Students from low socioeconomic status backgrounds in higher education:

*An annotated bibliography 2000–2011*

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O’Shea, H., Onsman, A., and McKay, J. Students from low socioeconomic status backgrounds in higher education

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Introduction

Objective

The objective of this document is to present an annotated bibliography of recent literature (2000-2011), in the broad area of the experience of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds (LSES) in higher education.

This bibliography was originally developed by Dr Helen O’Shea in 2010 as a contribution to the literature base for the research project, ‘Focusing on their success: Students from low socioeconomic backgrounds at Deakin University’, funded by the Strategic Teaching and Learning Grants Scheme (STALGs). In 2011, it was developed and updated by Associate Professor Andrys Onsman and Dr Jade McKay as part of the Australian Learning and Teaching Council project, ‘Effective teaching and support of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds: Resources for Australian higher education’.

The bibliography provides a summary of recent literature and a useful entry to the vast literature in the area, and is intended to serve as a resource for HE researchers who wish to undertake scholarly or research work in the area of the low-SES student experience.

Background

Students from low-SES backgrounds are under-represented in Australian higher education. As Devlin (2008) has noted, the representation of low-SES students in higher education has remained at around 15 percent for more than 15 years. Devlin also notes that:

In terms of success, there are widely held erroneous assumptions about the threat to standards of allowing students with marginally lower academic achievement, as measured by numerical rankings – which are widely understood to be limited in their usefulness – to enter university. However, a large body of longitudinal research by the Australian Council of Educational Research and others indicates clearly that once admitted to university, students from low SES have success rates comparable to those of their higher SES peers. (2008, p.1)

This bibliography focuses on the experiences of LSES students in universities from around the world. It includes articles about the theory of these students’ experiences as well as those concerning the practical aspects of their experiences. These peer-reviewed articles include reports on research studies, conceptual papers, and commentaries. Additionally, relevant government reports and policy papers have been included as well as a selection of key conference papers, addresses, books and book chapters.

Focus and content

The primary focus is on peer-reviewed journal articles. Journals consulted in the first instance were the following - the number of articles included in this bibliography appears in brackets following the title:

- Journal of College Student Development (16)
- Studies in Higher Education (16)
- Higher Education Research and Development (11)
- Higher Education (12)
- Studies in Learning, Evaluation, Innovation and Development (8)
- Teaching in Higher Education (7)
- Research in Higher Education (5)
- Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education (2)
- Journal of Higher Education (2)
- American Education Research Journal (2)
- Higher Education Quarterly (3)
- Innovative Higher Education (1)
- International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (0)
- The Journal of the First-Year Experience & Students in Transition (0)
- Review of Educational Research (0)
- Journal of Educational Psychology (0)
- Review of Educational Research (0)
- Journal of Educational Research (0)
- Educational Research (0)
- Educational Researcher (0)
Numerous other journals are cited. Those found to be particularly useful included the following:

- Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning (16)
- Research Papers in Education (3)
- Journal of Education Policy (2)
- Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management (2)
- British Journal of Sociology and Education (2)
- Journal of Further and Higher Education (2)
- International Studies of Sociology of Education Sociology (1)
- Higher Education: The International Journal of Higher Education and Educational Planning (1)
- Tertiary Education and Management (1)
- Open Learning: The Journal of Open Distance and E-Learning (1)
- Social Justice Research (1)

In the first stage of the development of this annotated bibliography, titles and abstracts of all articles in the listed journals between 2000 and 2010 were scanned and selected articles were then examined in more detail to ascertain their relevance to the experiences of low-SES students. In addition, a search of journal websites was conducted using the terms ‘socioeconomic’ (and its alternative spelling ‘socio-economic’) and ‘SES’ with ‘higher education’. This was followed by searches for the relevant policy documents relating to the broadening of participation in higher education, particularly in the United Kingdom and Australia. This led to searches of publications from related research centres. These included research reports and in some cases books. Finally, the bibliographies of articles selected for inclusion were searched and further relevant articles and documents were added, as in the case of Vincent Tinto’s seminal work on retention. In the second stage, literature up to May 2011 was canvassed and the bibliography was updated accordingly. The introductory material was also amended slightly.

**Format**

The format is as follows:

- Citation details
- URL to access article (nb: PDFs also available on HERG shared drive)
- ISBN if URL unavailable
- Keywords
- Abstract including scope and key findings or ideas
  - (‘abstract’ or ‘edited abstract’ indicating the author’s abstract has been duplicated or amended).

**A diversity of definitions**

As the list of keywords above suggests, people who are under-represented among higher education students are identified in many different ways: as nontraditional, of low socioeconomic status, from ethnic minorities, the working class, or simply as ‘under-represented’. Students from minority ethnic groups, for example, might be identified in the literature via the term ‘diversity’, reflecting the generalisations or euphemisms of past anti-discrimination legislation, notably in the USA and also in Australia and the UK. In both cases, the broadest term as a keyword (diversity and socioeconomic status) has been employed to simplify searching. The term ‘nontraditional student’ is a third catch-all term referring to mature students, those with nonstandard admission status, and women in male-dominated courses, in addition to students from ethnic minorities and low socioeconomic status.

**Themes**

The themes of the research reported on here are reflected in the keywords listed above. As a consequence of the varying ways of identifying under-represented students and conceiving of their paths into and through higher education, some of the literature included here may appear to be somewhat obliquely related to the experience of low-SES students. Selection has been governed by the estimated usefulness of the research to the unfolding situation in Australian higher education. The bibliography contains: reports on interventions among various populations of students, varying approaches to gathering and analysing the data and, in particular, commentary on policy and practice, on ways of understanding diversity, retention and attrition, student learning, the academic culture and student experience.
A diversity of focus and methodology

Higher education policy and funding of under-represented groups has a very different history in the USA from that of the UK and also Australia. In the USA, the policy emphasis is on race (as a result of anti-discrimination and affirmative action legislation with regard to Latino and Black students in particular) and the funding emphasis is on student financial aid. Research from the USA is focused on the performance of identified student groups (ethnic minorities, first-generation students, etc.) compared to other students and on evaluating initiatives to overcome their academic and cultural disadvantage. Much of the American research is quantitative.

By contrast, over the past decade, a large body of research has emerged from the United Kingdom that is specifically concerned with the former Labour Government’s policy, Widening Participation in Higher Education. This work comprises research reports and commentary directed at advocating and justifying the legislation and a vast number of descriptive and evaluative studies of initiatives directed at widening participation. The initial thrust of this progressive policy was to initiate local schemes to increase motivation, preparedness and access to higher education among under-represented groups. From around 2005, the emphasis of research moved to the experience and success of these students once they gained higher education places. It is this more recent research that has most relevance to Australian policy on increasing participation of LSES students, to understanding their experience at university and to making adaptations to admissions, teaching and institutional environments that will support their success.

An important shift is noticeable in research reports and commentaries from a number of UK ‘think tanks’ set up to work specifically in the area of widening participation (for example, Action on Access). This change, evident in the work of Gorard, Thomas and others (and summarised in Billingham 2009) is twofold: a shift away from a ‘deficit’ model of student difference to one of inclusion, and the advocacy of ‘mainstreaming’ or embedding of wider participation policy within higher education institutional culture. Another outcome of the intensive research on widening participation in the UK has been a change in the conception of higher education as a process, from one of ‘access + intervention = participation + intervention = graduation’ to that of ‘lifelong learning’ (also referred to as the ‘student life-cycle’), which maintains that ‘drop-outs’ is an inadequate characterisation of the strategic moves students make across institutions and courses, and in and out of higher education, over the life course.

Limitations

The bibliography is not exhaustive, both because of the time constraints in compiling it and its confinement to 12 years of published research. It should be regarded as an entry point and a historical background to ongoing research on the experience of low-SES students in higher education. A further limitation, as discussed above, is the overlap between low-SES students and other groups under-represented in higher education.

Acknowledgements

Part of this bibliography was funded by the Strategic Teaching and Learning Grant Scheme of Deakin University through a project led by Professor Marcia Devlin in 2010. Funding provided by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council for the project, ‘Effective teaching and support of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds: Resources for Australian higher education’ has allowed for the development and updating of the annotated bibliography. The latter project is led by Deakin University and the partner institutions are Queensland University of Technology and Charles Sturt University.

ISBN: 1 85856 316 X

Keywords: book chapter; case study; United Kingdom; participation; socioeconomic status; learning; student success; academic culture

A critique of Tinto’s model of retention, using as an example its relevance for vocational entry qualification students at the University of Central Lancashire. The authors conclude that the concept of institutional integration is not as important as Tinto’s model suggests and propose an alternative model, which focuses on pre-entry engagement and empowerment as key factors in higher education retention. (Edited Introduction, p. xvii)


URL: http://www.actiononaccess.org/index.php?p=11_5_2

Keywords: report; research report; United Kingdom; policy; government funding; participation; student success

Action on Access is the national co-ordination team appointed by the Higher Education Funding Council for England and the Learning and Skills Council to support their widening participation strategies through consultation, advice, research and dissemination of information and good practice. This report represents a series of research-based activities by Action on Access for the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) from December 2001 to December 2002. Broadly these have attempted to identify issues and consider factors that contribute to enhancing participation and student success, with an analysis of widening participation strategies and the approaches and response of HEIs in response to increased student diversity. (Introduction)

The PDF for this listing comprises the report’s introduction, background and context to the three studies, each of which is listed separately below:

Layer, G., Srivastava, A. and Stuart, M., Achieving student success

Thomas, L., Woodrow, M. Thomas, L., Access and retention

Layer, G., Srivastava, A., Thomas, L. and Yorke, M., Student success: Building for change.


URL: http://www.staffs.ac.uk/journal/volsixone/articletwo.htm

Keywords: journal article; case study; initiative; Australia; socioeconomic status; financial aid; student success

From 1997 to 1999 the Australian federal government made available funding for scholarships for disadvantaged undergraduate students to undertake tertiary studies. When this scheme ended, Monash University initiated its own equity-based scholarship program. In this article preliminary results from a case study of both of these groups of scholarship students is presented in order to consider whether scholarship support helps disadvantaged students enter, perform well in and complete tertiary education. Preliminary results suggest that the receipt of equity scholarships by disadvantaged students coincides with good academic performance. (Edited abstract)
Phenomenography is a qualitative research methodology that investigates the different ways in which people experience or think about things. It is often used in education research. This paper focuses on the data analysis stage of phenomenographic research, which is often not well understood. It aims to clarify the process, initially by collecting together the more concrete of the existing descriptions of phenomenographic analysis. The analytic process is then further elucidated by a unique analysis of variation in practice, based on the principles underlying that practice. (Edited abstract)


URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11162-008-9098-3

Keywords: journal article; quantitative research; USA; student experience; student success; student motivation; social connectedness

Reports a study of the effects of academic performance, motivation, and social connectedness on third-year retention, transfer, and dropout behavior. The sample included 6,872 students representing 23 four-year universities and colleges. Findings were that academic performance has large effects on likelihood of retention and transfer; academic self-discipline, pre-college academic performance, and pre-college educational development have indirect effects on retention and transfer; and college commitment and social connectedness have direct effects on retention. Academic self-discipline led to greater first-year academic performance, which suppressed its effect on retention and transfer. Practical and theoretical implications of these findings and directions for future research are discussed. (Edited abstract)


URL: http://www.actiononaccess.org/resources/files/USA.pdf

Keywords: report; commentary; USA; policy; participation; student finances; financial aid

One of a series of reports on other countries’ national policy and practice on widening participation in higher education to inform policy and practice in England. This report focuses on the US experience of fees, student support, student debt and the implications for access and admissions. It identifies some key issues facing those working to widen access in both the US and England -including the different expectations of equitable treatment in the two countries, the implications of long-term student debt accrued at increasingly high levels and the need to consider what policy and finance levers are appropriate in directing institutional policy towards access and widening participation. (Edited abstract)


Keywords: bibliography; United Kingdom; participation; equity; student success

An annotated bibliography on widening participation in the UK, prepared for the Department of Education and Learning Northern Ireland, Widening Access Expert Group, this report covers the areas of participation, retention, and completion as well as the variables of class, gender, religion, age, disability, and race/ethnicity.

URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/713655373

Keywords: journal article; United Kingdom; widening participation; working-class; non-participation; diversity

‘Widening participation’ and increasing student diversity are currently key concerns across the higher education sector, and particular attention has been drawn to the persistent under-representation of working-class students within British universities. It is thought that widening participation in higher education (HE) can result in a number of social and economic benefits, at a national level, for under-represented social groups and for individual groups and for individual participants. Less is known about the viewpoints and understandings of working-class non-participants, such as whether ‘official’ perceptions regarding the value of HE are shared or contested. Focus group discussions were conducted with 109 non-participant Londoners, aged between 16 and 30 years, from a range of working-class backgrounds. Findings focus upon non-participants’ constructions of risks, costs and benefits during application, participation and graduation. These perceptions of “value” are discussed with relation to widening participation strategies amongst ethничally diverse ‘working class’ groups. (Abstract)


From the issue entitled "Differentiation in Higher Education and its Consequences for Social Inequality"

Keywords: journal article; Italy; higher education; Bologna process; socioeconomic background; labour market; institutional reforms

DOI: 10.1007/s10734-010-9379-6

The focus of this paper is on the relationships between social origin, participation in tertiary education (enrolment, drop-out, enrolment at second level and post-tertiary education) and occupational instability among university graduates in a recent period of university and labour market reforms (the differentiation of higher education due to the “Bologna process” and the flexibilization of employment contracts). In the first part of the paper we review these institutional reforms, discussing how they have changed the structure of opportunities and constraints for students and graduates. In the second part we analyse data from several cross-section waves of the Upper Secondary Graduates Survey and the University Graduates Survey which cover both pre- and post-reform cohorts. Results from logistic regression models show a slight decline in the association between parents’ education and enrolment in tertiary education, whereas there is a reduction and a new increase of inequality in drop-outs. We also find remarkable effects of parents’ education on enrolment in post-graduate courses, but smaller on the risks of having unstable jobs and both are mainly stable over time. Only a slight reduction of the role of social origin in university participation and in the transition to the labour market took place, but it seems not to be too closely connected to the specific reforms which occurred in the 1990s. (Abstract)


URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03075070050193424

Keywords: journal article; methodology; student experience; affect; phenomenography

Phenomenography is a methodology that has been quietly influential in research on higher education, having been the basis of many studies of approaches to learning and student understandings. This article seeks to clarify important aspects of the methodology and argues that phenomenography would benefit from a more rigorous consideration of how to engage with the student’s lived experience. It sets out a series of guidelines for the conduct of phenomenographic research, and demonstrates how these might be achieved in practice by drawing on the experience of two higher education research studies: one into students’ experiences of cheating and the other into lecturers’ and students’ experiences of the teaching and learning of accounting. (Edited abstract)

URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13600800903191948

Keywords: journal article; case study; Australia; socioeconomic status; first-year students; first-generation students; nontraditional students; student experience

Of the challenges facing universities, the need to attract and accommodate students of increasingly varied demographic backgrounds is perhaps one of the most pressing. This study was conducted to profile the first-year student cohort at a new university campus characterised by the nontraditional students typical of a rapidly changing tertiary sector. The project was designed to follow on from the findings of a recent nation-wide review of first-year students in Australia, which provided a robust point of comparison. The cohort in this context differed from those of previous studies—over half were first-generation tertiary students; less than one-third were from a high socioeconomic status background; and just under half were mature-aged students. Overall, results indicated that students at this university, despite their backgrounds, were remarkably positive about their university experience and well equipped to achieve at university study. These findings are highly relevant in terms of understanding the transitional experiences of nontraditional students. (Abstract)


URL: http://www.staffs.ac.uk/journal/volthreeone/articleone.htm

Keywords: journal article; case study; United Kingdom; socioeconomic status; nontraditional students; student experience; student support; academic culture; cultural capital

This article examines the learning experiences of a group of adult working-class students participating in higher education in an elite university in the UK. Drawing on the work of Bourdieu, it suggests that the university environment is alien to many such students, and that it is unjust to expect the burden of change to fall only on the students themselves. The article proposes that a two-way process of change and development is required if working-class students are to enjoy a successful experience that integrates their learning. The article identifies the issues that these students face, then turns to the ways in which teaching staff and institutions can support nontraditional students in their learning. These include pro-active recruitment strategies, introductory level courses, more one-to-one support for students, interactive rather than didactic teaching, relevant course materials, which are easily accessible and greater flexibility. (Edited abstract)


Keywords: address; conference paper; Australia; generic skills pilot study; academic performance

Government and students expect universities to provide skills, knowledge and attributes that contribute to the country’s and individual’s gain. In 2008, the Bradley Report highlighted deficiencies in this regard, and called for universities to provide quality academic provision, increased student enrolments and higher completion rates. Central to achieving this is the development of generic skills, which provide the foundation through which discipline specific knowledge and skills are demonstrated. Whilst their importance is universally recognised, research into their successful development is limited and shows mixed performance results. This paper aims to contribute to these goals by reporting on the preliminary findings of an embedded intervention program targeting first year management students at Swinburne University of Technology. The program invites students to identify perceived areas of concern in their generic skill sets, which are then used to customise a workshop delivered early in the term as part of their unit. Preliminary analysis shows most students entered the management unit with both high, unrealistic result expectations and significant confidence in their generic skill sets. During the term, both changed, with over 50% finding the embedded program useful. The overall impact of the program on academic results compared to previous years was marginal but insights into specific areas of concern were identified. These may assist those considering implementing generic skill support programs. More research is now needed to identify the parameters of the response needed to bring significant change in performance. (Abstract)


