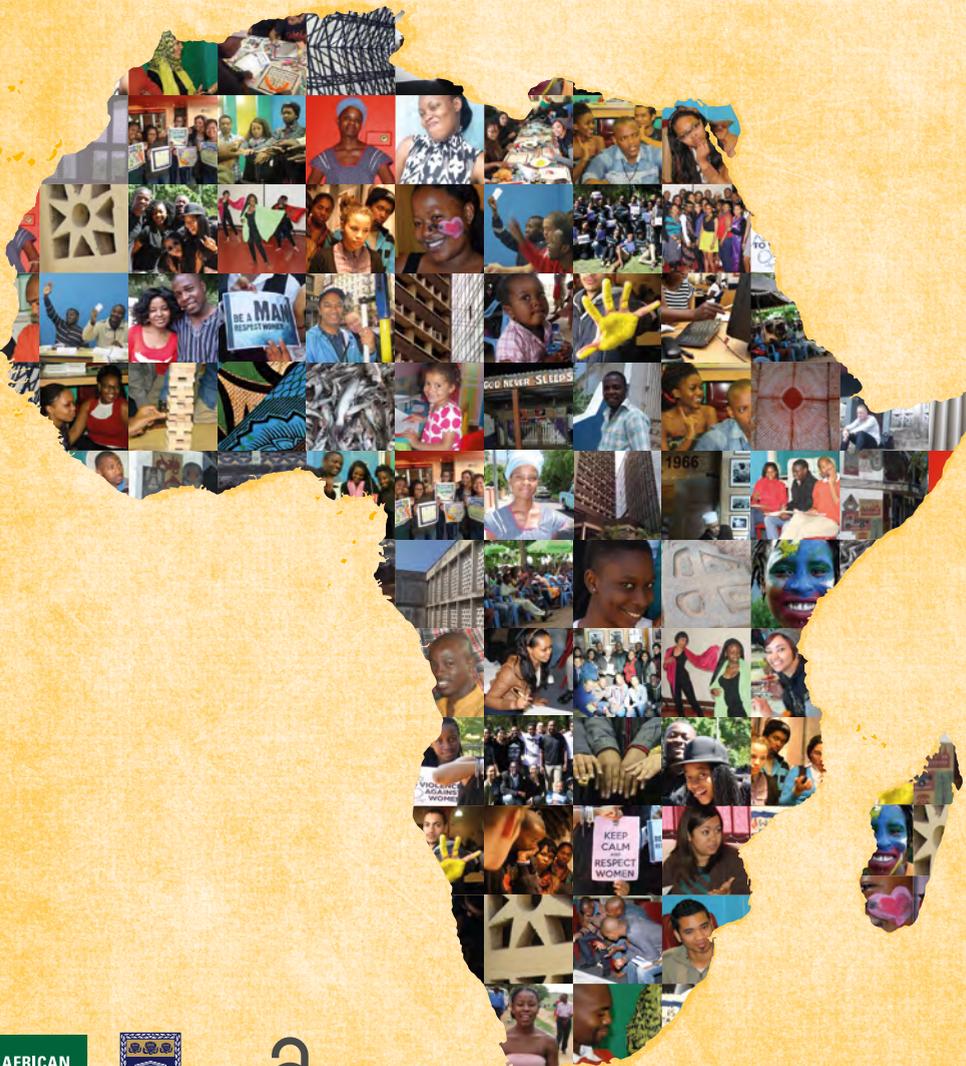




Journal of Student Affairs in Africa

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#Equity #SocialJustice #HigherEducationAfrica



Journal of Student Affairs in Africa

The *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa* (JSAA) is an independent, peer-reviewed, multi-disciplinary, open-access academic journal that publishes scholarly research and reflective discussions about the theory and practice of student affairs in Africa.

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The *JSAA* aims to contribute to the professionalisation of student affairs in African higher education by publishing high-quality scholarly articles, research and reflective discussions by academics, professionals, researchers and students about student affairs and services in African higher education.

The *JSAA* strives to be the foremost academic journal dealing with the theory and practice of the student affairs domain in universities on the African continent, and an indispensable resource for national policy-makers, the executive leadership of universities and colleges dealing with student affairs, deans of students and other senior student affairs professionals, as well as institutional researchers and academics and students focused on the field of higher education studies and student affairs.

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The scope of the *JSAA* is indicated by keywords such as: student affairs; student career development; student counselling; student development theory and research; student discipline; student engagement; student experience; student finances and financial aid; student housing; disability/disabled students; student leadership and governance; student life cycle; student living and learning; student organisations; student orientation; student policy; student politics and activism; student sport; student support; academic development; graduate attributes; and teaching and learning support. This list of keywords is not exhaustive.

Submissions are encouraged from scholars and reflective practitioners from across the globe. Submissions must be original and relevant to the mission, scope and focus of the journal. Especially encouraged are submissions from African scholars and professionals working in higher education on the African continent. Submissions dealing with student affairs issues from other contexts (e.g. the African diaspora; other emerging economies; developed countries) that are transferable to the African context are also considered for publication.

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EDITORIAL

Equity and social justice in higher education

Teboho Moja*, Thierry M. Luescher** and Birgit Schreiber***

In *Networks of Outrage and Hope* (2015), Manuel Castells discusses the new social movements of popular unrest, starting with the Arab Spring and Occupy movements that began with, and were accelerated by, “Internet social networks [...] beyond the control of governments and corporations” and protested the economic and political corruption and social injustices prevalent in our world (Castells, 2015, p. 2). According to Castells, the new movements indicate a shift in power to those who can wield social media and thereby influence the “construction of meaning” (p. 5). The cyberspace of social media – representing a “space of autonomy” (p. 250) – is now being claimed by students for the movement for change in higher education in Africa, the USA and the world as a whole; student organising is taking on a new kind of form, which Luescher and Klemenčič (forthcoming 2016) call the “internet-age student movement”. The new cyber-savvy student – horizontally engaged, organically organised above partisan lines but deeply connected to the real issues of social injustice – is changing the worldscape of higher education. The hashtag movements in South Africa of 2015, of which the best known are #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall, are certainly the most prominent manifestations of the “internet-age student movement” phenomenon in Africa so far.

Students at the University of Cape Town spearheaded the #RhodesMustFall movement, calling for an institutional culture that reflects their Africanness to decolonise higher education in South Africa – including its curriculum – and for advances in equity and inclusivity. For many acute observers of higher education in Africa, these calls are reminiscent of those made in the early 1970s by post-independence governments and the professors and leadership of the first African universities that were based on the rationale that Africa needed African universities that support the developmental state (Yesufu, 1973). The millennial student is making a different call – to hold government and institutions

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accountable to principles of equity and social justice alongside their claims of supporting a developmental state. For South Africa's institutions, particularly its historically advantaged ones, the call is to transform their institutional cultures, which are frequently characterised as 'privileged'. Moreover, after having reclaimed the institution, and with the statue of Cecil John Rhodes having fallen, the new student wants access to affordable education – hence the #FeesMustFall movement's demands to government to deliver on the right to affordable education have become synonymous with higher education struggles in the developing world and reflect a global pattern of post-2009 student struggles against austerity and the rising costs of higher education to students. Fees have not yet fallen; but in South Africa, at least, fee increases have been halted for now and may soon be falling for good.

The issues in other African countries are not that different. Student protests over tuition fees, related matters of student funding and conditions of learning are commonplace. For example, in Kenya, University of Nairobi students demanded the immediate release of funds by the Higher Education Loans Board earlier in 2015; at Makerere University in Uganda, protests erupted yet again at the start of the new academic year in October, against university management's tuition fee policy; and at the University of Lagos in Nigeria, the death of a student by a falling power cable has sparked protests against the dangerous neglect of campus infrastructure and the lack of responsiveness and sympathy by university officials. In addition, students continue to play a traditional role as "extra-parliamentary opposition" in countries like the DRC and Egypt, putting their lives on the line for a better future for all. Sadly, the response by governments continues to be one of elevating the level of violence and tensions between students, university administrators and governments.

In the US, where small-scale protests have not really amounted to much in the decades since the major anti-Vietnam protests, students are also bringing about change in the higher education landscape. The #BlackOnCampus movement is an expression of the feeling of being unwelcome and under-represented on campuses that maintain hegemonic assumptions about privilege. Students are protesting over race relations issues and the lack of support for the under-represented black minority and potentially "invisible" groups. The recent University of Missouri protest by a student on a hunger strike is a case in point: the football team's threat not to play and to cause a big loss in university revenue led to the resignation of both the system president and the campus chancellor within days of the protests starting. In no time, other campuses joined to show solidarity with the protesting students. Students at Ithaca College renewed their campaign to push out their president for his failure adequately to address racial incidents on campus. At Vanderbilt University, students are calling for the dismissal of a professor whose column last January regarding the incidents in Paris are said to be anti-Islamic. Support for Missouri students has also been reported from Smith College, where students and professors joined the protest. Students at the University of Iowa wore black clothes and rallied at the Old Capitol.

Student activism has been re-ignited in a new and powerful way and university leadership is responding quickly to meet or address the demands being made. Similar to #RhodesMustFall, Princeton University students have demanded that Woodrow Wilson must fall, and a sit-in in the president's office has led to a commitment to remove Woodrow

Wilson's name from campus due to his racist tendencies and advocacy for segregation. Townson University and Occidental College students also made demands that are changing their institutions (Jaschik, 2015a; 2015b).

The knee-jerk reaction of university leadership should be of concern to student affairs professionals more than ever, due to the need to focus on their role in advancing not only awareness of issues of social justice but also of enabling students to become constructive agents of change and to challenge visible and invisible structures that maintain inequities, to "imagine a different future" and "use knowledge for social transformation" (Osei-Kofi, 2011, p. 393). For us in the student affairs profession, there is the realisation of the power of the student voice when there is lack of proactive and constructive use of established mechanisms in addressing students' concerns. Student affairs professionals should take heed of the knowledge available on student activism and advise university leadership accordingly. Thus, it is well known that the violent repression of student protests is a key factor in increasing the size and militancy of student movements and that, in the long run, repressive strategies are highly counterproductive: the ways in which student activists articulate their concerns tends to be conditioned by the response they expect (Altbach, 1991; Luescher-Mamashela, 2015). Engaging with the theoretical foundations of student affairs is one of the hallmarks of a professionalised practice.

It is important for diverse students to feel welcome, receive support and be included in the campuses on which they study, not only for the sake of middle-class notions of "comfort" and "feeling at home", but also for delivering on equitable access and acknowledging and supporting diversity and inclusivity as values in themselves. In the article on international students' experiences at an East African university, Janice Rasmussen shares lessons about what it is like to be a student in a foreign country; the article highlights the need to provide the necessary support and a sense of welcome. The article by Ana Naidoo and Juan-Claude Lemmens of the University of Pretoria focuses on intervention strategies for supporting first-year students. This contribution introduces our focus on the first-year student experience that we will pursue in depth in the first 2016 issue of the Journal. Support for students is indeed critical for ensuring epistemological access, and the article on the attitude of engineering students, lecturers and academic development practitioners towards academic development classes by Thembeke Shange from the Tshwane University of Technology speaks equally to those issues. Epistemological access is also a key topic in the book review included in this issue (see below).

The increasing diversity of the student bodies at universities, along with the rise of identity politics in general, has long been acknowledged as a challenge for student affairs; in South Africa, with its history of apartheid institutionalised racism and colonial-era social conventions of racial discrimination and exploitation, addressing the legacy of apartheid in general and academic segregation in particular is a key aspect of a transformation agenda based on the principles of social justice and equity. While the common-sense notion of transformation in South Africa – even in higher education – has become closely associated with the 'numbers game' of demographics, the article by Shose Kessi and Josephine Cornell shows a much richer, deeper dimension that remains largely unaddressed. 'Coming to

UCT: Black students, transformation and discourses of race’ uses a powerful methodology, Photovoice, to analyse the racialised discourses embedded in the institutional culture of the University of Cape Town, a historically white university. Kessi and Cornell’s article expands on earlier findings by Zimitri Erasmus and Jacques de Wet (2003) about the burden of black students at historically white universities to do all the ‘race work’ – for example, naming ‘race’ and problematising the racially biased nature of social relations, the university environment and the curriculum to which white staff and students are blind. The article also relates to points made by John Higgins (2007) that a core problem of institutional culture is the pedagogical culture and culture of transmission in South African universities, which must address “the reality of the uneven distribution of cultural capital” (p. 116). In our view, however, the latter point needs revision and further investigation. We would argue that it is less an “uneven distribution of cultural capital” and much more a deeply biased validation of only one racialised kind of cultural capital: what is typically referred to as ‘whiteness’. Kessi and Cornell’s article illustrates this in the quotes they provide of students’ reflections on a set of photographs taken at UCT. In so many ways, the article captures the sense of disappointment and injustice experienced by black students that has given rise to the #RhodesMustFall movement.

In the US, which has a similar history to that of South Africa, the protests noted above, such as #BlackOnCampus, are awakening calls to engage with race issues that are often ignored in the hope that they will go away. Indeed, identity politics will be with us in student affairs for as long as race, gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation and so forth are used as grounds for ‘othering’ and discriminating unfairly, including and advantaging some and excluding and disadvantaging others. The field of ‘transforming’ is as wide and diverse as the student affairs profession and also reaches deep into the core of the academic realm. While professionalisation is not a panacea, an amateurish approach to student affairs is fast approaching its best-before date.

Thus, we submit that at the heart of the current upheavals in higher education are the principles of social justice and equity – in particular, equity in education. As we know, equity and equality are two concepts that are often used interchangeably even though we know they are not. Equity is about the recognition that a differentiated response is required to enable parity of living. Within critical social theory, Nancy Fraser (2009) and Joan Tronto (2013) discuss ethics of care and participatory parity as a key aspect of equitable living and that a range of varied responses to conditions of living as well as transformative approaches are required to address the structures that maintain inequities. Bozalek and Carolissen (2014, p. 16) suggest that we need to “create opportunities for people to participate on an equal footing”, and that this is an expression of recognition of diversity of living. It is a lived form of social justice.

In African student affairs, the current developments leave us with a number of questions: What is the next #movement? Will the South African phenomenon of #movements, which started at one institution, spread to others and eventually galvanised in a nationwide #FeesMustFall movement, mobilise continentally across the African cyberspace? Equity and social justice in higher education are continental – indeed global – concerns. How will

student affairs rise to the challenge? We are sure to continue keeping an eye on the current developments and publish the contributions that will advance a professional reflexivity about, theoretical engagement with, and empirical understanding of this.

