in order to aid in enhancing our students’ experience of life at Birmingham City University. These are firmly embedded as a core part of the social and academic life of individual schools and faculties across Birmingham City University and include pre-entry transition mentoring with our Level Up Venture Mentors who are current students of the course and co-designers in the Level Up content. Together, we have developed exciting, active inductions and welcome events, personal tuition and academic mentoring interventions, as well as integrated welfare support and embedded personal tutoring activity. In our true Birmingham City University partnership ethos, this presentation will be co-delivered by staff and students who are currently participating in that process.

Building upon the findings of What Works (Thomas, 2012), our Level Up transition programme locates the responsibility for nurturing our students’ retention and success firmly within the academic environment. Through the creation of an enhanced sense of belonging and a clear focus upon engaging our students within both the social and academic lives of our Schools, each of these interventions simultaneously support us in the challenges represented by financial pressures to hit student retention targets, an educational need to build in personalised tuition, easing pressure on academic staff with growing student numbers and, in the UK, increased expectations from our student body in response to the student fee increase.
However, rather than emerging as an institutional imposition from above, our partnership working ethos has fostered the organic development of these integrative transition programmes at grass roots level. Designed collaboratively by teams of students, academics and support staff, along with representatives from our Students’ Union and Centre for Enhancement of Learning and Teaching, we have worked together to develop activities that support the on-going transition of our students throughout life in the School and beyond. Our current students, as Level Up Venture Mentors (or LUVMs as they have affectionately come to be known), have played an instrumental role in this transition activity. In their involvement in the programme’s design and delivery, they have acted as the binding force and inspirational design glue to support the on-going transition of our students’ lives.

Our LUVMs were key in our induction and transition activities, acting as our new students’ mentors, designing and monitoring our social media-managed induction treasure hunt, planning and hosting our welcome tea party, as well as providing on-going support throughout the first year through the implementation of a series of embedded workshops based around the academic, social and administrative issues faced by our new students.

Our EFYE workshop, delivered by staff and students working on the Level Up project, will share the design process surrounding some of those programme interventions, our experiences of delivering them, how we dealt with the difficulties, the solutions that worked for us, as well as sharing some of the impacts and early wins that we have seen as a result.

Having shared our own approach and resources, the majority of this session will be given over to examining how participating delegates might rework some of these materials to fit their own institutional and course-specific situations. With our design team of staff and students on hand to help, participation in our workshop will offer an opportunity to consider your own institutional context and to work together on tailoring potential transition mentoring interventions with our university life hack team. Offering expertise in transition mentoring, personal tutoring support, exciting inductions, embedded service provision, academic intervention and the social integration of our students, working with our existing students and Level Up Venture Mentors, together, we level up!
W53 – Developing a social media project to support pre-arrival and first year transition

DANCE ROOM – TUESDAY 13:00-14:00

Workshop – 60 minutes

Ona Sumner, Janet Ellis

School of Nursing, Midwifery and Social Work, University of Manchester

Ona Sumner is the Programme Support Manager and Janet Ellis, the Student Support Officer working with student nurses and midwives at the University of Manchester. They have a shared interest in enhancing the student experience using social media to maximise student inclusion and engagement.

Summary

The workshop will consider a pilot project to engage applicants with their programmes using social media. Participants will exchange information on their own approaches and work together to address challenges including how social media can be inclusive, how social media spaces can be student-led and how engagement can inform transition practices.

Abstract

For students commencing their programmes in 2014 we piloted a project using social media to initiate a dialogue with them prior to their arrival at university. The initial objective was to increase the number of applicants converting into registered students at the start of term. However, the initiative has had interesting benefits for students’ induction and their first year journey which we
have monitored and are looking to develop further to enhance the student experience.

Once students had received an offer of a place they were invited to join a closed Facebook group. The group was facilitated by 9 second year student ambassadors who were recruited from the target programmes of nursing and midwifery. Ambassadors were then trained and supported by the project lead. Administrative staff had access to and analysed content but did not respond unless a query was flagged by the ambassadors.

Viewing the content of discussions provided the School with an invaluable real-time insight into students’ concerns; where they felt there was an information deficit and what was working well at various points in the transition process. This provided insight into how effective interventions were, providing useful feedback in addition to more formal evaluations.

The group was an effective way for students to establish peer networks prior to beginning their programmes, aiding their social transition. The participants built communication pathways with the student ambassadors and each other, frequently responding to posts based on their own knowledge and experiences. As a consequence university staff reported that in Welcome Week there was a reduced number of queries which were related to a lack of awareness of programme and funding issues.

Once students had begun their programmes of study in September they took ownership of the group and it has continued to function as a social network. Some ambassadors continue to post and programme specific societies have also joined the group.

At the workshop we will have data from Facebook page illustrating the volume of usage and the nature and frequency of topics discussed.

Discussion points for the workshop:

Working with other institutions to analyse their approaches to social media;

Inclusivity of social media and student participation;
Recruitment and training of student ambassadors;

Mapping usage and the student journey;

Explore ways for each of us to develop new or existing projects.

**Parallel session 5**

**TUESDAY 14:15-15:15**

**P28 – Changing student expectation through “habit forming”: Describing the AIT Business School’s evolving student transition model for students entering third level education.**

**AUDITORIUM – TUESDAY 14:15-15:15**

Owen Ross; Eoin Langan; Brendan Doyle

Business School, Athlone Institute of Technology.

Owen Ross has been the Head of Department of Business Studies in Athlone Institute of Technology since 2011. He served as a Captain in the Irish Defence Forces prior to moving to the education sector in 2003. He specialises in Leadership and Management.

Eoin Langan has been Head of the Business School since 2011 having commenced working in senior roles in Higher Education in 2004. Prior to working in the higher education sector he worked as an information technology
consultant. His research interests include supports for students in the transition to Higher Education.

Brendan Doyle has been acting Head of Department in the Business School for 2 years. He is ACCA qualified with a master’s degree in Accounting. His background is in Corporate Reporting, with a particular interest in IFRS. He acts as examiner for CPA Ireland in Corporate Reporting.

Summary

In order to improve student progression rates at the AIT Business School, a “habitforming” initiative was undertaken. This paper describes how changes in the programme assessment strategy and the induction process, has decreased the non-progression rate by 13.7% in the first year of the initiative.

Abstract

Alarmed by high levels of first year student attrition (28.5%) and non-progression rates of over 30% on five of the school’s first year programmes, in the academic year 2012-13, the new management team of the AIT Business School undertook to interview every first year student who failed any module from their semester 1 sitting. Following on from what was often a brutally honest set of exchanges it emerged that students who had averaged two and half to three hours study daily, the previous year, when they attended their final year of second level were now devoting less than half an hour daily to their studies.

The school’s management response, supported and delivered by all the academic staff in the school was to promote a “habit-forming” initiative, for every first year student, at the start of the 2013-14 academic year. This “habit-forming” initiative required students to start working from their very first day in the AIT Business School. In order to enhance student engagement, the traditional induction format was changed to incorporate giving every student their first assignment. This first assignment sought to achieve two main aims: firstly, it was not difficult for the average student to succeed. Such success would promote confidence, self-esteem and a sense of belonging. Secondly, it was designed to be time consuming, creating student expectation that time
allocated to coursework was essential. Students were told that their attendance in other subjects was part of the marking scheme for the assignment.

The initial results varied between programmes. One programme returned the best set of student results in the programme’s history. Another programme had students leave, due to increased stress levels, associated with the initial assignment. Across the school, the statistics were encouraging showing an increase in the number of students attempting their exams. The overall pass rate improved. The major statistical improvement was seen by the non-progression rate in the numbers that progressed to 2nd year reducing by 13.7%, after the repeat exams in the autumn.

Overall the “habit-forming” initiative was deemed successful in increasing levels of student engagement and through improved progression rates. The model was further enhanced for the 2014-15 academic year to include additional supports for the first years with their first assignment. A further measure incorporated their second assignment being announced in advance of their first assignment deadline. Further revisions have been implemented during the current and ongoing programmatic review to ensure every student has an assignment at all times and every semester requires them to work from the outset.

Students who traditionally are not strong enough to attend university but attend institutions like AIT Business School might need to be given a more challenging introduction to their life as a third level student. Easing the student transition by getting students into the habit of working consistently is a vital ingredient that will contribute to their success.

Keyword: Student Transition; Progression, Student Engagement, Habit-Forming

P50 – A Students’ Eye Perspective: Reflecting on the student experience to improve the transition to Higher Education
Dr C. Mann (Educational researcher)

Natasha McVey (Student Nurse)

Dr. C. Mann is an educational researcher managing a scheme of Peer mentoring for over 500 Nursing students. Her interests include transition, communities of practice and student-led change.

Natasha McVey is a student nurse and action researcher. She has acted as a peer mentor and peer mentor leader and helped to develop initiatives in transition and peer support. Natasha has been nominated for a prestigious ‘Edith Cavelli Nursing Community’ award in 2015 for her work in this area.

Summary

This paper presents a study into the student experience of transition into a Higher Education Nursing course, designed and conducted by students, for students. We aim to address the research question ‘What can be done, by student Nurses, based on their own experiences, to improve the student experience of transition?’.

Abstract

This paper reports on a small scale study into the student experience of transition into a Higher Education Nursing course, designed and conducted by students, for students. It is based in the current literature and asks the research question ‘What can be done, by student Nurses, based on their own experiences, to improve the student experience of transition?’.