DOI: 10.1353/csd.2010.0004

Keywords: journal article; review; United States; diversity; student success

Over the past quarter century, colleges and universities have been challenged to create environments that fully embrace the diversity of students, staff, faculty and other stakeholders. Yet, traditional response to this challenge has focused primarily on the degree to which students from underrepresented populations are admitted and their retention to graduation. In her inspiring and carefully researched book, Diversity’s promise for higher education: Making it work, Smith (2009) argues that our current focus on students’ success, however important, is insufficient. Diversity should be built into “the center of higher education, where it can serve as a powerful facilitator of institutional mission and societal purpose” (p. 3). This volume is useful for presidents, provosts, and enrollment managers as well as student affairs administrators since it avoids simple exhortations to be more sensitive to diverse populations. Instead Smith uses sophisticated analyses of demographic and historical trends to convince readers that structural attention to diversity is essential for institutional effectiveness in addressing societal needs. Fundamentally, Smith successfully advocates for a paradigm shift that transforms the conversation about diversity from concern about student demographics to a vital institutional imperative. (First paragraph of review)


URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/07294360600610388

Keywords: journal article; quantitative research; New Zealand; nontraditional students; student success

As New Zealand tertiary education has undergone extensive review processes, debate has centred not only on the need to extend the participation rates of groups previously under-represented, but also how to retain these under-represented groups once they are recruited into tertiary programs. This paper draws on a large-scale study of the factors that influence successful completion of tertiary qualifications for Pasifika students. Using a diverse range of data sources throughout New Zealand, the study identified a range of factors that impede retention, as well as positive factors that help increase retention. Its findings support the contention that the capacity of educational facilities to retain students is a function of the interface between student and institution, and the institution and the community. (Abstract)
British higher education have been both maximally and effectively maintained. Higher status degree programmes and at ‘Old’ universities remained fundamentally unchanged. In short, social class inequalities began to decline only during the early 1990s, after the enrolment rate for the most advantaged social class had reached saturation. In the odds of higher education enrolment proved remarkably persistent for much of the period between 1960 and 1995, and began to decline only during the early 1990s, after the enrolment rate for the most advantaged social class had reached saturation point. Throughout this same 35 year period, qualitative inequalities between social classes in the odds of enrolment on more traditional and higher status degree programmes and at ‘Old’ universities remained fundamentally unchanged. In short, social class inequalities in British higher education have been both maximally and effectively maintained. (Abstract)


Keywords: address; research report; Australia; diversity, student experience, student support

This paper examines the experiences of a group of students who have entered higher education via diverse pathways in order to consider the implications of their experiences for academic support. Drawing on students’ accounts provided as part of a longitudinal research project, we outline how these students manage their studies in the context of the competing demands on their time and the challenges they face. Perspectives from phenomenography, constructivism, distance education and adult education are used to frame the students’ experiences. One major finding is the participants’ limited usage of student support services provided by the university. Their primary source of formal support tended to be academic staff at the departmental level, while family and friends (including other students) were major sources of informal support. We discuss the implications of these findings for student support, raising questions about the boundaries of academic support, and how support services can be made more useful for these students. (Abstract)


URL: http://www.ean-edu.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=39&Itemid=75

Keywords: address; commentary; United Kingdom; participation; student experience; student success; policy; learning; student support

Billingham summarises the most influential research in widening participation in the UK, identifying shifts in thinking over the decade in which the Widening Participation in Higher Education policy has been developed, put into place and assessed. Broadly, the focus on barriers to participation has been replaced by an emphasis on the ‘student life cycle’ and ‘lifelong learning’, on ‘transition’ and ‘success’. Where the policy and funding had initially focused on access, it now focuses more on students’ experience in and beyond higher education. Focus on barriers needs to expand from situational and dispositional barriers to address the barriers that institutional inflexibility constructs. Billingham proposes a number of ways in which this might achieved through reforms in teaching and student support, emphasising that institutions go beyond the ‘deficit’ model of supporting students and actively engage in a ‘joint venture’ with this new population of students.

PDFs of paper and Powerpoint


DOI: 10.1007/s10734-010-9374-y

Keywords: journal article; United Kingdom; higher education; expansion; differentiation; social class

Conventional political wisdom has it that educational expansion helps to reduce socioeconomic inequalities of access to education by increasing equality of educational opportunity. The counterarguments of Maximally Maintained Inequality (MMI) and Effectively Maintained Inequality (EMI), in contrast, contend that educational inequalities tend to persist despite expansion because those from more advantaged social class backgrounds are better placed to take up the new educational opportunities that expansion affords (MMI) and to secure for themselves qualitatively better kinds of education at any given level (EMI). This paper sets out to test the predictions of the MMI and EMI hypotheses against empirical data for the case of Britain where higher education expanded dramatically during the 1960s and again during the early 1990s. The results show that quantitative inequalities between social classes in the odds of higher education enrolment proved remarkably persistent for much of the period between 1960 and 1995, and began to decline only during the early 1990s, after the enrolment rate for the most advantaged social class had reached saturation point. Throughout this same 35 year period, qualitative inequalities between social classes in the odds of enrolment on more traditional and higher status degree programmes and at ‘Old’ universities remained fundamentally unchanged. In short, social class inequalities in British higher education have been both maximally and effectively maintained. (Abstract)

URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1023/A:1004060422023

Keywords: journal article; research report; Australia; Indigenous students; conceptions of learning; student motivation; learning strategies

This paper describes an investigation of conceptions of learning held by 22 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from three universities in Queensland, Australia. Other areas investigated were students’ experiences of informal learning, their reasons for studying and the strategies they used to learn. Results of this study found that these students view and approach formal university learning in much the same way as other university students and most hold quantitative conceptions of learning. The most interesting result was the difference between students’ conceptions of formal learning and their experiences of informal learning. It is proposed that formal learning for Indigenous students recognise and include an Indigenous perspective such as integrating, where appropriate, practical strategies for learning. It is also suggested that Indigenous students be helped to develop conceptions that will enable them to learn formal, theoretical material successfully. (Edited abstract)


URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/030750703093009300

Keywords: journal article; case study; Australia; Indigenous students; phenomenography; learning

This article reports on a phenomenographic investigation into conceptions of learning for 15 Indigenous Australian university students over the three years of their degree courses. The ways in which they went about learning were also investigated along with the relationship between individual students’ ‘core’ conceptions of learning and the ways in which they learned. Results indicated that their conceptions and ways of learning were similar in some respects to those found for other university students. However, some students went about learning in ways that were incongruent with the core conception of learning they held. This can be regarded as dissonance between strategies and conceptions of learning. The implications of this for teaching and learning for such students are discussed. (Edited abstract)


URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1023/B:HIGH.000009807.00392.33

Keywords: journal article; case study; Australia; Indigenous students; phenomenography; learning

Conceptions of learning and strategies used by 15 indigenous students in three Australian universities were studied longitudinally over three years. Their academic achievements were good, but at a high cost in terms of time and effort. In spite of the fact that almost half of the students expressed higher-order (qualitative) conceptions of learning in the first year and more in the second and third years, all of the students reported using highly repetitive strategies to learn. That is, they did not vary their way of learning, reading or writing in the beginning of their studies and less than half of them did so at the end of the three years. It is argued that encountering variation in ways of learning is a prerequisite for the development of powerful ways of learning and studying. (Abstract)


URL: http://www.springerlink.com/content/a7261085750rkh02/fulltext.pdf

Keywords: journal article; United Kingdom; participation; financial aid; low socioeconomic groups; student finances

This paper, through a review of recent literature and policy documents, highlights: the rates of participation in higher education in the UK; the widening participation agenda and the potential impact of key financial changes in the funding of higher education, particularly for students from lower socio-economic groups. (Abstract)

URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10734-009-9238-5

Keywords: journal article; quantitative research; Australia; diversity; socioeconomic status; higher education aspirations; measuring SES

Using data from a recent survey of Australian secondary students, we find that those from higher socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to aspire to attend university. The same can be said for students who do not speak English at home. We find that students with an ethnic minority background are more likely to perceive higher levels of support from parents. However, we find that all students believe they receive encouragement from their parents to do well at school (rather than discouragement or disinterest), and that there is little difference in the level of importance placed on the views of parents between students from English and non-English speaking background. While interest in university education is strong across all socioeconomic groups, particularly for students who do not speak English at home, there is a considerable gap between aspirations and enrolment levels. We suggest that this ‘aspirations gap’ is larger for students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. This analysis also supports growing evidence that the postcode methodology for allocating socioeconomic status to individuals is unreliable. (Abstract)


URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02671520110037410

Keywords: journal article; case study; United Kingdom; diversity; nontraditional students; participation; student experience

The paper describes part of an ongoing study of the experiences of 32 mature, ‘nontraditional’ students involved in a community-based, flexible access to higher education project as they make the transition to higher education. The paper draws on the stories of three of the participants to highlight some of the financial and institutional barriers experienced by mature minority ethnic students. The study reveals the nontraditional student as a frustrated participant in an unresponsive institutional context and questions the tendency to problematize students from nontraditional backgrounds, rather than the educational institutions responsible for their progress. (Edited abstract)


ISBN: 1 85856 298 8

Keywords: book; research report; United Kingdom; socioeconomic status; nontraditional students; participation; student experience; first-year students; student success; academic culture; cultural capital; student finances; policy

This book reports on a 4-year action research project among nontraditional students, mainly mature, working-class women, through their entry to and study at a UK university. Thirty-two people here reflect on what held them back from engaging with further education, what eventually motivated them to aim for university and how they experienced life and study when they got there. Several chapters focus on participants’ first-year experience, including how they juggled time, dealt with finances and learned how to operate successfully in the academic culture. A second section of the book reveals the paradoxes in UK policy on widening participation and suggests needed changes.

URL: http://www.staffs.ac.uk/journal/voltenone/articleone.htm

Keywords: journal article; quantitative research; United Kingdom; student housing; student experience

This article explores first year undergraduate students’ choice of living arrangements and how they may impact on their experience of university. Using data from the UK Economic and Social Research Council/Teaching and Learning Research project Learning and Teaching for Social Diversity and Difference, the authors explore the range of living arrangements which students may opt for, the reasons for their choices and the extent to which personal choices are mediated by structural factors. Whilst confirming the notion of stratification between the pre- and post-1992 universities in the study, the data also reveal the complexity and diversity of choice-making at an individual level. The article discusses how living arrangements may facilitate or constrain students’ engagement with and orientation to university life and study, and draws out the implications for universities and university teachers. (Abstract)


URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13562510701596224

Keywords: journal article; case study; Australia; Indigenous students; diversity; international students; learning strategies

While diversity and commonality are not necessarily contradictory aspirations in relation to contemporary teaching in higher education, they exist potentially in a state of dynamic tension, fostered by market-based and government-induced policies that strive to have the largest and widest possible client- or customer-base, while reducing costs by standardising delivery and assessment. This paper explores this dynamic tension between diversity and commonality through three empirical cases of different types of students at Central Queensland University in Australia: Indigenous, pre-undergraduate and international students. The paper presents an analytical synthesis of the particular teaching strategies developed by academic staff working with students in each case: experiential learning, transformative learning and culturally-situated pedagogy. The authors argue that these strategies constitute a potentially effective means of helping to resolve the dynamic tension between, and of unravelling the Gordian knot linking, diversity and commonality in Australian contemporary higher education. (Abstract)


Keywords: report; Australia; policy; higher education

The review, subsequently known as the Bradley Report, was established to address the question of whether the higher education sector is structured, organised and financed to position Australia to compete effectively in the new globalised economy. The panel has concluded that, while the system has great strengths, it faces significant, emerging threats, which require decisive action. To address these, major reforms are recommended to the financing and regulatory frameworks for higher education. See DEEWR documents 2009 and 2010, below, for the government response to the review.

URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10734-010-9343-5

Keywords: journal article; South Africa; higher education; students; dropouts; poverty; educational costs; student welfare; retention; policy

While the role of financial considerations in higher education student dropout is being recognized increasingly, the dominant international literature fails to reflect the extent of socio-economic deprivation among students in countries where many people live below the poverty datum line. This article draws on a study of student retention and graduate destination at seven HE institutions in South Africa, focusing on the University of the Western Cape which caters for a large proportion of impoverished students. The study found many students left before completing a qualification because they were too poor to stay. A model of student departure is presented which draws on the very influential work of Vincent Tinto but also allows for greater emphasis than he did on students' ability to pay (real or perceptual) and demarcates the times in the academic calendar when finances present their greatest challenge to retention. The model also invites consideration of the national and international factors which impact on the social/economic/political milieu in which students' persist-or-depart decisions are made. (Abstract)


Keywords: journal article; initiative; Australia; first-year students; diversity; student success; learning; engineering education

Diversity in the university classroom, particularly in the entry-level courses, has always been viewed as a ‘difficulty’ by academics. This paper argues that the careful integration of Problem Based Learning (PBL) into the curriculum can turn the disadvantage of diversity into an advantage. PBL can assist in meeting many of the desired graduate attributes such as teamwork, effective communication and problem solving. PBL can also help ensure that students with diverse educational backgrounds have a reasonable chance of success. (Abstract)


URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/csd.0.0081

Keywords: journal article; case study; USA; first-generation students; student experience; student success

First-generation college students face a number of barriers to academic success and completion of their degrees. Using Bronfenbrenner's (1989) ecological theory as a framework, qualitative research was used to examine the experiences of 10 first-generation Appalachian Kentucky university students (mean age = 21 years) and factors they attributed to their educational success. Content analysis was used to analyze the data. Seven themes representing participants’ experiences in a university setting were identified: (a) close-knit families and communities, (b) separate identities, (c) knowledge of college procedures, (d) pressure to succeed, (e) returning home, (f) the pervasiveness of poverty, and (g) the importance of early intervention programming. Additional areas for research and potential policy adjustments for universities serving this population are presented. (Abstract)
O’Shea, H., Onsman, A., and McKay, J. Students from low socioeconomic status backgrounds in higher education


Keywords: address; conference paper; Australia; higher education; diversity; teaching

The last two decades have witnessed diversification of the Australian higher education student cohort with the introduction of the Dawkins reforms in the late 1980s. Further diversification and reshaping of the higher education landscape is now anticipated in response to the recommendations of the 2008 Review of Australian Higher Education, also known as the Bradley Report. In preparation for these changes a number of serious questions need to be asked: Are institutions prepared in terms of the knowledge, skills and attitudes required to support further diversification and expansion of the sector? How will universities support academic teaching staff to cope with further diversification and the ensuing increase in overall student numbers? Given the current reality of staff struggling to provide adequate support for the number of ‘new’ learners that have entered universities in the last two decades this will be a challenge for institutions on several levels. In considering the learning and teaching literature including aspects of diversity and inclusivity, this paper argues that institutions are under-skilled and unprepared to deal with a further diversified student cohort. It explores what an even more diversified student cohort might look like and the knowledge, skills and attitudes academics will need to teach this newer, expanding group of students. It outlines the challenges and opportunities ahead for institutions in preparing for the new tertiary landscape and considers possible ways forward to ensure that the continued reshaping of higher education delivers quality learning and teaching for all. (Abstract)


Keywords: address; conference paper; Australia; predictors; entrance scores; personality traits

This paper describes the results of the first stage of a longitudinal research project being undertaken at the University of Southern Queensland (USQ) to identify the key predictors of academic success. By identifying the individual and sociocultural factors that influence how individual students perform, educators are in a better position to make changes to the teaching and learning environments so that future commencing students can achieve a smoother and more successful transition to university. The research team used a battery of tests to gather a wide variety of data about students in the on-campus offer of a first year engineering course. The data was analysed to gain an understanding of the diversity of the students in the cohort and to identify the significant factors that influenced their success in their first year of study at USQ. The results indicated that Queensland Tertiary admission centre rank significantly predicted academic success and, interestingly, the Extroversion personality trait also proved to be important. The implications of these findings are discussed. (Abstract)


URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02602930120052387

Keywords: journal article; quantitative research; Australia; nontraditional students; student experience; student success; academic standards

The changing demographic profile of many universities has been reflected in the increasing presence of mature-aged students on campus and the increased acceptance of nontraditional qualifications allowing entry to undergraduate programs. Recent research has suggested that such changes have not been accompanied by a diminution of academic standards. In the present study, we examine the academic performance of students entering a university via traditional and nontraditional means using database records for three years of entry. Analysis revealed a marginal disadvantage in academic performance for students entering via nontraditional enabling programs, but a positive effect for mature age on entry. The results were broadly consistent with earlier studies and confirm the equity goals of more open access to undergraduate study. (Abstract)

URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0729436042000206627

Keywords: journal article; case study; Australia; nontraditional students; student experience; learning

In this study, the academic experiences of 33 male students from an industrial background were investigated as they completed a two-year education degree. The purpose of the study was to investigate the quality of student adjustment to an academic environment following extensive industrial training and experience. Students completed a series of questionnaires relating to learning as well as a series of open-ended questions relating to academic and social adjustment. Data indicated that while students had developed a positive learning profile, a continued belief in the structural simplicity of knowledge appeared to have a significant diminishing effect on the quality of adjustment and on the quality of learning outcomes. Open-ended responses revealed patterns of academic adjustment consistent with the restricted understanding of the nature of university learning. Implications of these data for both recognition of prior learning (RPL) entry and ongoing support are broached. (Abstract)


URL: http://www.staffs.ac.uk/journal/volseventhree/articletwo.htm

Keywords: journal article; research report; United Kingdom; initiative; nontraditional students; student support

The participation rate in Scottish higher education has increased from less than 10 per cent to 50 per cent in the space of 40 years, with the largest increases noted during the late 1980s. There have been associated changes in entry routes, the profile of students and the average age on entry (Reibig & Kemp, 2005). For this reason, it is increasingly important for institutions to fully understand the challenges faced by mature students so that they may implement defined support strategies to meet the social, emotional and financial needs of students. The aim of this qualitative project was to gain an understanding of the challenges mature students face and to highlight the interventions they themselves would put in place to mediate these challenges. (Abstract)


Keywords: journal article; Australia; equity; scholarships; financial support; financial disadvantage

URL: http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=c8158e1d-41fd-4e11-ad1b09c2240fa1ab%40sessionmgr13&vid=4&hid=25