We close off this issue of the *JSAA* with two invitations to our readers to engage with the diverse literature spanning the field of student affairs. The first is the review of Ursula Wingate's (2015) book, *Academic Literacy and Student Diversity: The Case of Inclusive Practice*, reviewed brilliantly by Thengani Ngwenya. According to Ngwenya, Wingate's book "is not just another textbook on academic literacy but an incisive critique of the often taken-for-granted conceptions of academic literacy and its role in curriculum design and pedagogy" (p. 61). He argues that the book shows that epistemological access is deeply intertwined with academic literacy; that academic literacy is far more than a set of reading and writing skills to be delivered to 'disadvantaged students' to be able to cope with higher education; and that Wingate succeeds in proposing a more egalitarian and transformative approach to academic literacy based on the language socialisation and socio-cultural theory. If this sounds like jargon, Ngwenya assures readers that the book is "eminently readable" and "will appeal to both experts and novices working in the field of academic literacies in higher education" (p. 61). Our second invitation to read is a set of three reading lists for practitioners and scholars of student affairs in Africa, which were compiled by Tom Ellet, Birgit Schreiber and Travis York respectively.

This is the third anniversary issue of the *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa*. We started this journey in 2013 and are deeply grateful to all contributors, editors and peer reviewers for continuing to share their knowledge and invest their time and expertise in our common quest to contribute to the professionalisation of student affairs in Africa. We are also indebted to our colleagues at the University of the Western Cape Libraries and e-Publications and at our publisher African Minds, who have taken responsibility for the professional and technical aspects of the publishing of *JSAA* since its launch.

In its first three years, the *JSAA* has grown immensely. On the one hand, we now have a growing stock of research articles of increasingly high quality; on the other hand, we have found ourselves having to reject a number of articles or redirect articles that did not match the scope of the *JSAA*. Of most concern, we detected this year two cases of serious plagiarism in submitted manuscripts, which confirmed our practice of putting submissions through plagiarism detection software. The growth of the *JSAA* is also evident in statistics provided by Google Analytics: the *JSAA* has a readership that hails from all continents. Indeed, among the top 50 countries from which the journal was accessed, there are several from the African continent from which the open-access, online version of the *JSAA* is accessed: Botswana, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. It further includes users from all other BRICS countries (of which China tops the list), as well as from other countries across the globe such as the United States (which overall tops the list), Australia, Canada, Germany, Japan and the United Kingdom. We had over 4 500 new users of the website in 2015 alone (not counting the surge in users when this issue goes live), of which over 240 have registered on the website to receive regular notices.

As members of the Editorial Executive of *JSAA* we remain fully committed to the *JSAA*'s mission "to be the foremost academic journal dealing with the theory and practice of the student affairs domain in universities on the African continent". Thus, in the course of 2014, *JSAA* was evaluated and included in the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), and this year we have started the process of being evaluated and indexed in African Journals Online (AJOL), the world's largest online collection of African-published, peer-reviewed scholarly journals (see www.ajol.info). Our medium- and long-term goals are to gain endorsements and accreditation by institutional, professional, national and continental bodies such as the South African Department of Higher Education and Training, and to have *JSAA* included in all relevant international indices. As we continue to monitor the *Journal's* impact, we find that published articles are also increasingly surfacing in citations. There is a well-known lag in citation impact of works published in the Humanities and Social Sciences; yet, given our focus on quality, relevance and accessibility, we are confident that our contributors will find themselves affirmed in the choice of the *Journal* as a manner of inserting themselves into a global scholarly discourse on student affairs in Africa and beyond.

We hope you will enjoy this issue, and dare to enter the debates and contribute an article.

For the Editorial Executive,

Prof. Teboho Moja, Dr Thierry M. Luescher and Dr Birgit Schreiber

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Coming to UCT: Black students, transformation and discourses of race

Shose Kessi* and Josephine Cornell**

Abstract

Since the dismantling of apartheid in South Africa, increasing numbers of black students have been enrolling at historically whites-only universities. This situation has been paralleled by a resurgence of racialising discourses that represent black students as lacking in competencies, lowering academic standards and undeserving of their places at university. This paper investigates the impact of these discourses on black students at the University of Cape Town (UCT). Over six months, 24 students from seven departments and four faculties participated in a Photovoice project during which they produced photographs and stories representing their experiences at UCT. The findings demonstrate that, through practices of material and symbolic exclusion, racialising discourses of transformation had a detrimental impact on students, affecting their self-esteem, sense of belonging, and academic performance. The discussion reflects on the identity dynamics and the coping strategies that black students adopt to fit into the whiteness of the university.

Keywords

Transformation, black students, South Africa, higher education; race, Photovoice.

Introduction

The transition from apartheid to democracy paved the way for significant changes in South Africa's institutions of higher education. Arguably, the most notable change is the shifting demographics of historically 'whites-only' universities. In 1989, on the eve of the dismantling of apartheid, black students¹ constituted 24.7% of the student population at the University of Cape Town (UCT) (Luescher, 2009), a leading South African public institution. It took another 16 years for the number of black students to exceed white students when, in 2007, black students accounted for 51% of UCT's student body (DHET,

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2007). Figures for 2011 indicate a total of 25 279 students, of which 7 262 were African, 3 748 were Coloured, 1 859 were Indian and 9 306 were white (DHET, 2011) – indicating that black students still constituted just over 50% of the student body. Despite these promising figures, the politics of transformation at UCT have been the subject of intense debate (Erasmus, 2010; Kessi, 2013a; Soudien, 2010), with particular emphasis on the admissions policy. The discourses emerging from this debate tend to present black students as ‘the problem’. Furthermore, amidst what we will argue are contradictory practices of transformation, little is known about what black students at UCT think, and how they feel and navigate these dynamics on a day-to-day basis. This paper is thus concerned with the experiences of black students at UCT who tell a very complex story of the dynamics of racial transformation.

Discourses of race and transformation at UCT

Racial differences and race discrimination are recognised as central concerns of the transformation process.² However, the growing number of black students at UCT, resulting from the admissions policy, has been met with a more direct discourse of resistance to transformation. Discourses of low standards and reverse racism have inundated the media and present black students as the ‘problem’ rather than as rightful co-beneficiaries of transformation (Kessi, 2013a).

Discourses of transformation thus produce knowledge about black students as underserving of an education either because they are lacking in capabilities (they are accused of not entering on merit) or lacking in hard work (they are accused of being unfairly advantaged). Studies on the impact of racialisation on educational achievement in South Africa (De Beer, Smith & Jansen, 2009; Higham 2012; Vincent, 2008) and elsewhere (Johnson-Ahorlu, 2012; Codjoe, 2001; Davis *et al.*, 2004; Harper, 2009, 2012, 2013; Howarth, 2004; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2001; Gillborn *et al.*, 2012; Phoenix, 2009; Smith, Allen & Danley, 2007) have shown that such discourses can affect the self-esteem and sense of belonging of black students who internalise the negative stereotypes assigned to them, often leading to a drop in their academic performance.

The aim of this paper is to discuss the experiences of black students at UCT, to voice their views on transformation, and to build a framework for resisting and altering the negative discourses associated with the transformation discourse. It further contributes to the research on transformation and decolonisation in higher education in South Africa from the perspectives of black students.

Photovoice methodology

The data for this project was collected through a participatory action research initiative using Photovoice methods. Photovoice involves the collection of photographs accompanied by written stories or captions (referred to as ‘photo-stories’) produced by the research participants to describe their experiences at UCT and their views on transformation. These photo-stories were then displayed at a photography exhibition held at UCT and open to the public. Drawing on feminist theory, Freirian conscientisation and

documentary photography (Strack, Magill & McDonagh, 2004; Wang & Burris, 1997), Photovoice is a method that offers participants the opportunity to voice their concerns, represent themselves, gain a deeper awareness of the issues affecting them, and reach a broad audience. Hence, participating in a Photovoice project can be an empowering experience in which participants develop a consciousness of their situation and become active change agents in their own lives (Carlson, Engebretson, & Chamberlain, 2006; Strack, Magill & McDonagh, 2004; Wang & Burris, 1997; Kessi, 2015). Photovoice research has been effective in working with young people in South Africa to address issues of identity, stigmatisation and social change (Moletsane *et al.*, 2007; Kessi, 2011, 2013b; Langa, 2010) and is particularly appropriate for use with university students who may feel unable to reach those in the institution who make influential decisions (Goodhart *et al.*, 2006), and to raise consciousness about the impact of racialisation (Kessi, 2011, 2013b).

The participants in this study were 24 full-time undergraduate and postgraduate black students from UCT, 5 male and 19 female, drawn from seven departments in four different faculties.³ The participants were recruited through the Department of Psychology's Student Research Participation Programme (SRPP),⁴ or by word of mouth.

The design of the project included a series of activities including focus group sessions on transformation; written personal reflections (of 500 words); a photography training exercise; photo-story production; and a photography exhibition. The exhibition opening was held at UCT on 10 October 2013 and was attended by students, participants, faculty and members of the public.⁵

The project thus involved participants in an organised and staged process designed to encourage a rigorous reflection on the complex issues surrounding transformation at UCT and to give black students an opportunity to be heard and recognised as active and full members of the UCT community.

Findings

The findings are organised below into three themes and present the data arising from the focus group discussions, the personal reflections and the photo-stories collected during the project. The themes present how the discourses of low standards and reverse racism occur in participants' stories of their experiences at UCT. The first theme, *Out of focus: Racial identity and belonging*, highlights their general reflections on their identity and position within the institution; the second theme, *Daily experiences of segregation, othering and inequality*, exposes the ways in which their experiences of being black at UCT are reinforced in many aspects of their everyday lives on campus; and the third theme, *The whiteness of UCT: Cultural and symbolic exclusion*, presents participants' deeper reflections on the historical, institutional and relational barriers that contribute to the racial dynamics that they experience at UCT.

Theme 1: Out of focus: Racial identity and belonging

This theme describes the impact of stigmatising discourses of blackness on students' experiences at UCT. Many of the participants described how arriving at UCT was marked by 'feeling black' for the first time.

In this first photo-story, Claudia describes her impression of UCT as more concerned with its reputation than with embracing the racial transformation of the institution. In the photograph, a black student is standing 'out of focus' in front of a UCT building that is 'in focus'.

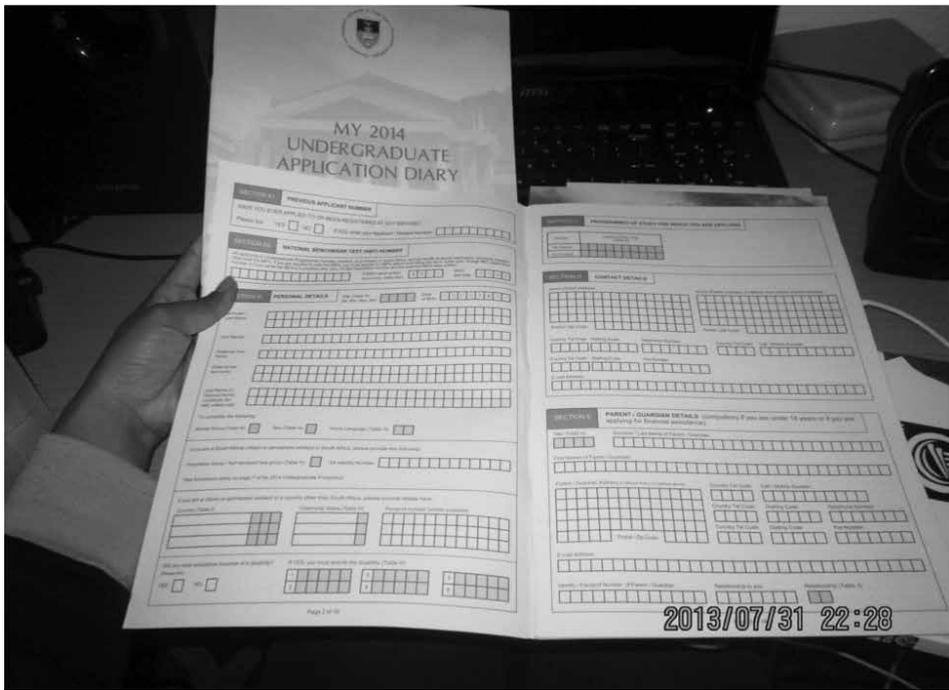


Out of focus

As part of the theme on transformation at UCT, I took this photo as it captured this idea. The fact that the subject, the student, is out of focus while the building is in focus, has important suggestions being made concerning transformation at UCT. As a newcomer at UCT it feels as though it is the image of UCT (top achieving institution on the continent) which is privileged over the students themselves [...].

Being 'out of focus' is the metaphor for feeling insignificant as opposed to the significance of UCT. This reveals a disconnection from the institution – the black student in the photograph does not contribute to the reputation of UCT but rather highlights the perspective that increasing numbers of black students leads to a drop in status for the institution.

These ideas of lowering standards also came up significantly in the data through students' experiences of self-doubt. Many expressed that 'feeling black' led them to internalise the negative imagery of incompetency attributed to them and, therefore, to question their own abilities. In the following photo-story, Vicky reflects on the application process and the changing significance that indicating one's race on the application form had for her:



Coming to UCT was the first time I felt black

Indicating my race on my application form was one of the information that I gave not thinking that it mattered that much. I thought it was just for statistical purposes, but it came to be something that would impact my self-esteem greatly in my life at UCT. I have started to wonder if I got to where I am because of my academic potential or whether it was because I am black and there needed to be some black people in the class for UCT to be achieving their goal of transformation [...].

This first encounter with ‘race’ at UCT left her uneasy and made her question her academic abilities. In the title of her photo-story, the phrase ‘feeling black’ is used as a negative experience of racialisation as opposed to being black. ‘Feeling black’ was a way of describing how black students are perceived by others through stigmatising images of blackness. Davis *et al.* (2004), who interviewed black students about their experiences at a predominantly white American university, noted one student saying that “you will come here and you will learn that you are black” (p. 432). For Vicky, indicating her race on her application form was at first a rather benign act that subsequently gained a new significance after her experience of UCT. As she reflected on that moment and connected it to her current experiences, she concluded that the students who are meant to be central to transformation were somehow removed – they were simply numbers on a form.

In her personal reflection, Lindi also expresses the impact that these discourses have on her ability to succeed: “Had I entered because of merit? Or had I entered because of my skin colour? [...] I believe that these doubts have been the major contributor to my recent

low academic achievements [...]”. Being in an environment that marginalises and alienates black students made her question her abilities and impacted her academic performance.

Students also explained their experiences of ‘feeling black’ in relation to their academic competencies vis-à-vis white students and how, consequently, they were made to feel that they were taking the place of white students. In the following extract from a focus group, Sean says:

I feel it in my [X] class all the time. I’m just there, I’m just occupying a space that was actually meant for another white person that did better than me [...] I do feel, all the time! [...] I do feel I’m occupying a space that wasn’t actually meant for me.