The current higher education climate and culture can be defined by the power of the student voice and the juxtaposition between the need to offer a quality student experience that is value for money with minimal or reducing staff resources. Higher Education research documents the changing position of the student model; from the student as a passive recipient of knowledge, to the student as a consumer, and now moving into active partnerships between students and their institutions. There are widespread reports of students acting
as change agents and co-producers of knowledge and driving forward positive improvements in the student experience. At the University of Nottingham, we have developed a peer mentoring scheme in the School of Health Sciences where all incoming students are matched to a more experienced student for a supportive relationship. The scheme and associated student research group ‘MARG’ (Mentoring Action Research Group) provides the context for this research into the first year student experience.

The study contained several layers of research. Firstly Nursing Peer Mentor leaders (n=12) participated in semi-structured focus group interview workshops about their own experiences of transition and supporting others through transition. As part of this workshop students co-designed a questionnaire for a wider range of peer mentor students with the aim of validating preliminary findings and generating wider data to ensure saturation. This questionnaire was administered to all volunteer Nursing Peer Mentors (n=91). The data was analysed by students during another focus group workshop. Students thematised responses and developed a list of several potential interventions to benefit the student experience of transition. Finally these interventions were presented to Nursing Peer Mentors in focus group workshops (n=91) and to all first year students by questionnaire (n=500). The responses to the proposed interventions in the current transition process were used to write a report with a recommended action plan for the School of Nursing.

The findings of the research suggest a range of interventions that could be developed to support incoming students through the transition into Higher Education Nursing. Many of these are consistent with findings from the literature – for example an extended induction, however they are localised to the course, for example suggesting the induction should take the same blended learning approach used in the course design. In using Kolb’s reflective cycle at each stage of the research, students were able to identify the areas of change which they could directly impact – such as in co-design of an induction process, and other areas where they would take an advocacy role, such as in campaigning for earlier contact in peer mentoring.

P19 – Earopeners and Eyecatchers: Listening skills and note-taking
strategies in today’s first-year college students

ROOM A – TUESDAY 14:15-15:15

One hour paper

Joke Vrijders and Pieterjan Bonne

Artevelde University College Ghent

Joke Vrijders has been a language policy officer since 2006 and was joined by Pieterjan Bonne in 2012. They train lecturers in diverse study programmes and guide students towards academic success by focussing on their language proficiency. On an institutional level, they are involved in the development and execution of strategies, the design and implementation of new educational tools for language screening, remedial teaching and continuous professional development.

Summary

A broad study set up by Artevelde University College Ghent mapped problems students experience with whole-class teaching (listening skills and note-taking), how first-year students cope with this and how lecturers can didactically support them. Participants will be shown research results, didactical tips and experience a screening tool to sensitize first-year student.

Abstract

The classroom and note-taking experience are much different for today’s college student than it was two decades ago. Whereas students back then had to listen to lectures and write down whatever they thought was important, students nowadays are provided with a syllabus, a textbook and PowerPoint slides packed with information (Boye, 2012). Students struggle to see main and side issues in all the material, while lecturers find it increasingly difficult to encourage note-taking in their ‘digital native’ students. Yet, both listening skills
and note-taking are a crucial part of successful learning (Armbruster, 2000; Boye, 2012) in which especially first-year students experience difficulties. For most of them whole-class teaching in large groups in higher education is completely new.

The paper consists of two parts.

In the first part we would like to present the results of a broad study (Bonne, Van Kerckhove and Vrijders, 2014) which was conducted in two university colleges in Flanders, one university and one adult education centre. The study surveyed the listening skills of over 1000 students during whole-class teaching. A combination of a questionnaire (quantitative research) and focus groups (qualitative research) was used to pinpoint problems and to show how lecturers can deal with them. The data was analysed over the whole population and then split up according to number of years in higher education (first-year vs. older students).

The research results on listening skills show that students are still open for whole-class teaching, when used appropriately. Most crucial here is the professor (cf. Hattie, 1987). Students clearly expect lecturers to add structure, to guide them through the content and, above all, to be enthusiastic about their course (cf. Hattie e.a., 1996). Students also tend to stop paying attention when classes are not relevant (for/according to them) or get too abstract. A professor whose style matches these criteria can easily engage more than 80% of the students.

For first-year students, whole-class teaching in higher education is more challenging. Half of the first-year students feel classes go to fast (46.5% as opposed to 26.8% of older students) and have trouble to combine listening and note-taking (49.8%). Yet firstyears tend to cope better with the form than older students. They rate classes as less boring (-31%), have less trouble focussing (-16%, -25%) and take more notes (+18%).

The research results also show the beliefs of college students on note-taking. Although lecturers report a lack of student note-taking skills, more than 90% of students see their notes as a necessary tool for higher education (cf. Armbuster, 2000). Students who take notes do so because they have to invest less time studying afterwards (58.3%) (cf.Hom e.a., 1993), it helps them to pay attention
(64%) (cf. Di Vesta and Gray, 1972) and they remember the content better (87.1%) (cf. Kiewra, DuBois, Christian, & McShane, 1988).

In the second part we would like to present 6 practical recommendations or ‘ear openers’ for lecturers and students. Each participant will receive an English version of the checklist with these ‘ear openers’ and see a demo of an online tool to screen listening and note-taking skills in order to sensitize first-year students.

In the end, we would like to discuss the experiences of the participants. How can you improve listening skills? How can you transfer note-taking as a coping strategy for first-year students? (cf. Kobayashi, 2006) How can you reinforce effective and accurate notetaking? Do you offer Powerpoint slides beforehand or not? How can we support students? Etc.

Bibliography


**P3 – The role of time perspective in study success**

**ROOM C – TUESDAY 14:15-15:15**

Drs. Jeany van Beelen-Slijper

University of Groningen – faculty of behavioural and social sciences / developmental psychology

Inholland University of Applied Sciences / domain Business, Finance, Law

I am working at Inholland university as account manager for incoming students. I am also coordinator for different orientation trajectories for prospects. For Inholland, I am doing a Phd study about the study process of first year students, from a developmental psychological perspective, at the University of Groningen.

**Summary**

We examined how we can help students effectively in the process from study-choice to study-success. The paper-session focuses on the difference in time perspective with which first year students start their studies. Students with a distal time perspective run higher risk to drop out than students with a
proximal perspective. Furthermore, more intensive preparation to study choice is related to less drop out.

Abstract

In my paper I will present the first results based on a Phd study aiming at the improvement of the transition from secondary to higher education. I will discuss the first preliminary analyses, relevant for one of the main themes of the conference: How do we prepare students for subsequent studies, and according to this theme, what kind of interventions could be used when guiding future students in their study process?

In the longitudinal study, 89 first-year law students were investigated before and during the first year of their bachelor studies in law. Based on Erik Erikson’s seminal work on IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT THROUGHOUT THE LIFE SPAN, study and career choice can be considered as the most central domain of identity formation (Erikson, 1968). Furthermore, exploration and commitment formation are seen as two fundamental aspects of identity development. In the exploratory study, students were interviewed and an instrument of the Groningen University was used: the Groningen Identity Development Scale, called GIDS. (Bosma, 1985; Kunnen & van der Gaag 2012). Interviews were used to shed light on the students’ development before and during their first year, and focused on a qualitative approach. Moreover, the GIDS helped us to measure the strengths of exploration and commitment scores over time. By following each student individually over time, we investigated how students develop in their study choice process. The scores for commitment strength and exploration strength allowed us to distinguish between different sequential patterns of identity statuses (Marcia, 1966), that can be considered as indicative of stable, progressive, regressive or fluctuating developmental pathways (Bosma & Kunnen, 2001).

Preliminary analyses suggest that students differ with regard to the time perspective with which they start their studies, and this time perspective is related to their study results. Students that put the focus on the here and now in general continue their studies, while students focussing on the future, the ulterior profession being their main concern, drop out more frequently. Their doubt about the rightness of their choice is rather a doubt about the profession, and not about the study itself. Their image of this profession is abstract and simple, and they have a future time perspective that seems to be driven by extrinsic motivation. Students that are more successful are more
present-oriented and focus more on study related topics, such as the study programme. They are less occupied with what they are going to do in the future, are more task-oriented and more intrinsically motivated. These results are in accordance with the self-determination theory of Deci and Ryan (1985).

Furthermore, first analyses suggest that the more intensive and the longer students prepare themselves for their future study, the less they drop out. The respondents in our study were distributed over 6 groups, on the basis of introduction programs of different length and intensity. Especially for this conference it is interesting to discuss these different trajectories, such as summer school or trial days. How can we help students effectively in their study choice process, and what kind of choices should institutions make when approaching their prospect students?

References:


P4 – Entering higher education: experiences with the ‘study choice
check’ and start of a route to study success.

ROOM C – TUESDAY 14:15-15:15

Dr. Kariene Mittendorff

Saxion University of Applied Sciences

Dr. Kariene Mittendorff is assistant professor at Saxion University of Applied Sciences. Her research focuses on the quality of student guidance processes in vocational and higher education, student success (factors) and the transition process of students from vocational to higher education.

Summary

This paper presents the results of a study on a ‘study choice check’ for students (before entering higher education) which is meant to help students to check if they ‘fit’ the study they signed up for. Through questionnaire research (N=1711 and N=52) as well as additional interviews, students and teachers are asked to formulate what is helpful in terms of choosing a study, feelings of bonding with the school and starting their career at higher education.