There has been little research conducted about scholarships administered to students in financial need from an Australian or international perspective. Despite the dearth of information about what impact receiving a scholarship may have on financially disadvantaged students, there is much written about the diversity of circumstances that may cause disadvantage to students. This article presents some of the key findings of research undertaken in 2005 on the impact of equity scholarships on students in financial need at Swinburne University in Melbourne, Australia. Although using relatively small numbers, the results do, however, give a clear message of the level of relief the scholarships provide. Although to be read in an Australian context, the findings show relief in the forms of retention and standard of living - relevant to institutions anywhere in the world. Ultimately, a larger-scale, nationwide study should be carried out anywhere in the world. Ultimately, a larger-scale, nationwide study should be carried out, and comparisons made with the impact of relief given in other countries. (Abstract)
This article offers a brief history of the provision of equitable access and opportunities to widen participation to higher education in Australia over more than a century up to the present day. Three key factors causing disadvantage to students and making university inaccessible to students are addressed, as well as an analysis of the social justice theories of Pierre Bourdieu within an educational policy framework. This article also provides a critical analysis of two key Australian Governments that have had an immense impact on higher education in Australia over the past century. With a change of government in November 2007, there is a new wave of commitment and enthusiasm for what the Government is labelling an ‘education revolution’. (Edited abstract)


URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11162-007-9060-9

Keywords: journal article; quantitative research; USA; socioeconomic status; student finances; student success

Using national survey data and discrete-time logit modeling, this research seeks to understand whether student aid mediates the relationship between parental income and student dropout behavior. Our analysis confirms that there is a gap in dropout rates for low-income students compared with their upper income peers, and suggests that some types of aid are associated with lower risks of dropout. Thus, we examine the interaction between financial aid type and parental income to explore whether, and if so how, different types of aid may reduce the dropout gap by income level group. We find that the receipt of a Pell grant is related to narrowing the dropout gap between students from low- and middle-income groups, although overall the interaction between Pell grant and income is not significant. Loans and work-study aid both have similar effects on student dropout across all income groups. (Abstract)


URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03075070120076318

Keywords: journal article; research report; United Kingdom; policy; socioeconomic status; student employment; student experience; student support; student finances; financial aid

This article seeks to explore the ways in which the current financial regime for supporting students impacts on the choices they make while studying for their first degree. It focuses particularly on the financial choices students make (or feel forced to make) in relation to work, debt and economising. It argues that the degree of discretion that students have is crucially related to the financial support they receive from their parents. However, even where parents are generous, most students seek an additional source of income to increase their autonomy in spending decisions. Parental attitudes are found to be important determinants of the ordering of drawing on other income. There is found to be a financially vulnerable group of students whose fragile financial position largely results from their parents being unable to offer much financial support; this group in particular finds their time at university characterised by considerable amounts of paid work and increasing debt. (Abstract)

This analysis supports Ford et al.’s (1995) argument that the imperative to support oneself at university exacerbates inequalities: the affluent emerge with few debts and interesting CVs (giving them an advantage in accessing the best paid jobs); the less privileged with significant debts and a history of working in shops and bars. The danger in current government policy, which is increasing the financial burden on students and their families, is that more students will be pushed into the position of having few choices about working and borrowing, increasing the financial fragility of a greater proportion of the student body. (Conclusion)
Accounts of emotion and affect have gained popularity in studies of learning. This article draws on qualitative research with a group of nontraditional students entering an elite university in the UK to illustrate how being and becoming a university student is an intrinsically emotional process. It argues that feelings of loss and dislocation are inherent to the students' experiences of entering university, and that 'coming to know' a new community of practice is an emotional process that can incorporate feelings of alienation and exclusion, as well as of excitement and exhilaration. A broader understanding of how students learn then depends not just upon the individual's emotional commitment to developing a new learning identity, but on the emotional interaction between the student and the learning environment of the university. (Abstract)


URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01452692.2011.527723

Keywords: journal article; United Kingdom; community cultural capital; widening participation; knowledge; curriculum; student voice; higher education.

This paper explores some of the unresolved tensions in higher education systems and the contradiction between widening participation and the consolidation of social position. It shows how concepts of capital derived from Bourdieu, Coleman and Putnam provide a powerful basis for critique, but risk a deficit view of students from less privileged backgrounds. These students are more likely to attend lower-status institutions and engage with an externally focused curriculum. The paper argues for greater attention to agency, and community and familial capital, in conceptualising the resilience of those from less privileged backgrounds. While the recognition of 'voice' is important, a curriculum that acknowledges the context independence of knowledge is essential if these students are not to be further disadvantaged. (Abstract)


URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/07294360600610354

Keywords: journal article; research report; United Kingdom; student experience; affect; student success; student support

One of the paradoxes confronting higher education teachers and other staff supporting students is that despite their perception that they offer students opportunities for support, students do not take advantage of them. This research was based on the desire to understand the ways students cope and what resources they draw on. Interviews with students from a range of backgrounds and courses were analysed in terms of situated self-esteem, which concerns proper and measured judgments about the self and the ability to cope rather than conceptualizing esteem in a therapeutic framework. (Edited abstract) Reframing the issue of support involves thinking about how students achieve and the personal and institutional resources they deploy, rather than the negative or therapeutic question of what problems students face. We are attempting to rethink some of the questions around retention, progression and the student life-course based on insights from qualitative data about what supports diverse students employ in overcoming the challenges that they inevitably face. (Introduction) Concludes that mainstream pedagogical practices should incorporate support so that students do not have to ask for it.
The ‘successful’ Arts student of the new millennium in Australia is likely to be female and studying full-time, having just completed her final year of schooling. Increasing numbers of students, however, are mature-age, are working long hours in paid employment, or may be the first in their family to attend university. A significant proportion of this heterogeneous population may appear on campus only rarely. In order to engage the hearts and minds of these students in their arts and humanities studies, it is necessary to acknowledge such realities. Last century’s solutions to the ‘academic adjustment’ question will not hold. The new transition to study initiatives rely to an extent on differentiating between student groups to establish starting points, but must also find broad and stable ways of supporting the student cohort to make the transition successfully, particularly to the kinds of writing and thinking that characterize the individual disciplines. (Abstract)

The project investigated the relationship between parental income and the post-secondary education enrolment of youth aged 18-19 in Australia using census data from 1991 to 2006 and data from HILDA (Household Incomes and Labour Dynamics in Australia). The estimates highlight a strongly convex relationship for university enrolment, with enrolment rates essentially the same for the lowest two parental income quartiles, rising moderately for the third quartile then steeply for the top income quartile. This pattern is also observed if either parental occupation or post-code based SES measures are employed rather than parental income. Key findings include that students who speak a language other than English at home are 15% more likely to attend University than students who speak only English; and that young people with a parent who has completed a Bachelors degree are 25% more likely to attend university than those whose parents did not complete high school. (Edited abstract and summary)

Using a longitudinal sample of 146 Latino students in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) majors, the purpose of the study was to examine factors that affect their academic performance. The main premise supporting this study suggested that Latino students perform better academically when they have cultural congruity within their chosen academic major. Although this premise was supported, college experience variables like studying with other students and attending diversity functions were negatively correlated with performance. Such experiences may reveal insight into the cultural incongruity that exists for students in these majors and their peers outside of the majors. (Abstract)

URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10734-007-9065-5

Keywords: journal article; research report; USA; first-generation students; student experience; academic culture; cultural capital; student success

Success in college is not simply a matter of students demonstrating academic ability. In addition, students must master the ‘college student’ role in order to understand instructors’ expectations and apply their academic skills effectively to those expectations. This article uses data from focus groups to examine the fit between university faculty members’ expectations and students’ understanding of those expectations. Parallel discussions among groups of faculty and groups of students highlight important differences regarding issues of time management and specific aspects of coursework. We find definite incongruities between faculty and student perspectives and identify differences between traditional and first-generation college students. We argue that variations in cultural capital, based on parents’ educational experiences, correspond to important differences in each group’s mastery of the student role and, thus, their ability to respond to faculty expectations. The conclusion discusses the theoretical and practical implications of considering role mastery a form of cultural capital. (Abstract)


URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11162-009-9130-2

Keywords: journal article; bibliography; commentary; USA; initiative; student experience; student success

In response to the mounting national support provided to mentoring programs and initiatives in higher education, the present article updates a review article written by Jacobi (Rev Educ Res 61(4):505–532, 1991). The article revisits the mentoring literature in an attempt to re-frame and update the definition and characteristics of mentoring provided by Jacobi. It also synthesizes and critically analyzes empirical literature specific to mentoring college students published between 1990 and 2007. Finally, the article presents broad theoretical perspectives of mentoring from the business, psychology and education literature in preface to a proposed theoretical framework specific to mentoring college students. The article concludes with specific recommendations to advance the mentoring literature. (Abstract)


URL: http://www.staffs.ac.uk/journal/volfiveone/iparticletwo.htm

Keywords: journal article; initiative; Australia; student support

This innovative practice piece discusses an academic transition program at a large, multi campus Australian university (Ward, Crosling and Marangos, 2000). The systematic program that is fully integrated with the mainstream teaching responds to the needs of students and teaching staff who implement the program. From 1997 until an extensive evaluation was undertaken in 1999, the program operated in an experimental form, and it was revised following the results of the evaluation. The revised program had to respond to issues for students and staff, and these are discussed in this piece. (Abstract)

DOI: 10.1080/13562517.2010.515021

Keywords: journal article; United Kingdom; social class; Bernstein; higher education; teaching and learning

There are substantial reports on working-class student non-completion and the challenges of engaging or not with the teaching in higher education. The students in our study were all successful at university but the different universities provided different types of experiences for their respective students. In this paper we focus on the pedagogic processes and explore how these enabled or constrained the working-class students to engage with the means to succeed. We employ Bernstein’s concepts of classification and framing and the other elements of his pedagogic device to interrogate the learning frameworks that impact on the students’ academic progress. The paper draws on qualitative case-study data from an extensive Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) (RES-139-25-0208) funded study. The study suggests - with a number of provisos - that “Once the student has been accepted the university has to ensure that they succeed. Tight control over the learning experience is thus a prerequisite. The strong framing provided clear direction or sequencing of work and led to clarity of expectation - a visible pedagogy but also created the ethos of intense competition between students which fuelled the pace of work.” (Edited abstract)


URL:http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/esrcinfocentre/viewawardpage.aspx?awardnumber=RES-139-25-0208

Keywords: report; research report; United Kingdom; participation; socioeconomic status; affect; student experience; student success

This research explored working class students’ experiences of higher education, once at university, their impact on their learner and cultural identities, and the implications of these for their progress and retention. The research employed mixed methods across four institutions, located in three different geographical areas, comprising an elite, ‘red brick’ and post 1992 university and a college of Further Education, offering Foundation degrees. We sought to compare the social and cultural experiences of working class students in different types of universities in order to identify any similarities and differences. This helped us to understand how they see themselves as learners and whether they see a need to operate strategically in order ‘to stay in and get on’. We aimed to find out whether working class students feel the need to adapt and change their identities in order to survive and progress at university or whether they resist any pressures and expectations to do so. (Edited abstract)


URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02671520802048703

Keywords: journal article; research report; United Kingdom; participation; socioeconomic status; first-generation students; student experience

In the context of widening participation policies, polarisation of types of university recruitment and a seemingly related high drop-out rate amongst first generation, working class students, we focus on the provision offered by the universities to their students. We discuss how middle class and working class student experiences compare across four different types of higher education institution (HEI). Exploring differences between the middle class and working class students locates widening participation discourse within a discussion of classed privilege. We conclude that, whilst there is a polarisation of recruitment between types of universities, there exists a spectrum of interrelated and differentiated experiences across and within the HEIs. These are structured by the differential wealth of the universities, their structure and organisation; their ensuing expectations of the students, the subject sub-cultures, and the students’ own socio-cultural locations; namely class, gender, age and ethnicity. (Abstract)
This book presents a strong and coherent rationale for improving learning for diverse students from a range of socio-economic, ethnic/racial and gender backgrounds within higher education, and for adults across the life course. It provides clear and comprehensive research evidence on the policies, processes, pedagogies and practices of widening or increasing participation in higher education. This evidence is situated within the contexts of changing individual and institutional circumstances across the life course, and wider international transformations of higher education in relation to the global knowledge economy. It also considers: the changing UK policy contexts of post-compulsory education; how socio-economically disadvantaged students – raced and gendered – fare through schools and into post-compulsory education; the kinds of academic and vocational courses, including Maths, undertaken; the changing forms of institutional and pedagogic practices within higher education; how adults view the role of higher education in their lives. This book, based upon both qualitative studies and quantitative datasets, offers a rare insight into the overall implications for current and future policy and will provide a springboard for further research and debate. It will appeal both to policy-makers and practitioners, as well as students within higher education. (Edited description)


URL: http://muse.jhu.edu.ezproxy-f.deakin.edu.au/journals/journal_of_college_student_development/v046/46.3dennis.html

Keywords: journal article; research report; USA; first-generation students; diversity; student success; student support; student motivation

The role of personal motivational characteristics and environmental social supports in college outcomes was examined in a longitudinal study of 100 ethnic minority first-generation college students. Personal/career-related motivation to attend college in the fall was a positive predictor and lack of peer support was a negative predictor of college adjustment the following spring. Lack of peer support also predicted lower spring GPA. (Abstract)

Department for Business Innovation and Skills (2009) *Full-time Young Participation by Socioeconomic Class (FYPSEC) 2009 Update.*


Keywords: report; quantitative research; United Kingdom; socioeconomic status; measuring SES

This report provides an update on Kathryn Kelly and Stephen Cook, ‘Full-time Young Participation by Socioeconomic Class: A new widening participation measure in higher education’ (2007) Department for Education and Skills Research Report RR806 (2007): http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR806.pdf The new measure is a composite measure, comprising two participation rates: (i) the percentage of the population from the top three socioeconomic classes who participate for the first time in higher education, and (ii) the percentage of the population from the bottom four socioeconomic classes who participate for the first time in higher education, and also the difference or gap between these participation rates.


Keywords: policy document; United Kingdom; government funding; participation

White Paper that informed the UK government policy Widening Participation in Higher Education.
UK government policy on Widening Participation in Higher Education.


Keywords: policy document; Australia; socioeconomic status; participation; government funding

In response to the findings of the Bradley Review of Australian Higher Education, the Australian Government will make an unprecedented investment in our universities and tertiary education system to drive comprehensive reform across the post-compulsory education and training sector. This will include an immediate injection of funding to address weaknesses and build on strengths, while putting in place a realistic plan over the next decade to ensure the higher education system is sustainable into the future. (Introduction)


Keywords: report; Australia; measuring SES; policy

In response to the Bradley Review, the Australian Government announced significant reforms to the higher education system. Within this package of reforms the Government announced its intention to improve the participation of students from low socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds in higher education to 20 per cent of all undergraduate students by 2020. The government also indicated that new measures of SES would be developed. The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) in consultation with the Indicator Development Group of higher education experts have developed a discussion paper on the measurement of SES. This discussion paper provides a starting point for consultations and is designed to encourage discussion in the Australian higher education sector about how to define and measure socioeconomic status. (Abstract)


Keywords: policy document; Australia; government funding; socioeconomic status

The Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP) provides funding to eligible universities to improve access to undergraduate courses, for people from low socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds, in addition to improving retention and completion rates of those students. (DEEWR)
This report provides information on the factors affecting participation of regional students in Australian universities. In particular, it examines the relative importance of socioeconomic status and access to university in influencing higher education participation across regions. The report shows that regional participation in university among 19-21 year-olds students increased from 18 per cent in 1996 to 21 per cent in 2006. However, university participation among metropolitan students increased faster from 28 per cent to 35 per cent, so that the gap between regional and metropolitan participation increased from 10 percentage points to 12 percentage points. The report finds that lower socioeconomic status, as measured by education and occupation levels, explains most of the gap in participation between regional, outer metropolitan and inner metropolitan areas. While proximity to campus matters, the report finds that access to university appears to have less influence on university participation than socioeconomic status. (Abstract)


The rates of higher education access, participation and completion for Indigenous students are much lower than those for non-Indigenous students in Australia. This paper argues for a research-led focus on what works in terms of Indigenous student equity in higher education. Undertaking independent evaluation of existing initiatives and leveraging the experience of hundreds of successful Indigenous graduates, it may be possible to articulate some of the ways in which success has been, and can be, achieved, despite the challenges that face Indigenous students. In other words, it may be possible to articulate some aspects of what works for some Indigenous people in relation to higher education. A focus on articulating strategies that Indigenous individuals and communities might adopt in relation to higher education should be developed alongside the management of systemic problems through a range of means. The ‘success focused’ approach would provide one of a suite of approaches that may be helpful in addressing Indigenous student equity. (Abstract)
The criteria of effective teaching in higher education are understood to comprise particular skills and practices applied within particular contexts. Drawing on the literature and using Australia’s understanding of effective teaching, this paper examines the notion of effective teaching. The paper maintains that our collective understanding of competent, professional and effective teaching must continually evolve in order that it accurately reflects and continually responds to the contexts in which learning and teaching is undertaken. This context includes the increased diversity and the need for effective teaching that can manage and address such diversity. In order to engage all students, teachers must have an appropriate pedagogical response that accommodates a wider range of both learning styles and preferences and a wider range of language, cultural and educational backgrounds than has previously been the case. (Edited abstract and text)

Research into student experience in Higher Education has largely focused on students’ role as learners. However, the student experience encompasses a much wider range of behaviours and beliefs than can be captured through a focus on teaching and learning alone. I report the findings of a research project, which explored student experience in the music department of a British redbrick university. Music presents a particularly interesting case study given the presence of extra-curricular musical activities, the opportunity for social interaction between staff and students outside the formal context of the lecture or seminar room, and perceptions of Western art music as a form of ‘middle-class’ culture. Analysis of survey and interview data reveals the centrality of musical performance activities, and in particular the development of a performer identity, to students’ experience of belonging and achievement. The influence of students’ socioeconomic background is also considered: social class was largely invisible to respondents within the departmental context, possibly because it is an invisible norm, within larger contemporary discourses in which social class is equated with financial difference rather than cultural difference. However, the research revealed an association between socioeconomic background, term-time employment and academic achievement. The implications of these findings for teaching and learning in music in Higher Education are considered. (Abstract)