Here we see the combined impact of discourses of low standards and reverse racism. Sean describes how ideas of incompetency are associated with the guilt of taking the place of white students. Hence, as black students internalise what it means to be black at UCT, they begin to construct their black identities in relation to white identities and take on the responsibility of reverse racism. Left unaddressed, this creates the conditions for isolation as depicted in the following photo-story:



Isolation (Zethu)

Isolation is the theme captured in this image as it is also an important part of transformation experienced at UCT. The fact that this male student is alone and almost blurred shows the possible disillusionment in which this isolation sometimes results.

In this photograph, there are two students – one white student sitting on the stairs and a black student who is not only blurred but also partly hidden behind the tree. However, the photographer only speaks of the black student in her story and leaves the racial dynamic as a tacit interpretation. The white student is more visible in the photograph and is reading

a book, which could symbolise his connection to being a student at UCT, whereas the black student is hardly visible and seemingly passing by, as if there by mistake. This photo-story is a powerful example of how a photograph can convey beyond words the affective experience of being black at UCT. Being in an environment where racial identity is salient leads to a sense of isolation, a lack of belonging and low self-esteem amongst black students who are left to grapple, often for the first time, with the reality of what it means to be black in South Africa today. The reflections in the above stories are verified by De Beer *et al.* (2009), who found that the black students who perceived themselves as 'second-class students' (regardless of their academic ability) had lower academic performance than those who did not. These racialising experiences therefore have a real impact on both identity and performance and have been documented by a number of researchers (Codjoe, 2001; Cokley *et al.*, 2012; Johnson-Ahorlu, 2012; Gillborn *et al.*, 2012; Griffin *et al.*, 2010; Harper, 2013; Howarth, 2004; Phoenix, 2009). These experiences may not be particular to UCT, but for many of the participants, the awareness of being black in a racialised society was heightened by the focus on racial identities in university practices, in particular the hostility surrounding the affirmative action discourse. Universities are often referred to as elitist institutions that cater for a privileged few (Gibson, 2015). Hence, experiences of belonging and exclusion become even more palpable in such environments (see Tabensky & Matthews, 2015). As the next two themes demonstrate, the elitism of UCT is very much racialised through day-to-day practices and upheld by cultural symbols of whiteness.

Theme 2: Daily experiences of segregation, othering and inequality

This second theme highlights the racialising encounters that black students face on a regular basis. These take place during lectures and tutorials, in residence halls, and in other public spaces across the university. The stories below are examples of the racial segregation that exists on campus, of encounters with white students and of the material inequalities between white and black students.

In the following extract from his personal reflection, Kopano describes the commonplace practice of sitting in separate race groups:

First day of lectures and the class is split almost perfectly by race. All the white students sat in one section we coined "Camps Bay". All the Indians sat in another. Most of the coloured and Muslim students would sit next to the Indian section or at the back of the class or "Mitchell's Plain". The upper middle class black students congregated in a small area and finally the rest of the black students populated the remainder of the class "Khayelitsha". I was in shock ...⁶

The practice of labeling physical areas by race is an indication of the lingering impact of apartheid segregation. The fact that this practice occurs at UCT makes it apparent that the current generation is still affected by racial beliefs, contrary to what the discourses of reverse racism suggest. Segregation is not a benign act of separation in South Africa but a historical practice of oppression that signified a division between superior and inferior 'race' groups (Zuma, 2010) and has been documented in previous studies with UCT students (Alexander & Tredoux, 2010; Schrieff *et al.*, 2010, 2005).⁷

Participants also spoke about their experiences of othering during group work or joint assignments with white students. They complained about how their contributions were often undermined or that white students demanded to check over their work before submission. One participant, Mashama, described a situation where she got higher marks on an assignment than her fellow white student, who said: "... oh man I just don't know what happened. Something's wrong ...". Participants described these as subtle experiences of racism that indicated a sense of entitlement amongst white students. Indeed, the reluctance of white students to work with black students in group-work projects has been widely documented (Fries-Britt & Turner, 2001; Harper, 2012, 2013; Higham, 2012; Solórzano, Ceja & Yosso, 2000; Vincent, 2008).

Another important issue that participants raised is the material inequality that they encounter. These experiences represent a stark contrast to the discourse of reverse racism. Having to face the privilege of white students on a daily basis heightens students' experiences of 'feeling black' and its associated stereotypes. The following focus group exchange explains:

Buhle: Yesterday, am walking back home after class and this boy drives off in a Porsche Boxter...I was like, oh my gosh, this boy, this kid, this child, is driving a car that could like pay for my entire fees, like everything, 1st year, 2nd year, 3rd year, Honours, Masters. This guy is driving a car and he's revving his engine and I could just not stop laughing at how (pause) I felt so poor...

Bongi: And it's crazy because then, after that moment you had, you're supposed to just carry on with life now like you had that moment, take it all in and like you deal with it, take it in, suck it up and then you go to class and sit right next to this person every single day.

These differences in material wealth further contribute to the affective experience of exclusion and incompetency. 'Feeling poor' is another way of depicting the range of experiences of 'feeling black' at UCT and one that arises out of the confrontation with excessive wealth. These experiences are a constant reminder for black students that they are not on a level playing field with their white counterparts. Hence, experiences of segregation, othering and material inequality are a few of the ways in which racial disparities are reinforced in black students' day-to-day lives at UCT.

Theme 3: The whiteness of UCT: Cultural and symbolic exclusion

The data up to this point has touched upon participants' position at UCT in relation to institutional practices and in relation to white students. Their testimonies of these experiences point to the whiteness of the university, a set of cultural practices that are historically, socially and culturally produced (Frankenberg, 1993) and that privilege the experiences of white students over black students. The following set of stories highlights how participants reflected more broadly on the whiteness of the university to explain the devaluation of their own identities and experiences.

Returning to the sense of 'feeling black' expressed in the first theme, the following story reflects on how coming to UCT is many black students' first significant exposure to whiteness.

Kagiso: Maybe I always knew I was black. And perhaps I always knew there were white people. I never really cared about it though. It never really impacted me in any way. The thing is, I grew up in a township. We never did see any whites, let alone interact with them, unless we went to town [...]. Fast forward a few years and I find myself in Cape Town, a student at UCT as a fresher [...] and for the first time ever in my life I was confronted with the cultural capital that comes with being white, or familiar with the white world. Thus, for the first time ever in my life, I felt black, I knew I was black [...] and suddenly for the first time ever in my life too, I felt inferior [...].

Kagiso describes how coming to UCT ignited his awareness of the broader power relations between blacks and whites in society. Although he hints at a vague awareness of it growing up in the township, his first significant encounter with whiteness was at UCT. He refers to the “cultural capital that comes with being white” as a symbolic location of privilege, and highlights the significance of the sense of familiarity with the white world that made him, as a black student, feel inferior. This familiarity relates to the affinity that white students automatically have with the cultural symbols and artefacts imbued in the discourses and practices of UCT.

The following photo-story about the statue of British mining magnate and colonialist Cecil John Rhodes (who ‘donated’ the piece of land on which UCT is built) that previously stood high in the centre of upper campus⁸ captures many of these ideas.



Power and internalised inferiority (Sean)

This picture shows the main statue of Cecil John Rhodes on upper campus. As I took the picture standing in front of the statue, I thought about the internalised inferiority that is imbued in my psyche as a black student at UCT. These are unconscious processes that dictate my relationships with others, my decisions, the way I speak and how I have come to perceive myself and people who are of my race. Standing in front of the statue of Cecil John Rhodes, I still felt the power of the colonisers on my colonised forefathers and myself in contemporary South Africa. In taking the picture, I was still positioned in a lower position of both the statue and my white fellow students standing next to the statue. This elevated their position in relation to me and the Jammie stairs was a metaphor for the upward mobility of black people and how that meant that whiteness or the colonisers' position needs to be aspired to. The fact that I adjust my accent and continuously refine my English is a reflection of this and the black person's positionality in this institution.

A most interesting aspect of this story is how the condition of success for black students is the assimilation into whiteness. Sean suggests that if black students want to be successful at UCT, they must take on the values and culture of the white world and aspire to it, in this case through changing their language and accents to fit in.

Participants also raised related issues such as the whiteness of the curriculum and the lack of black representation in academia. As Mareka reflects:

Our curriculum is still from a Western perspective. You look at most of the lecturers we have, I'm a third-year student at UCT and I've not been taught by somebody who's black or someone who's of another colour.

The content of the curriculum is important as students' ability to relate to the material is a significant factor in facilitating their learning experience and promoting their knowledge and capabilities (Codjoe, 2001; Nhlapo, 2011; Hickling-Hudson & Ahlquist, 2003). Furthermore, the lack of black academic staff can reinforce black students' sense of exclusion. It symbolises a lack of opportunities for them to gain access to careers in academia but also denies them the advantages of having professors of their own race. Some of those advantages are that black lecturers can help to validate students' academic ability, belongingness and racialised experiences, and serve as role models (Davis *et al.*, 2004; Harper, 2013).

The cultural capital associated with whiteness is both despised and envied by participants who, on the one hand, take on some of the behavioural expectations that ease their assimilation into the culture of the institution and, on the other hand, resist because of the impact on their identities and sense of self-esteem. These experiences largely revolve around discourses of incompetency and reverse racism that they face on a daily basis and that highlight a master narrative of black underachievement (Harper, 2009). The discussion that follows will focus on the identity impacts caused by these experiences and the need to re-centre the transformation discourse on more positive outcomes.

Discussion: Identity impacts, coping and resistance

Students' experiences in this study highlighted some of the many challenges of 'feeling black' at UCT and the centrality of race in the politics of transformation. Imbued in participants' experiences are feelings of inadequacy, not belonging, self-doubt and confusion. In response to these dynamics, students adopted strategies to cope with the dominant culture of the university. Many students silence themselves and are thus not able to participate fully in university life. Others distance themselves from the transformation discourse as one that applies only to *other* black students (Kessi, 2013a), whilst many students assimilate into the dominant culture by taking on certain cultural practices, such as modifying their language and changing their accents, making friends with and engaging in the activities of white students.

Kopano explains how he transitioned from feelings of inadequacy and incompetence that led him to silence himself in the classroom, to a sense of inclusion by making friends with white students and joining the predominantly white rugby team:

And if white people see me asking a question, "who's he who thinks he's..." you know? And also in my mind I'm thinking they got higher marks than me, so obviously my question's going to be stupid. And you always second guessing yourself... because I couldn't ask a question in the class I doubted my entire ability and it affected my ability to get good marks. The way I got over it, very embarrassing, I decided to start playing rugby with the white guys... I decided to start playing to become friends with them so that I know that I can interact on the same level to get in my mind that we can think the same so that in class when I talk they know that we've the same brain... and lo and behold it improved my marks by about 8 per cent.

For Kopano, being in close contact with white students reduced his feelings of incompetence and exclusion and had a positive impact on his academic performance. Although this was an effective strategy for Kopano and one that disarmed his white counterparts, being accepted by white students remained the underlying condition. In doing so, he took on the responsibility of the stereotype and for transformation, letting white students off the hook. Also, his embarrassment indicates that efforts to fit into the culture of UCT sometimes come with other affective consequences. Students who assimilate with whiteness are faced with the additional burden of how this might be perceived by other black students. One participant, Mashama, explained how relating to white students when she first arrived at UCT earned her the label of 'coconut' – a term given to black people who take on white identities.

Participants described how interactions between themselves as black students became more complex in the context of UCT where the need to belong often dictated who they would relate to and how.⁹ These complicated identity dynamics mean that black students must find strategies for coping in addition to their academic requirements (Smith, Allen & Danley, 2007). These strategies also shift over time. The contrast between Lihle, a first-year student, and Sean, a postgraduate student, speaking of racism at UCT is evidence of the need for effective coping and resistance strategies:

Lihle: Back home, people talk about UCT like, “Oh my gosh! This diverse place, I mean amazing place. There’s no racism there whatsoever! People there are equal [...]”. And that’s the mentality I had coming here. I didn’t really want to, I don’t know maybe I didn’t want to find out about this, but I just don’t know. I ignored whatever came my way, whatever racism thing that came my way.

Sean: I mean I used to feel so confident. These things I weren’t aware of, and then you become aware of them and you become your insecurity. I can speak about it because I’m able to deal with those insecurities, that’s why I’m so open about it.

Black students have to put in the extra effort to fit in, to prove themselves, and to defend their right to be at UCT. Many black students at UCT are excluded by transformation discourses and simultaneously take on the burden of transformation. Transformation then is not simply about diversity statistics in admissions but is also, and just as importantly, about addressing the culture and practices that perpetuate their marginalisation from UCT. The rationality and reductionism of the transformation discourse, as one that supports black students to ‘fit into’ the university but simultaneously portrays them as incompetent, conceals the exclusionary practices that take place.

Conclusion

Despite the increasing numbers of black students at UCT, their sense of belonging to the university remains limited and their position within the discourses of academic achievement remains precarious. Black students are seen as passive recipients of transformation policies rather than active contributors to the prestige of UCT.

Directing our attention to the contributions that black students make to knowledge production in higher education would represent a paradigm shift in understanding transformation at UCT and elsewhere. Black students have been and continue to be at the forefront of socio-political changes in South Africa. As such, their involvement in historically white universities such as UCT should continue to guide current and future transformation efforts.

Endnotes

1. ‘Black students’ in this paper refers to African, Coloured and Indian/Chinese students as per the former racial categories instituted under apartheid. We use the term ‘black’ as a political identity that acknowledges that all these racial groups were affected by apartheid policies and as a way of promoting a common experience of racialism and a solidarity between black students that goes beyond apartheid classifications.
2. <http://www.uct.ac.za/about/transformation/>
3. One student only participated in phase 3 and subsequently dropped out. Two students participated in most phases but did not submit final photo-stories. The final data set includes the personal reflections and photo-stories from 21 participants.
4. SRPP is an online system to promote and facilitate student involvement as participants in the research activities of the Psychology Department.
5. The exhibition is mentioned here as an important part of the Photovoice project. However, due

to space limitations, this particular paper focuses on the data collected in the project and does not reflect further on the impact of the exhibition.

6. Camps Bay is an affluent white suburb, Mitchell's Plain is a coloured township and Khayelitsha is an African township. During apartheid, black South Africans were assigned to live in under-resourced settlements – 'townships' – and separated by apartheid racial categories.
7. The student self-segregation that Kopano describes is not only by race but also by class by referring to the "upper middle class black students" and the "rest of the black students". Differences amongst black students in terms of class, gender, ability and sexual orientation have come up more prominently in subsequent phases of the project and have been discussed elsewhere: Cornell, J. (2015). Transforming higher education: UCT students' visions for the future. *Mail and Guardian*. Retrieved 26 September 2015 from: <http://thoughtleader.co.za/psyssa/2015/09/26/uct-students-visions-for-the-future-transforming-higher-education/>
8. The project took place before the emergence of the #RhodesMustFall movement and the subsequent removal of the statue from UCT campus.
9. The authors acknowledge that these participants may have experienced racism differently depending on other identity factors such as class, gender, language and nationality. However, these concerns did not come out significantly in this phase of the project. This could be the result of the Photovoice methodology, which aimed at building solidarity amongst students in relation to their racialised experiences. More recent groups of LGBT and gender non-conforming participants revealed more prominently the intersecting realities of being black at UCT.