Abstract

Studies have shown many students do not prepare themselves properly for the studies they are choosing after high school and students often state that the main reason they leave their studies is because they did not choose properly (Warps et al., 2009). In line with these findings, the government of the Netherlands has obliged all institutions for higher education to offer students a study choice check: an activity in which students can check whether they have chosen for the right study or not. At Saxion University a lot of time and effort is put into realizing this ‘check’ for all students. Every student that chooses a study at Saxion is invited for this ‘check’ that consists of an assessment, a personal meeting with a teacher (and sometimes students) and an individual advice. The goal of the study choice check is stimulating students to think more profoundly
about their choice of study: it should contribute to a process of ‘matching’. Another goal is to bond students sooner and better to school, since this is believed to have an effect on student success (see also Tinto, 1987).

The study presented in this paper focused on the following research questions:

1. How do students experience the study choice check?

2. How do teachers (intakers) experience the study choice check?

3. What elements of the study choice check contribute to the goals (matching and feelings of bonding), according to the students and the teachers?

Data was collected with questionnaires and interviews. Students filled in a questionnaire directly after having the check at Saxion (N=1711), teachers filled in a questionnaire after they completed all study choice checks (N=52). In the questionnaire we asked students about their experiences with the study choice check and for example, whether it led to another choice of study or other actions. Teachers were asked about their experiences as well. After the summer holiday students (N=136) and teachers (N=35) were interviewed to reflect on their experiences with the study choice check and the contribution of this activity to starting a study program at Saxion.

Results show that students appreciate an individual conversation before starting their studies. Some students seem to reconsider their choice for a certain study and look further and are also more likely to follow an extra course or take other actions to prepare themselves better. Students also appreciate conversations with older students from the same program, who they can ask about what the study is like.

More efficacy can be realized by focussing the check on more specific ‘success factors’ of the study program the student chose for, so the study choice check contributes better to a process of ‘matching’. Now, every student is assessed on ‘common’ higher education competencies, such as logic reasoning, maths or language, and not on specific competencies or attributes that are important for a particular study.
W31 – When The Going Gets Tough: Developing emotional resilience in first year students

ROOM E – TUESDAY 14:15-15:15

Workshop – 60 minute

Sue Morgan

Department of Radiography;

School of Allied and Public Health Professions

Birmingham City University

Sue has been a senior lecturer in Diagnostic Radiography at Birmingham City University for 14 years; she is currently Clinical Placement Coordinator for the BSc (hons) Diagnostic Radiography programme. Sue coordinates 21 placement sites for upwards of 300 students, aiming to meet the needs of both students and placements.

Summary

Emotional resilience is a complex concept that can be defined as the ability to adapt to, and bounce back from, adversity or stressful situations. Emotionally
resilient individuals possess skills required for successful placement and academic learning. This workshop will discuss the best ways to develop emotional resilience in students.

Abstract

Emotional resilience is a complex concept that can be defined as the ability to adapt to, and bounce back from, adversity or stressful situations (Grant & Kinman 2014). For many years it was believed that resilience is a trait that cannot be learned; however there is now a growing body of evidence showing that resilience is process that can be developed (Truebridge & Bernard 2013). Emotionally resilient individuals possess empathy, optimism, self belief and are able to build supportive relationships with family, friends and colleagues. These are all attributes that will help a student to cope with the demands of higher education. Resilient students tend to thrive, whilst non-resilient students may not even survive.

Students on the BSc (hons) Diagnostic Radiography programme at BCU spend between 16 and 22 weeks of each academic year on placement, with the first placement experience commencing 10 weeks into the programme. Student evaluations indicated that for some students the demands of placement were adversely affecting learning both on placement and at university. Perceived problems included: maintaining academic studies whilst on placement, lack of empathy from supervising professionals, witnessing traumatic events, maintaining work/life balance and overload of information. It is has been acknowledged that the challenges of placement in radiography education increase student stress, failure and attrition (Colyer 2013, Hyde, 2014).

Since September 2014 first year students are being introduced to concept of emotional resilience along with some of the tools available to help them develop a process of emotional resilience that works for them as individuals. The challenges being faced in the introduction of this are the large group size – 120 students – and limited contact time – 3 x 1.5 hour blocks spread across the first year.

During this interactive workshop participants will be able to discuss how emotional resilience affects learning, identify potential “crisis” points for students, and review some of the tools available for developing emotional resilience. This will be facilitated through group discussion and the use of interactive resources enabling participants to explore the need for developing
emotional resilience in students and how best to achieve this. Participants will be encouraged to use phones/tablets for interacting with each other during some activities.

References


W5 – Thinking Spatially about Belonging, Retention and the First Year Experience

DANCE ROOM – TUESDAY 14:15-15:15

Workshop – 30 minutes

Kate Thomas
Birkbeck, University of London UK

Kate Thomas is a researcher at Birkbeck, University of London, UK and a Higher Education Academy Mike Baker Doctoral Programme Award Holder 2012-2015. Her research interests include student retention and progression, ‘non-traditional’ student pathways, widening participation and lifelong learning. Kate is also a freelance educational consultant/researcher.

Summary

This interactive workshop invites participants to explore methods used in case study research with UK universities and to discuss the proposal that ‘thinking spatially’ can uncover institutional power relationships and practices of belonging which impact the experiences of a diverse first year population.

Abstract

This workshop draws on the methods and emerging findings of a multiple case study investigating part-time, mature undergraduate belonging and retention in English higher education to offer participants opportunities for exploration and discussion.

Students are especially vulnerable to withdrawal in their first year of study. At a time when the retention of students for the full duration of their programme has become increasingly critical to the institutional bottom line, considerable resources are directed towards encouraging students to engage with the institution and to develop a ‘sense of belonging’. The latter is frequently referenced in discussions about retention. A sense of belonging, Thomas argues, is ‘closely aligned with the concepts of academic and social engagement’ (2012:12) and ‘critical to retention and success’ (ibid:10).

These statements draw on Tinto’s (US) model of student departure which ‘explains the longitudinal processes of interaction between the individual and the institution that lead differing individuals to drop out from institutions of higher education’ (1975:90). Tinto describes how difficulty, incongruence and isolation influence different forms of student departure’ (1987:112), while persistence is a function of the match between an individual’s motivation and academic ability and the institution’s academic and social characteristics. Tinto’s model has been highly influential on UK HE retention strategy and
practice and there are distinct synergies between the stages of separation, transition and incorporation in it, and accepted good practice approaches to the first year.

However, belonging in HE is complex and contested for students labelled ‘non-traditional’ and a linear approach to retention, concerned with measurement of learning within narrow, time-limited parameters is an institution-focused, rather than student-centric term. It is a blunt instrument in relation to a diverse student population and overlooks the student dimension in which engagement with HE is structured by age and mode of study as well as gender, ethnicity, and socio-economic and educational background. The ‘complex social process of student-institution negotiation’ (Ozga and Sukhnandan, 1998:316) is a site of tension between measurable outcomes and a lived experience; between a linear process and a ‘multiplicity of trajectories’ (Massey, 2005:4).

In the workshop participants will be invited to actively explore two research methods: campus dérive and mapping belonging, developed as part of this multiple case study. Both are concerned with the uses, meaning and experiences of institutional spaces. These activities will inform our discussion about to what extent thinking ‘spatially’ can uncover institutional power relationships and practices of belonging which impact the experiences of a diverse first year population and may usefully inform institutional practice and development.

REFERENCES


W16 – We got the students we wanted – now what do we do?

DANCE ROOM – TUESDAY 14:15-15:15

Workshop – 30 minutes

Robert Nordman & Tomas Otby

Institute of Technology at Linköping University

Robert Nordman (BA) is a Study counsellor since 2008, with a background in the Student union both locally and on a national level.

Tomas Otby (MSc) is faculty coordinator for Master-level programs and previously education manager at the faculty.

Summary

Specific programs tend to attract students who are on average similar. This creates a culture among the students themselves, which poses a new set of challenges for how we prepare them for higher education. In this workshop we will identify some such challenges we have in common and different approaches to handling them.

Abstract

We got the students we wanted – now what do we do?
In trying to attract students to our study-programmes in the faculty of Technology we communicate that we look for those who are ambitious, want to face challenges and who have certain fields of interest. As a result we do in large part get exactly those. Choosing what to study has become part of setting your identity, reinforced by other students during the years you spend there and inadvertently by the university as a whole.

As preparation for the coming studies we focus most of our efforts in the first weeks with a few follow-ups the rest of the first semester. Our system for this is popular and strong, involving both experienced students and teaching staff. We have students, “Student mentors”, hired to give an introduction to higher studies. Other students are involved in specific courses. The student union arranges the social aspects of the reception, with a policy of limitations on alcohol.

Our purpose is of course to show good role-models, and that we have values, views and visions in common between students and staff.

The introductory weeks work well, but after that brief time we face the following challenges:

The students are exactly as ambitious as we want them to be, and so they test our systems to the limit. This leads to them requiring a lot more resources. How do we handle this?

Students with similar interests and views of themselves create a culture within the studyprogramme, and it’s not necessarily a positive one. How can we handle this?

The 90’s generation puts new demands: They want all information available everywhere at all times, yet at the same time they would prefer a very personal contact and coaching. As this is impossible to balance we need methods to socialize them into more reasonable expectations. How do we do this?

Preliminary structure of workshop in the following three steps:

1) Background description of how we currently arrange the preparation of new students
2) Ventilating challenges the participants find we have in common
3) Putting a “title” for each area of challenges and discuss methods of handling them

Parallel session 6
TUESDAY 16:15-17:15

P63 – Using “reading rooms” to encourage departmental affiliation.