While the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in higher education in Australia has doubled in recent years, the gap between their attainment and the attainment of other Australians has remained consistent. This study focuses on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students’ experiences in a diploma program offered in block mode, in order to better understand the on- and off-campus experiences which are related to academic success and the factors which challenge or enhance students’ study. The research yields important findings related to students’ motivations to enrol and their definitions of academic success; the challenges they experience in making the transition to tertiary study; the vulnerability of our students’ determination to succeed; the effects of being in a program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students; and the ways in which minor challenges, if unresolved, can accumulate to interfere with students’ study. (Edited abstract)

URL: http://cshe.berkeley.edu/publications/docs/ROPS.ImmigrantUniv.CSHE.19.07.pdf

Keywords: report; quantitative research; USA; student experience; diversity; socioeconomic status; student success

The University of California has long been a major source of socioeconomic mobility in California. Data from the University of California’s Undergraduate Experience Survey (UCUES) indicates that more than half the undergraduate students in the UC system have at least one parent that is an immigrant. The ratio is even higher at UC Berkeley. Students at Berkeley who come from lower income families and have relatively low socioeconomic capital (in particular Chicano/Latinos) do well academically, if only marginally less so than those with higher rates of educational capital. At the same time, they also spend more time in paid employment, spend approximately the same amount of time as Euro-Americans studying and going to class, and have relatively high rates of overall satisfaction with their social and academic experience. (Edited abstract)


URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/030750701200993787

Keywords: journal article; initiative; South Africa; Indigenous students; student support; student success; STEM education

An approach to remedy the scarcity of Black students within the sciences at southern African universities has been the development of access programs. There has been little acknowledgement of the contribution of these access programs in increasing the quantity and quality of graduates. The contribution made by the Science Foundation Programme (SFP) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), Pietermaritzburg campus, South Africa, was assessed for the years 1991–2003. Participation in the program did not guarantee access to faculty. Of the 1533 SFP students, 1101 subsequently registered for tertiary study at UKZN and 479 students graduated. These results highlight the valuable role played by the SFP in terms of equity redress and providing a route for historically disadvantaged students to achieve tertiary education success. (Edited abstract)


URL: http://www.actiononaccess.org/resources/files/SouthAfrica.pdf

Keywords: report; commentary; South Africa; policy; participation; diversity; socioeconomic status; student experience

One of a series of reports on other countries’ national policy and practice on widening participation in higher education to inform policy and practice in England. This study focused on Western Cape province. The report outlines the social, historical, and political context and considers the higher education experience of students prior to and during their study, and subsequent employment and lifelong learning opportunities. It also considers national priorities and policies, and possible implications for the UK, notably in the manifest importance given to building both social and economic capital, community and individual progression. (Edited abstract)
O’Shea, H., Onsman, A., and McKay, J. Students from low socioeconomic status backgrounds in higher education


DOI: 10.1080/07294360.2010.512628

Keywords: journal article; Australia; educational planning; graduate outcomes; policy; disadvantage; inclusion

The development of a strong and vibrant knowledge economy is linked directly to successful learning outcomes among university graduates. Building evidence-based insights on graduate outcomes plays a particularly important role in shaping planning and practice. To this end, this paper analyses some key findings from the Graduate Pathways Survey, the first national study in Australia of bachelor degree graduates’ outcomes five years after course completion. It focuses on the outcomes of graduates from disadvantaged groups, people of particular significance in an expanding and increasingly important higher education system. After advancing the rational for this analysis, the paper sketches the overall research approach. The paper continues with an analysis of education and employment outcomes for the target groups, and concludes by summarising implications for building further research insights. (Abstract).


DOI: 10.1080/13600800701457905

Keywords: journal article; Australia; disadvantage; access

Competition for entry to university has escalated in Australia over the past decade. This rise in competition is attributable to a number of factors, a major one being that the provision of university places has not kept pace with growth in the population of university-aged persons. Using the city of Melbourne as a case study, this paper highlights the impact that rising competition for university has had on two disadvantaged groups; those from the Government school sector and those from areas of low socioeconomic status. It finds that the opportunities for university entrance among tertiary applicants in these two groups diminished substantially between 1996 and 2004. In particular, this was because of the rising academic entrance requirements at some of the more ‘academically accessible’ university campuses, which previously provided an opportunity for many educationally disadvantaged students. (Abstract).


Keywords: journal article; initiative; USA; student support; socioeconomic status; student success

Recent data from the National Center for Education Statistics indicate that while an estimated 56 percent of high-income students who begin postsecondary education will earn their four-year degrees within six years, only about 26 percent of low-income students will do so. We carried out a systematic, multi-institutional, longitudinal four-year study of the impact of learning communities, and the collaborative pedagogy that underlies them, on the success of academically under-prepared, predominantly low-income students. The combined data were analyzed to determine the independent effects of participation in a learning community on subsequent persistence, controlling for student attributes (e.g. gender, ethnicity, parents’ educational level). (Edited abstract)
O'Shea, H., Onsman, A., and McKay, J. Students from low socioeconomic status backgrounds in higher education


URL: http://www.staffs.ac.uk/journal/volelevenone/articlethree.htm

Keywords: journal article; commentary; South Africa; socioeconomic status; student experience; student support; student success

This article reflects on concepts and practices of lifelong learning with reference to a group of working adult students in one faculty at a South African university. It offers a view on what is institutionally important to ensure the best possible educational experience in order for working adult students to succeed. Our reflections are drawn from a recently completed research project, which sought to understand how work and study influences impacted on the success of working adults attending one faculty’s after-hours programs. (Edited abstract)


URL: http://www.staffs.ac.uk/journal/voleightthree/articletwo.htm

Keywords: journal article; initiative; United Kingdom; student support; student success

The University of Glamorgan has a policy of encouraging widening participation. However, as many universities are realising, widening the entrance gates can sometimes lead to increasing numbers leaving through the exit gates before the completion of their program. At the University of Glamorgan, a project established in 2001 is demonstrating how interventionist policies can improve progression rates. This project involves two of the University’s biggest departments and comprises of a series of timed interventions designed to support vulnerable first year students during the first semester of their studies. Typical experiences of students in UK higher education have been highlighted and mapped onto a timeline, along with the sequence of retention and support initiatives introduced at Glamorgan. It is this timeline that will be explored in the paper. (Abstract)


Keywords: journal article; research report; USA; first-year students; student experience; student support; academic culture

This study examined the joint effects of stress, social support, and self-esteem on adjustment to university. First-year undergraduate students (N = 115) were assessed during the first semester and again 10 weeks later, during the second semester of the academic year. Multiple regressions predicting adjustment to university from perceived social support (friends and family), self-esteem (academic, social, and global), and stress were conducted. From the fall to winter semesters, increased social support from friends, but not from family, predicted improved adjustment. Decreased stress predicted improved overall, academic, personal-emotional, and social adjustment. Increased global, academic, and social self-esteem predicted decreased depression and increased academic and social adjustment. Results are discussed with respect to potential mechanisms through which support and self-esteem may operate. (Edited abstract)

URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03075070120099377

Keywords: journal article; remote and regional Australia; first-year students; student experience; learning; academic culture

In this article, the difficulties some Australian university students experience in academic learning environments are explored. Particular attention is given to the experiences of students whose difficulties are often portrayed as intrinsic to them, and who are diagnosed as having learning disabilities or ‘disorders’. In so doing, dominant neuro-psychological perspectives on students’ learning ‘problems’ are challenged, broadening the discussion to include sociocultural explanations of students’ difficulties. Research that foregrounds these students’ own accounts of their problems is reported, identifying a number of tests of time, association and dissimulation that they experience in coming to terms with the particular institutional requirements of university life. At the very least, these explanations draw attention to the need for university teaching scholars to also be learners, and to consider their own practices in the construction of learning difficulties for their students. (Abstract)


Keywords: commentary; Australia; socioeconomic status; measuring SES; participation

Short article comparing the usefulness of education, occupation and wealth as indicators of socioeconomic status. Where a single indicator is used, Gale concludes from the research literature that occupation is the most valid and reliable.


ISBN: 978 1 85856 414 2

Keywords: report; book; United Kingdom; participation; policy; access; socioeconomic status; measuring SES; equity; student experience; student motivation; student success; learning

The Gorard report was commissioned in 2004 by the Higher Education Funding Council for England, to review the results of the Widening Participation policy. Chapters consider the deficiencies in statistical measurement of participation, and identify who misses out because of them; review available research evidence and difficulties in synthesizing this; summarise the education ‘life-course’ of individuals from birth to possible transition to higher education; and look at the early experiences of higher education students and those things that encourage them and lead to success; and consider graduate destinations as motivators or barriers. A final summary chapter advocating policy changes is essential reading for Australian policy makers. See in particular chapters 8 (Experiencing higher education) and 10 (Overcoming the barriers to participation) and the list of references.


URL: http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rdreports/2006/rd13_06/barriers.pdf

Keywords: report; bibliography; United Kingdom; participation; nontraditional students

This report reviews the extensive research literature on participation in higher education in the UK in order to establish the nature of barriers to participation at all levels of the ‘student life-cycle’. It includes sections on student success and on academic and non-academic support for nontraditional students.

DOI: 10.1080/03075070703414305

Keywords: journal article; International study; university teaching; diversity; phenomenography; conceptions; teacher education

This article reports on an international study examining the range of university educators' conceptions of student diversity and situating them within the various discourses and debates about diversity in higher education. Using a phenomenographic approach, the study asks whether academics meet their responsibilities to enable diverse students to access discipline knowledge and the 'culture' of higher education. A scale of responses ranging from the narrowest conception ignored any differences between students, via the broader conceptions made allowance for such differences, to the most expansive conceptions utilised diversity as an essential pedagogical resource. The study finds that some academics espouse a view that diversity is an irrelevance in the context of their teaching, others address diversity through the view of a deficit model, while some seem actively to utilise diversity as an essential resource in their teaching. (Abstract)


URL: http://www.staffs.ac.uk/journal/voleightone/articlethree.htm

Keywords: journal article; research report; United Kingdom; policy; socioeconomic status

The working class remain under-represented in UK higher education institutions (HEIs). There is also evidence to suggest that students from lower social classes may have greater difficulty adapting to university life because of a mismatch between their cultural capital and the middle class culture they encounter in higher education. As a result of such concerns social class has become a key focus of government policy on widening participation. This research uses interviews with key institutional policy makers in three English HEIs to gain an insight into the way policy on widening participation deals with ‘the issue of social class’. It is argued here that a failure to clearly conceptualise who widening participation students are, and a reluctance to ‘label’ by social class, acts as a significant barrier to the development of effective policy. Also the rejection of social class as a key influence, and the assumption that individualised factors are the main reason for student disadvantage, may lead to victim blaming, especially if support is predicated on middle class values. (Abstract)


URL: http://www.mediator.qub.ac.uk/ms/streams/CED/inclusion/TeachingForInclusion.pdf

Keywords: report; United Kingdom; diversity; learning; participation; teaching

This guide is aimed at any member of staff in higher education who is interested in improving their teaching and enhancing student inclusion, success and learning. It has been designed to be used flexibly by different staff groups and individuals. New and relatively inexperienced teachers in higher education, and any member of staff engaged in the support of student learning, will find it particularly relevant to their needs. (Abstract)


Keywords: journal article; quantitative research; USA; first-generation students; student experience; student success

This study used structural equation modeling to investigate differences in first generation and non-first generation students using data from the Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS) 90/92/94. Factor loadings indicate first generation students differ from non-first generation students on the following: (a) expected highest level of education; (b) entrance exam score; (c) nonacademic experiences; and (d) aspirations for education. Path coefficients indicate College Experiences were a stronger influence on Educational Outcomes for first generation students than were Precollegiate Traits, while for non-first generation students, Precollegiate Traits were a stronger influence on what the student does in college and on what happens four years later. Areas in which institutions can assist in developing curricular and co-curricular experiences are then presented. (Edited abstract)


URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2273.2009.00431.x

Keywords: journal article; commentary; United Kingdom; participation; socioeconomic status; measuring SES

This paper analyses the definition of the appropriate target group for widening participation activities advanced by the Higher Education Funding Council for England in their Targeting Disadvantaged Learners advice to Aimhigher and higher education providers. This definition includes components of area deprivation and higher education participation rates, which are apparently intended to act as a proxy to reach learners from lower socioeconomic groups. Through statistical analysis of geo-demographical data from the Southwest region of England, this paper questions whether the HEFCE targeting guidance is likely to meet the policy aims that underpin it and reach the ‘disadvantaged learners’ of its title. It is found that the geographical proxy tends to miss learners from lower socioeconomic groups in areas of wider affluence and those in rural areas. The paper concludes by questioning whether the areas identified by a rigorous application of the targeting guidance are likely to be the most fruitful locations for outreach activities in the short-term given the ingrained, multi-faceted and multi-generational challenges which they face. (Abstract)


Keywords: journal article; United Kingdom; widening participation; future directions; students from low-socioeconomic groups

URL: http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=c8158e1d-41fd-4e11-ad1b-09c2240fa1ab%40sessionmgr13&vid=4&hid=25

The year 2010 will probably turn out to have been critical in the widening participation (WP) journey. With WP high on New Labour’s political agenda over the past ten years, and with what we may see with hindsight as generous funding both for institutions and for Aimhigher, much has been achieved. The Higher Education Funding Council for England’s (HEFCE, 2010) shows real progress in admissions to higher education of students from low socio-economic groups, WP is firmly in the mainstream of universities’ thinking and real progress has been made in developing inclusive institutional cultures. Continuing to make progress in a very different and as yet uncertain political and funding climate is the challenge we now face. (Introduction)

A short, reflective piece about the current state of play in the UK, this article identifies some of the underlying concepts.


Keywords: report; Sweden; policy; participation; socioeconomic status

One of a series of reports on other countries’ national policy and practice on widening participation in higher education to inform policy and practice in England. The focus of this report is on vocational progression to higher education. It also reports on a major policy review of higher education in Sweden following three years of widening participation project work and the publication of ‘New World – New University’ a government bill on internationalisation, broader recruitment and admissions. The proportion of students from working-class backgrounds rose from 18% of new enrolments in 1993/94 to 24% in 2002/03. (p. 10)


URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2273.2005.00285.x

Keywords: journal article; research report; United Kingdom; socioeconomic status; financial aid; student experience

This article draws on quantitative and qualitative data from two institutions to compare the student experience of those with and without bursary awards. Using the student life cycle model, the article examines the ways in which bursaries impact on the student experience before they enter the institution, in the early weeks of their studies and as they progress through their programs. At these two institutions, students with bursaries were more likely to be retained and to perform well during the first year than those without bursaries. The study found that bursaries can ease financial pressures during their transition to higher education (HE) and that institution-specific bursaries can affect students’ perceptions of an institution and their commitment to succeed. After 2006, those institutions wishing to charge variable fees will be required to provide bursary support for low-income students. The findings from this article suggest that HE providers should consider the timing of the bursary payments and the implicit message the bursary sends to applicants if they want to ensure that their bursaries have a positive impact on the student experience. (Abstract)


URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03075070500160038

Keywords: journal article; research report; United Kingdom; socioeconomic status; financial aid; student experience

In England, the government target that 50% of young people should gain experience of higher education has prompted many initiatives to widen participation. National policies, however, are often implemented at institutional or local level. As a result, the impact upon the individual participants can vary according to the context in which the measures are enacted. The Opportunity Bursary scheme was first introduced in 2001, and institutions were allowed considerable discretion over the allocation of these awards. Drawing on quantitative and qualitative data, this article reports differences in the ways in which two institutions administered their bursary schemes, and the effects on the students. At both institutions, bursary students were more likely to continue with their studies one year after entry than students from low-income backgrounds who were not in receipt of financial assistance. The interview data suggests that bursary students are well motivated and determined to succeed, but it is unclear whether this is due to the additional financial support or to the process of conscious choice through which they have entered higher education. (Abstract)

URL: http://www.actiononaccess.org/resources/files/Canada.pdf

Keywords: report; commentary; Canada; policy; participation; remote and regional; socioeconomic status; academic culture

One of a series of reports on other countries' national policy and practice on widening participation in higher education to inform policy and practice in England. This report presents the findings from a study of Canadian policy and practice, focusing on the provinces of Nova Scotia and British Columbia, as Canada does not have a national higher education system. The report highlights the importance of ‘culture’ in affecting HE participation, particularly for young men and those in rural and coastal areas. (Edited abstract)


URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/07294360500453137

Keywords: journal article; quantitative research; Australia; nontraditional students; student experience; socioeconomic status

Over one-quarter of all undergraduates attending Australian universities enrol on a part-time basis. This paper addresses the social, educational and financial characteristics of these students. In a survey in 2000, questionnaires were sent to a sample of 84,591 domestic undergraduate students at 19 Australian universities. The response rate was 41.1%. Systematic differences were found between full-time and part-time respondents across a wide range of characteristics. Importantly, part-time undergraduates were more likely to be older, in full-time employment and concentrated in particular fields of study. Just over one-half of all part-time undergraduates would have preferred to be studying full-time, financial circumstances permitting. Slightly less than one-third felt prevented from studying full-time because of a lack of government income support. A tenth of all part-time undergraduates felt unable to study full-time because of costs. An important difference between part-time and full-time students related to family socioeconomic status (Edited abstract)

‘Part-time students (44.7% of males and 47% of females) were significantly more likely than full-time students (32.5% of males and 36.2% of females) to come from “lower-middle” or “lower” family socioeconomic status backgrounds.’ (p. 45)


URL: http://www.staffs.ac.uk/journal/volelevenone/editorial.htm

Keywords: journal article; commentary; Australia; policy; government funding; participation; socioeconomic status

Overview of the Bradley review’s recommendations.