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Faculty intervention as support for first-year students

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Abstract

The impetus for this study is grounded in a strategic decision by management to measure readiness for university education as part of an early alert and referral system. The motivation for this project is also rooted in literature that points out that the South African higher education system faces challenges with students entering the system underprepared. Data at entry to the university, specifically related to the individual student, is used initially to profile the students. This profile is used to identify students who could be at risk of failing. These students are referred to a Faculty Student Advisor (FSA) for support to address their needs.

Using a survey, 966 students were identified as being at risk at the beginning of the 2013 academic year. After additional criteria were applied to our prediction model, 200 students were selected for academic development workshops or individual sessions provided as intervention in the first semester. An outcomes assessment method was used to determine whether the number of sessions that at-risk students attend has had an influence on their academic achievement in the first semester. The assumption is that students who made more use of the intervention services (attended more sessions) were more likely to be successful than students who defaulted on the intervention or attended fewer sessions with the FSAs.

A cross-tabulation showed a significant association on the Pearson's Chi-square statistic (13.60, $df(4)$, $p = 0.009$), which implies that students who attend more sessions with the FSA are more likely to be academically successful in their first semester.

Keywords

Academic risk profile, academic success, first-year student, readiness for university.

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Background

In 2010, a decision was made to provide a number of interventions to support students to succeed at the university. The aim was to develop an early alert and referral system to identify students who required support. One of the strategic goals of the university is to increase the *access, throughput* and *diversity* of students. Bringing the three concepts together results in a focus on the success of our diverse group of students. Unpublished cohort research on student success done at our institution over a number of years indicates that first-year students are especially at risk of failure and eventual withdrawal, which adversely impacts on the institution's success indicators.

The challenges faced by our university are not experienced in isolation. Literature (Van Zyl, 2013; Scott, 2009) shows that the South African higher education system as a whole is facing similar challenges. Since the publication of the White Paper on the higher education landscape (DoE, 1997) an updated report by the Council on Higher Education (CHE, 2014) shows that the key indicators of the success of the sector, such as participation and retention rates, are lower than anticipated. The gross participation rate in South Africa has, for instance, plateaued at about 17% (CHE, 2014). Graduation rates disaggregated by race show that, although African students have made some improvements in gross participation rates (improvement from 9% to 14% between 1996 and 2012), there is still a large disparity between their participation rates and their proportional population size. Proportionately, white and Indian students have much higher participation rates in the higher education system (CHE, 2009; 2013; 2014). Given that the number of students who gain access to the university is, relatively speaking, very low, it is of concern that only 51% of the students who gain access to three-year degree programmes at universities tend to graduate after period of six years (CHE, 2009; 2014; Bunting *et al.*, 2010). In addition, these graduation rates are also highly skewed among racial groups (CHE, 2013).

In order to increase students' chances of success, higher education institutions need to make a concerted effort. Success, in this context, is defined as the ability of an institution to retain a student from admission through to graduation (Berger & Lyon, 2005). Research suggests that evaluating success only towards the end of a programme is insufficient and that students should be assessed and monitored from the very first day they enter the university (arguably even before then) and at strategic points along the cycle of the academic programme (Van der Merwe & Pina, 2008; Rassen *et al.*, 2013; Van Zyl, Gravett & De Bruin, 2012; Van Zyl, 2013). Practices are constantly being put in place in the hope that they will influence student success.

The thinking underlying this study is that improvement of students' overall experience inside and outside the classroom, especially at first-year level, is a prerequisite for ensuring that students succeed in subsequent years of study. Scott (2009) writes that the first year is regarded as the academic year in which students' success is highly influenced by their experiences. They have to adjust to the new institutional environment and manage increased levels of stress (Tinto, 1993; Bean & Eaton, 2000; Upcraft, Gardner & Barefoot, 2005; Jones *et al.*, 2008; Hawkins & Larabee, 2009).

Literature review

Internationally, institutions have approached some of the problems discussed above with an orchestrated approach by implementing an early alert, monitoring and referral system (Rassen *et al.*, 2013; Tinto, 2013). Early alert refers to the identification of a student who is potentially at risk of being unsuccessful at a university, either academically or personally (Beck & Davidson, 2001; Seidman, 2005). Such a system is heavily focused during the first academic year, as numerous research points to the first-year learning experience as critical to student success and persistence (Reason, Terenzini & Domingo, 2006; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

According to Wend (2006), the student learning experience can be defined as the variety of experiences within the sphere of the university that influence learning. The student learning experience is therefore all-embracing and includes matters such as curricula; methods of teaching, learning and assessment; the learning environment and resources; student progress and achievement; and academic and pastoral support. The first-year experience is not only influenced by the university environment in which students go to class, socialise in cafeterias, participate in sport or learn in small groups in the library, but is also highly influenced by students' motivations, ability, socio-economic status, preparedness, and other external factors (Tinto; 1993; Bean & Eaton, 2000; Braxton & Hirschy, 2005; Jones *et al.*, 2008; Hawkins & Larabee, 2009).

Particularly, for first-year academic achievement at the university, the level of academic readiness or preparedness is of critical importance. Literature suggests that a reason for the poor performance of the higher education sector is that students enter the system underprepared (Scott, Yeld & Hendry, 2007; Strydom as cited in Joubert, 2002). Academic readiness is broadly defined as the level of preparation a student needs in order to enrol and succeed, without remediation, in a credit-bearing programme at a higher education institution (Conley, 2007). More specifically, preparedness refers to being prepared in reading, writing and mathematical skills (Van Dyk & Weideman, 2004; Cliff, 2014).

The readiness model of Conley (2007) shows that readiness for university education is not only associated with academic performance at school or with measures of ability on psychometric tests, but also with socio-cultural and motivational factors. The participants of Byrd and MacDonald's study, for instance, identified the following additional factors associated with readiness, namely: skills in time-management; motivational factors; background factors; and student self-concept (Byrd & MacDonald, 2005). Other researchers pay attention to the non-cognitive and/or demographic characteristics of students as influencers of readiness for university (Sedlacek, 2004, 2005; Camara, 2005a, 2005b).

The four categories of readiness that were identified by Byrd and MacDonald's (2005) qualitative study are confirmed by Conley's (2007) research on readiness for university over a number of years. Conley further suggests a broad definition of readiness that includes cognitive strategies, acquiring content knowledge, academic behaviours, and contextual knowledge and skills. Conley (2007) explains that the various elements of readiness are neither mutually exclusive nor perfectly nested because they interact with and affect one another extensively. Entry characteristics in the form of demographic variables have been shown to predict accomplishment later in one's academic career (Sedlacek, 2005).

Keup (2008) names four issues that impact on student readiness: the shift to a truly multicultural student body; mental and emotional healthcare needs; a utilitarian view of higher education; and an integration of new technologies. In considering the first-year experience, Kift (2009) says that the challenge of moving from research and theory into practice is becoming more difficult. This makes it even more important to determine whether our practices will have any impact on student success. The interventions provided by the FSAs can be classified as informal learning opportunities (Wawrzynski and Baldwin, 2014) that also forge links with the formal ones taking place in the classroom. While interventions by the FSAs may not fall neatly into Kuh's (2008) high-impact practices, they are seen as an attempt to address some of the needs of first-time-entering students.

Early alert and referral strategy

Our institution adopted an early alert and referral system early in 2010 to facilitate the transition from school to university in order to have students fully integrated into the university environment within the first quarter of the first year. Among the activities were academic introductions to the disciplines before the start of the official year, allocation of mentors to particular students, monitoring student achievement after the first test (in a particular faculty), and the placement of advisors to provide support within each faculty.

In line with literature on student readiness (Van der Merwe & Pina, 2008; Van Zyl, Gravett & De Bruin, 2012; Rassen *et al.*, 2013; Van Zyl, 2013), students are assessed on their academic readiness. Our Student Academic Readiness Survey (STARS) was developed to function – in conjunction with demographic variables, high-school marks (Admission Point Score) and the National Benchmark Test – as early warning indicators of failure or dropout among first-year students. The STARS is a low-stakes, self-report survey measuring non-cognitive variables on 115 items, administered during the orientation week. This survey has been administered, since 2010, to over 42 000 students. It is a norm-referenced test and consists of 26 non-cognitive dimensions. The objectives of the STARS are to act as early-warning indicators of failure or dropout among first-year students and to categorise students into groups for specific interventions.

Students identified through the STARS are referred to a peer mentorship programme for transitional support and/or an FSA for academic support and advice. The FSA refers students with financial and accommodation challenges to the relevant sections. This study will focus on the academic development interventions supplied by the FSAs. The responsibilities of the FSAs are to make contact with students and invite them to an intervention programme; advise such students about reducing their risks; provide study skills and time management workshops; monitor particular students' results as an early alert of their progress; provide support to self-referred students; and assist students requiring advice about programme changes.

The FSAs are also required to keep records of the students who attend their intervention programmes. The data about the number of students identified for the intervention programmes as well as the students' participation rates are necessary for the programme to have value during the first semester of the first year. Research suggests that

not only student support services, but the system as a whole, influence students' learning experiences and success (Tinto, 2013). While efforts are also being made to encourage lecturers to support students within their discipline, this is not the focus of this article. Here, we focus on the interventions made by the FSAs.

Methodology

The current study focuses on the quantitative analysis of survey data in combination with high-school academic results, student demographic data and results from the National Benchmark Test (NBT). The aforementioned data are used in predictive analytics to identify students for various intervention programmes on campus.

Data collection method or procedure

The STARS is administered to students attending the orientation week at the beginning of each academic year. The survey is intended for all first-time-entering, first-year students. However, not all new students are able to attend the orientation week and, in some cases, returning and transferring students also attend it. The surveys are administered in paper-and-pencil format and electronically. The results of the STARS feed directly into the institution's business intelligence software, called the STARS Student Retention System. Each student's STARS profile is programmatically compared with his or her high school academic results, student demographic data and results from the NBT. Predictive analytics of the data over a number of years were used to develop academic risk profiles of students. The STARS retention system uses the algorithms of the predictive analytics to identify the students who may be at risk. The system produces automatic reports that are used by the FSAs to contact students about a variety of intervention programmes.

The criteria for selection for academic advising, which are evaluated in this study, include high school academic performance in relation to the admission requirements per programme. As part of this study we have included the NBT as an additional criterion for selecting at-risk students because research shows that the three NBT sub-tests generally act as contributing signals, with National Senior Certificate (NSC) results, in explaining first-year academic achievement (Lemmens, 2013). The results of the STARS are mainly used as qualitative information for tailoring the intervention programme.

FSAs are required to keep records of the students who attend academic advising and the number of sessions they attend. The number of sessions ranged from zero to nine sessions. These sessions were clustered into three, roughly even, groups in order to perform a Pearson's Chi-square analysis from contingency tables (Field, 2005). The students who attended zero sessions were contacted but chose not to attend any of the sessions.

Three distinct groups – at-risk, borderline and successful – were used by the FSAs for further academic development interventions in the second semester. The data for this is not presented here as the focus is on the first semester only.

The research question for this study is: Does the number of academic advising sessions decrease the academic risk of students who were predicted to be at risk upon entry to the institution?

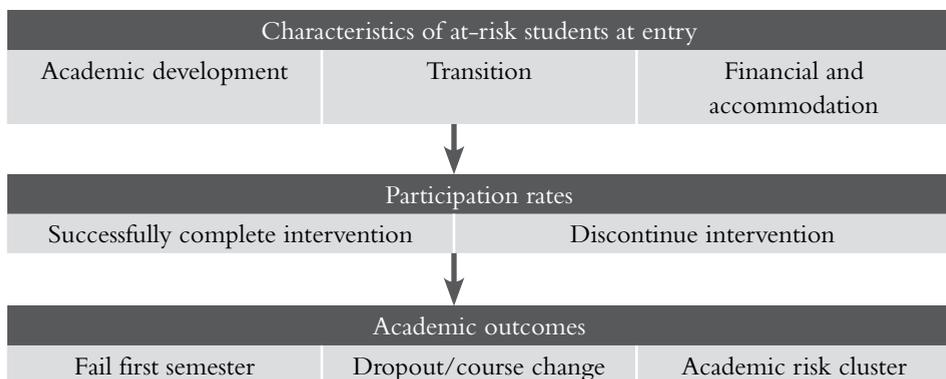
Data analysis

The data analysis for this study can be categorised as descriptive analysis of the demographic data and institutional sample data. Inferential statistics, namely a Pearson’s Chi-square, was used in combination with contingency tables because the data were clustered into discrete categories. A Chi-square analysis was also used to test a hypothesis with an associated significance indication (Field, 2005).

In order to evaluate the academic success of students, a cluster analysis was performed to identify students who had performed academically poorly in the first semester. Cluster analysis is a statistical method for finding relatively homogeneous clusters of cases based on measured characteristics. The k-means algorithm clustering method was utilised to analyse the data (Field, 2005). The variables that were used in the first phase of the analysis, performed by our Institutional Planning section, were the ratio of credits registered versus credits failed; the average mark for the first semester; the ratio of modules in which students performed poorly; and the high school English mark. In the second round of the analysis, the borderline students were extracted from the data set and split into Sciences and non-Sciences groups. The k-means cluster analysis was performed on these two groups separately. The variables that were used in the second phase were the ratio of credits registered versus credits failed; the average mark for the first semester; and the ratio of modules in which students performed poorly. However, the high school English mark was removed. This allowed identification of borderline students at the granular level, thus splitting the lower borderline from the true borderline and upper borderline students. The lower borderline students became part of the at-risk group.

The following outcome assessment models will be used to evaluate the outcomes as they are presented in the evaluation framework:

Model 1: Outcomes assessment of at-risk students



In this model, the students who were identified as being at risk with predictive analytics were referred to one of the three support services mentioned above. They are subsequently prearranged in two groups, namely students who successfully completed the intervention and students who discontinued or defaulted on the intervention. The two groups will be compared in relation to their first-semester academic achievement, their academic risk cluster and dropout rate. The purpose is to determine whether students who made use of the intervention services were more likely to be successful than the students who defaulted on the intervention. In this study the focus is on the cluster analysis of the academic outcomes in relation to participation in academic development sessions facilitated by the FSAs.