AUDITORIUM – TUESDAY 16:15-17:15

Inger Nilsen

Department of Informatics, University of Bergen

Cand.philol with a thesis in history, and a postgraduate certificate in Education. Since 1999, administrative tasks and coordination of various research projects at the department of General Practise. Students advisor at the Department of Informatics, and now, I’m working on a project regarding the dropout problem at the department of Informatics.

Summary

As many other departments, we do have a large number of dropout students after at the first year at the Department of Informatics. This article will examine the statistical measurable change that has happened at our department after introducing a designated reading room for our bachelor students, and the students’ perception of the importance the reading room has for their studies. The article will also provide a review of how the reading room is in use today,
how it is administered, and what we see as success factors and conditions for this success.

Abstract

As many other departments, we do have a large number of dropout students after the first year at the Department of Informatics. The departments previously research on this subject, initiated various measures to increase the chances that students would continue after the critical first year.

One of the measures we started was to create a separate reading room for bachelor students at our study programmes. We wanted to give our students a sense of belonging to the department from the first day of study. At the University of Bergen there are open reading rooms for all students at undergraduate level, in each faculty, and they are situated in close proximity to the largest lecture halls. This is apparently a very practical and straightforward solution since the first semester courses are common to many study programmes. The downside is that many students do not get proper affiliation feeling to their department before later on during their study. Our department is located at another part of campus than those reading rooms, and the student numbers are always very large for the courses our students take the first semester. Our students could go all first semester without being familiar with their peers in the same study. Now with the new bachelor reading room located at the department, we have seen several good results.

It has been said that we have halved the student dropout as a result of the introduction of the reading room for bachelor students. In this article I will examine the data that has given this statement. It will also succeed to see what other data we have available and what constraints and opportunities inherent in these.

The main sources in this paper are Mandt’s report on dropout from 2008, the available data from our administrative systems, and data collected in various surveys this past year. Data from the administrative system are annually processed and analyzed at the faculty. This past year we have conducted several types of surveys among our students. It has been both discussion groups and online surveys. Students in these studies report the great benefits of utilizing the reading room both academic and social.
This paper will also provide a review of how the reading room is in use today and how it is administered by the students themselves. It is important to highlight the cooperation with our Student Council students and their efforts to build a social foundation among the bachelor students. The department of Informatics has from the opening of the reading room given the students clear guidelines and encouragement to make it a success. In this paper I will present these instruments that we have adopted and what we see as success factors and conditions for this success.

References:


P36 – “Bridging the gap” Investigating the transition between secondary vocational education and higher education, to find grounds for decreasing dropout rates in first year of higher education.

AUDITORIUM – TUESDAY 16:15-17:15

Marije Nije Bijvank
Rozan Nijland

Study Success Centre, Saxion

University of Applied Sciences

The Netherlands

Marije Nije Bijvank is a senior researcher and policy advisor on study success at Saxion University of Applied Sciences. Her research interests include the effects of policy measures and student determinants on students’ first year study progress. Rozan Nijland is a junior researcher with a specific focus on the transition between secondary and higher education.

Summary

This study investigates the transition between secondary vocational education and higher education. In questionnaires, interviews and focus-groups, students and teachers were asked how they experience the match between previous and current education, and more specifically what challenges students face during the first year of higher education, related to (risks for) dropout.

Abstract

In the debate on study success in the Netherlands one of the main concerns is dropout rates in the first year of higher education. For students with a Secondary Vocational Educational (SVE) background this first year dropout rate is even higher than for students with a higher secondary or pre-university education. More specifically, the dropout rate for these students at Saxion is currently about 30%. A research was conducted to gain insight in the transition from SVE to higher education as experienced by first year students and teachers, to find solutions to reduce dropout rates. The central research question is: Which factors relating to the transition from SVE to higher education influence first year study success?

Literature exploration has led to the inclusion of factors that possibly influence study success in higher education: the level of experienced match between previous and current education, (2) a conscious study choice process, (3) the
level of realized expectations and (4) the level of motivation. To answer the research question different data-collection methods and –sources were used;

– semi-structured questionnaires among first year students with SVE (N=531)

– first year dropout (related to questionnaire data)

– a subset of data from the National Student Survey (NSS, N=2870)

– two interviews with experts and focus-groups with teachers (N=12)

Results of logistic regression show that students with lower scores on these four factors have a significantly higher risk to dropout, compared to students with higher scores (p<.01). Respondents’ own comments on the match between their previous and current study show that they mainly experience difficulties with ‘skills needed to study successfully in higher education’, such as self-regulation and analytical thinking. To improve the match between both educational environments students suggest that they should learn more about (the differences in) the ways of learning and skills for studying. Results of focus-groups and interviews show that teachers also see a lack of these skills in their students, for example the ability to regulate ones’ own study behaviour. They further state that this is probably the main risk for dropout during the first year of their study. Furthermore, results of the NNS show that first year students with an SVE background are significantly less satisfied about the extent to which the level of learning independently and academic writing matches with their previous education, compared to students with a higher secondary degree (p< .01).

In sum, quantitative and qualitative results from students and teachers show that students with a previous degree in SVE experience a lack of and/or deficiency in skills that are necessary to be able to learn and study in higher education. It might be effective to develop a programme specifically focused on training students more continuously in so called ‘higher education skills’ they need to succeed in their new educational environment. This should be done in close cooperation with institutions of students’ previous education, and could be implemented in the last year of SVE education and the first year of higher education.
P45 – Realising the potential of student leaders in facilitating the transition into higher education for first-year students.

ROOM A – TUESDAY 16:15-17:15

One hour paper

Jacques van der Meer

Jane Skalicky

University of Otago, New Zealand

University of Tasmania (Australia)

Jacques van der Meer (PhD) is Associate Dean (Academic & Research at the University of Otago (New Zealand). His research interests are related to the first-year experience, student retention, equitable access and participation in higher education and peer-learning/student leadership approaches to enhancing student engagement.

Jane Skalicky (PhD) is Associate Director, Student Life and Learning at the University of Tasmania (Australia), leading a large team of academic, professional staff and student leaders to provide language and academic skill development, academic transition programs, as well as a range of peer learning and engagement programs.

Summary

This paper will argue case that student leaders can play an effective role in first-students making the transition into higher education. Apart from discussing the rationale for this, and some research-based programmes, we will present data from a project related to building student leader capability and the initial
findings of an international survey in collaboration with US-based National Centre for the First-Year Experience.

Abstract

Transition is not a one-off event that can be ‘ticked off’ after the first week at university. Developing an understanding of the expectations of new educational environments, and forming new study habits that reflect these expectations, takes time and resources. And ideally these resources are not just hand-outs or web links that tell students how to do it. Forming new habits, and becoming familiar with a thoroughly different educational environment is often best facilitated by means of direct interaction with people. Therein lies the problem for many institutions in a time when many universities are operating within tight financial constraints.

However, there are other students at universities who have been through the process before and are well-placed to take on the role of ‘guides’ for first-year students in making the transition journey. Realising the potential of other students to play this role of peer leaders is not a matter of ‘just’ getting them to do it, but requires an intentional process of training, monitoring and developing the skills of these peers so that they can perform their role to a high standard.

A great variety of programmes to support students in the transition during the first year have been set up over the last couple of decades. The “Peer Assisted Study Sessions” (also known in the US as “Supplemental Instruction”) is one of the better known examples.

Most studies into the effectiveness of these programmes is focussed on the benefits for first-year students. The argument can be made, however, that without the peer leaders these programmes could not operate. So it is important as well to focus on how these peer leaders can be most effective in their work and continue to be interested in volunteering for these positions.

This then leads to the question ‘why would students want to do this?’ In other words, what do student leaders get out of it? And, how can we make sure that the peer leaders in these important programmes are well-prepared to play their role in the life of first-year students? To this end, a group of Universities from
Australia and New Zealand have initiated a project to study how student leadership capabilities and quality programmes can be built?

Part of the project involves collaboration with the US-based National Resource Centre for the first-year experience in administering an international survey into student leadership, along with universities in other English-speaking countries (including the UK). This survey sought to develop an inventory of the range and diversity of peer leadership programmes operating, as well as to assess the benefits of peer leadership as perceived by the leaders.

This paper will present the initial statistical analysis of the results of the Australasian cohort, both descriptive statistics and the results of factor analysis. Overall, the leaders perceived there to be a benefit. However, some of the results suggest that more can be done to help leaders identify the possible benefits participating in these programmes might have on their own academic performance.

**P18 – Strategies for increasing engagement, social inclusion and success of minority students in the first year in higher education.**

**ROOM C – TUESDAY 16:15-17:15**

Faumuina A/Professor Sopoaga

Dept Prev and Soc Medicine, Dunedin School of Medicine, University of Otago

Faumuina is the Associate Dean Pacific in Health Sciences, University of Otago, NZ and the Director of the Pacific Research Unit, which supports engagement, participation and success of minority students. She trained initially in medicine and holds a high chief title from the beautiful Pacific Island of Samoa.
Summary

Pacific students represent a minority group in New Zealand who, like non indigenous smaller minority groups in many countries, find engagement with university and subsequent academic achievement difficult. This paper discusses the impact of a targeted programme aimed at increasing engagement and success of minority underrepresented students in higher education.