Keywords: journal article; case study; Australia; first-year students; nontraditional students; student experience; student success; student support; learning

For many ‘new’ university students, especially those who might be called ‘mature age’, ‘interrupted’ or ‘second chance’ learners, the commencement of university study is often fraught with difficulties. Whilst family and paid employment commitments sometimes compete with study time, some students worry that they do not have the wherewithal for tertiary study or that they may not be successful in their new venture. This paper sets out to investigate some of the concerns experienced by a group of ‘interrupted’ learners who are enrolled in the first year of an education degree in a regional Australian university and to consider their views of a support program that they have accessed. In contrast to the traditional approach of offering academic support to students, this program emphasises social support and the development of a learning community as essential to academic success. In providing a time and a place for students to meet with a group of academics on a weekly basis, the program operates with no fixed academic agenda and positions students and academics as life-long learners. In this supportive environment, this approach works to develop enhanced problem-solving capacities as the students make their transition into university study. (Abstract)


DOI: 10.1080/03075070903414297

Keywords: journal article; United Kingdom; widening participation; underachievement; academic achievement; admission conditions; university practices

It has been widely claimed that UK students from relatively disadvantaged backgrounds but nevertheless having the potential to benefit from a degree programme are being denied higher education places because of their relatively poor paper qualifications. As a consequence, the claim continues, students from independent schools have an advantage in the competition for such places. Universities have responded to such claims, and incentives from the government to do so, by introducing widening participation programmes, but very little research has been done which explores whether students from disadvantaged backgrounds who are admitted to elite universities perform as well as their counterparts with better entry qualifications. Using a large data set from one university, this article explores performance by students at A-level and their first and final university years. Students from independent schools performed better at A-level than those from state schools, but not at their university examinations, other things being equal. (Abstract)


URL: http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/ourwork/evidencenet/inclusive_learning_and.teaching.in.higher._education.synthesis

Keywords: report; bibliography; United Kingdom; diversity; learning; participation; teaching

This report and annotated bibliography synthesises research reports and research findings, considers implications for policy and key stakeholders, and includes a bibliography and further reading list.
O’Shea, H., Onsman, A., and McKay, J. Students from low socioeconomic status backgrounds in higher education


URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13562510701596323

Keywords: journal article; research report; United Kingdom; participation; academic culture; student experience; learning; student engagement

The growth in the student population within higher education against a background of government policy promoting the concept of ‘widening participation’ has led to much debate about the nature of university teaching. Academic engagement of all students within increasingly large and diverse classrooms has proved difficult to achieve. The research that we report here is part of a two-year ESRC/TLRP-funded project, whose key aim is to develop strategies for encouraging academic engagement and participation of all students by creating inclusive learning environments. In this paper, we report on the first stage of this project by exploring some of the sociological, epistemological and pedagogical reasons why learning environments may impact differently on first year students. We do this by asking over 200 ‘pre-entry students’ what conceptions they have about higher education, university teachers, their subject and themselves as learners prior to enrolment at university. We consider how these conceptions might influence how they engage in, and benefit from, learning at university. (Abstract)


Keywords: journal article; United States; college freshmen; economic conditions; higher education; social conditions

DOI: 10.1353/csd.2010.0003

This longitudinal, mixed-method study explores how the financial burdens of college attendance impact student involvement and experiences throughout the first year of college. The student participants at 4 Midwestern, public universities were engaged to describe their experiences throughout their first year as they navigated a complex and expensive system. The policy recommendations of this study implicate many functional areas and levels at the university including academic and student affairs. (Abstract)

This article contains interesting data to support possible positive intervention.


E-ISSN: 1543-3382 Print ISSN: 0897-5264

Keywords: journal article; United States; college choice; economic aspects; low-income students

The impacts of the financial awards on student college choice and engagement can inform the research on college students and further initiatives intended to promote student success in college. The artificial boundary between the research in higher education finance and conventional research on college student experiences and development needs to be re-examined, given that an increasing number of studies suggest the linkage between finances and student experiences and development (Hu, 2008; Smart, Ethington, Riggs, & Thompson, 2002). Moreover, because scholarship awards help low-income students of color not only to upgrade their college choices, but also become more engaged in college activities, financial support can be considered as fruitful approaches to promoting postsecondary opportunities and success for traditionally disadvantaged student groups. (From conclusion)

URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/07294360600793002

Keywords: journal article; case study; South Africa; diversity; academic culture; learning; student support; student experience

Globally, universities today are attracting students from widely diverse language and cultural backgrounds. However, it is apparent that students with certain background characteristics are more successful than others. Disparities that exist in perceptions of institutional provision and expectations are problematic for certain students and, indeed, for the universities themselves. An examination of students’ learning behaviours and attitudes may give indications as to where solutions lie. The writing centres of these institutions are ideally placed to explore such factors, due to the individual nature of their work with students and the data kept with regard to this work. In an analysis of consultants’ reports on their observations of students’ behaviours and difficulties arising in consultations at one writing centre, I examine aspects of students’ management of and relationships within their learning, and how these affect control of their texts. Through an understanding of students’ practices and needs, I highlight implications for development of students’ learning in the broader institution. (Abstract)

This article focuses on the acquisition of academic literacy and acculturation in academic life.

**International Association of Universities (2008)** *Equitable access, success and quality in higher education: A policy statement by the International Association of Universities.*


Keywords: policy document; access; participation; student success

Advocates a number of key principles upheld by IAU and includes recommendations for both higher education institutions and governments.


URL: http://muse.jhu.edu.ezproxy.deakin.edu.au/journals/journal_of_college_student_development/toc/csd44.4.html

Keywords: journal article; case study; USA; Indigenous students; student experience; student success

Qualitative interviews with 15 successful Native American college students who grew up on reservations identified the following themes related to their persistence in college: (a) family support, (b) structured social support, (c) faculty/staff warmth, (d) exposure to college and vocations, (e) developing independence and assertiveness, (f) reliance on spiritual resources, (g) dealing with racism, (h) nonlinear path, and (i) paradoxical cultural pressure. The results indicated a need for stable mentoring relationships and programmatic support. (Abstract)


URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1023/A:1012264010667

Keywords: journal article; quantitative research; remote and regional Australia; access; equity; participation; socioeconomic status

This paper describes the results of a study that re-examined the relatively low higher education participation rate of people living in rural or isolated Australia. The focus of the study was the goals and plans of Australian school students in their senior school years and the underlying attitudes towards education. The study suggests higher education participation for people in rural and isolated areas may be affected less by distance from university campuses than by socioeconomic circumstances and the influences of rural social and cultural contexts. Socioeconomic effects are generally more pronounced and pervasive than any effects of location identified by this study. The implications of the findings for equity policy and programs are discussed. (Abstract)
Internationally, equity is usually considered to be one of the three fundamental measures of the effectiveness of a higher education system, alongside quality and efficiency. Equity is therefore one of the enduring issues for higher education policy-makers, to be ignored at their peril. The importance attached to equity in higher education is unsurprising. (NLA summary)


Keywords: report; quantitative research; regional and remote Australia; equity; socioeconomic status; nontraditional students; student success

This report analyses the performance of equity groups in higher education during the period 1991–2002 and investigates whether the definitions of equity groups are still appropriate. It presents analyses of the DEST’s Higher Education Student Statistics Collection, examining the performance of five groups: people from low socioeconomic backgrounds; people from rural or isolated areas; people with a disability; people from a non-English speaking background; and women, especially in nontraditional areas of study and higher degrees.


Keywords: report; commentary; Australia; participation; equity; socioeconomic status; Indigenous students; policy; measuring SES

This report reviews available literature and data relating to the participation and success of people from low socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds and Indigenous people in Australian higher education and contains a summary of the equity activities and initiatives of Australian universities and a summary of equity policies, programs and trends in selected nations, in particular the United Kingdom, USA and Canada. The purpose of the report is to shed light on the factors associated with the persistent underrepresentation of low SES people and Indigenous people in Australian universities with a view to informing policies and strategies and providing a framework for further analysis of equity for people from low SES backgrounds. The report includes a summary of barriers and inhibiting factors as well as suggestions for possible ways of defining and measuring socioeconomic status for higher education purposes. (Edited excerpt)
In the UK mass higher education has resulted in a significant expansion in the number of students participating in higher education. Widening participation has attempted to increase the number of students accessing HE from under-represented groups (with a particular policy focus since the late 1990s on students from lower socioeconomic groups). However, it has been recognized that admission to higher education is insufficient: students need to be able to succeed too ... The focus on retention - a narrow view of student success - is reinforced by the data collection mechanisms and funding regimes. Unfortunately this approach has led to the largely unfounded belief that the consequence of widening participation is a decline in student retention and thus increased exposure to risk for institutions (House of Commons Select Committee Report, 2001, section 18). In fact, despite a substantial increase in the number of students participating in higher education, the non-completion rate has remained relatively stable (see data presented in House of Commons Select Committee Report 2001 and NAO 2007). Furthermore, international evidence demonstrates that students from lower socioeconomic groups do not necessarily have lower rates of success than the majority (Thomas and Quinn, 2006). (Excerpt)

A recent independent review of Australian higher education has made a series of recommendations that the government has largely accepted and that have the potential to alter dramatically that country’s university system. In combination, some of the consequences of the review have significant implications for regional education, particularly new criteria for the designation ‘university’, the removal of a cap on student numbers, and targets for participation both generally and for students from disadvantaged groups, including those from regional and remote areas. In response, two universities have proposed the establishment of a new, merged institution to be based in regional Australia but with a national mission, which would necessarily have a significant - and possibly unique - distance education mission. A scoping study for this institution has been funded by the government and initial consultations have been held. These developments come at a fortuitous moment in the history of Australian distance education, a field that, while strong in practice, has lost some sense of its own identity as a result of a general movement in Australia’s dual-mode university system from distance education for some to flexible delivery for all. De facto leadership of much of the discussion surrounding online delivery has been assumed by information technologists and online enthusiasts who do not necessarily understand the milieu of the distance student. The position taken in this paper is that the developments proposed afford an opportunity for the distance education community to focus its energies under a new mandate and with a more specific student base. There are, however, significant challenges to which both the present system and distance educators in particular will have to respond. One of these relates to the role of online delivery within the university sector, and particularly for such a national university in the context of an existing diverse and dispersed approach to distance delivery in higher education across the country. It may be the case that the developments outlined herein have some resonance in distance education communities beyond Australia. While this is beyond the paper’s present concerns, it seems unlikely that, for example, the issues of identity mentioned above constitute a distinctly Australian phenomenon. These issues will be explored within the paper. (Abstract)

This article explores some relevant issues relating to low SES students in the rural/regional environment.


Keywords: report; quantitative research; case study; Australia; diversity; nontraditional students; socioeconomic status; first-generation students; learning; student experience; student success

This longitudinal study tracked two groups (2x150) of students selected to provide a broad spread of disciplines, courses and professional experiences and include the following diversity groups: indigenous students, low income, first generation, mature age and fulltime/part time students. The project combined quantitative data from a large student sample with qualitative data from a series of case study narratives to document the students’ perceptions about their learning experiences, the factors underpinning progression in their studies and their transition into the workplace. The project has attempted to answer the question: does diversity matter? Do students of different diversities progress differently, and are there differences in the factors enhancing progression and developing resilience that can be linked directly to diversity? The project’s findings were that: for the great majority of the student participants and the majority of the diversity cohorts, there are far more similarities than there are differences; diverse support networks and the ability to seek help for learning within them are important factors underpinning successful progression and resilience; students’ personal goals or career aspirations are overwhelmingly important, and are universal factors underpinning persistence and success; the immediate learning environment links together, and operationalises, many of the factors enhancing progression; and the graduating institution and employers both have roles to play in assisting the transition of graduates into the workplace. (from Executive Summary)


ISBN: 978 0 415 39921 0

Keywords: book chapter; case study; initiative; United Kingdom; nontraditional students; socioeconomic status; teaching; learning; student experience; academic culture

Case study of a student-centred and inclusive approach to teaching taken in a social sciences course at Manchester Metropolitan University, the aim of which was to empower students to become independent and confident learners, while inducting them into the discipline’s discourse and processes.


Keywords: journal article; quantitative research; Australia; first-year students; student experience; socioeconomic status; attrition

Student attrition has become the focus of significant research activity in Australia over the past decade. To some extent this focus has been by driven by national policy imperatives to reduce student attrition, but other drivers include a growing concern about the quality of the student experience in the context of an increasingly marketised and highly competitive higher education sector. This paper reports on data drawn from the national study of the first year experience in Australian universities. It examines the characteristics of first year undergraduates who seriously consider dropping out of university during their first year. Implications for policy and practice are discussed by way of conclusion. (Abstract)


Keywords: journal article; commentary; Australia; student experience; learning; student support; attrition; student success; theory

Higher education debates about the reasons for student attrition and the effectiveness of retention models and strategies are largely expressed through political and empirical perspectives but lack theoretical perspectives capable of providing integrated understandings of the processes involved. This paper integrates research and theoretical perspectives to generate a re-conceptualisation of the processes of retention. This re-conceptualisation takes the form of a theoretical shift, the deficit-discourse shift, and two conceptual representations, the Framework for Student Transition and Retention and the Model for Student Success Practices. The shift and the framework illustrate the student-institution relationship by connecting students’ transition and retention with their engagement, mastery and demonstration of mainstream institutional literacies/discourses. The model introduces practical strategies that students can use to facilitate their transition to and engagement with the new university culture. A third perspective, the student voice is provided to give insight into these processes. The integration of the three perspectives challenges both universities and students to become more committed to and involved in students’ transition and retention. (Abstract)


URL: http://www.actiononaccess.org/index.php?p=11_5_2

Keywords: report; commentary; United Kingdom; participation; socioeconomic status; policy; student success

This report reflects on the strategies and activities to be undertaken by Higher Education Institutions as they seek to enhance student retention. There is an important distinction to be made between enhancing retention and ‘Achieving Student Success’. The latter is the prime focus of the HE student experience and seeks to recognise achievement rather than ‘failure’, whereas retention places limits on the nature of HE given the measures used and the assumptions of consecutive study. (Introduction)

First of three reports incorporated in Action on Access’s (2003) Student Success in Higher Education.


URL: http://www.actiononaccess.org/index.php?p=11_5_2

Keywords: report; commentary; United Kingdom; participation; socioeconomic status; policy; student success

The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) commissioned Action on Access to carry out a study on aspects of student success as a result of the continuing and essential shift towards the implementation of strategies and practice that maximise student retention in Higher Education (HE). The present study was based on institutional plans and practices with a view to further identifying good practice and disseminating it across the sector. This study looked at a range of institutional activities and the report provides an overview of the research undertaken, the outcomes and a series of case studies of institutional practice. The report provides specific examples of good practice that are likely to lead to student success and that are transferable (perhaps with adaptation) to other institutions with a diversity of student intake. (p. 77)

Third of three reports incorporated in Action on Access’s (2003) Student Success in Higher Education.
Diversity, understood in a multiplicity of ways, has been a focus of attention in education in recent years. As in many other countries, recent post-school education policies in Aotearoa/New Zealand have emphasised previously under-represented ethnic groups, such as Maori and Pasiaka. The intention has been to widen participation in further and higher education (FHE) as a means to improve the country’s economic performance in a global market. However, the same policies imply a deficit discourse – where diversity is perceived as a problem or deficit to be ‘fixed’. As part of a larger study into FHE student retention, 137 teachers were surveyed to identify what they did to cater for the learning of these ‘diverse’ students. The responses varied. For example, some insisted that, to be fair, all students had to be treated the same; others described teaching/learning approaches they used to ensure students succeeded. Five positions were identified in the data: universal, universal/group, group/group, group/individual, and individual. These positions are discussed and linked to Banks’s cultural-pluralist and assimilationist ideologies. It is argued that FHE teachers could draw on strategies from each of the three main positions to enhance student learning. (Abstract)


URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0268093032000145863

Keywords: journal article; case study; United Kingdom; nontraditional students; ethnic minority students; socioeconomic status; student experience; identity; academic standards

This paper explores constructions of the ‘new’ university student in the context of UK government policy to widen participation in higher education. New Labour discourse stresses the benefits of widening participation for both individuals and society, although increasing the levels of participation of students from groups who have not traditionally entered university has been accompanied by a discourse of ‘dumbing down’ and lowering standards. The paper draws on an ongoing longitudinal study of undergraduate students in a post–1992 inner-city university in the UK to examine students’ constructions of their experiences and identities in the context of public discourses of the ‘new’ higher education student. Many of the participants in this study would be regarded as ‘nontraditional’ students, i.e. those students who are the focus of widening participation policy initiatives. As Reay et al. (2002) discovered, for many ‘nontraditional’ students studying in higher education is characterized by ‘struggle’, something that also emerged as an important theme in this research. The paper examines the ways in which these new student identities both echo the New Labour dream of widening participation and yet continue to reflect and re-construct classed and other identities and inequalities. (Abstract)


URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13562510701794118

Keywords: journal article; initiative; United Kingdom; first-year students; learning

The Department of English Literature at Kingston University piloted an innovative Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) program as part of a two-year pilot project funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England’s (HEFCE) Widening Participation Fund. The project aimed to enable first-year students to develop academic writing skills related to a specific level-one module. Part of the evaluation involved undertaking a student survey to determine student’s perceptions of how PAL contributed to their writing skills and their ability to critique their own writing. Findings from the survey indicate that the PAL program had a positive impact on student’s perceptions of their learning in four areas: clarification of new knowledge; development of assessment (writing) skills; reduction in feelings of intimidation; and the creation of a safe environment for learning. Assessment results are also discussed. However, the most important findings were that the results support constructivist and situated learning theories about how students create meaning, and that, in the specific area of writing skills, successful students are better equipped and better placed than lecturers to pass on these skills to novice students in a peer-facilitated environment. The data supports to conclusion that, in this study, PAL enables them to become better learners. (Abstract)

Example of an intervention outside the ‘deficit’ model, and which focuses on whole academic courses rather than individual disadvantaged students.

URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13562510903186618

Keywords: journal article; initiative; South Africa; socioeconomic status; learning; first-generation students

This paper reports on the findings of a formative evaluation of the mentorship support program run by the Maskh’iSizwe Centre of Excellence for recipients of its bursaries. Learning theory traditions have typically been divided into those that prioritise individual cognition versus those that prioritise the context in which learning occurs. In both these traditions, the individual agent is dissolved. This paper interrogates the ontological assumptions held by dominant learning theories regarding relations between individual and society that neglect agency in the learning process. Drawing on Archer’s social theory it is suggested that support programs for undergraduate financially disadvantaged learners ensure that they first develop a sense of personal identity and social agency as a pre-condition for succeeding academically and developing a professional identity. (Edited abstract)


Keywords: journal article; quantitative research; USA; diversity; Indigenous students; student experience; student engagement; student success

Using a national sample (n = 643) of Native American students who took the College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ), the researcher identified how student involvement and institutional commitment to diversity predicted student learning. Native American students reported higher levels of learning when the institution’s commitment to diversity was strong and when students were frequently engaged in discussion with others, particularly when that discussion required students to synthesize and integrate information from various sources. Suggestions are made for student affairs efforts to boost institutional emphasis on diversity and to increase frequency of peer discussion. (Abstract)


URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.3102/0028312042004605

Keywords: journal article; commentary; USA; diversity; student success; theory

Despite the many studies of student departure, colleges and universities continue to face difficulties in retaining underrepresented student populations. The authors argue that contemporary social integration and multicultural theories of student retention theory do not adequately address the academic needs of underrepresented students of color. Relying on case studies of student-initiated retention projects (SIRPs) at the University of California, Berkeley, and the University of Wisconsin, Madison, the authors develop insights into how student retention theory might be reconsidered for students of color. Three key components of SIRPs are discussed: developing knowledge, skills, and social networks; building community ties and commitments; and challenging social and institutional norms. Findings are then synthesized with theoretical constructs largely deriving from the work of Pierre Bourdieu, Frantz Fanon, and Paulo Freire. The result is a theoretical framework grounded in the concepts of cultural and social capital, collectivism, and social praxis. (Abstract)

DOI: 10.1080/03075070903131610

Keywords: journal article; United Kingdom; fair access; university choice; multivariate model

This quantitative study is concerned with what determines prospective university students' first choice between British universities of different status. The results suggest that examination performance, going to an independent school and fear of debt independently affect students' decisions. Social factors and students' perceived level of information on universities had no independent effect at this stage of decision-making. There were considerable differences between two geographic areas considered in the study, with a large decrease in the probability of attending a high-status institution in the locality with no such local institution. This particularly affects high-achieving students, with an estimate suggesting an increased probability of 18% of going to a high-ranking institution where such an institution is local for such students. If these findings apply similarly to other areas, the results suggest a ‘postcode lottery’ in higher education. (Edited abstract).


URL: [http://research.acer.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1054&context=lsay_research](http://research.acer.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1054&context=lsay_research)

Keywords: report; quantitative research; Australia; socioeconomic status; student success

The purpose of this report was to examine completion and non-completion of university courses and the consequences of non-completion. It estimated course completion rates for first and second courses, the completion rate for any course and the socio-demographic and educational correlates of course completion. The report compared the major activity, weekly income, occupational status and work satisfaction of university non-completers relative to other groups of young people ... completion. (p. 27) One finding was that: ‘Expected course completion did not vary in a systematic manner with parents’ occupational group, but there were some differences by parents’ education. Students whose parents had not completed secondary school had the lowest expected completion rate for any course (72%), and those whose parents had a highest qualification of Year 12 had a higher completion rate (87%) than those whose parents held a degree or diploma (85%). (p. viii)


DOI: 10.1080/03075070903518386

Keywords: journal article; South Africa; student learning; disadvantage; narrative analysis; engineering education

This article explores the use of narrative analysis to provide a methodology for student learning research with a sociocultural orientation. The narrative which is the primary focus of this article is drawn from a study in which a series of individual interviews was conducted with a class of senior engineering students. The interview with a particular student emerged as a ‘paradigmatic’ case, in that it represented a rich example of student success against a background of disadvantage. The analysis presented in the article leads to a questioning of some of the commonly held views on disadvantage in higher education. It is argued that the coping strategies developed in a ‘disadvantaged’ social background could form useful resources for succeeding in higher education, and that the construction of identity could be crucial for mobilising these resources. Questions are consequently raised about the extent to which these aspects of personal growth are supported by the formal curriculum and the professional workplace. (Abstract)

URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/csd.2005.0040

Keywords: journal article; quantitative research; USA; first-generation students; student success

Reports on a study which examined and compared the determinants of first-to-second-year persistence for 1,167 first-generation and 3,017 continuing-generation students at four-year institutions, using data from the Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Survey (Wine, et al., 2002). Because first-generation students are overrepresented in the most disadvantaged racial, income, and gender groups, a critical theorist perspective was used to frame the research problem, guide inquiry, and interpret results. (Abstract)


URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/csd.0.0053

Keywords: journal article; quantitative research; USA; first-generation students; student experience; attrition

Many college entrants’ parents do not have college degrees. These entrants are at high risk for attrition, suggesting it is critical to understand mechanisms of attrition relative to parental education. Moderators and mediators of the effect of parental education on attrition were investigated in 3,290 students over 4 years. Low parental education was a risk for attrition; importantly, college GPAs both moderated and mediated this effect, and ACT scores, scholarships, loans, and full-time work mediated this effect. Drug use, psychological distress, and few reported academic challenges predicted attrition, independent of parental education. These findings might inform interventions to decrease attrition. (Abstract)


URL: http://muse.jhu.edu.ezproxy.f.deakin.edu.au/journals/journal_of_college_student_development/toc/csd47.5.html

Keywords: journal article; quantitative research; USA; first-generation students; socioeconomic status; student success; parent involvement

The primary purpose of this study was to examine if parental involvement had a significant influence on the educational aspirations of first-generation students as compared to the educational aspirations of non-first-generation students. Additionally, the study investigated if the educational aspirations of first-generation students differed from their actual educational attainments. Lastly, the study explored the differences in educational attainment for first-generation students by gender, race/ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Longitudinal data from a nationally representative sample of 1,879 students generated by the National Educational Longitudinal Study 1988-2000 was used as the basis for analysis. (Abstract)


Keywords: journal article; initiative; Australia; first-year students; attrition; student support; student success

Students enrolling at university expect to succeed. The Student Learning Journey is a Central Queensland University (CQU) initiative to support students in achieving this goal. This paper explicitly examines an important ‘first step’ in the process where on enrolment it is intended that students complete the Student Readiness Questionnaire (SRQ). This questionnaire was developed following over a thousand hours of interviews with students identified as being ‘at academic risk’, and as part of a working group of the Student Learning Journey. The development and use of this questionnaire as part of CQU’s initiative to help all students be successful in their studies are discussed in this paper. The questionnaire will build a student profile in areas including mode of study, age, educational preparedness, lifestyle and cognitive and emotional readiness. These factors tell a powerful story about essential elements of a student’s expectations, motivation to succeed and persistence to seek help. From this, personalised learning programs can be designed. By knowing the profile of our student community and what that means in relation to the academic journey, it is possible to identify what particular structural and systemic solutions are required to support further student retention. (Abstract)

Useful literature review.


URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/07924360120043621

Keywords: journal article; quantitative research; Australia; first-year students; student success

With the increasing diversity of students attending university, there is a growing interest in the factors predicting academic performance. This study is a prospective investigation of the academic, psychosocial, cognitive, and demographic predictors of academic performance of first year Australian university students. Questionnaires were distributed to 197 first year students 4 to 8 weeks prior to the end of semester exams and overall grade point averages were collected at semester completion. Previous academic performance was identified as the most significant predictor of university performance. Integration into university, self efficacy, and employment responsibilities were also predictive of university grades. Identifying the factors that influence academic performance can improve the targeting of interventions and support services for students at risk of academic problems. (Abstract)


URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0792436032000168513

Keywords: journal article; quantitative research; Australia; learning; first-year students; motivation; student success

The purpose of this research was to develop and test a multicausal model of the individual characteristics associated with academic success in first-year Australian university students. This model comprised the constructs of previous academic performance, achievement motivation, self-regulatory learning strategies, and personality traits, with end-of-semester grades the dependent variable of interest. The study involved the distribution of a questionnaire which assessed motivation, self-regulatory learning strategies and personality traits. Students’ academic records were accessed at the end of their first year of study to ascertain their first and second semester grades. This paper reports on what this study established about previous academic performance, use of self-regulatory learning strategies, personality traits and motivation as indicators of future academic success. (Abstract) This research has demonstrated that, for students to achieve high levels of academic success during the difficult transition period that is evident in the first year at university, having both the skill to perform and the will to succeed are important. The first year of university signals a new learning environment for the majority of students, and while previous demonstrated ability may have been important in the university selection process, students also need to be motivated to employ the strategies necessary to complete the learning tasks, to excel in their studies. (Conclusion)

May be useful to compare general first-year findings with Low SES.

Keywords: Higher education differentiation, Social class, Gender, Inequality, Tuition fees.

DOI: 10.1007/s10734-010-9375-x

This article explores social class and gender differences in entry to the two main higher education sectors, universities and institutes of technology, among school leavers in Ireland over the period 1980–2006. A rational choice perspective is adopted, with participation hypothesised to reflect the costs and benefits attaching to attending the two types of institution. The initial expansion of higher education resulted in a widening of the participation gap between the higher professional and other groups, with some reduction thereafter as higher professional groups reached near-saturation levels. The removal of higher education tuition fees in 1996 was not sufficient to increase working-class participation in a context where other direct costs remained high and employment represented an attractive option. The period analysed saw a significant shift in the gender composition of higher education entrants, with young women now making up the majority. This article points to the value of taking a dynamic approach to analysing higher education participation, unpacking the effects of expansion in provision and of the costs and benefits attached to higher education entry. (Abstract)


URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1023/A:1003943824357

Keywords: journal article; methodology; Australia; socioeconomic status; measuring SES

The underrepresentation of persons from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds in higher education in countries such as Australia is of policy concern. In order to be able to identify such individuals for targeted interventions and to monitor their participation rates, it is necessary to have an accurate, simple to administer, and relatively inexpensive method of measuring students’ socioeconomic characteristics. We demonstrate that the postcode methodology currently used by the Australian Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA) for monitoring purposes, while being relatively simple and inexpensive to administer, is subject to considerable error. In order to identify more accurately low SES students, we develop measures based upon the characteristics of individual students, rather than the characteristics of the area in which they reside. These new measures are based upon the results of the Participation in Higher Education Survey (1997). Our findings suggest that individual-based measures relating to the occupation and education of parents at the time when the student was in high school are appropriate for the classification of both recent school leavers and mature aged students. Together, these characteristics represent the family socioeconomic situation while the student was attending secondary school. (Edited abstract)


URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1023/A:1007580217973

Keywords: journal article; USA; ethnic minority students; student experience; persistence; student success

This article explores the lives of academically resilient Dominican American college students at a selective private university in the Northeast. The conceptual framework used to guide the inquiry is based on the assumption that there are certain protective factors that play significant roles in the students’ defiance of the odds and their ultimate academic achievement. The findings presented here focus on the emergence of a resilience cycle present during these students’ academic journeys. The cycle is presented and its practical implications explored. (Abstract)

URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03075070500340135

Keywords: journal article; case study; United Kingdom; nontraditional students; socioeconomic status; student employment; student finances; student experience

Engagement in paid work during term-time amongst undergraduates in England has increased in recent years, reflecting changes in both higher education funding and labour market policy. This article draws on research with students in a post-1992 university to explore undergraduate students’ accounts of combining work and study during term-time and the various strategies they employ in their attempts to balance the two. Many of the students in this study may be described as ‘non traditional’ entrants, and attention is paid to the ways in which students’ accounts reflect issues of social class. It is argued that the transfer of responsibility for funding university study from the state to the individual student and their families, and the lack of attention paid to the demands of term-time work in higher education and institutional policy, risks reinforcing and exacerbating inequalities. (Abstract)


URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13596740903565376

Keywords: journal article; case study; United Kingdom; socioeconomic status; first-generation students; student experience; student motivation; affect

Using data from in-depth individual interviews, this article discusses the educational experiences and ambitions of two young working-class full-time female students. The two studies are derived from a wider investigation into student post-16 educational experiences and decision-making, based on a sample of students and staff of an Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education in Travel and Tourism at a large further and higher education college in the West Midlands of England. The author considers the young women’s stories in the light of governmental aims to widen participation in the post-16 sector. It is argued that, although the students’ stories offer a positive account of determination and ambition, they also reveal ambivalences and struggles that reflect the nature of the barriers that working-class students can encounter within post-16 education. Such ambivalences and struggles reflect, in turn, the wider contradictions that the post-compulsory sector faces within the ‘market state’. (Abstract)


DOI: 10.1080/135625111003620001

Keywords: journal article; international focus; college/university teaching; class size; large classes; active teaching; teaching approaches

The past decade has seen a substantial increase in the enrolment figures of tertiary level colleges and universities in OECD countries and it is predicted that this increase will continue. As Biggs suggested more than a decade ago, in addition to teaching larger numbers of students in tertiary level institutions, increasingly staff have to deal with a student population that is more diverse in age, experience, cultural background and socioeconomic status than ever before: whereas once those attending college were the brightest and the most highly motivated, and unfortunately also the most privileged; now college classes are comprised of students who vary in ability, interest and motivation. This creates additional challenges for staff and makes greater and different demands on their teaching skill. In the UK context, Biggs argues that these factors suggest ‘lower standards of teaching and, therefore, learning’. One of the likely consequences of these increases is the maintenance and/or increase of class sizes in colleges and universities, especially at undergraduate level. It is clear from the research literature that large classes at tertiary level create particular problems for staff and students alike, many of which can contribute to less effective teaching and learning. Lecturing still remains the predominant teaching approach in the context of large group undergraduate teaching. However, there is evidence that other teaching approaches that focus on making large group teaching more active and student centered are also being used. More active teaching approaches may go some way towards addressing some of the problems that are being encountered in the context of large group teaching. Support for and training of college teachers and further research is needed in this context. (Edited abstract)

URL: http://www.staffs.ac.uk/journal/voleleventwo/articleone.htm

Keywords: journal article; case study; United Kingdom; participation; student success

The rapid expansion of higher education as well as a focus on widening participation has undoubtedly led to a more diverse and less traditional student body. This small higher education institution, which has a strong commitment to equality of opportunity, attracts a relatively high proportion of less traditional entrants including those with qualifications other than A levels. There is some consensus (Houston et al., 2007: 121) that less traditional entrants to higher education are more likely to experience difficulties in the course of their studies and clearly this has the potential to create both opportunities and challenges for institutions in their support of students. This study draws on quantitative and qualitative data to analyse and explore factors affecting the progress, achievement and outcomes of new entrants to an Education Studies degree program. It concludes that academic outcomes appear to be largely unrelated to student entrance qualifications and grades, and are primarily influenced by individual and institutional factors. It identifies a number of characteristics specific to the institution and to individual students that variously promote (as bridges) or inhibit (as barriers) progression and achievement, and explores the dualistic role of the social relationship between the institution and the individual in enabling academic achievement. (Abstract)


Keywords: journal article; initiative; Australia; first-year students; attrition; teaching; student support; student success

This article reported on the successful intervention by proactive personal contact with first year students designated at risk of attrition to provide them with an action plan of personal, social and academic processes and resources designed to promote student engagement with tertiary life and studies. The success of the intervention, related to both the nature and content of the contact made and the design of the curriculum, provides the confidence to expand the program beyond one faculty, a limitation that is currently being addressed in a replication of the study across five faculties at QUT. This type of intervention has significance not only for first year curriculum and pedagogy and strategic alliances between professional and academic staff but also for administrators conscious of the financial implications of attrition. (Conclusion)


URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1356251032000052302

Keywords: journal article; commentary; United Kingdom; participation; teaching; learning

Higher education has faced profound teaching challenges in recent times, as it has delivered a widening range of courses to students of increasingly diverse backgrounds, expectations and levels of preparedness. These challenges call for a more radical shift in teaching than simply incorporating remedial support within existing teaching programs. This paper argues that neither traditional ‘knowledge delivery’ models of teaching, nor a purely ‘student-centred’ approach, adequately addresses the challenges of student diversity. Instead, it proposes an emphasis on the sociocultural nature of learning and teaching, modelling learning as acquiring the capacity to participate in the discourses of an unfamiliar knowledge community, and teaching as supporting that participation. It explores the challenges faced by students struggling to make meaning in strange intellectual and social surroundings, and outlines ways teachers can structure courses and tasks so that very diverse cohorts of students can progress together in meeting those challenges. (Abstract)
O’Shea, H., Onsman, A., and McKay, J. Students from low socioeconomic status backgrounds in higher education

URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13562510701596455

Keywords: journal article; commentary; United Kingdom; participation; diversity; learning

This essay comes from pondering the relationship between the ‘language of diversity’ and the ‘embracing of different forms of knowledge and ways of knowing’ in the university. The issue of diversity is usually a sociological rather than an epistemological one—the access to and inclusion in higher education of individuals from under-represented groups, groups defined by previous education qualifications, class, ethnicity or gender. But the presumption of access courses, at least, is that such personal diversity, once (hopefully) welcomed into the university, is then normalised (inter alia, Lillis & Turner, 2001). Linking the two [in a special issue title: diversity in the academy] raises two questions explored here—should the university be a place of heterodoxies rather than orthodoxy: should it embrace different ways of knowing? And, what should be done with personal, diverse and potentially troublesome ways of knowing? (Edited abstract)

URL: http://sleid.cQU.edu.au/viewissue.php?id=8

Keywords: journal article; initiative; Australia; learning; student support; student success

This paper is based on the premise that universities have an obligation to provide adequate student support services, such as assistance with academic writing and other study skills and that to be effective, services must be responsive to the wider policy and social implications of student attrition and retention. The paper outlines briefly some of the factors that have influenced the development of learning assistance practices in Australia and America. This is followed by an account of experiences at one Australian metropolitan university where learning assistance service provision shifted from a decentralised, faculty-based model to a centralised model of service delivery in response to concerns about lack of quality and consistency. A follow-up study, however, identified other problems, identified as contextualised versus decontextualised learning assistance, including the relevance of generic learning assistance; the apparent tensions between challenging students and assisting students at risk of failure; and variations in the level of collaboration between learning advisers and academic staff in supporting students in the learning environment. (Edited abstract)