Sample

The population for this study consists of 12 916 students enrolled in their first year in 2013. First-time-entering, first-year students numbered 8 515, with the remainder of the students being both returning students (students who did not successfully progress to the second year of study) and transferring students (students who changed course or transferred from other institutions).

A total of 7 033 students completed the STARS and, from the initial risk criteria, 966 students were identified as being at risk. After applying additional risk criteria explained in the data collection procedure above, 200 students were identified as being at risk. The FSAs followed these students up. The FSAs kept records of the 200 students for the purpose of this study.

Coyne (1997) refers to all sampling as being purposeful. He turns to Patton's view (1990, p. 69), that "qualitative inquiry typically focuses in depth on relatively small samples, even single cases, selected purposefully". The purpose of choosing the 200 students is that they interacted with the FSAs in terms of being provided with a form of intervention.

Ethical considerations

Confidentiality of first-year students was maintained at all costs. Students were informed of the purpose of the survey prior to its administration. Students had to log in to the student portal with their student numbers and passwords to gain access to their individual reports. Only reports of students who agreed to make their information accessible to university staff were available by proxy access to FSAs, counselling staff and deans of faculty. Students were advised to make use of support structures, but not forced to do so. These students were also briefed about the method through which they had been identified and what the support programme entailed. Students who decided not to make use of recommended services either did not attend the sessions or indicated their decision to default verbally to the FSA when invited to the intervention programme.

Results

Our results focus on the descriptive statistics of the sample and the quantitative evaluation of the intervention programme facilitated by the FSAs.

Sample

The distribution of first-year students by faculty and by admittance type can be observed in Table 1.

Table 1: Biographical data of first-year students by faculty and admission type

Faculty	New	Returning	Transfer	Total
Humanities	1 394	244	80	1 718
Natural and Agricultural Sciences	1 716	663	81	2 460
Law	173	180	9	362
Theology	56	11	7	74
Economic and Management Sciences	1 717	383	95	2 195
Veterinary Science	131	42	27	200
Education	914	98	54	1 066
Health Sciences	569	646	651	1 866
Engineering, Built Environment and IT	1 845	1 085	45	2 975
Total	8 515	3 352	1 049	12 916
	66%	26%	8%	100%

From the population of first-year students admitted to the university (12 916), a total of 7 033 students completed the STARS. Of the 7 033 students completing the STARS during the orientation programme, 93% are first-time-entering, first-year students, 2% of the registered students are students returning to the first year and 4% of the registered students have transferred from other institutions. One per cent of the students are labelled as “unknown” on their student record. The target audience for the student academic readiness survey was first-time-entering, first-year students and, to a large extent, this was achieved.

The distribution in participation rates in the STARS by faculty is equivalent to the distribution of the student population as presented in Table 2, thus indicating that the students who completed the STARS are a representative sample of the first-time-entering, first-year student population.

From Table 3 it is evident that the majority of students who completed the STARS are female, which is in accordance with the gender profile of the undergraduate student population (female = 58.5% and male = 41.5%) and first-year students in particular (female = 58.2% and male = 41.8%) at our own institution.

Table 2: Distribution of students completing the STARS by faculty

Faculty	Frequency	Percentage
Economic and Management Sciences	1 374	19.5
Education	834	11.9
Engineering, Built Environment and IT	1 550	22.0
Health Sciences	469	6.7
Humanities	986	14.0
Law	164	2.3
Natural and Agricultural Sciences	1 500	21.3
Theology	36	0.5
Veterinary Science	120	1.7
Total	7 033	100.0

Table 3: Distribution of students completing the STARS by gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Female	4 120	58.6
Male	2 913	41.4
Total	7 033	100.0

Table 4: Distribution of students completing the STARS by race

Racial group	Frequency	Percentage
Asian	363	5.2
Black	2 705	38.5
Coloured	178	2.5
Other	34	0.5
Unknown	6	0.1
White	3 747	53.3
Total	7 033	100.0

From Table 4 it is evident that the majority of students who completed the STARS are categorised as white, which is roughly in accordance with the racial profile of the undergraduate student population and first-year students in particular. Black students make up 38.5% of the sample, while the proportion of black students in the population of first-time-entering, first-year students is 41.1%. The proportion of white students completing the STARS is 53.3%, while the population of white, first-time-entering, first-year students is 50.7%. Black students are thus slightly under-represented in the sample and white students are slightly over-represented in the sample.

Academic proficiency of students completing the STARS

The academic proficiency of students who completed the STARS is presented in Table 5. Academic proficiency, in this instance, is measured by the Admission Point Score (APS) as well as the subtests of the National Benchmark Test (NBT). These scores show, to some extent, the academic skills and/or knowledge that a student has acquired up to a certain point. Universities can use this information to set benchmarks for the level of knowledge and/or skills that students require to have a fair chance of being successful at a particular programme. Thus, they not only say something about the students' current ability, but also predict academic outcomes in the future based on what is known presently.

Table 5: Average high-school academic performance on the APS and NBT

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std deviation
APS	6 574	15	50	34.50	4.589
NBT-AL	5 139	28	92	62.64	11.311
NBT-QL	5 139	13	96	58.88	15.128
NBT-Math	4 510	19	97	48.84	15.947
Sample total	4 276				

From Table 5 the mean APS score was 34.5. On the other hand, the mean score for the NBT–Academic literacy subtest was 62.64, while the mean score for the NBT–Quantitative literacy subtest was 58.88 and the mean score for the NBT–Mathematics subtest was 48.84. The sample total for this table is 4 276 because not all students have to complete the NBT results, and the sample total represents the number of students who have scores for all four of the variables.

First-semester students 'at risk' according to the STARS

Table 6 shows that 966 students were identified as being at risk by the STARS Student Retention System at the beginning of the academic year, using only APS as the criteria. For the purpose of this study, the NBT was included in the selection criteria to identify students who are at a greater risk. A total of 200 students were selected for this purpose.

Internal research at our institution on NSC subjects and APSs with the STARS results shows that the NSC – and, more specifically, the APS – only partly explains academic outcomes (Lemmens, 2013). When other variables, such as NBT results and psychosocial variables, are added, they can increase the accuracy of the prediction model.

From Table 7 it is evident that students who were selected based on APS criteria only have higher mean scores on the NBT-AL, NBT-QL and NBT-Math than the students selected with APS and NBT criteria (60.64 vs 56.23; 57.24 vs 49.91; 45.27 vs 39.05 respectively). One can see that the APS scores of both groups were almost equal and that the addition of the NBT subtest provides additional information to help with the accuracy of the prediction model. The students who were contacted were prioritised because of their performance on the NBT and would possibly be at greater academic risk.

Table 6: Prediction criteria applied

Faculty	Criteria: APS	Criteria: APS and NBT
Economic and Management Sciences	264	42
Education	97	23
Engineering, Built Environment and IT	215	13
Health	33	2
Humanities	242	43
Law	12	3
Natural and Agricultural Studies	83	65
Theology	7	0
Veterinary Science	13	9
Grand total	966	200

Table 7: Descriptive statistics of participation in FSA session/s and proficiency scores

APS criteria only (N = 766)	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std deviation
APS	763	17	38	29.83	3.679
NBT-AL	519	29	85	60.64	11.319
NBT-QL	519	20	91	57.24	15.981
NBT-Math	439	20	88	45.27	14.396
APS and NBT criteria (N = 200)	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std deviation
APS	196	3	37	29.09	3.523
NBT-AL	125	31	83	56.23	12.363
NBT-QL	125	19	84	49.91	14.011
NBT-Math	112	22	71	39.05	11.939

Academic development outcomes assessment

In this section, the students who were identified as being at risk based on academic criteria will be assessed against the academic risk cluster as the outcome variable. The students who were identified and referred to the FSAs will be divided into three groups, analysed according to the number of sessions in which they participated (grouped for analysis purposes).

Table 8: Cross-tabulation of academic risk cluster and number of FSA sessions participated in

Academic cluster		Number of individual FSA sessions			Total
		Zero sessions	One session	Two or more sessions	
At risk	Count	28	27	12	67
	% within cluster	41.8%	40.3%	17.9%	100%
Borderline	Count	24	29	22	75
	% within cluster	32.0%	38.7%	29.3%	100%
Successful	Count	8	28	22	58
	% within cluster	13.8%	48.3%	37.9%	100%
Total	Count	60	84	56	200

The two variables in the contingency table (cross-tabulation) in Table 8 – academic risk cluster and the number of FSA sessions participated in – are significantly associated on the Pearson's Chi-square statistic (13.60, $df(4)$, $p = 0.009$). This implies that there is a significant relationship between the risk cluster in which a student is observed and the number of academic advising sessions in which a student participated with the FSAs. The category of "Zero sessions" refers to the students who were invited to the interventions but did not participate ($n = 60$). The number of students attending one session were 84 and number of students attending two or more sessions were 56. The results show that 41.8% of the at-risk students fall into the zero session, 40.3% participated in one session and 17.9% participated in two or more sessions. The students classified as borderline with the cluster analysis had slightly larger numbers of students attending one session. Namely, 38.7% of the students attended one session, 32% of the borderline students attend zero sessions and 29.3% attended two or more sessions. In contrast, 13.8% of the successful students attended zero sessions, 48.3% attended one session and 37.9% of the students attended two or more sessions.

Based on the cluster analysis percentages, one could conclude that the optimal number of sessions that at-risk students should attend, to move from being classified as being at risk upon entry into the institution to being classified as successful, is one. One can also observe a larger number of students within the "Successful" category. However, students attending one session were in the majority, which will influence the relative frequencies and associated percentages. In order to accommodate the difference in total frequencies of students attending interventions, the relative percentages of the number of sessions in relation to the academic cluster has to be investigated.

The results of the calculation of the frequencies and column totals in Table 8 (percentages not shown here but explained in this paragraph) show that successful students were more likely to have attended two or more sessions (39.3%) than students who attended one session (33.3%) or no sessions at all (13.3%). Conversely, the at-risk students tended not to attend any sessions (46.7%) compared with students who participated in one session (32.1%) and students who participated in two or more sessions (21.4%). The

students classified as borderline could have attended zero (40%), one (34.5%), or two or more (39.3%) sessions without showing a clear trend in the contribution of attending more sessions to risk movement. Generally, the results thus show that of the high-risk group contacted by the FSAs, students who attend more sessions with the advisor are more likely to have successful first-semester academic outcomes. Furthermore, there is evidence to show that academic advice is an effective intervention for high-risk students in the short term. However, this finding needs to be tested further. Further research will be undertaken on students who did not receive any intervention, but who were identified by the STARS, to determine if they could have been more successful had they received academic advice. Such a comparison could have worked well with the students whom the STARS system identified as not being at risk.

Conclusion

The research from this study found that 766 STARS students who were selected using APS criteria and who did not attend FSA interventions were less likely to be at risk than the 200 who were selected based on the APS and NBT results participated. Adding the subtest of the NBT to the identification of students for the academic intervention programmes has improved the ability to predict the success of students entering the university, allowing the university to be more active in selecting at-risk students with predictive analytics and recommending interventions proactively. An outcomes assessment of this analysis–intervention–evaluation framework has shown promising results for the implementation of academic advising in this case, and has allowed us to improve the intervention programme as well as the monitoring of at-risk students.

The results show that only 32 out of 200 students were able to move out of academic risk without attending any academic advising – however, most of these students were at borderline academic achievement. This could be attributed to students making changes to their academic behaviour due to the knowledge that they were being observed (the Hawthorne effect) or because they consulted elsewhere. The results show that 28 of the 60 students who did not attend any sessions are from the at-risk category (46.7%). It is also evident that students who attend only one session have a one in three chance of being either at risk, borderline or successful. This indicates that attending only one session does not seem to be clearly beneficial to this group of students. Evidently, the tipping point in the effectiveness of academic advising is student participation in two or more sessions. Students who attend two or more sessions are likely to be successful or, at least, to become borderline academic achievers. Clearly, students who do not use FSA services are at a higher risk. Thus, active participation in intervention programmes is of value to academically underprepared students.

Through the STARS and the employment of FSAs, the institution has shown its commitment to interventions for improving student success. It is taken further within the faculties where students identified as being at risk are supported by tutors and other academic practices.

The findings have also shown the value of using NBT results as additional criteria for identifying at-risk students for academic advice programmes. Research has used NBT

mostly in comparative analyses of NSC marks and NBTs for placement purposes (Fleisch, Schöer & Cliff, in press).

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Perceptions of Engineering students, lecturers and academic development practitioners about academic development classes at a university of technology

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Abstract

With the increase in student enrolments in higher education, which has resulted in changes to student profiles, academic development has become important in terms of students' success. This article is a report on a qualitative study that used in-depth interviews to investigate the perceptions of Engineering students and staff to academic development classes at a university of technology (UoT) in South Africa. The students' feelings concerning the need for academic development to continue beyond their first year of study was of particular interest. Participants included five lecturers from the Engineering faculty and four academic development practitioners, who were all purposefully selected. The sample consisted of men and women who were interviewed individually. Interviews were also conducted with ten first-year Engineering students and ten second-year students, who were randomly selected on the grounds of having been involved in the academic development programme during their first year.

The responses of the lecturers were compared with those of the academic development practitioners and the first- and second-year students' responses were compared. It emerged that academic development was considered questionable as it did not seem to be structured and that the academic development curriculum, itself, was problematic.

Keywords

Academic development, engineering education, scaffolding, self-regulated learning, students.

Introduction

Students from previously disadvantaged schooling backgrounds entering university often have a negative perception of academic development (AD) classes. The Council on Higher Education (CHE, 2013, p. 72) suggested a limitation in AD programmes, such as extended foundation programmes within AD units, as they are seen to have a low status and are, consequently, often marginalised academically and administratively. Furthermore, students

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in extended programmes have been affected by the perceived status of the intervention. According to the CHE (2013, p. 72), research indicates an ambivalence in student attitudes where recognition of the programmes' value is often tempered by the threat of stigma and stereotyping. Different authors show that, when students enter university, they are often underprepared for the demands of higher education and, therefore, have a need for some kind of intervention. The establishment of academic support programmes in institutions was an initiative to assist students who, in addition to being socio-economically disadvantaged, had been systematically underprepared for university. The CHE (2013, p. 57) maintains that the dominant view for underperformance in higher education is that a high proportion of students are underprepared for study at university level. In this UoT, a Student Academic Development approach is used to assist students with curriculum strategies that enhance their teaching and learning, and this is the function of the Student Development and Support Unit. This is done through various strategies, including academic development classes.