Abstract

The successful engagement from school into their first year at University has arguably the greatest implications for subsequent student success at university and major implications for their future success beyond University (Dickson, Fleet, & Watt, 2000; DiGregorio, Farrington, & Page, 2000; Gall, Evans, & Bellerose, 2000). Engagement has been defined to be the quality of a student academic effort that contributes to desired outcomes (Kuh, Cruce, Shoup, Kinzie, & Gonyea, 2008). However, the concept of engagement remains complex with many publications expanding on key elements of the construct. Most studies focus upon individual sub constructs derived from the work of Tinto such as a student’s abilities and skills, successful academic integration, social integration within the university and social interaction beyond the university (Tinto, 1975, 2007). In practice, the focus includes the efforts institutions make to enable students to take up the support and services it provides (Tinto, 1997, 2000). Recent focus on students’ engagement with their University is increasing. However, the issues involved have been recognised as complex.

Pacific students represent a minority group in New Zealand who, like non indigenous smaller minority groups in many countries, find engagement with university and subsequent academic achievement difficult. Pacific communities in New Zealand are characterised by a predominantly young demographic structure from low socio-economic groups (Ministry of Health, 2012). In line with international trends toward increased participation by minority groups in higher education, and in response to poor academic levels for Pacific peoples in New Zealand, the New Zealand government has responded by making Pacific participation and achievement at University a priority (Ministry of Education, 2011).

One response to assisting the level of engagement of Pacific student in the first year at University has been to develop a Pacific Orientation Programme at
Otago (POPO) to improve engagement and outcomes for students. (Sopoaga & Van der Meer, 2011). POPO is a programme that comprises of three main components. A pre-orientation residential programme to introduce students and their parents to the University, a mentoring programme with the support of senior Pacific students and a series of academic tutorials in collaboration with academic departments.

The academic performance of students in the first year at University was monitored against their attendance at POPO mentoring and academic programmes and allocated colour categories. Students were categorised into three categories (“Green”, “Amber” and “Red”) from a model previously developed based on the predicted probability of passing all four Semester 1 papers (Kokaua, Sopoaga F, Zaharic, & Van der Meer, 2014). “Green” refer to students with a high probability, “Red” those with a low probability and “Amber” those with an intermediate probability of passing all Semester 1 papers. Data on Pacific students’ academic performance in their first year of Health Science from 2012-2014 at the University of Otago was obtained. For binary outcomes, such as the proportion who passed all papers in a Semester 1, logistic regressions were used to show the effects of engagement with the POPO programme over time. Linear regression models were used to show the effects of the POPO engagement (mentoring and academic programmes) and colour categories on the average marks for students. All data were analysed using STATA version 13 and results processed in MSExcel.

In the past three years the POPO programme has seen 220 health sciences students who identified with Pacific ethnicity; 106 in 2014, 67 in 2013 and 47 in 2012. The aim of this paper is to report on the ongoing progress of the programme to date. The intention is to refine the POPO program for each student that will enable them to overcome any shortcomings that may exist in their academic preparation prior to attending University and retain and enable other students attain and exceed their expectation of achievement. Our research shows that student engagement is directly linked to improved academic performance and success.

References:


P46 – On Reducing the Number of At-Risk Chinese Students

ROOM C – TUESDAY 16:15-17:15

Garry N. Dyck

Dr. Rod Lastra

Student Affairs (English Language Centre), and Extended Education (Access Programs)

University of Manitoba

Garry N Dyck is the Director of the English Language Centre focusing on English for Academic Purposes for students preparing for and in degree study.

Rod Lastra is head of the Access Math and Science program with the aim of ensuring success for non-traditional students.

Summary

Based on a database of 70,251 students, this study compares secondary school grades used for entrance with first year grade point averages. The number of
at-risk Chinese students at the end of year one is lower for students who have completed a presessional English for Academic Purposes course.

Abstract

In this study, we compare secondary school grades used for entrance requirements with university first year grade point averages (GPAs) ranging from 0 to 4.5. The study, based on a database of 70,251 students admitted from 1997 to 2013, compares four cohorts: Canadian students (CA), English speaking international students (ES), international students who completed a fourteen-week presessional course to meet the language requirement (L5), and international students who met the language requirement without the presessional course (IN). Students in each of the four cohorts are grouped according to half-bands of first year GPA. Averages of secondary school grades are calculated for each half-band range. Patterns for CA, ES, and IN are similar; however, L5 students have a significantly lower range in high school averages from the 4.0 to 4.5 GPA cohort to the less than 1.0 cohort. In addition, the percentage of students in each GPA cohort is similar among the four student types with the exception of a high percentage of IN students below a GPA of 1.0; that is, with D or F grades. This also remains true when Chinese students, the largest group of international students, are isolated in the IN and L5 cohorts. Results from this study provide evidence in support that Chinese students who complete the presessional English for Academic Purposes course do better in their first year of degree study than other Chinese students. Furthermore, the number of at-risk Chinese students at the end of year one is lower for students who have completed a presessional English for Academic Purposes course. Reasons for patterns are discussed.

W32 – “richtig einsteigen.” – Engaging faculty and central units in creating an integrated first year programme

ROOM E – TUESDAY 16:15-17:15
Workshop – 60 minutes

Juana Salas Poblete

Meike Vogel

Bielefeld University, Centre for Teaching and Learning

Juana Salas Poblete studied conference interpreting at Heidelberg University and linguistics, texttechnology and German as a foreign language at Bielefeld University, where she also obtained her PhD in linguistics. In 2012 she joined Bielefeld’s first year programme, concentrating on peer learning before transferring to the executive head office.

Prior to joining the CTL at Bielefeld University, Mei

3ke Vogel served in different positions in higher education management. She studied history and mathematics in Bielefeld and Paris and holds a PhD in history. Since 2012, she is the executive manager of the first year programme “richtig einsteigen.” at Bielefeld University.

Summary

Bielefeld University has been introducing a first year programme involving stakeholders at all levels by bringing together faculty members of different departments and representatives of various central units creating interdisciplinary teams that design and test innovative teaching concepts for introductory courses that are part of the set curriculum.

Abstract

Bielefeld University was founded in 1969 as one of Germany’s reform universities. Nowadays, it has over 20000 students and is renowned for its interdisciplinary approach to teaching and research. The university received an amount €12 million to implement a broad first year programme in the context of the nationwide Quality Pact for Teaching initiated by the Federal Ministry of
Education and Research (BMBF). This programme called “richtig einsteigen.” (“get started”) has a duration of five years (extendable for another four years).

It is against this background that we are reforming our first year to help new students to get started by offering fast and high quality orientation in the different subject areas as well as carefully designed introductory courses. We pursue these changes mainly by applying writing intensive teaching and supporting mathematical skills, e.g. through e-learning or collaborative learning. The programme is coordinated by a steering committee and an executive head office in order to allow the development of overall strategic objectives and an active interchange between the different departments.

Sustainable change can only be achieved with the active support of the departments and their willingness to reform their teaching approach. In order to create a reliable base for this university-wide cooperation, the programme provides all 13 departments with one or two faculty members who teach the respective subjects but are also committed to didactics. They maintain a constant interchange with their counterparts in the other departments. So, “richtig einsteigen.” does include two interdisciplinary teams comprised of nine members each, who meet regularly to exchange their experiences in enhancing literary and mathematical skills within regular lessons. They are also encouraged to share their experiences with their faculty colleagues to incite them to contribute to reforming university teaching.

To provide a competent coordination of the two interdisciplinary teams their meetings and cooperation is facilitated by members of central units: the literary skills team is coordinated by two members of the CTL’s writing centre and the mathematical skills team is supported by two members of the Institute for Didactics in Mathematics, thereby ensuring the personnel’s access to didactic expertise.

While this structure is admittedly quite complex, first evaluation results provided by an external institute for higher education development show that the outcome is worth the effort: The programme is well known in the university, the personnel is accepted and their expertise has been requested by many colleagues searching to revise their course design. After three years all departments are participating in a lively communication about the basic skills students need for a successful start in each discipline. We aim to include these insights in the curriculum development.
The range of measures offered by “richtig einsteigen.” is complemented by teams offering counseling, peer learning activities, training programmes for faculty members and an internal evaluation based on an annual student survey.

We invite you to discuss chances and challenges of bringing together faculty members of different departments within a centrally coordinated programme pursuing the aim to develop and change university teaching.

**P14 – Balancing education and campus experience for the local student: Making Fresher’s Week Relevant to All**

**DANCE ROOM – TUESDAY 16:15-17:15**

Lorraine Gearing

Vice Chancellor’s Office, Coventry University

I have an interest in widening participation, in particular, first generation learners who remain in the family home whilst they study, with past responsibilities for outreach activities and increasing aspirations. I have more recently led the development of education and assessment strategies at my university.

Summary:

As an institution there is a need to approach fresher’s week with an understanding of cohort demographics, so that we provide a balance that acknowledges the local student. Many of these students separate their studies from their ‘undergraduate life’ and universities need to address their different transition needs.

Abstract:
Widening participation and spiralling living costs have meant that increasing numbers of students study at their local university. The phrase ‘Freshers Week’ immediately conjures up an image among students entering higher education in the UK. The image and tradition are usually centred on non-academic activities including the student union, clubs and societies and social events. The background for these activities is to assist students in settling into a new way of life away from their home environment. Do these activities have relevance for the student who continues to live in the family home and is familiar with the locale? Christie calls these the ‘day student’ (Christie et al 2005) although places them within the widening participation arena as does Elliot (2009) in a study that focuses on the need for local provision based upon economic and other factors. We are concerned with attrition rates during the first term, but we may overlook the ‘first impression’ that is given during orientation as a contributory factor. Many studies have been done concerning the ‘early-walker’ (Bennett et al, 2007) however the focus on many of these has been the socio-economic or ethnic group.

