STUDENT RETENTION-HELPING STUDENTS TO SUCCEED

Dr Dawn Jones
To define reasons why students leave university and investigate how the current Newcastle University strategies impact on academic practice and enhance student retention and success.
This presentation will address the following:-

1. Why is student retention an issue? – National learning and teaching strategy
2. Why do students leave higher education?
3. Newcastle University strategies
4. Introducing ‘capitals’
5. Identify Singapore specific issues
6. Conclusions and recommendations
University Funding

“Concerns [about retention] arise not from a student perspective, but from the competitiveness that results from universities becoming driven by academic capitalism which has shifted their ethos ... from the client welfare of their students to the economic bottom line.” (Clarke and Crome 2004).

Economic Impact of Fewer Skilled Graduates entering the Workplace

“in a knowledge economy, universities are the most important mechanism we have for generating and preserving, disseminating, and transforming knowledge into wider social and economic benefits” (Department for Business Innovation and Skills. 2009)

Student Self Esteem

“The time of adjustment for a student to their new environment is a time of risk for withdrawal as students may suffer stress and a sense of loss” Theory of student integration (Tinto 2008)
Institutions were asked to consider these in developing their learning and teaching strategies:

- Ensuring that teaching is informed and enriched by research
- Supporting continuing professional development activity, enabling staff to meet agreed national teaching standards and building a record of attainment against these standards
- Broadening the learning experience through support for student volunteering
- Supporting success and progression for students with diverse needs.

http://www.hefce.ac.uk/learning/enhance/quality.htm
Choosing the wrong course/lack of pre-course information.

Isolation - the need to establish peer and friendship networks.

Lack of timely support for disability and dyslexia requirements.

Overwhelming induction process.

Remoteness of staff - especially when much of the early experience occurs in large lectures.

Uncertainty regarding workload weighting, assessment criteria and level.

Lack of timely and meaningful feedback on assignments.

from HEA NTF First Year Shock Absorber Final Report 2010
WHAT IS NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY DOING TO SUPPORT STUDENT SUCCESS AND HOW DOES THIS TRANSULATE/RELATE TO PRACTICE IN SG?
What’s different from school? *(QUILT)*

- Manage your own study
  - Independent study – stage 2 = 70%, stage 3 = 81% *(UNISTATS, 2014)*

- Develop your own views
  - Weigh evidence and come to a conclusion

**Internationalisation**

- Intercultural communication *(QUILT)*
  - Using a non-native language
  - Dealing with cultural differences
  - Teaching and learning styles
  - Knowledge of foreign education systems
What is Capital?
- A resource

Academic Capital (Bourdieu, 1979)
- Educational experience can be used in society
- Better paid job

Human Capital
- Employability skills
- Stand alone or embedded

Social Capital (Hanifan, 1916, Thomas 2002a)
- Supportive social networks
- ‘Community as whole benefits from cooperation of all parts – Individual advantages of help, sympathy and fellowship’ Hanifan 1916 (pp130-131).

Cultural Capital (Bourdieu, 1986)
- Knowledge of culture (practice not just high art)
- Bernstein (1971) Language codes

Educational institutes favour knowledge and experiences of dominant groups – if a student feels that their social/cultural practices are inappropriate and that their tacit knowledge is undervalued they may be more inclined to withdraw early
Notion of success (QUILT widening participation)

- Transition into HE,
- Retention, progression and completion within the target award

Reasons why students leave

- Lack of timely and meaningful feedback on assignments.
  - Feedback has been prompt -33% (UNISTATS)
  - Feedback on my work has helped me clarify things I did not understand – 35% (UNISTATS)

- Remoteness of staff - especially when much of the early experience occurs in large lectures.

- Uncertainty regarding workload weighting, assessment criteria and level.
General
- Currently have multiple assessments across units- not uniform at all

Intercultural communication (QUILT)
- Using a non-native language
- Dealing with cultural differences
- Teaching and learning styles
- Knowledge of foreign education systems
IMPACT ON ACADEMIC PRACTICE

- Requires additional resources
  - For formative assessment
  - Additional time and space allocation for timetabled tutorials as well as one to one sessions.
- Activities designed to promote autonomous and lifelong learning
- Increasing innovation required to come up with new and interesting formative assessment- keep old school but embrace technology (Nichol 2009)

GOOD PRACTICE

- Formative assessment
  - Timely feedback-monitoring progress
- Varied forms of summative assessment and teaching practices
  - Some students experience ‘academic culture shock’ –large class sizes, lack of structure/too much freedom, increased workload. (Quinn et al 2005).
Student retention is an issue nationally and institutionally

‘The more students learn, the more value they find in their learning, the more likely they are to stay and graduate. In the final analysis, student learning drives student retention’ Tinto (2002:4)

- Do not assume a single student body - Recognise the diverse capitals that students bring

- ‘student focussed’ -‘Develop partnership with students. Ensure that we embed a culture of partnership with students throughout all of our provision.’ (LTA strategic Framework)

- Setting up the student to succeed-change habitus ‘alternative forms of teaching,...[accompanied] with strategies to ease the transition from one belief set to another’. (Kember 2001)

- Ensure we have the necessary skills to support student success

- Share Best Practice amongst faculties and departments
REFERENCES


Bernstein, B. (1971) Class, Codes and Control vol 1 London; Paladin


QUILT http://www.ncl.ac.uk/quilt/resources/teaching/internationalisation.htm

QUILT Widening participation document http://www.ncl.ac.uk/quilt/resources/teaching/participation.htm


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Thomas, E.A.M. (2002a) "Building social capital to improve student success" BERA conference