I have, however, observed that often students in their first year of study absent themselves from the AD classes that I teach, but when they are in their second or third year of study, they frequently consult academic development practitioners (ADPs) on various issues, such as note-taking, study skills, reading and writing, time management and examination preparation. It is puzzling why they absent themselves from these classes in their first year and, instead, choose to seek help voluntarily in subsequent years with issues that are part of the AD curriculum. This situation challenges ADPs to maintain a high attendance rate in AD classes for a number of reasons, which are explored in the discussion section. Lecturers encourage their students to make use of services offered by Student Development and Support (SDS) as soon as they identify the need for them to do so. Researchers have indicated that scaffolding at university level should extend beyond the first-year level and continue until the student feels confident to tackle his/her studies without any support. Baleghizadeh, Memar and Memar (2011, p. 44) understand scaffolding as a knowledgeable participant creating supportive conditions in which the novice can participate and extend his/her current skills and knowledge to a higher level of competence. Donato (1994) and Schumm (2006, in Baleghizadeh et al. 2011, p. 44) emphasise that scaffolding provides support for students, which gradually diminishes as students become more independent. Many definitions highlight support 'by the other' and maintain that, at some point, scaffolding needs to be reduced to allow learners to become independent. It is likely that this would be the case when students achieve higher levels of competence. I support this view, having observed the practice of some Engineering students who come for support in their second year of study. Additionally, this corresponds to the aim of this article, which is to examine the perceptions of Engineering students to AD classes whose absenteeism was prominent in their first year and some of whom then consulted ADPs in their second or third year of study.

The purpose of this article, therefore, is to examine Engineering students' perceptions in relation to the AD classes at the UoT. To achieve that, the current AD model at this institution will be discussed within the relevant literature for existing information on AD,

both nationally and internationally. The methods used to gather information will then be given, followed by the results and a discussion of the issue of concern.

The concept of AD

As more and more underprepared students from previously marginalised communities gain access to, and enrol at, tertiary institutions, they fail to cope with the rigour of the programmes as they are faced with a variety of problems and challenges that need immediate intervention in the form of AD. This is the case in South Africa and elsewhere in the world; the concept of AD is not unique to South Africa, but it is found all over the world. Thayer (2000, p. 3), confirms that there is a growing awareness of effective interventions that increase student persistence.

What is academic development? The use of phrases like ‘students at risk’, ‘students with poor English’ or ‘students with deficiencies’ relates to the sensitive matter of students who need extra support to succeed in tertiary education. Scott (2001, p. 3) maintains that there is no official definition of the term. He is of the opinion that AD refers to the design and implementation of educational processes and initiatives that are intended to promote equity and to redress historical inequalities in student access to, and success in, higher education. Baume (2002, p. 110) asserts that AD is concerned with the improvement of processes in higher education, educational development and enhancing the capabilities of those who directly support learning in higher education. Underprepared students who enter university sometimes display a mismatch between the requirements for admission to higher education and their actual preparedness for it. Fisher and Scott (2011, p. 12) confirm the negative effect of this mismatch when they suggest that there is no single solution for addressing the articulation gap between secondary school and higher education; instead, they support a combination of approaches and strategies. This seems to be a move from the past when low-performing students were labelled ‘educationally disadvantaged’ in South Africa and ‘disadvantaged minorities’ in North America, as stated by Lillis (2001) in Zengele (2006, p. 18). Fisher and Scott (2011, p. 13) cite the following strategies for addressing the articulation gap:

- 1) Improving the academic preparedness of first-time-entering students by raising the quality of school learning outcomes;
- 2) Providing alternative entry routes into higher education through a college system and/or alternative and ‘second chance’ entry routes;
- 3) Expanding private provision of tertiary education and creating new public institutions; and
- 4) Improving the effectiveness of teaching and learning in higher education itself, particularly by adjusting the curriculum at entry level to meet the capacities of incoming students.

The different approaches and strategies are an indication of the complexity of the problem, but this discussion focuses mainly on the improvement of teaching and learning in higher education. According to Fisher and Scott (2011, p. 25), the constraints of the

mainstream curricula have particularly severe consequences for disadvantaged students and, in their opinion, there is effectively no space for these students to attain the conceptual development, learning approaches and academic literacies needed for success in advanced studies. Zamel (1998) in Zengele (2006, p. 18) maintains that students entering a new community must take on its ways of knowing and its 'ways with words'. Gee (1996) notes that there are particular literacies, social languages and discourses that are operational in these new communities that may pose a threat to someone who has not been adequately prepared for this kind of environment. Furthermore, Gee (2012, p. 158) explains 'discourse' as a socially accepted way of using language and other symbolic expressions; of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing and acting as well as using various tools, technologies or props that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or 'social network'; and as signalling (that one is playing) a socially meaningful 'role' or that one is filling a social niche in a distinctively recognisable fashion. For students entering university for the first time, there may be challenges in respect of whether they possess the relevant discourses that may assist them to cope within a new discourse community. For Fisher and Scott (2011, p. 25), this may be more problematic if English, which is the dominant language of instruction, is not students' mother tongue.

A variety of interventions have been introduced in response to the changing student profile, where students may not possess the relevant discourses for university education. For example, AD interventions have evolved from Academic Support in the 1980s to Academic Development and Student Development in more recent years. Some of the strategies mentioned by Fisher and Scott (2011, p. 25) are current interventions that involve supporting students in the mainstream curriculum through supplementary tutorials, mentoring schemes and study skills programmes, among others. With regard to these interventions, Fisher and Scott (2011, p. 25) believe that there has been limited success because they operate under flawed assumptions about students' academic preparedness and prior learning and such interventions further overload the students who are most in need of support. Another intervention, which is supported by Fisher and Scott, is that of extended programmes, which are degrees or diplomas of increased duration. According to Fisher and Scott (2011, p. 28), these programmes – some of which may have been developed from stand-alone foundational programmes into integrated degree or diploma programmes – provide sufficient additional curriculum space to address the articulation gap; address the gaps in subject knowledge and an inadequate grasp of concepts; and develop academic language skills, quantitative computer and information literacy skills, and teaching and learning approaches appropriate to higher education.

AD model at the university of technology (UoT)

Presently, AD is provided by SDS at the UoT. As a response to the institution's vision and strategic goals, the SDS unit has a task of providing a holistic student development approach that enhances the quality of teaching and learning for holistic student support. The service portfolio includes life skills, English proficiency interventions, personal and career counselling, writing skills, psychometric testing for placement and diagnostic

purposes, mentorship, and attention to students with disabilities. AD classes involve the facilitation of life skills and writing skills, which are credit-bearing. In the Engineering and ICT Foundation curricula, life skills is compulsory and, therefore, examinable, while writing is also credit-bearing for Education studies. In other faculties, students are identified by their lecturers and sent to the SDS for intervention, depending on the students' specific challenges. The SDS then uses diagnostic tools like LASSI (Learning and Study Strategies Inventory) and risk profiling, which focuses on the early identification of a student at risk of being unsuccessful in his/her studies at the UoT because of inadequate skills, underdeveloped emotional intelligence, career orientation or a lack of English language proficiency. The results of the assessments point to the relevant interventions required to address the identified needs.

As part of the available interventions, once-off workshops on examination preparation, study techniques, reading skills, etc. are conducted per department. The SDS also receives 'walk-in' students who come for individual study counselling. Another group of students consists of those who are put on probation by their departments due to poor performance and who may be denied re-admission unless they submit reasons for their poor performance, backed up by authentic evidence. A diagnostic test is first conducted with students in this group before they are referred for appropriate interventions, such as study counselling, personal counselling, or dealing with assessment and reading and writing skills. The targeted students are mainly Foundation and first-year students from all the faculties, so that they can be identified at entry level if they need intervention.

Research design

This study falls within the qualitative descriptive paradigm. Flick (2009), in Ormston *et al.* (2014, p. 3), describes qualitative research as a naturalistic, interpretive approach concerned with exploring phenomena from the inside and using the perspectives and accounts of research participants as a starting point. McMillan and Schumacher (2001, p. 283) see a descriptive research as one that concerns itself with the current or past status of something. This study of Engineering students' experiences and perception of the AD programme is to understand why the students do not use the service that is there to help them improve their results. The target population of this study has two components: Engineering students, both male and female, ranging from 18 to 21 years of age who had participated in the programme, and both male and female lecturers who taught those students. The sampling method is purposive and, according to Ritchie, Lewis and Elam (2003, p. 78), it involves selecting individuals based on particular features or characteristics that will enable detailed exploration and understanding of the central themes and puzzles that the researcher wishes to study. Having identified the targeted population through purposive sampling, I had to ensure that the research was seen as a true reflection of the problem being investigated. Morse *et al.* (2002, p. 1) maintain that without rigour, research is worthless, becomes fiction, and loses its usefulness. In order to ensure trustworthiness, the research questions for the student interviews were piloted with ten students who had been through the AD programme in previous years, as well as lecturers who were not part of the interview

process. This was done to ensure that the questions asked elicited the information that I was looking for.

In order to examine the students', Engineering lecturers' and ADPs' perceptions of the AD classes at this UoT, semi-structured interviews were conducted. The key questions to answer were: What are the perceptions of first- and second-year Engineering students of the AD classes at the UoT? What are the lecturers' and the ADPs' perceptions of the AD classes?

Results

The responses of the lecturers, the ADPs, and the first- and second-year students will be presented according to identified key themes.

Responses from ADPs and lecturers

1. Differing perceptions of what academic development classes are for

In response to the question about what they thought AD classes were for, the majority of the lecturers said they thought these classes were intended to develop lecturers' skills. One lecturer emphasised the development of skills among the academic staff; he made four references to the idea that lecturers also needed to be equipped with skills to develop their students. He commented that academic development was "to develop me to give better service to my students and to the university of technology, in general" (1 September, 16.00, Office). Another lecturer said AD was "to uplift us, to sort of make sure, to check on what we are doing". In response to the same question, half of the ADPs said that AD provided help for both students and lecturers. The minority of the ADPs said that, for them, AD classes were there "for supporting students" and "to help lecturers to identify students who [were] not performing well". A number of ADPs felt that AD was there to provide students with "coping skills". One ADP said that academic development gave students "the necessary support to cope and come up to expected level". The responses from the different groups were not the same. The lecturers from the Engineering faculty focused on staff development and the ADPs focused on student and staff development. Both agreed that AD plays a supportive role for two types of learners: those who are underperforming for various reasons and those who "are on the right path" – as one ADP observed – and who need to improve their level of performance. One ADP said that "academic development is to help students reach their full potential as far as academic studies are concerned", while one of the lecturers said that "academic development is maybe to help students who have some inefficiencies to cope with the amount of work". There was a general awareness among both lecturers and ADPs that some students enter tertiary institutions less prepared and that they lack the necessary skills that enable them to cope well with their studies. Some ADPs considered AD classes to be "remedial" because they provide interventions for the underprepared learners; one commented that "academic development classes are remedial in a way because we're trying to fix problems that schools didn't diagnose and fix".

The main attitude of the ADPs was that AD classes should develop students' academic skills and address the needs of staff so that lecturers are equipped to hone these skills

during their own teaching. The lecturers concurred with the view that the Department of Teaching and Learning Development has the overall responsibility for the development of academic staff in academic-related fields and that the ADPs are responsible for catering for the needs of academics. The majority of the lecturers strongly felt that they needed help with their own teaching. This was in contrast to the ADPs; of the ones interviewed, only a small minority made mention of the need to equip staff with the skills to provide academic development in their own classes.

2. Teaching and learning issues that should be dealt with in academic development classes

The second part of the question sought to establish which teaching and learning issues needed to be dealt with in AD classes. As it stood, this question explored the pedagogical issues related to AD and what teaching and learning actually means to these two groups of people. Most of the ADPs and lecturers indicated that there was “no relationship” between what lecturers do in the classroom and what the ADPs do with learners. One lecturer commented that “students must be aware that besides lecturers there are other people who are going to help them”. The need to integrate academic development into mainstream courses appears to be crucial for both ADPs and lecturers, which seems to be a major problem at the institution as there is no clear link between academic development and mainstream subjects. Another lecturer felt that AD was non-existent at the institution, commenting: “I feel it is there; in a way it’s not there; it feels like nothing is happening”. This attitude suggests a serious challenge for the integration of AD into mainstream courses if some lecturers do not even recognise its existence or “feel it is there” but do not have a strong sense of what it is there for.

It seems that lecturers see ADP visibility in the classrooms as a major issue. This is supported by comments like “there should be enough visibility” and “academic development practitioners should be seen in the classroom set-ups”, which means that they would like to see ADPs in class more often for them to have an impact on the students’ performance. Lecturers’ attitudes are that they are subject specialists and not “teachers”; this implies that they should not be expected to attend to academic development because they are not trained as teachers. However, there is a contradiction in this regard because some lecturers agreed that “[w]e come straight from industry and we walk into a class and we think we can teach”. Another lecturer scornfully commented: “You guys are outside architecture; you guys are outside electrical; and what is it that you guys can tell us?” It is possible to conclude that there is an us-and-them attitude in the sense that lecturers may not see AD as part of their own problem and responsibility, but rather that of the ADPs; if this is the case, then teamwork among lecturers and ADPs may be negatively affected. This will have consequences for students’ learning. A similar attitude is confirmed by Lewin and Mawoyo (2014, p. 92) when they state that AD staff are, generally, viewed as being on the periphery or seen as “outsiders” and that this has an impact on the relationship between lecturers and ADPs.

The majority of lecturers recognised the gap between high-school learning and higher education. They saw academic development as bridging the gap between Further Education and Training and Higher Education. They felt that it was the responsibility of the ADPs to bridge this gap so that students could adapt to, and cope with, tertiary education. One lecturer maintained that students “need someone who can help bridge the gap” while another suggested that “we need people who can help to bridge the gap for them”. This “bridge” that may be problematic for new students could have something to do with feelings of loneliness and alienation brought about by a mismatch between the student and the environment in which he/she finds himself/herself. In such instances, an early relationship between an adviser and a new student should be established. This is where ADPs play a role in ensuring that students cope with the new climate and helping to bridge the gap to which the lecturers alluded.

3. Perceptions about whether academic development classes are succeeding in achieving their objectives

Most of the ADPs feel that AD classes are not achieving their intended objectives. Although there is a general belief from both groups that AD is important, lecturers and ADPs agree that some improvements need to be made so that AD meets the objectives as mentioned by Niezen and Soer (undated article, p. 11).

4. The role that lecturers play in academic development

The comments of some lecturers and ADPs show different perspectives on the role that lecturers should play in AD. There seems to be some uncertainty and confusion among lecturers about the purposes and intentions of academic development and this does not seem to be unique to the UoT. Dison and Rule (1996: 85) point out that the focus on developing academic skills as the primary function of ADPs is also potentially reductive. In other words, this approach suggests that the function of the ADP goes only as far as skills development. While some lecturers think that AD is solely the duty of ADPs, some ADPs feel that lecturers need, also, to play a vital role in terms of encouraging students to attend AD classes.