This study looks at the value and benefit of orientation activities as perceived by students in their first week and discusses the wider implications of a positive or negative experience on successful completion of the first year of study.

Beginning with a paradigm shift of what constitutes support and who needs support, a range of strategies can be put into place to enable every student to become a confident and autonomous learner, irrespective of academic ability (see Lees 2010, Cook & Lowe 2003).

Before any of these worthwhile structures are put into place, the academic team has already made its first impression during fresher’s week. The purpose of this study was to investigate student first impressions and engagement with fresher’s week activities to enable the team to plan a more effective induction programme. Using demographic data that shows the proportion of students who will be living in the family home, can then align activities at a programme level to maximise attendance.

Initial results of a comparative study of fresher’s week attendance between two groups suggested that there is a need re-brand the objective of fresher’s week. Group A recruited a high proportion of students living in the family home and Group B recruited nationally. Engagement with fresher’s week activities was 26% for Group A, compared with 49% for Group B.
Group C were students returning for the second year. These students are typically provided with a shorter induction programme across three days. Although the attendance was comparable to year one students, the perception of the value of activities was significantly higher. Though further research is needed, the focus on modules, subject and requirements for the next level is far higher than for first year students. Their activities contain a far higher proportion of social and extra-curricula and these results indicate that we have to be very clear on the objective of fresher’s week and it is not just to wander round, do a quiz and join a club.

There is a value in the provision of a well-organised Fresher’s that orientates students into both the course and the university. An increasingly higher proportion of students will be local and living in the family home, which should effect a change in the way that fresher’s activities are conducted to bring these student into the university culture and help them make the transitional to higher education.

References:


P42 – How do we prepare students for their new lives at university?

DANCE ROOM – TUESDAY 16:15-17:15

Prof Jane Spowart

Dean’s office, Faculty of Management, University of Johannesburg

(Associate) Prof Jane Spowart is presently the Vice Dean (Teaching and Learning) in the Faculty of Management, University of Johannesburg. Prior to that she was the Head of the School of Tourism and Hospitality having being the head of the Food and Beverage Department for many years in the former Technikon Witwatersrand.

Summary

A reflection of First year students’ feedback on their thoughts, ideas and experiences concerning the interventions implemented by the Faculty of Management. These included identifying at-risk students together with their
comments on the special-purpose Departmental FYE programmes to assist students to cope with university.

Abstract

Reflection of First Year Students’ first semester experiences: a survey in the Faculty of Management at the University of Johannesburg, South Africa

The University of Johannesburg (UJ) is a vibrant, multicultural and dynamic institution of higher education. It attracts over 100 000 applications for ten thousand five hundred first year places annually. The fifty thousand student population is drawn predominantly from the surrounding suburbs of Johannesburg but also from the rural areas of South Africa. The public schooling system in South Africa is considered to be challenging. There are, however numerous good public and private schools. Since 2010, there has been an intense focus on supporting the very diverse first year student population at UJ, with the First Year Experience (FYE). This is deemed necessary particularly as most of them come to university un- and underprepared from diverse schooling backgrounds. This paper shares how the Faculty of Management has taken steps to identify at-risk students and to improve the support to the Faculty’s two thousand five hundred first year students.

In 2014 the following surveys and interventions were implemented: firstly, at-risk students were identified by means of analysing national entry and placement test results together with the test results of major modules of the qualifications for which students were registered. Secondly, all departments supported their first year students by preparing a special-purpose FYE programme for the first semester in conjunction with the University’s division of Academic Development and Support (ADS) and other support units to ensure that each student experiences assistance in order to help them cope with university life. Thirdly, the students were surveyed at the end of the first semester to obtain their thoughts, ideas and experiences concerning the interventions they had received as a first year student in the Faculty of Management.

The methodology used for identifying the at-risk students included correlating the national entry and placement tests to the first test results of the major modules. Thereafter, students deemed to be at risk of not achieving academic success were identified and interviewed. The surveys were placed online on Blackboard (the UJ learning management system) and Google Drive, with
students then given a specific time in which to complete these. This paper will discuss the findings of these surveys and how all the collected information will assist in improving the engagement of first year students in the Faculty of Management.

Parallel session 7

WEDNESDAY 09:00-10:00

P47 – The LightBox project – an interdisciplinary collaboration for production and transference of knowledge and skills in architecture and photography

AUDITROIUM – WEDNESDAY 09:00-10:00

DOINA CARTER

Lincoln School of Architecture and Design

College of Arts

University of Lincoln, UK

Doina Carter: Architect, senior lecturer, HEA teaching fellow. Studio tutor, lecturer in humanities subjects and coordinator of History and Theory of Architecture in the Lincoln School of Architecture. Prior to becoming an

Summary

This paper reports on a model of interdisciplinary collaboration which aims to support 1st year students engagement through participatory events where newly acquired subject specific knowledge can be applied in environments similar to professional real-life situations. The experiment encourages cross-programme transferral of knowledge to enhance own discipline and life skills and awareness.

Abstract

The LightBox experiment embodies the University of Lincoln’s ethos of ‘student as producer’ (Neary 2012). It is part of a more extensive piece of action research which reconsiders assessment in response to student diversity, an increase in numbers of international students and the need to support transition from high school to HE in order to improve engagement, attainment and retention. The project facilitates a cross-programme collaboration where students work as partners, enabling the sharing of student knowledge and offering an experience outside of the traditional curriculum remit of each course. This paper comments on the project’s premise, organisation, results and research data. In its 3rd year, the Light/Box brings together 1st year BArch(Hons) Architecture and BA(Hons) Contemporary Lens Media (CLM) students in a one day workshop, during which they build, light and photograph a physical scale model of a historic interior design. In this process of active learning students cement classroom subject specific knowledge in a dynamic, interactive manner mimicking real-life professional situations: the CLM students have their first experience of a ‘client’, with specific requirements, to which they have to respond using diverse, newly acquired knowledge; the architecture students need to respond in their design of the scale models to the particular requirements of photography shoots and relinquish control over how their work is ‘seen’ (interpreted). Also, for the architecture students learning to take good photographs of perishable models is one of the essential study skills necessary in studio; grasping its basics in 1st year helps not only with the transition to second year but also equips them for life in practice.

Data collected over the last three years suggests that such collaborations improve students’ confidence in their own domains, while triggering the
awareness of belonging to a creative community, within the University and beyond (by being exposed to visiting professionals who attend and support the LightBox workshop). In questionnaires students rate highly the immersive learning experience of the workshop and subsequently they become willing peer mentors for their 1st year colleagues. One important aspect of the on-going action research is strengthening the transferable skills acquired during such events, a number of which are traced and monitored in studio work; some of these skills are subject-specific, being a part of the essential delineation and communication ‘tool-kit’ any architect needs in practice.

This paper reports on the results of such collaborations, which are pedagogically and palpably more than the sum of the parts. This formula of interdisciplinary events can be applied to other domains: the LightBox experiment has inspired a similar, very successful project between the Journalism and Performing Arts courses.


**P27 – Facilitating whole-of-institution engagement in the first year experience through distributed leadership approaches**

**AUDITROIUM – WEDNESDAY 09:00-10:00**

Associate Professor Jo McKenzie, Dr Kathy Egea

Institute for Interactive Media and Learning, University of Technology, Sydney, Australia

Associate Professor Jo McKenzie is Director of the Institute for Interactive Media and Learning at the University of Technology, Sydney. She has overall
responsibility for learning and teaching development. She has 25 years experience in higher education and her research focuses on change in university teaching and learning.

Dr Kathy Egea is a senior lecturer with over 20 years experience in higher education. As UTS FYE coordinator, she co-leads the FYE strategy, building a FYE community of academic and professional staff in supporting first year students, facilitate small grants and leads the faculty-based FYE academic coordinator team.

Summary

This paper describes a systematic, whole-of-institution strategy that uses distributed leadership to engage academics and professional staff in supporting transition, success and retention for first year students at an Australian university. A set of interrelated activities has achieved outcomes that include cross-institutional engagement and collaboration, student success and institutional recognition.

Abstract

Distributed leadership involves collaboration around shared activities in which individuals are recognised for contributing diverse forms of expertise (Jones, Lefoe, Harvey & Ryland 2012; Jones, Harvey and Lefoe 2014; Bolden, Petrov & Gosling 2008; Gronn 2000, 2002). Within higher education institutions, distributed leadership has been shown to be particularly successful in: facilitating alignment between top-down strategic directions and bottom-up emergent approaches and ensuring cross-disciplinary and cross-organisational collaboration (Bolden et al 2008); and engaging academic and professional staff in collaborative activities (Jones et al 2014). Distributed leadership approaches are thus highly appropriate for facilitating cultural change and engagement in strategic, institution-wide first year experience programs.

The First Year Experience (FYE) Strategy at the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS), Australia, is an institution-wide, systematic strategy for supporting transition, retention and success for first year students from low socio-economic status backgrounds, within a philosophy that good practice for these students is good practice for all students. The strategy is guided by a framework based on third generation first year policy and practice (Kift, Nelson
& Clarke 2010), which builds on Kift’s Transition Pedagogies (2009), and is enacted through distributed leadership approaches. This paper will report on these distributed leadership approaches and their outcomes for the institution, staff and students.