URL: http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2002/02_48.htm

Keywords: report; bibliography; United Kingdom; diversity; learning; participation; teaching

This document provides examples of practice to improve planning at a school or departmental level in widening participation (including disability) and learning and teaching. It is not prescriptive, but identifies common principles that institutions can adapt to their own circumstances, to help them recruit and support a diverse range of students. (Abstract)


**Keywords:** journal article; commentary; Australia; socioeconomic status; academic culture; learning; student support

The Australian Federal Government’s recent commitment to increasing the numbers of students from low socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds in higher education will have a particular impact on the academic language and learning professional, who is at the front line in providing learning support for such students. The presence of working-class students at the university can be a powerful challenge to the unspoken assumptions that surround academic discourse, and raises a number of pressing ethical as well as practical issues. This paper reviews some of the literature on the specific needs of students from low SES backgrounds, with a focus on language and learning support. It presents a range of strategies for working with these learners to achieve the specific literacies associated with academic discourse, while recognising and drawing on the knowledge and understandings they bring to the academy. (Abstract)


URL: http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/content~db=all~content=a739044005~frm=titlelink

**Keywords:** journal article; United Kingdom; access; achievement; drop-out; pathways; retention; socioeconomic status; transition

The ‘drop-out’ of working-class students from universities has been identified as one of the most pressing issues for the higher education (HE) sector in the United Kingdom. This article draws on the initial findings of a major research project that explores the meanings and implications of such withdrawal from HE amongst young working-class people. The article argues that drop-out should be seen not just as an educational problem, but also as a manifestation of sociocultural change. To understand drop-out we need to look beyond student support needs or institutional barriers to cultural narratives and local contexts. This enables us to use a sociological frame to understand the educational question, and employ the educational data to contribute to sociological debates on class. The article analyses ‘drop-out’ as a self-fulfilling cultural narrative that is increasingly connoted as working class, as well as being a consequence of the material exigencies of working-class circumstances. It illustrates how class identity mutates yet stays the same, with the working class still positioned in terms of ‘lack’. Although the possibility of university study has become a part of working-class identity, the expectation that this experience may be ‘flawed’ or ‘spoilt’ has also become engrained. The article analyses drop-out as two sides of one coin: as both significantly influenced by local culture and as having a perceived impact upon that culture, with different effects in different locales. (Abstract)


URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03075070309290

**Keywords:** journal article; research report; United Kingdom; nontraditional students; student experience; academic culture

Academic culture is not uniformly accessed or experienced. Whilst financial constraints have a major impact on student entry and retention, students from ‘nontraditional’ backgrounds are also disadvantaged by institutional cultures that place them as ‘other’. Individuals do not passively receive these cultural discourses, however, but actively engage with them and attempt to challenge them. This article explores such negotiations by looking at students’ conceptions of ‘belonging’ and ‘isolation’ at a post-1992 university with a statistically high proportion of ‘nontraditional’ students in terms of class, maturity and ethnicity. It looks at: the extent to which such students can challenge their positioning as ‘other’ by choosing a university where they feel they can ‘belong’; the extent to which institutional academic cultures work to constrain and disrupt such feelings of ‘belonging’; the adoption of alternative discourses of the student-lecturer/student-institution relation, and the extent to which such discourses can challenge feelings of isolation and marginalisation in the academy. (Abstract)
Arguably, student retention has been the primary goal for higher education institutions for several decades. Certainly, it has been the focus of much research effort among higher education scholars. Unfortunately, efforts to improve retention seem to be ineffective; attrition rates have endured despite significant efforts to close them (ACT, 2004b; Braxton, Brier, & Steele, 2007; Terenzini, Cabrera, & Bernal, 2001). A substantial empirical and prescriptive literature does exist to guide faculty members, campus administrators, and public policy makers in attempts to increase student persistence in higher education. With rare exception (e.g., Astin, 1993), these persistence studies possess the same major flaw as most higher education outcomes research; these studies fail to consider the wide variety of influences that shape student persistence, focusing instead on discrete conditions, interventions, and reforms (Terenzini & Reason, 2005). (Abstract)

This paper draws on data from an on-going ESRC project on choice of higher education. It focuses primarily on the experiences of non-traditional applicants to higher education. Although these students are not typical of the entire university entry cohort, their narratives raise important issues in relation to race, class and higher education choice processes. These ‘success stories’ reveal important causes for concern as well as reasons for celebration. In particular, their experiences of the choice process are qualitatively different from those of their more privileged middle-class counterparts, highlighting key class and racial differences and inequalities. (Abstract)

The current agenda for widening participation (WP) promotes equal access to higher education (HE), yet it also implicitly requires institutions to develop support strategies to ensure a successful learning experience and good retention for different groups of students. The objective of this article is predominantly reflected in the latter goal and considers student retention, rather than recruitment. Specifically, it focuses on whether non-traditional students’ experiences of teaching environments could potentially contribute to ‘drop-out’, ultimately enhancing our understanding of what role pedagogy might play in WP retention strategies. Using a qualitative framework, the views of a group of non-traditional students are presented, focusing specifically on their experience of teaching provision, and the extent to which it matched their expectations of HE. Consideration is then paid to the students’ views to garner an account of solutions they deem to be essential in tackling negative experiences and subsequent attrition. The present project should have wider appeal for those interested in understanding how student-centred research can help deal with the challenges faced by WP students. (Abstract)
This article identifies social and educational challenges of students engaged in a 1st year, online, communication course. An understanding of the learners' experience is based on the perceptions of learners who completed the course and from an analysis of how students interact as they participate in collaborative learning activities. Learners identify a range of factors which enhance and impinge upon their learning experience. The analysis of student contributions during online discussions reveals a range of self initiated communication strategies and behaviours which appear to provide learners with the support they require to negotiate and surmount the challenges they perceive within the learning context. The supposition is that relationships with peers provide learners with an effective means of social and educational support and are a key factor in the development of a learner's sense of community. The thesis has important implications for teaching, learning and curricula development as it places emphasis on the relational aspects of interpersonal communication over activity and frequency of interaction and emphasises the need to facilitate and promote the development of learner-learner relationships within online learning contexts. (Abstract)

Particular relevance to Deakin's online learning environment.


The article discusses the effects of socioeconomic status on age at the time of college enrollment. Traditionally, enrollment occurs within two years of high school graduation, but research shows lower rates of enrollment within that time frame for U.S. students with lower income and low socioeconomic status than for other students. This study builds on work by J. C. Hearn, who studied students graduating high school in 1980, by looking at a later group of students, expanding the enrollment time examined, and utilizing a more comprehensive conceptual model. Both studies show that Black students, students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, and students with lower levels of academic preparation are more likely to delay college enrollment. Implications for policy and practice are included. (Abstract)


Outlines changes in government policy in Ireland to widen higher education participation among underrepresented groups. Cautions that a conventional liberal discourse problematises these students and attributed their status to individual causes and promotes a more radical response that considers structural causes of exclusion.


This is a summative opinion piece from Sacks, arguing that the class question is not considered deeply enough in the equity debate. Although it is somewhat polemic, the essay is widely cited.
The dramatic growth in student numbers associated with the shift from elite to mass systems across virtually all developed countries is central to current transformations in terms of structure, purpose, social and economic roles of higher education. The paper develops the concept of nontraditional learners and demonstrates how an examination of ways in which higher education systems respond to such learners can provide a fruitful basis for a comparative analysis of change in higher education across ten countries – Austria, Australia, Canada, Germany, Ireland, Japan, New Zealand, Sweden, United Kingdom, and the United States. The primary emphasis in the study was on the institutional and policy issues which appeared to either inhibit or support participation by nontraditional learners. On this basis six factors were identified which seemed to be particularly influential with regard to the participation of nontraditional students and the associated moves towards a lifelong learning mode of higher education. The evidence suggests that high participation rates do not automatically imply that the functions of higher education in social selection and reproduction are obsolete, or that issues of access and equity can be regarded as features of the past. (Edited abstract) The extent to which the notion of the nontraditional student has been replaced by that of the lifelong learner may provide one key indicator against which progress might be assessed in the future. (p. 324)
O’Shea, H., Onsman, A., and McKay, J. Students from low socioeconomic status backgrounds in higher education


URL: http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/ourwork/evidencenet/Summaries/embedding_widening_participation_and_promoting_student_diversity_a_summary

Keywords: report; case study; United Kingdom; diversity; participation

This report provides the findings from a research project into the drivers, benefits and costs of embedding widening participation (WP) and student diversity that might be used as elements of a business case approach, in the context of fewer external funding policy levers to stimulate and promote change. Thus the institutional-level ‘business case’ argument resting on internal drivers for change assumes a greater importance. The study encompassed both an exploration and analysis of the extant literature and new research evidence in order to provide examples of how WP and diversity policy and practice was constructed, understood and implemented by different internal HEI stakeholders. Primary research was carried out using a case study methodology based on a theoretical sampling of eight HEIs across the UK representing the diversity of institutions within the sector. The concept of a business case for diversity is built on recognising a distinction between an externally driven ‘equal opportunities paradigm’ and a ‘diversity paradigm’ that recognises business benefits as well as moral and ethical arguments. (Edited abstract)


DOI: 10.1080/03075070903469606

Keywords: journal article; Greece; higher education; social class; access; performance; choice; labour market

Higher education choice has been a central theme in sociological research in recent decades, especially following the policies for the widening of participation adopted in many countries. Research has shown a relationship between social class and higher education choice, and this is a reason why the expansion of higher education does not reduce social inequalities. This article is based on quantitative and qualitative research on first-year university students, and examines the higher education choice of students from different socio-economic backgrounds, but with similar levels of performance. The findings provide evidence that, even when high performance provides students with a wide range of choices, higher education choice is a different experience for middle-class and working-class students. The authors argue that choice is a multifaceted process, the analysis of which needs to consider the general financial and societal context, and the specific labour market characteristics in each country. (Abstract)


DOI: 10.1111/j.1468-2273.2010.00476.x

Keywords: journal article; United Kingdom; equity, higher education, diversification.

This article summarises previous academic research into university education, distinguishing between arguments for and against improving access. Several views are summarised, including structural-functionalism, which claims that powerful social groups maintain their status and income, and human capital theory, which focuses on employee productivity. Almost all viewpoints discussed in this article support meritocracy. UK universities differ in their openness to people from disadvantaged backgrounds. Many universities, referred to here as ‘inclusive’, deserve credit for encouraging disadvantaged people to become students; in contrast, ‘exclusive’ universities tend to have fewer disadvantaged students than expected. There are barriers facing disadvantaged students, including unequal access to universities, which can at least partly be explained by private schools for rich pupils and financial burdens at university causing some students to take paid work (reducing time available for study). The UK spends less per student on universities than the world average and less than half as much as some European countries. The UK Government could increase university funding, concentrating on universities that are most inclusive and that tend to have the largest problems in affording sufficient staff and teaching facilities. This investment would give long-term benefits to the UK economy. (Abstract)


Keywords: address; conference paper; Australia; widening access, first year experience.

Widening access is a topical subject in Australian Higher Education (HE) forums. Students from low Socio-Economic Status (low SES) backgrounds, Indigenous students and students from rural and remote Australia are under-represented and the percentage has stayed static or declined in recent years (James 2007). The Bradley Review of Higher Education released in June 2008 challenges the Federal Government and the HE sector to address this imbalance, through increased funding and institutional targets. The First Year Experience is a chief battleground where the contest to widen access will be lost or won. Gaining admission is only the first step: providing comprehensive support in First Year is equally important in ensuring retention and success. This paper addresses the challenges of widening access in a research-intensive university and provides a case study of a successful transition program that for 21 years has supported students under-represented in its student population (Abstract)


DOI: 10.1007/s11211-007-0047-7

Keywords: journal article; United States; social justice; social stereotypes; higher education

Stereotype threat effects occur when members of a stigmatized group perform poorly on a task because they fear confirming a negative stereotype that is associated with their ingroup. The present study investigates whether the observed achievement gap in standardized testing between high- and low-socioeconomic status (SES) American students can be due, in part, to this phenomenon. Participants were placed in one of four conditions that varied in level of “threat” related to socioeconomic status. Results show that when socioeconomic identity is made salient before taking a test, or when the test is presented as diagnostic of intelligence, low-SES students perform significantly worse, and report much lower self-confidence, than low-SES participants in the non-threatening conditions. When threatening conditions converge, performance of low-SES students is at its worst level. These results help us better understand the role stereotyping plays in the academic performance of low-SES students, and may partly explain the disparity on standardized test scores between low- and high-SES students. (Abstract)

"Our findings, therefore, are consistent with the idea that at least part of the large discrepancy regularly found between high and low income groups in American standardized testing (College Board, 2005) may be attributable to factors that have little to do with the actual intellectual skills of the individual taking the test. This is not good news, particularly because of the virtual lack of institutional policies designed to rectify class inequality in the access to higher education. Policies that attempt to increase diversity usually target ethnic diversity, but this does not necessarily increase the number of low-SES students. Indeed, college students from traditionally underrepresented groups, such as Latino-Americans and African-Americans, tend to be from relatively high-SES backgrounds (Sacks, 2003). It appears that socioeconomic diversity and equality remains to be one of the last frontiers for social justice in America." (Conclusion)


URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.3102/0002831208329903

Keywords: journal article; quantitative research; USA; student success; student engagement; financial aid

This article utilizes data on students enrolled at three flagship public institutions to examine the effects of financial aid on first-year and second through fourth-year college GPA. The results indicate that need-based aid and merit-based aid both have positive and significant effects on student GPAs throughout college. Thus, the results are supportive of theoretical predictions that financial aid promotes student integration and commitment to academics, which results in higher achievement. (Conclusion)
Recent concerns about ‘fairness’ in university entrance have highlighted the need to review existing practices in admissions processes. The agendas for equity and social inclusion, however, must also apply to the processes and outcomes of higher education, where considerations of ‘standards’ are additionally crucial. As principles underpinning the assessment process, ‘equity’ and ‘justice’ and ‘academic standards’ are part of taken-for-granted cultures and practices which impact on decisions about progression, eligibility for awards and degree classification for individual students. Changing discourses of academic standards have given rise to contrasting decision-making processes rooted in the role and operation of assessment boards. Contrasting models of assessment board cultures are developed to highlight how practices are beset by conceptual confusions about what is being assessed and the basis for judgements about success and failure in higher education. There is a strong case, not only for critical review of assessment processes, but also for monitoring outcomes for different social groups. (Abstract)


Increasing costs of running educational institutions and funding educational programs, coupled with decreasing government subsidies to support such costs, have made privatisation and marketisation of higher education a common phenomenon throughout the world. The article presents the development of this trend in Indonesia utilizing two recent government regulations: Badan Hukum Milik Negara (BHMN/State Owned Legal Institution) law of 1999, and Badan Hukum Pendidikan (Educational Legal Institution) law of 2009. Three main criticisms to the regulations include impartiality towards low-income students, the government’s reduced responsibility and commitment to education, and commercialization of public universities. The article argues that the regulations and their main criticisms have failed to address the underlying causes to educational inequity and the lack of emphasis on the impacts of privatisation and marketisation on academic values and purposes of higher education. The article emphasizes the need to revisit the purposes of higher education, to reinforce academic standards and values, and to strengthen the teaching profession. (Abstract)


Keywords: journal article; initiative; United Kingdom; student experience; participation; socioeconomic status; student success

Higher education is usually the preserve of the white, able-bodied, middle classes. This paper reports on the experience of the participants in a project designed to challenge this by giving access to working-class, black and disabled community activists to the degree in community education. It identifies the institutional and dispositional barriers to access to higher education and to sustained participation, and shows how the project has overcome many of them using illustrations from the participants’ experiences. In particular, their school and later learning experiences and attitudes to higher education and the factors that helped them to stay on their course, are discussed. It makes suggestions for the ways in which higher education might become more accessible, based on these findings, at both an institutional and an individual level. (Abstract) Tett identifies that ‘Factors which helped to sustain participation included the extent to which staff were encouraging and interesting; the quality of interaction with fellow students, the suitability of course content; and students’ commitment to the course and institution.’ (114)


URL: No DOI. Full text accessible through Deakin Library

Keywords: journal article; case study; United Kingdom; student experience; socioeconomic status; nontraditional students; academic culture; equity; participation

Widening participation initiatives tend to focus on raising the aspirations of the working class rather than changing educational cultures. However, any analysis must take account of the role of the educational institution itself in creating and perpetuating inequalities. Participation in higher education (HE) is an inherently more risky, costly and uncertain ‘choice’ for working class groups and this frames their decisions. This paper focuses on the particular issues and ‘risks’ raised when mature working-class students form a small minority in an elite institution. It draws on the experiences of two cohorts of mature students to examine the contrasting discourses used to explain their exclusion and choice. It argues that if the entrenched inequalities in participation in, and across, HE are to be properly addressed and systematically dismantled, there is a need to understand issues of process and structure, and exclusion and choice, in all their complexity. (Abstract)


URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02680930210140257

Keywords: journal article; case study; United Kingdom; student success; socioeconomic status; student experience

This paper examines some of the issues surrounding student retention in higher education. It is based on the case study of a modern university in England that has good performance indicators of both widening participation (i.e. increasing the diversity of the student intake) and student retention. The two-fold nature of this success is significant, as it has been asserted that greater diversity will necessarily lead to an increase in student withdrawal. Furthermore, changes to student funding in the UK put greater financial pressures and stress on students, especially those from low-income groups. Nevertheless, many students cope with poverty, high levels of debt and significant burdens of paid work to successfully complete their courses of study. Drawing on the work of Reay et al. (2001), this paper adopts and explores the term ‘institutional habitus’, and attempts to provide a conceptual and empirical understanding of the ways in which the values and practices of a higher education institution impact on student retention. (Abstract)

URL: http://www.staffs.ac.uk/journal/voleightthree/editorial.htm

Keywords: bibliography; participation; policy; socioeconomic status; measuring SES; first-generation students; student success

Review of literature on access, participation and success of first-generation higher education students in the UK and internationally.