Responses from students

1. Students' understanding of the term 'academic development'

Both groups of students who were interviewed had participated in AD during their first year of study. However, one first-year student initially denied having taken part in AD and seemed to be more comfortable with the term ‘life skills’. He admitted: “Yes, I have attended life skills classes”. When asked how they knew about academic development classes, all the second-year students who were interviewed said that they had just found AD on their timetables. One student said:

OK. Firstly, I didn't attend the orientation. It was there in my timetable that you have to attend AD and they asked us whether we wanted to attend or what because we ain't gonna write about it. We ain't gonna do anything about it. (25 August, 12.00, Boardroom)

All the second-year students agreed that they had the freedom of choice to participate or not to participate in AD, reflected in comments like “it was a matter of choice, it was up to you”. Half of the second-years maintained that AD was not part of their diploma and this might have been the reason why one of them made the comment: “We ain’t gonna write about it; we ain’t gonna do anything about it” (24 August, 13.00, Boardroom). This suggests that students might have taken life skills seriously if they were assessed on it – otherwise, they did not see the need to do it. Another second-year student said that he had heard about AD from friends.

The first-year students painted a totally different picture. The majority of them agreed that AD was part of their curriculum. One student said: “It’s part of my academic; it’s part of my subjects” (28 August, 12.00, Boardroom). Half of the first-year students had heard about AD on registration while the other half said that these classes were introduced to them “by management”. This suggests a shift in attitude over the two years – if AD is part of the students’ curriculum, they tend to take it more seriously. The responses of the second-year students indicated poor attendance of AD classes. One student said: “Sometimes maybe we are writing”, which shows that this student only saw the need to attend academic development classes if he was to sit for a test. Another second-year student considered this to be “too much work”. No second-year student admitted to having attended all the AD classes; one reason for this might be that they were neither compulsory nor credit-bearing.

2. Students’ participation in, and knowledge about, academic development classes

Only half of the first-year students had attended all of the AD classes. One student commented: “In my first year I thought life skills, why life skills? Why do I have to attend life skills?” This comment reflects confusion between AD classes and the life skills that he had attended and, as a result, he did not see any reason for attending these classes. A second-year student who had done badly in his first year associated this with the fact that he “didn’t take things seriously” and questioned AD’s validity with the question, “Why do I have to attend? I don’t have to write”. The student maintained that he did not have to attend AD classes because he did not have to write an examination in it. He continued by saying: “In my second year I saw that things they were teaching at academic development were helping; after that I passed all my subjects” (28 August, 12.00, Boardroom). He associated his success with his participation in AD classes.

3. Parts of the programme in which students participated

It was noted with interest that the commonalities of both groups during AD classes in their first year is note-taking. Aside from this, students mentioned various themes and topics that they had learnt about during AD classes. From the responses of the first-year students, their list included the following: trauma, time management, HIV and Aids, dealing with stress, drug abuse and racism. 50% of the first-year students emphasised that they had talked about HIV and Aids. A further 50% of the first-year students also made reference to trauma as one of the aspects that they had learnt about during AD classes. These were some of the much-needed psychological aspects that were dealt with during AD classes.

Some second-year students mentioned aspects like understanding sentences, listening skills, group work, attitude towards classes, study skills, reading, passing tests, submitting assignments and achieving high marks. One second-year student actually emphasised the importance of group work by making comments like “portray yourself in a group of people” and “how to relate to groups”.

The majority of the first-year students knew that AD was part of their curriculum and this could have had an impact on their attendance of AD classes. Most of the students who had not attended all of the AD classes regarded these as an extra burden because of the lack of assessment. They were of the opinion that they would focus on tests and examinations rather than attending AD classes. This attitude agrees with that of Fisher and Scott (2011, p. 25), who maintain that such interventions further overload the students who are most in need of support.

Second-year students who had taken AD classes for granted and did not see the need to attend them in their first year suddenly had the following to say: “In my second year I saw that things they were teaching at academic development were helping; after that I passed all my subjects” (25 August, 1.00, Boardroom). Bjork, Dunlosky and Kornell (2013, p. 419) speak about becoming “truly sophisticated” as a learner, and some of the things they cite in becoming truly effective as a learner include knowing how to monitor the state of one’s learning activities and understanding certain biases that can impair judgements of whether learning will support later recall and transfer. Of interest is the correlation that Zumbunn, Tadlock and Roberts (2011, p. 10) have noted in self-motivated, self-regulated learners who tend to be autonomous. They believe that such learners are more likely to persist with difficult learning tasks and often find them gratifying. Some of these learners frequently seek help when necessary and this could apply to second-year students who consult ADPs of their own free will, which may be an indication that they have achieved a certain level of self-regulation.

Conclusions and recommendations

The purpose of this article was to examine the perceptions of Engineering lecturers and students of the AD classes at a university of technology. The students themselves admitted that they perceived these classes as too much work. There also seemed to be a misunderstanding with regard to the purpose and the naming of the AD classes as students thought these were different from life skills. The same applied to lecturers who thought that AD should be the responsibility of the ADPs. It would be recommended that the UoT reconsiders its AD model so that there is integration between normal teaching and academic development.

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Not just academics: Supporting international graduate students at an East African private university

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Abstract

The number of students enrolled in higher education outside their countries of origin increased from 0.8 million in 1975, to 2.1 million in 2000, and to 3.7 million in 2009 (Ryan, 2012). This growing trend of student mobility leads to increased university competition for students around the globe. However, little is known about the experiences of international students in Africa. This lack of understanding could leave the continent at a disadvantage for attracting and retaining international students, while other parts of the world continue to benefit. To begin to address this gap, I conducted a qualitative phenomenological study at one private university in East Africa that attracts about 20% of its population as international students.

As International Student Coordinator at this university, I interviewed 13 graduate students from various countries and conducted participant observations on campus for three years. I aimed to understand students' perceptions of their learning experiences. This article focuses on students' non-academic learning. Students' positive and negative experiences highlighted the difference that student affairs and administrative staff can make in the quality of students' educational experiences. A needs model shed light on students' non-academic experiences. Student affairs and administrative staff were essential in 1) providing pre-arrival information, 2) meeting students' initial basic needs, 3) connecting them with others, keeping immigration documents current, and 5) understanding the new academic system. Ecologically, students were required to make a variety of connections in their adjustment process on campus and beyond. If the university could adequately address international students' non-academic issues, then students would be better able to focus on their main purpose: their academics. It is recommended that the university revisit its procedures and develop more holistic international-student-friendly policies. Then, it could better support the learning of its present students and attract more international students, thereby more greatly impacting the world.

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Keywords

Higher education, internationalisation, international students, student experience, student affairs, East Africa.

Introduction

African students have long pursued graduate degrees abroad. At great financial cost, some have battled racial discrimination, immigration hassles and loneliness only to find that their studies do not fit their contexts once they return home (Hyams–Ssekasi, 2012, p. 50). Institutions outside Africa are actively recruiting African students. These universities have recently become aware of the importance of the quality of the student experience. Institutions and countries appear to be increasingly cognisant of the importance of satisfied international graduates, and are thus looking to ensure that their foreign students receive the education and overall student experience they were promised during the recruitment process (Verbik & Lasanowski, 2007, p. 28).

In today's competitive graduate school environment, continuous improvement is critical just to stay viable. Institutions within Africa, too, must focus on the quality of students' experiences if they hope to attract international students. Yet little research exists regarding the current state of international students' experiences in Africa. This article provides a case study of one university in East Africa that has attracted international graduate students from its inception about three decades ago. As its International Student Coordinator for four years, I observed the experiences of international students and noticed gaps in our services to them. In an effort to better serve them, I undertook a qualitative study of their learning experiences at the university. My findings may offer insights to similar institutions in Africa, which also desire to see international students not only survive but thrive in their graduate studies.

Purpose, design and methodology of the study

This study describes international students' learning experiences at a private university in East Africa, which I will refer to here using the pseudonym Trinity Global University (TGU) to preserve its anonymity. I sought to understand 1) how international students describe their academic and non-academic learning experiences at TGU; 2) how their past learning experiences influenced their expectations and experiences at TGU; and 3) whether and how international students changed while at TGU. Findings regarding the students' academic experiences, how they say they have changed and the pedagogical implications are being published elsewhere. This article focuses on the international students' non-academic learning experiences pertaining to student affairs and administration.

The research context

This is a case study of TGU, a small, private, international university in East Africa, with about 600 students. TGU is a hybrid of different international and local educational systems that have influenced its history and present (Buenfil, 2014, pp. 219–220; Dimmock & Walker, 2005, p. 81). Like many private institutions of higher learning, TGU began as a

seminary. The original goal was to provide quality theological education at masters level in Africa, for Africa. It has recently expanded into doctoral and bachelor level courses and beyond theological topics. Typically, 19–23% of the student body at TGU has been international students (non-local-country passport holders) from about 28 countries. Most come from English-speaking countries around Africa. However, students have also come from North America, Asia, Europe, Australia and South America in the past five years. Some are only on campus for a few weeks each year for intensive programmes, while others live on campus for up to four years or more, if they do consecutive programmes. Since international students get priority for on-campus housing, the campus community is very international.

At TGU, the faculty is also international. In 2012–2013, about half of full-time faculty members (10 of 17) came from outside the country. However, as TGU adds bachelors courses, the percentage of international faculty is decreasing (Kihika, 2011; Mutheu, 2013).

Even with this rich history of international education, the university focuses little attention and few resources on international students. The few policies in place relate to transcript equivalency assessments, immigration regulations, settling students in, and housing. Most of the administrative and student affairs staff are locals.

Population and sample

I conducted the interview portion of this study during Term III of the 2012–2013 academic year. During this academic year, 107 (including 76 graduate) international students enrolled at TGU. They held passports from 23 countries. This study focused on graduate students, because of TGU's history as an internationally recognised graduate institution. Because I believed that on-campus, full-time students may have experienced TGU more intensely than commuters, I invited only enrolled graduate international students living on the TGU campus and studying full-time, with at least one previous term of enrolment, to be interviewed. Out of the 24 masters students and 14 PhD students ($N = 38$), 13 agreed to be interviewed in depth ($n = 13$). While this sample was not large, it represented about one third of the population. Also, these 13 represented near maximum variation in age, programme, family status and passport country.

Methodology, data collection and analysis

Since I sought to understand international student experiences in depth in a particular context, I chose a qualitative, case study approach. This was appropriate, as qualitative research involves looking for rich, deep data that will give understanding of a certain phenomenon in context (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003, p. 204). I looked for patterns emerging from the narratives. In contrast, quantitative research looks for patterns in numbers. It usually requires larger populations and sampling numbers. The size of the sample in qualitative research is usually smaller than in quantitative research, which was appropriate with my small population. The results are not generalisable, though they may be cautiously transferrable to very similar situations (Creswell, 2009, p. 13).

In contrast to quantitative research, current qualitative methodology acknowledges the researcher is not totally objective or detached from the research participants (Charmaz & Bryant, 2011, p. 192). Some researchers even claim that researchers should be members of the groups of people whom they study in order to make legitimate knowledge claims about them (Miller & Glassnar, 2011, pp. 136–141). At the least, researchers should be familiar with the participants' lives and try to experience the natural setting of the phenomenon under study (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2007, p. 31). As an international student and International Student Coordinator, I was well positioned to conduct this type of research. In order to understand the lived experiences of the students and the meaning they made of their experiences, I chose a phenomenological, interpretive approach for this study. Participant observation and interviews were utilised. Participant observation notes were taken over three years (2011–2014), which captured a broad range of experiences of many international students on campus. These included skits in chapel, small group discussions and one-on-one discussions around campus with international students from many countries and programmes. Prior to this study, in 2011, five similar interviews with international students were also conducted, transcribed and analysed. These were included as part of the participant observations. The participant observation notes were analysed and used to triangulate the data from the interviews. I interviewed 13 students in depth (an average of 90 minutes per interview) in order to get a more focused understanding of their experiences and to hear their stories. Twelve allowed me to record and transcribe the interviews. For the other one, I took notes. Each interviewee double-checked his or her transcription. I then analysed the interviews and the participant observation notes using the computer program WEFT QDA. I labelled various concepts and open-coded them into categories, then analysed them again into more abstract axial codes. Themes eventually emerged for each research question, which I also sent back to interviewees for review. Conducting these member checks ensured the trustworthiness of the data and findings. I will describe the themes related to non-academic learning experiences, using pseudonyms for the students to preserve their anonymity. Each theme arose from many students expressing the viewpoint, but I am only able to share a few representative quotes here due to space constraints.

Research findings and discussion of related literature

Though classes were challenging, most international students at TGU found the non-academic issues to be more frustrating. Physical, social, financial and cultural issues powerfully affected their lives and their learning at TGU. This Canadian student's sentiments were echoed by many others:

Most of the challenges have not been in the classroom. They've been outside of the classroom. There have been some really great things outside of the classroom and some more difficult ones. Outside of the classroom, there have been some cross-cultural learning experiences, for better or for worse. (Paulo, personal communication, April 29, 2013)

Administrative issues and cross-cultural communication issues caused him more difficulty than his courses. Just as adult educators begin their programmes with needs assessment (Vella,

2002, pp. 228–229), student affairs staff must first understand the experience of the students and the needs they express if they want to support them well and improve on the service they offer. Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory points out that if people's basic needs are not met, energy is not available for higher-level needs (Lau, 1984, pp. 68–69). If one assumes that pursuing graduate studies is a higher-level need, then his theory suggests that lower-level needs must be met before meeting higher-level needs can be attempted. This hierarchy may be debated, but international students confirmed that attention to the various levels of needs was important for them to concentrate on their studies. When students first arrived, their basic physiological needs were of foremost concern. The security issues soon became important, as did the social needs. Although Maslow's theory has been critiqued as an unreliable predictor of decision-making behaviour, I use it here simply to categorise the students' various reported issues and to illustrate how institutions can support the whole student.

Figure 1: Maslow's hierarchy of needs (adapted from Lau, 1984, pp. 68–69)



Before arriving, international students needed admissions information, campus information and some contacts. They had questions about what to expect, what to bring, and where they would live. Most found admissions staff friendly and helpful.

Physiological needs

Upon arrival, international students had many basic physiological needs. Most needed transportation from the airport or bus station and a phone contact. Once on campus, they needed meals, keys to their housing and a campus tour. They needed internet access and phone SIM cards. Then they needed to access their financial accounts, to shop for food and household basics, and to navigate public transport. Once settled, these physiological issues did not disappear. For some, financial worries about these basic needs persistently distracted them from learning, such as the Congolese student below.