Distributed leadership in the UTS FYE Strategy involves senior academic sponsorship, central coordination, First Year Transition Experience (FYTE) coordinators in each faculty, central and local learning communities and support for curriculum change at the local level. Implementation involves a set of interlinked activities:

• A university-wide FYE community with over 350 members, which engages academic and professional staff, enables sharing of resources and provides a sense of common purpose. The community has an online presence and email list.

• Five face-to-face FYE community forums are held each year to showcase good FY practice, share ideas and enable cross-university collaboration and networking.

• FYE communities of practice in four Faculties enable local sharing of practice and collaboration around local FY and transition priorities.

• FYE small grants (A$500-A$4000) support faculty subject coordinators to embed transition practice in the curriculum in ways aligned with institutional strategic priorities. Since 2011, 107 grants have been awarded, with 170 staff involved, including casual academics and professional staff.

• Resources to support subject teachers, including tutors, to implement transition pedagogies in practice.

Outcomes of the four years of the strategy for students have been evaluated using retention and success data from the institutional business intelligence system, along with further strategies in individual subjects. These outcomes include significant improvements in the success of students from low socio-economic backgrounds across the university and in specific subjects; and significant improvements in the success of those commencing with lower university entrance scores. Overall levels of commencing student success have increased significantly, despite a 38.7% increase in students since 2010.
Outcomes for staff have included cross-institutional engagement and collaboration and evolution in understandings of transition pedagogies. The paper will present some of the diverse forms of evidence for these outcomes.


P56 – Growth in academic self-concept in first year students in STEM programs: interplay with achievement and gender.

ROOM A – WEDNESDAY 09:00-10:00

One hour paper

C. Van Soom, T. De Laet, G. Langie & B. De Fraine

Summary

We investigated growth in academic self-concept, defined as self-perception of one’s ability in academic domains, during the first year of STEM higher education. At the start of the first year, female students have a lower academic self-concept compared to male students. During the first year, growth rate of academic self-concept is not related to gender, but to academic achievement.

Abstract

Academic self-concept is defined as the self-perception of one’s ability in academic domains. Since it is associated with higher academic achievement, the relationship between both variables has been extensively studied, mostly in primary and secondary education [1–4]. Little is known about the evolution of academic self-concept during the first semester in higher education. In a longitudinal study of first-year university students in social sciences, no gender difference was observed in academic self-concept at the beginning of higher education, but after the first semester at university, general academic self-concept of female students significantly declined, whereas there was no self-concept change for male students [5]. In a cross-sectional study of first year university STEM students, math and science self-concept of female students was lower compared to male students [6]. The minority status of female students in Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) programs is known to cause stereotype threat [7] and to be associated with
poorer perceived performance, decreased engagement and higher risk of dropout [8].

To better understand the first-year experience of students in STEM programs, we investigated changes in self-concept during the first year, in relation to gender, academic achievement, and gender-balance of the program of study.

The sample consisted of 1139 first-year (undergraduate) Bachelor students in STEM, participating for the first time in higher education. During academic year 2012-2013, students were asked at three different occasions to fill out a questionnaire to measure their academic self-concept [9] and quality of motivation[10]. Furthermore, achievement data were collected at 3 occasions: prior high school achievement (self-reported at start of academic year), early academic achievement (university database results of first (January) exam period ) and late academic achievement (university database results of second (June) exam period). For the linear models, students were classified either as high performing (passed 60% or more of their courses) or low-performing based on the january examn results. Programs of study were designated as “male-dominated” when less than 16% of female students or “gender-balanced” with between 39 % en 69% female students. Growth in academic self-concept was studied by means of a two-level model, with measurement occasions nested within students [10]. SEM-analyses were performed in M-plus.

Our growth analysis shows that at the start of the year, female students have a significantly lower academic self-concept compared to male students. Both groups show a slight increase in academic self-concept during the first year. When also achievement is taken into account, considerable differences become apparent. The average academic self-concept of low achievers decreases significantly, whereas the academic self-concept of high achievers increases significantly. These changes in academic self-concept during the first year are not dependent on gender, but only on achievement. The patterns are also unrelated to the gender-balance of the program. Male and female high/low achievers show the same average increase/decrease in academic self-concept.

In addition we relate these findings to more recently obtained results of SEM-analyses on this cohort, in which the relationships were studied between initial and subsequent academic self-concept, prior high school achievement and subsequent academic achievement, and initial and subsequent intrinsic motivation of male and female students.
Implications of these and other research results are discussed.

Reference List


P6 – Shift from teacher-centered to student-centered learning. Bottom-up and top-down changes in an institution.

ROOM C – WEDNESDAY 09:00-10:00

Lucas M. Jeno

Department of Biology, University of Bergen

Ph. D. researcher at bioCEED – Centre if Excellence in Biology Education, at the University of Bergen. Masters degree in Pedagogy from the University of Bergen.

Summary

Shifting from teacher-centered to learner-centered education requires change at both the person and institutional-level. Fostering excellence in education requires both a structures organization at the highest level within the institution,
and a volitional change in teacher culture, in order to promote higher academic performance and reduce dropout.

Abstract

The purpose of the current presentation is to highlight the importance of shifting higher educations pedagogical focus from teacher-centered education to learner-centered education. Higher education tends to have a teacher-centered perspective on education in which students are passive, as opposed to active, recipients. bioCEED – Centre of Excellence in Biology Education represents a learner-centered perspective to pedagogics, with a reciprocal relationship between; content knowledge->practical skills->societal relevance.

The current research is based on a national-survey (forthcoming) administered to biology students at Universities and Colleges across Norway. We investigate students' perception of the lecturers’ motivational support, their motivation (or lack thereof), self-efficacy, school satisfaction, school grades, and dropout intentions. In order to fully understand students’ intentions to dropout and academic performance, it’s important investigate an integrative model based on student learning and learning climate. Previous research suggests such hypothesized relations between the abovementioned variables (Jeno & Diseth, 2014).

Research derived from Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) suggests that students flourish under conditions when the lecturers give them choice, base the lectures around their interest, and try to understand their internal frame of references. According to SDT, when educators and schools satisfy students’ psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, students are more intrinsically motivated and autonomously motivated, as opposed to extrinsically and controlled motivated. Intrinsic and autonomous motivation is associated with beneficial outcomes such as less dropout, higher performance, greater psychological well-being, and conceptual understanding. This may be fostered by teachers and institutions provision of social support. Hence, higher education should reflect these aspects. By educating all the aspects of the students, we at bioCEED provide students with
20% less of large-group lectures, more student active learning, and more internship in the public and private sector.

Institutional changes must however consider all aspects of the students learning climate. According to the abovementioned reciprocal relation, we not only surveyed students, but also lecturers, the administration, and workplaces. In order to revolutionize education, we need to include all aspects of education and include them in the decision making process. Furthermore, research suggests that lecturers social support is important for organizational change in teacher culture (Deci, 2009). Hence, a bottom-up approach focuses on creating room for lecturers to contribute for student learning. bioCEED host teacher-retreat every semester for lecturers to discuss learning, teaching, and curricula. A top-down approach, on the other hand, requires a structured organization in which a theoretical foundation lay as a basis for the pedagogical work. Accordingly, a framework within SDT and active learning is emphasized. Such bottom-up and top-down processes are highly important for educational reform in order to increase academic performance and decrease dropout. Results from the national survey are discussed and the work of bioCEED presented. Lastly, future directions suggested.

References


P25 – Use of the VARK learning style inventory with first year students for
improving teaching and learning: One case study in the UAE

ROOM C – WEDNESDAY 09:00-10:00

Verma, P & Russell, C

American University of Ras Al Khaimah

Priti Verma is an Assistant Professor of Psychology at the American University of Ras Al Khaimah. She graduated from Chaudhary Charan Singh Haryana Agricultural University, India with a degree in Child Development and Family Studies in 2003. Her current research interests include college readiness, learning styles and first year experience of university students.

Cambria Russell is an Assistant Professor of Education at the American University of Ras Al Khaimah. In 2012, she earned a PhD in International and Comparative Education from Teachers College, Columbia University. Dr. Russell is continuing her research on education in the UAE.

Summary

This study investigates the preferred learning styles (via VARK inventory results) of first year students at a small university in the UAE. Findings describe the composition of cohort in terms of their learning preferences. The relationship between learning preference and academic performance is also examined. Finally, implications and recommendations are reviewed.

Abstract

Introduction and Background

This study investigates the preferred learning styles of first year students at a small university in the UAE. This university has approximately 550 students and has been operating for less than a decade. The students hail from more than
thirty countries but are primarily from the Arab world. In an effort to improve instruction for our particular population, this study on learning styles was conducted. The VARK test, developed by Neil Fleming in 1987, was used. We have used Version 7.0 of the VARK questionnaire in this study. The VARK inventory focuses on how learners prefer to use their senses to learn. This study will interest delegates who work with Arab populations and those who wish to improve programming through learning styles inventory use.

Methods

A census of first year students (N=98) was given the VARK test as part of the Freshman Transition course. The results were recorded and analyzed. Descriptive statistics were run. A sub set of students (N=75) chose to provide their identifying information on the test. The VARK scores from these students were then compared to their Grade Point Averages (GPA) in the first semester of university. Analysis was conducted to determine if students with particular learning profiles were more likely to perform well in their first semester.