URL: http://www.actiononaccess.org/index.php?p=11_5_2

Keywords: report; research report; United Kingdom; participation; socioeconomic status; policy; student success

This project investigated six institutions which had performed particularly successfully in widening participation and retention, with the intention of identifying factors that contributed to that success. The project was underpinned by a literature review of research that took into account international findings. The aim of this research was to identify factors that influence institutional success in the recruitment and retention of students from low socioeconomic groups, by studying institutions with particularly strong performances in these respects. (pp. 39–40)


Keywords: book; research report; United Kingdom; access; participation; policy; first-generation students; socioeconomic status; student experience; student success

This book examines the proposition that parental education is a key factor contributing to the access and success of students, but that insufficient attention is paid to this by researchers, national systems and institutional interventions. Analysis of research findings from ten countries, plus a UK wide study, indicates that parental education is more important in determining access to higher education than parental employment or financial status. The book provides a clear conceptualisation of first generation entry, exploring its complex interrelationship with social class. (Publisher’s description)

URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10734-009-9289-7

Key words: journal article; Netherlands; postsecondary education; disadvantaged youth; educational attainment; adult education; parent background; socioeconomic background.

In the tracked educational system of the Netherlands, students at the end of secondary education have to decide whether they want to enter subsequent post-secondary or tertiary education. Depending on the previous qualification, they have the choice between up to four different options, including not entering further education. We propose, in line with prevalent theoretical approaches, that children from lower socio-economic backgrounds tend to make decisions that do not fully capitalize on their previously obtained qualifications. By means of multinomial logistic regression models we tested the unconditional and conditional effects of family background for entering the different tracks of post-secondary education. In the unconditional analyses we found effects for parental education on making a transition to all types of post-secondary and tertiary education, but the occupational status of the father seems to be only relevant for the transition to lower tier tertiary education. The conditional effects of parental education for making the transition to senior vocational education and university are strong, while the transition to lower tertiary education is not influenced by parental background characteristics. This shows that even with eligibility for the most prestigious tracks, children from lower socio-economic backgrounds tend to make less ambitious educational decisions. We also examined to what extent this inequality changed across time for the cohorts that terminated secondary education between 1932 and 1995. Decreasing effects of parental education indicate that the expansion of secondary education had the positive effect of leading more children from lower social backgrounds into favourable secondary education tracks, especially the intermediate general track. This equalization is carried forward through the entire sequence of educational transitions. The students from advantaged backgrounds nevertheless still profit from the parental resources in access to the most prestigious tertiary education institutions given secondary qualifications. Their head start into the academic track has not been reduced across cohorts. (Abstract)


Keywords: journal article; case study; USA; initiative; socioeconomic status; learning; social connectedness

Examines college preparation programs for low-income urban minority youths. Overview of models of college preparation; Analysis of a particular university-sponsored inner-city program; Proposal of a culturally responsive model requiring affirmation of local identities and active participation of families, teachers and universities. (Abstract)

URL: http://www.yorku.ca/retentn/rdata/Takingretentionseriously.pdf

Keywords: journal article; United States; USA; first-year experience; student success

Many colleges speak of the importance of increasing student retention. Many even invest substantial resources in programs to achieve that end. Witness, for instance, the growth of the freshman seminar. Some institutions even go so far as to hire retention consultants who promise significant gains in retention if only you use their programs. But while many colleges have adopted a variety of programs to enhance retention, most programs are add-ons that are marginal to the academic life of the institution. Too many colleges have adopted what Parker Palmer calls the add a course strategy. Need to address the issue of diversity? Add a course in diversity studies. Need to address the success of new students? Add a freshman seminar. Need to address student retention? Bring in a consultant and establish a committee or office charged with that responsibility. The result is a growing segmentation of services for students into increasingly autonomous fiefdoms whose functional responsibilities are reinforced by separate budget and promotion systems. Therefore, while it is true that retention programs abound on our campuses, most institutions, in my view, have not taken student retention seriously. They have done little to change the way they organize their activities, done little to alter student experience, and therefore done little to address the deeper roots of student attrition. As a result, most efforts at enhancing student retention, though successful to some degree, have had more limited impact than they should or could. (Abstract)

Tinto argues that, while many colleges address the issue of retention for specific groups of students, they do so by adding courses rather than addressing the three conditions he identifies for student success: high institutional expectations for student learning, the provision of academic and social support, and their active involvement with other students and faculty in learning.


URL: http://www.nhcuc.org/pdfs/Learning_Better_Together.pdf

Keywords: monograph; USA; learning; teaching; student success

Despite recent innovations, it remains the case that most students experience universities as isolated learners whose learning is disconnected from that of others. Fortunately, there is change … Partly in response to a series of reports in the 1980s by the National Institute of Education (1984), the Association of American Colleges (1985), and studies in the late 1980s and early 1990s by scholars such as Astin (1987), Boyer (1987), and Tinto (1987), a growing number of institutions have begun to reform educational practice and restructure classrooms to more actively involve students in learning. One such effort that is gaining increased attention is that encompassed by learning communities and the collaborative pedagogy that underlies them. Unlike many programs which exist at the periphery of the academic experiences of students, learning communities seek to restructure the very classrooms in which students find themselves and alter the way students experience both the curriculum and learning within those classrooms. (Introduction)


ISBN: 1 85856 316 X

Keywords: book chapter; commentary; USA; participation; learning; student success

Maintains that, in the experience of higher education in the USA, access is less of an issue than retention and completion. Discusses a number of student learning focused reforms which stress the importance of shared, connected learning and of the educational community. Concludes that much of the focus so far has been on helping students adjust to university life and too little attention has been paid to the need for universities to change. (Editor’s Introduction, p. xiii)


Keywords: journal article; commentary; United States; socioeconomic status; student success

After reviewing the state of student retention research and practice, past and present, the author looks to the future and identifies three areas of research and practice that call for further exploration. These concern issues of institutional action, program implementation, and the continuing challenge of promoting the success of low-income students. (Abstract)


URL: http://www.ewu.edu/groups/academicaffairs/IR/NPEC_5_Tinto_Pusser_Report.pdf

Keywords: report; commentary; USA; student success; policy; theory

Though research on student attrition is plentiful and debate over theories of student persistence vigorous, less attention has been paid to the development of a model of institutional action that provides institutions guidelines for effective action to increase student persistence and in turn student success. This report describes a model of action for institutions that is intended to increase student persistence. The report does so by reviewing not only the growing body of research on effective institutional practices, but also studies of effective state and federal policy. In doing so, it seeks, for the first time, to situate institutional action within the broader context of federal and, in particular, state policy. (Introduction)


URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11162-005-9000-5

Keywords: journal article; quantitative research; USA; socioeconomic status; student success; financial aid

Using national survey data, multilevel modeling techniques, and descriptive statistics, this study makes an effort to understand the influence of the financial context of institutions on the chance of college completion for low socioeconomic status (SES) students at four-year colleges and universities. This research shows that college completion is positively associated with an institution's tuition revenue as a percent of total revenue and educational and general expenditures per full-time equivalent student. This study also documents that, compared to high SES students, low SES students are disproportionately enrolled in institutions with lower levels of financial resources and higher dependence on tuition as a source of total revenue. The results of this research have implications for policy with regard to addressing the chances of college completion for low SES students. (Abstract)

URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10734-009-9208-y

Keywords: journal article; research report; Australia; socioeconomic status; nontraditional students; student support

The aim of the current study was to examine mature-aged student perceptions of university support services and barriers to study. Using a mixed methods approach, interviews and focus groups were conducted with mature-aged students to identify barriers to study, knowledge and use of current student support services, and suggestions to improve upon these services. From these data and an audit of university support services, an online survey was created to examine study barriers and patterns of support service use, as well as perceptions of proposed support services not currently offered by the university within a larger sample of mature-aged students. Analysis of survey data indicated distinct patterns of barriers and support service use according to socioeconomic status as well as other demographic factors such as, age and enrolment status. Study findings are discussed in terms of generating support services for the retention of mature-aged students of low socioeconomic status and for the retention of mature-aged students in general. (Abstract)


URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/csd.0.0109

Keywords: journal article; quantitative research; USA; first-generation students; student experience; student success

The purpose of this study was to analyze the effects of self-efficacy on academic success of first-generation college sophomore students. The participants in the study consisted of college sophomores from 5 of the 23 California State University campuses. An online College Self-Efficacy Inventory was employed to measure participants’ self-efficacy levels. The study explored four areas: the relationship between self-efficacy scores and academic success as defined by GPA and persistence rates, the academic success and persistence rates between first-generation and second-and-beyond-generation college sophomore students, the effects of the demographic factors of gender and ethnicity on self-efficacy, and the relationship between institution size and self-efficacy. Findings show that self-efficacy beliefs affect GPA and persistence rates of sophomore students and second-generation college sophomores outperform their first-generation peers. (Abstract)


URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/rhe.2003.0044

Keywords: journal article; quantitative research; USA; socioeconomic status; student experience; student success; cultural capital

This study investigated college experiences and outcomes for low and high SES students utilizing data from a longitudinal database. Low SES students engaged in fewer extracurricular activities, worked more, studied less, and reported lower GPAs than their high SES peers. Nine years after entering college, the low SES students had lower incomes, educational attainment, and graduate school attendance than high SES students. These experiential and outcome differences are tied to differences in cultural capital and habitus.

ISBN: 978-0-470-22535-6

Keywords: report; commentary; USA; policy; measuring SES; socioeconomic status; first-generation students; access; student experience; student success

The gap between low- and high-SES student college enrolment has not diminished in decades. This volume provides an overview of the current research on this problem and provides ideas and insights that may help reduce the gap. It integrates the research on low-SES, low-income, working-class, and first-generation students’ access to, enrolment and experiences in, and outcomes of college. The volume reviews how scholars define socioeconomic status and its component variables and how those definitions are used in higher education research. It also highlights conceptual frameworks and models used in research on these students and reviews EEC students’ access to, experiences in, and outcomes of college attendance. The volume concludes with implications and recommendations for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers. (Publisher’s introduction, edited)

See review by Fisher and St John in Review of Higher Education 32(1), 139–40.


URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11162-007-9079-y

Keywords: journal article; quantitative research; USA; socioeconomic status; student experience; ethnic minority students; student success

This study focuses on how social class affects the college experiences and outcomes for African American students in 4-year colleges and universities. Using a national, longitudinal data base, the findings indicate that low SES African American students have less contact with faculty, study less, are less involved with student organizations, work more, and have lower grades than do their high SES peers or all African American students. Furthermore, 9 years after entering college, low SES students report lower incomes, lower rates of degree attainment and lower aspirations than their high SES peers, and were less likely to have attended graduate school. Logistic regression results indicate that sex, college GPA, and plans following college significantly affect the likelihood that a student will attend graduate school.


Keywords: report; quantitative research; USA; first-generation students; student success

This statistical report examines the high school preparation and postsecondary persistence of first-generation students–those students whose parents had no education beyond high school–and compares them with students whose parents went to college. The analyses address the following question: were first-generation students who were otherwise equally prepared academically comparable to students whose parents went to college in terms of their postsecondary enrollment and performance and rates of persistence and attainment? The data indicated that, while first-generation status is negatively associated with academic preparation in high school and success in postsecondary education, rigorous preparation in high school substantially narrows the gap in postsecondary outcomes between first-generation students and their peers whose parents graduated from college. (Abstract)

URL: http://www.staffs.ac.uk/journal/voeightthree/articleone.htm

Keywords: journal article; case study; New Zealand; nontraditional students; student support

The participation of mature-aged students in tertiary education is increasing and is particularly evident in primary school teacher training in New Zealand. A group of mothers with dependent children, enrolled in pre-service teacher education at the Christchurch College of Education, took part in this qualitative study to share the impact on them and their families. Their participation in such lifelong learning identified issues such as dealing with their children’s feelings, childcare considerations, clarifying the importance of their support networks, coping with their increasing financial constraints and having a significant lack of time. They also made suggestions on how the College could better meet their specific needs. (Edited abstract)


DOI: 10.1080/07294361003592058

Keywords: journal article; Australia; equity groups; Equity Raw-Score Matrix (ERSM); equity sub-groups; under-represented groups

Issues surrounding student participation, transition, retention and successful completion in higher education are topical. While the Australian federal government has identified broad groupings of under-represented students, these do not shed light on the complexities underlying the issues of the educationally disadvantaged, such as the compounding problems of multiple equity-group membership or the overlay of the acute or chronic effects of equity sub-group membership. This paper details the Equity Raw-Score Matrix. The matrix is a multi-dimensional indicator of potential disadvantage in learners, created for the specific purposes of diagnosing the complexities of educational disadvantage and creating pre-emptive strategies for the participation, transition and retention of students who are disadvantaged. The paper also describes the qualitative research study that was the catalyst for the creation of the matrix. (Abstract)


URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0307507022000011552

Keywords: journal article; research report; United Kingdom; nontraditional students; socioeconomic status; student employment; student experience; student motivation

Studies of student motivation, drawing on psychological theory, have identified learning, teaching and assessment strategies that are likely to enhance motivation. However, little attention has been paid to the impact on student motivation of recent changes in the social and economic context of higher education. This article uses qualitative data from interviews with students to provide a broader perspective on motivation. It was found that some students with demanding family or employment commitments were able to integrate the demands of the course into their lives, while others had little time available for academic work. There was also a group of students who had few commitments other than the course, but spent little time studying. It is suggested that the use of motivation-enhancing approaches to teaching will be limited unless there is also change at the level of government, to address the needs of those students whose childcare responsibilities impede their capacity to study. (Abstract)


ISBN: 97888021047174

Keywords: book chapter; case study; United Kingdom; socioeconomic status; first-year students; student experience

Reports on a research project which confirms differences in the first-year experience of relatively advantaged and disadvantaged students.

URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13600800305737

Keywords: journal article; research report; United Kingdom; socioeconomic status; student success; policy

Success in higher education for students from lower socioeconomic groups and from disadvantaged backgrounds is becoming an increasingly important policy goal in the UK and abroad. An analysis of the HEFCE performance indicators identified six English higher education institutions performing above their benchmarks with regard to widening participation and also student retention and completion, and prompted an investigation of what these institutions had been doing that might account for their success. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with senior managers responsible for retention and completion, which focused on institutional strategy. Analysis of the interviews suggested that success in retaining students from lower socioeconomic groups required a strong policy commitment to access and retention, backed up by practical action. A number of actions were identified as possible contributors to such success. (Abstract)


URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1469787405049946

Keywords: journal article; bibliography; commentary; student support; student success; teaching

Tertiary institutions are under increasing pressure to improve student outcomes such as retention, persistence and completion. In 2002, the New Zealand Ministry of Education commissioned a team of Massey University researchers to conduct a best evidence synthesis of literature on how institutions might improve student outcomes. Our study found two different discourses on this. One predominates, centreing on what institutions do to fit students into their existing cultures. The other is still emerging and challenges the dominant discourse. Rather than requiring students to fit the existing institutional culture, it suggests that cultures be adapted to better fit the needs of increasingly diverse students. This article has four sections. First, a survey of background literature introduces competing theoretical approaches to outcomes research. Second, we explain how the survey was conducted. Third, we summarise the findings of 146 research studies. Finally we raise some challenges for practice based on the emerging discourse. (Abstract)


URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2010.522084

Keywords: journal article; commentary; research report; New Zealand; student engagement; student success

This paper questions current policy discourses that equate student success with hard outcomes like retention, completion and employment. It offers another view, one that uses ‘soft’ outcomes and student engagement literature to widen our understanding of student success. In the paper, we first draw on literature to explore student engagement, usually understood as a means to achieve success, and ‘soft’ outcomes as acceptable student outcomes, as success. We present possible indicators for these forms of success and a matrix of factors that influence such success. We then examine these ideas using data gathered from a project that investigated success as experienced by post-school foundation learners in Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The findings suggest that the ideas have value. Finally, we identify some implications for teachers, arguing that, contrary to some current views, all four quadrants in the matrix are the business of teachers. (Abstract)

DOI: 10.1080/03075070903545074

Keywords: journal article; New Zealand; student success; higher education; non-institutional influences; survey research

Student success, variously understood as engagement, persistence, completion, graduation and entry to employment, has become a central focus for stakeholders in higher education. Theoretical and empirical research exploring these varied conceptions has mushroomed since the 1980s. Much of this literature focuses on what and how higher education institutions contribute to student success; a substantial amount also reports on the part students play in their own success. Less frequently studies investigate how non-institutional influences affect student success. This article addresses this gap. It uses data from a survey of first-time enrolled students in New Zealand higher education to investigate the importance of family, cultural, employment and personal influences on student perceptions of success. Findings show that non-institutional influences exert a moderate effect on student success, and that they are influences which need to be considered by institutions interested in fostering student success. (Abstract)

"A second lens focuses on the influence of student background on success, including socio-economic status, which seems to have a strong impact (Fitz, Taylor, and Pugsley 2005). Levels of parental education, occupation and income produce economic, social and cultural capital (Bourdieu 1973). Congruence between familial and institutional culture means students with higher socio-economic status are more likely to be successful than students with low socio-economic status. Some students, often labelled 'non-traditional', lack the cultural capital needed to integrate and succeed. They may have different interpersonal skills, habits, manners, linguistics, educational credentials and lifestyle preferences (Berger 2000) than those required for success in mainstream educational settings. 'Non-traditional' students often feel uncomfortable in traditional institutions (Bennett and Flett 2001; Gavala and Flett 2005; Harper, Carini, and Bridges 2004; Laird et al. 2007; Walker 2000). However, socio-economic status is complex, as there are multiple intersections with ethnicity and gender (Vryonides 2007). Further, there are considerable differences within 'non-traditional' ethnic groups; intersections between social class, ethnicity and gender impact on attitudes to study and success (Hutchings and Archer 2001). Parental dispositions, preferences, expectations, support and encouragement have powerful effects (Brooks 2004), although they may also vary with gender, class and ethnicity (Payne 2003). Cost and financial aid are factors for many students; perceived ability to pay is central (Perna 2000). Johnson et al. (2007) claim teachers and institutions need to adapt their cultures to meet the needs of students from diverse backgrounds." (From text, pp. 228-229)