TEACHING ADVANCEMENT AT UNIVERSITY (TAU) 2015/2016
Exploring Factors That Influence Student Success in Diverse South African Higher Education Contexts

Liqhwa Siziba[1], Alex Nabbi[2], Nomakhaya Mashiyi[3], Corlia Janse van Vuuren[4], Roxanne Piderit[5], Elizabeth de Kadt[6]
[1]NWU, [2]MUT, [3]CPUT, [4]UFS, [5]UFH, [6]UJ

Introduction

- Student success has been widely investigated – both nationally and internationally (e.g. Tinto, 2012; CHE, 2014; Maree, 2015; Kappe & van der Flier, 2012; Wilson-Strydom, 2010; Petersen, Louw, Dumont, 2009)

- Drop-out rates remain high – but higher still among Black South African students (Badat, 2014) and only 5% of Black and Coloured students complete studies in regulation time (CHE, 2013)

- Various frameworks have been suggested for understanding student success, most of which have a lot in common (e.g. Hurtado, Carter & Spuler, 1996; Tinto, 2012; Ashwin, 2015; Norris & Baer, 2013)

- Current argument supports a rethinking of curriculum design, teaching and learning, based on a Scholarship of Teaching and Learning foundation, to address continuing poor student success in South Africa (CHE 2016:53)

- Therefore, this study investigates a number of the factors influencing student success listed in the Framework for Institutional Quality Enhancement (CHE, 2014) due to its currency and relevance in the SA context

Institutional Contexts

- Five institutions - Three traditional Universities and two Universities of Technology

- Each institution has a unique student profile
  - MUT– located in a township, largely rural student intake
  - CPUT – urban, diverse student profile: rural, black, white and coloured students, most disadvantaged
  - UFH – mainly disadvantaged black students, some international students from Zimbabwe
  - UFS – urban, disadvantaged students, international students from Lesotho
  - NWU – rural and urban locations, student extremes, some rich and many disadvantaged

Factors Influencing Student Success

Student Success

Student Profile
- Context – Language, Nationality, Urban vs Rural
- Social & Economic Background
- First-Generation University
- Millennials
- Unpreparedness

Student Admission
- Pre-requisite NSC Subjects
- Qualification Choice
- Resident v Oppidan
- Extended Curriculum

Academic Support
- Language Interventions
- Tutorial/SI Support
- Virtual Support
- Mentoring

Non-Academic Support
- Student Funding
- Food Security
- Residence Availability
- Family Support
- Communication

Curriculum
- Recurriculation of Qualification
- Limiting of Electives
- Discipline-specific Foundation Modules

Instructional Approach
- Redesign
- Blended Learning
- Reflective Practice
- Learning Styles

Research Problem & Objective

Crises of the post-apartheid South African higher education sector :

- Many interventions planned in terms of promoting student success have not been successful

- Unacceptably Low Student Success Rates

- **Objectives:**
  - Investigate and reflect on the role of a number of factors implicated in student success
  - Develop a framework for understanding and enhancing student success in diverse South African Higher Education contexts

Research Approach

- Multi-method approach drawing on a variety of sources:
  - Interviews
  - Questionnaires
  - Existing Institutional Data
  - Reflective Practice
  - Mixed Method

Conclusion

- Of the five Projects three are seeking to explain causal factors for students' poor performance each in a different context

- Two have already gone a step further and have implemented changes in the curriculum and instructional approach which has had a positive impact on student success

Contact emails: liqhwas@gmail.com; alexnabbi29@gmail.com; mashiyin@cput.ac.za;

jansevanvuurenec@ufs.ac.za; roxannepiderit@gmail.com; edekadt@uj.ac.za