Findings

The descriptive statistics tell us about our first year class and their preferred learning styles. Each participant could have one, two, three or four preferences as their VARK result. Seventeen per cent of the students (N=38) expressed a preference for Verbal learning, 34% (N=74) for Aural, 22% (N=48) for Reading, and 27% (N=58) for Kinesthetic.

Students with one dominant learning preference are labelled uni-modal. In our First year class, thirty-five per cent (N=34) expressed a uni-modal learning preference. Seventeen of these uni-modal respondents identified an Aural preference, and nine indicated a Kinesthetic preference. Five prefer Reading, and three favor Visual learning. Thirty three per cent (N=32) of our respondents are bi-modal; eight per cent (n=8) are tri-modal. Twenty four per cent (N=24) are quad-modal.

With the smaller group of students, we looked at GPA for the first semester. First, we determined the average GPA for students with each learning preference. We then compared these averages. We found the average GPA of students who preferred Verbal learning is 2.13. The average for students preferring Aural learning is 2.22. The average for students with a preference for
Reading is 2.09, and the average for students preferring Kinesthetic learning is 2.39. While those with a preference for Kinesthetic learning have a higher average GPA, the difference between the four preferences is small.

We also examined GPA by VARK type. Students with a uni-modal preference had an average GPA of 2.41. Bi-modal learners had an average of 2.53. Students indicating a preference for tri-modal and quad-modal learning performed less well with 2.0 and 1.97 GPAs respectively. It appears that students with multi-modal learning styles are performing less well.

Implications and Recommendations

Based on our study and results of other studies like Torres’s (2014) and Wagner et al (2014), we recommend that learning styles should be considered in tertiary education in order to support student learning. The data has been presented to the head of teaching and learning centre and plans are in development to share the data with faculty, provide training for faculty on working with student learning styles and development of workshops for students to help them best utilize their learning strengths.

References


W26 – Making students strong and flexible from the beginning: The case of biomedical sciences.

ROOM E – WEDNESDAY 09:00-10:00

Annick Hayen; Monique Maelstaf

Prof. dr. Marcel Ameloot

Hasselt University/Department Education

Hasselt University/Faculty of Health and Life Sciences

Annick Hayen has a bachelor degree of teaching elementary school and a master in Educational Sciences. She works as a staff member at central department of Education at Hasselt University. In an earlier job, she provided lectures in higher education (teacher education).

Monique Maelstaf has a master degree in Psychology. She coordinates a team of staff members at Hasselt University.

They support departments in curriculum design, assessment, innovations and diversity. They organise courses to train university teacher (individual and collective coaching of teachers engaged in developing pedagogical competences).

Prof. dr. Marcel Ameloot was trained as a physicist at the KU Leuven (Belgium). He obtained his PhD in 1984 at the Limburgs Universitair Centrum (now Hasselt University) on the topic of nanosecond fluorescence relaxations in artificial lipid membranes. He took a postdoctoral position at the Johns Hopkins University (Baltimore, USA). Thereafter he obtained a permanent position at Hasselt University where he became full professor in 2000. Marcel Ameloot
takes several administrative duties with respect to teaching and curriculum development, both in Physics and Biomedical Sciences.

Summary

Biomedical Sciences at the University of Hasselt is confronted with a double challenge.

Due to the vagueness of the profile and the uncertainty of the employment opportunities for a biomedical scientist the discipline attracts freshmen with deficient learning competences and knowledge.

Consequences in the first year: demotivated students, no stimulating learning climate, high dropout rate, low social and academic involvement.

Abstract

The problem

In Belgium access to higher education is guaranteed without formal prerequisites or entrance exams (one exception: medical and dentistry studies) Free choice of university is the norm. In the competition for new students an explicit and clearly distinct profile is a necessity for all related curricula.

The bachelor in Biomedical Sciences at the University of Hasselt is confronted with a double challenge.

Due to the vagueness of the profile and the uncertainty of the employment opportunities for a biomedical scientist this bachelor discipline attracts freshmen with deficient learning competences and knowledge.

Moreover the bachelor studies in biomedical sciences were (and still are) a simple and easy passage to the medical sciences for those students that didn’t pass their medical entrance exam. Students can switch from the first year biomedical sciences to the second year of medicine. The effect of this ‘unique’ year is a large number (over 50% of the student population) of so called
“students-in-waiting” putting their education on hold. These are students without genuine interest in biomedical sciences.

The consequences in the first year are unmistakable: demotivated students, no stimulating learning climate, high dropout rate and low social and academic involvement.

Proposed solution

In June 2014, installation of a taskforce with extended authority to prepare the work of the regular Education Management Team of Biomedical Sciences. One third of the EMT are student members.

Based on input stakeholders (students, teachers, employers) the taskforce has developed the framework of the new curriculum.

The transition to medicine is no longer a condition. Clear communication, new summer courses and other teasers reinforce the network with secondary schools and teachers of possible future students.

A biomedical scientist is a catalyst between different actors in healthcare. With his scientific expertise he can monitor the future in the whole range of prevention, diagnosis and therapy. This sharper profile and the expected multi- and interdisciplinarity should be reflected in the curriculum.

Having the new profile in mind, former not validated learning outcomes were replaced by unique biomedical objectives that are more oriented towards employability skills.

Through a backward chaining analysis, learning paths of the bachelor program were developed. Supply knowledge will be limited and there will be more focus on the core themes. Academic and employability skills are embedded in all interdisciplinary courses of the core curriculum. Supporting knowledge and domain-specific knowledge are integrated and offered just-in-time. The educational concept stimulates development of personal competences and self reflection and is in accordance with the assessment.
This blueprint was completed by budgeting the study load. To manage the intended competence development every learning path has a coordinator. He bridges the gap between individual teachers of all courses in a learning path and gives feedback to the Education Management Team.

Intended deadline for implementation: September 2015

The reality check will occur in 2015-2016.

Does the intended new learning path fit with the potential of the incoming students?

Are the start requirements and the learning paths realistic?

Do the students show more academic engagement?

Interaction

- Are the proposed solutions an efficient way to increase motivation and learning skills in the first year?

- How to deal with the diversity of the incoming students?

- Is social cohesion both by students and staff a necessary condition of academic success?

W67 – 8,500 students, many opportunities – bringing ‘the University’
to residences through Learning Communities

DANCE ROOM – WEDNESDAY 09:00-10:00

Mark Hibbert and William Carey

Residences, Directorate for the Student Experience

The University of Manchester

Mark works full-time for the University’s Halls of Residences, working closely with Hall Wardens and the student-led Student Associations to support proactive and reactive interventions encouraging community development and wellbeing. He is the Warden of a large, catered residence and supports individual students with issues of welfare, conduct and personal development.

William’s substantive post is within the Teaching and Learning Support Office where he focuses on Manchester’s culture and approach to Student Engagement. He works part-time as a non-residential adviser for Residences and is supporting the introduction of Learning Communities through student-led activity and developing the training of the core Pastoral Team.

Summary

How can you or your colleagues impact your students’ living environment? The University of Manchester has piloted ‘Learning Communities’ in its managed Residences to support the academic, social and personal development of its residents. Come and discuss with us:

- (y)our successes and challenges
- Integrating residential life into institutional frameworks
- Building culture and capacity in key teams
Abstract

The University of Manchester guarantees all Year 1 students accommodation in its Halls of Residence, comprising approximately 8,500 beds. It operates a mix of catered/self-catered Halls in a range of traditional and modern buildings. Students are supported by a team of part-time, live-in pastoral advisers (themselves either post-graduate or staff). Over the past 3 years, and building on the excellent practice undertaken by each Hall’s ‘Residents Association’, staff working within Halls have developed a ‘Learning Communities’ model that seeks to encourage student to integrate their social and academic lives in their Hall.

Critical to the initiative have been the strong partnerships forged between Residence staff and wider University colleagues. The programme started as a small pilot activity in one traditional, collegiate Hall making use of student-led study groups and working with the Careers Service to run an evening workshop to prepare students for summer internship applications. The activity has now developed across multiple Halls (approx. 2,500 students) and draws from the expertise of many campus based services including the Library, Counselling Service and International Society.

The programme is aligned to two emerging models of practice: ‘Manchester Ways to Wellbeing’, 6 actions to incorporate into daily life (drawing from the research by the New Economics Forum) and ‘Manchester Employability Model’ (built on internal research to identify key approaches taken by students successful in finding work soon after graduating).

Anecdotal feedback from students and observed behaviours indicate this approach has been successful in enabling students to develop additional relationships (particularly international students) to support a greater sense of belonging within Halls and across different residences.

Ongoing work to enhance the training provided for the pastoral advisers is working to embed some provision within each Hall, that is ‘owned and led’ by the individual Hall community whilst maintaining a coordinated oversight, ensuring an equitable experience for our students.

This workshop will briefly outline the University’s Halls of Residence structure and then explore the concept of Learning Communities and Residential Life.
through a series of challenges that have been encountered. Participants will be encouraged to share and develop their own experiences of partnered opportunities between residences and wider academic/support services. It will also highlight the importance of embedding activity into the individual culture of each Hall and how this is happening at Manchester through a consistent training programme for pastoral advisers and the oversight by the Pastoral Care Management Team.

Activities across Manchester’s Halls will be shared alongside feedback from those students and staff engaged in the pilot activity. It will demonstrate how the programme aligns to Manchester’s ‘Ways to Wellbeing’ and ‘Employability Model’ to support students in making connections between their Hall life and the available services on campus.