Before going to class in the morning, I'm like, 'What am I going to eat today?' ... I know that maybe after lunch I'm not going to cope even in the library ... I am hungry. I cannot make it ... these kinds of things ... they really disturbed me. The finances were not there. (Luka, personal communication, May 13, 2013)

This student could not focus on his higher-level needs while hungry. While local students in other places also experience financial stress (Yakaboski & Birnbaum, 2013, p. 41), international students have fewer places to turn for help. Many of these students had relied on family, church members and friends in the past. Now, for the first time, they felt truly on their own, depending only on God to provide. A South Sudanese student explains:

You don't have scholarship for yourself or even for your families. And here you cannot run to any nearer person asking for something when you come to school fees, when it comes to upkeep. These are some of the challenges we are facing and these can also influence our studies, 'cause as a family man, when my children, if they don't have meal in the house to drink, so I cannot concentrate on the study. I will focus twice. I will think, now they don't have something and I'm here in the library. So I cannot be stable ... (Tomas, personal communication, May 20, 2013)

Back home, this student could borrow from neighbours when in need, but at TGU, even his fellow countrymen were too constrained to help. These issues led many to pray more and to have more compassion for others in need. Some with full scholarships wished the TGU community could do more to support their fellow struggling students, although TGU has a benevolence fund for students' basic food needs.

Some (especially students from Nigeria, DRC and South Sudan) struggled with the weather. Although they had been sent information about the weather before arrival, they could not imagine how cold it would be. They had to purchase more warm clothing and blankets as soon as they came for themselves and their children.

Safety and security

Financial problems also affected students' sense of security. One student told of his most stressful moment: being "de-registered" from class because he could not pay his fees. At this lowest point, he was ready to pack up and go back home to Malawi (or another country to avoid the shame of returning home a failure). Miraculously, he received a last-minute scholarship and stayed (Daudi, personal communication, May 27, 2013). Although the campus itself was viewed as a secure, peaceful place, the country was involved in a war during this time. Terrorist attacks, armed robberies, carjackings and pickpocketing on public transport occurred regularly, often nearby. Many international students came with traumatic experiences, such as first-hand experiences of war. Some got news while studying that their relatives were in crisis or had been killed in conflict back home. Student affairs personnel organised trauma workshops for such students.

Immigration status problems

Still, the most unsettling safety issue for the majority of international students was their immigration status. Acquiring and maintaining valid immigration status was extremely frustrating for many students. Some students delayed submitting their documents, the government was slow, but many also questioned the school's follow-up on their student visas. Meanwhile, students and their family members worried about being in the country illegally, though they reportedly developed patience in the process. International students at institutions around the world share these immigration concerns, in various forms (Hyams-Ssekasi, 2012, pp. 127, 249). One TGU student described his feelings:

You feel as if you are not treated well ... There are times that the service delivery is not adequate and sometimes even availability when you need help ... it kind of cuts across but, you see, it's more severe for international students because you feel you are far away from home and then you sometimes say, for these people, whatever happens, they are at home, but for you ... the impact becomes more and sometimes you begin to wonder, "Is it because I'm not from here? Will it be better if I'm at home?" ... For example, the last time my [student visa] expired, I knew I felt insecure when I was going out, you know, supposing, somebody, a policeman says, "Are you legally in this country?" (Jeremiah, personal communication, May 24, 2011)

This student felt that staff did not provide services in a timely, adequate way. He wondered if it was because he was a foreigner. He felt the impact sharply, being far from home.

Unclear administrative structures

Maslow notes that clear, orderly structures of administration can provide security (Lau, 1984, p. 68–69). Students expected the administrative systems and structures to be like those of the institutions they had attended previously. They soon realised that they had to learn a new educational system, a new "academic culture" (Cortazzi & Jin, 1997, p. 77). Some from large secular universities were confounded by the way education was administered at TGU, as one Nigerian student reported below:

Here you don't quite know where to go. Maybe that is where you get some of your worry from. You don't quite know which systems to follow. And even when you do that, the general spirit around does not see you as if you are doing something right even when your motive is right. (Matteo, personal communication, May 15, 2013)

When structures were unclear and inefficient, students felt as if they were set up to fail. They worried about being seen as rebels if they pushed for information. Comparative education experts Teferra and Altbach (2003) point out that the challenge of ineffective administration in higher education runs throughout the continent:

Efficient management and administrative systems are of paramount significance to the productivity and effectiveness of any enterprise; academic institutions are no exception. By and large, however, African universities suffer from poor, inefficient, and highly bureaucratic management systems. Poorly trained and poorly qualified personnel; inefficient, ineffective, and

out-of-date management and administrative infrastructures; and poorly remunerated staff are the norm throughout many systems. (Teferra & Altbach, 2003, p. 7)

These concerns may contribute to the following theme, if staff members themselves feel unappreciated and underpaid.

Uncaring administrative staff

While the interviews were not intended to evaluate staff's effectiveness, some staff performance issues affected students' learning experiences. Many international students felt uncared for by some of the administrative staff. At the time of the study, administrators and student affairs personnel seemed threatened that students (not just internationals) were trying to take power, boycott activities or push too strongly for their rights at UGU, as was happening in other places (Yakaboski & Birnbaum, 2013, p. 45). Some international students who were unaccustomed to campus tensions between students and administrators were shocked by this.

Students questioned the efficiency and communication skills of staff in some offices. Some felt that the administrative problems at TGU kept recurring without being resolved. Some felt that administrative staff needed professional development to reach international standards as a university, as noted in other studies on student affairs in Africa (Major & Mangope, 2014, pp. 24–31; Yakaboski & Birnbaum, 2013, p. 43). Also, most staff members had no experience of being a foreigner, so perhaps that contributed to their perceived lack of empathy in dealing with internationals. On the other hand, several staff members were seen as caring and helpful. Admissions staff attracted some of the students interviewed.

Inaccessible finances

The system of handling student finances at TGU caused great stress for some international students. Some were surprised to find that money that sponsors had previously sent to their student accounts for their upkeep was not available for some weeks, or even months. They needed it for living expenses, including food, but could not access it. At the same time, they did not want to paint a bad picture of TGU to their sponsors, such as the Ethiopian student below:

I have personal sponsors to support my studies here in the country. ... They [TGU accounts office] are not able to pay me in time. The money was sent one month before coming here. Every term, still until today, they do that ... but I get it in the fifth week or for example, in the ... second term, I got it at the eight week of the term, after dying [metaphorically]. That is great challenge for me. (Emmanuel, personal communication, April 26, 2013)

If they were able, students set up an external account into which sponsors could deposit their upkeep money, but some, like the student above, were not able to change the agreements previously made with sponsors. Tracking electricity bills and payments also caused confusion and frustration. The international (and others) students lacked trust in the finance department, as noted by the American student overleaf:

There's always been a lot of debate on campus, on how finance should be dealt with, but the majority ... are very disappointed in the finance department – how they handle students, the double standard. They expect a lot of students but then they don't come through on their part. (Samuel, personal communication, June 15, 2011)

While they may have been demanding of students, the finance department was also challenged by students who were behind with their accounts. Students sometimes also had unrealistic expectations of when money would arrive and could be accessed.

Administrative difficulties at places such as TGU are interconnected with lack of funds (Yakaboski & Birnbaum, 2013, p. 33). Universities around the world are in financial crisis, “but the magnitude of these problems is greater in Africa than anywhere else” (Teferra & Altbach, 2003, p. 5).

Love and belonging

Making friends took time. With demanding studies, not much time was available for these graduate students. Families relied on each other, but even then, roles changed. Others missed spouses and family members back home. Singles often found other singles from the local and the international community. As noted in the next discussion section, in time, most of these international students felt accepted by the community. Many developed deep relationships with people from various countries, through programmes set up by student affairs, the student council, or just through classes, roommates and informal networks. Some even married fellow students. The great cultural diversity on campus also brought challenges. While most expected cultural challenges, they still found them surprising and difficult when encountered, like the Nigerian student below:

You are coming from Africa, you don't expect such changes. You assume that it's going to be like Africa – you are Africans, you have similar outlooks and all that – then all of a sudden there's this rude shock or awareness that, Oh, we're Africans, but there are so many things that are different. The first thing is the social life – you know, how they socialise is different from how we do it. So that creates a little bit of disorientation. Maybe you expect to be greeted and you are not greeted ... but with time, you just get used to it. (Jeremiah, personal communication, May 24, 2011)

After the initial confusion, most international students had learnt cross-cultural skills, in addition to making many cross-cultural friendships.

Occasional discrimination

Most international students at TGU were African. In contrast to studies of African international students done elsewhere, such as in the UK, international students at TGU reported less racial discrimination, especially from fellow students (Hyams-Ssekasi, 2012, p. 197). International students at TGU generally found the host country students to be more helpful and friendly than host students in other places (Terkla, Rosco, & Elish-Andrews, 2007, p. 1). However, a few international students experienced discrimination at TGU.

Several students felt that they had been very unfairly represented (even falsely accused) in communications with the TGU administration, possibly because they were foreigners. They felt issues were taken to higher levels very quickly and without hearing both sides of the issue. This led to frustration and a sense that they (as international students) could not speak up when they had problems, as they would not be fairly heard, as noted by the student below:

One of the challenges here at [TGU] is xenophobia, quite frankly, here as international students ... not ... in the classroom, but outside and even to some extent, dealing with administration ... What I've learned basically ... I have to be very careful about what I say. (Paulo, personal communication, April 29, 2013)

Other international students, too, learned to keep quiet. Perhaps the country's colonial history influenced how some internationals were treated.

Missing home and the support there

Students missed the support they would have experienced if they had been studying back home. Some would have been able to get emotional and financial help from family, church member, and neighbours, such as this Malawian student who reported:

Learning was a bit simpler [at home], easier to me than how I'm experiencing it over here ... At least there, family members and relatives, whenever I'm stuck, I would consult. They would support. (Daudi, personal communication, May 27, 2013)

Students felt lonely and missed home. When cultural challenges came, students reminded themselves that they were only here for a short time and that "this is not home". They challenged themselves to adapt. They were determined to focus on learning and finishing, as the student from South Sudan below pointed out:

If I start to do something, I make sure I finish that. So as soon as I step on this soil, I make sure I graduate. In fact, for the first year, it was quite challenging, but now I am sure I will finish. (Tomas, personal communication, May 20, 2013)

Some who felt lonely found friends to talk to, pray with or run with. Some found ways to go home on breaks to join their families. Some sought out other foreigners to talk to, like the Nigerian student below:

I miss home. That, for me, affects me ... I sometimes feel that, this is not my country or somebody makes me feel like ... this is just not your place. So that reality is there. And sometimes they do come in a very sharp way that does affect ... you ... I kind of prepare my heart for the best or for the worst, so when I am down ... I realize that way, this is home for some people, human beings like me. That helps my inner man and sometimes I talk about it with friends who will not be offended ... international students. (Matteo, personal communication, May 15, 2013)

He learned to cope with homesickness when it came. Most students shared these feelings, though they coped in different ways.

Change overload and cultural adjustment

For many international students, all of these issues combined created what one researcher labelled “change overload” (Loss, 1983, pp. 49–55). Change overload means that one difficulty or even several difficulties would be manageable, but many at once, particularly upon arrival, can leave international students very stressed. Students at TGU especially felt this in their initial weeks at TGU. Although the “U curve” theory of cultural adjustment has been questioned lately (Black & Mendenhall, 1991, p. 245; Kohls, 1979, pp. 68–70; University of Minnesota, 2012, p. 31), this group of international students, from their retrospective report, generally followed the basic curve. They were excited upon arrival at TGU, then discouraged as they struggled with many bewildering issues, and then, gradually, they developed relationships and coping skills to operate effectively in their new location.

Self-esteem

The competence and confidence levels of some students were challenged by the heavy workload and by having to learn many new skills at once, as noted by the Congolese student below.

I struggled like the first three terms. I was like totally confused between the IT, and the library, and the classes and actually in my undergraduate we don't use computers. This was one of the hard things. Sometime I can write and in the middle of my assignment, I lost it. You can just feel the frustration. (Luka, personal communication, May 13, 2013)

Students like this had a steep learning curve that affected their self-esteem – negatively at first, but then positively as they learned these skills.

English and academic skills

Students who lacked fluent English struggled to listen, speak, write and read at the levels required for their graduate studies. Like international students in other places (Cammish, 1997, pp. 143–146), they felt doubly burdened. They felt disadvantaged in class amongst peers with fluent English. An Ethiopian student expressed his concerns:

That's another challenge, in fact, to write in a good way, since we are from different countries ... we don't have English. Our people, they do not speak English. But here, since we are from different countries, our teachers, they look to our work, according to their standards or according to the other students, not understanding our problem, or our weakness in English. (Emmanuel, personal communication, April 26, 2013)

Many of these felt they greatly improved their English skills while in the country, which benefits them in the future. TGU students also felt some second-language anxiety, but they did not seem to experience as much as some international students in Europe, perhaps because most TGU students did not speak English as their first language (Charter *et al.*, 2010, pp. 8–9; Zhao & Wildemeersch, 2008, p. 55).

Pressure to succeed

Several TGU students talked of the pressure to succeed, since they were on scholarship or their families had sacrificed for them to study. Some said they would have quit in the difficult times if they could have avoided the shame. Other studies have noted similar findings (McLachlan & Justice, 2010, p. 31).

Being humbled

At TGU, as in other places, some students gave up high status (such as bishop, pastor, or teacher) to become students at TGU. They were treated as students. Being humbled was difficult, but character-building.

These self-esteem issues were more related to academics than directly to administration. Yet, the quality of services and support by student affairs and administration could either add stress to the students' whole experience or alleviate stress.

Self-actualisation

The student affairs and administrative sectors at TGU were meant to support students by enabling them to pursue their goals in their graduate studies, thus moving them towards fulfilling their purpose and calling in life. The academic content generally did provide this, as expressed by the Canadian student below:

Here the learning process is for the purpose of ministry together ... We're part of a community and we're contributing to the greater good of the church and the academy across the continent, and also a sense that our studies are relevant and needed. That's also something that our teachers have given us a strong sense of ... So there's a lot of mutual encouragement and encouragement to pray and believe that this is God's will for us. (Paulo, personal communication, April 29, 2013)

He appreciated the faculty's faith in him and was inspired to fulfil his destiny by the faculty.

Another student developed his calling by serving on the student council, where he learned about different decision-making styles. As an American, he learned cross-cultural communication skills appropriate to the local country that have helped him in his career, as he reported in an informal follow-up interview (Benjamin, personal communication, April 11, 2015).

Summary of findings

TGU international students voiced a variety of non-academic issues that affected their learning experiences. Given the continual financial constraints, the university had to accomplish its goals with minimal funds. Yet, many issues mentioned by TGU international students were not costly to remedy. For example, they needed timely information before arrival. Upon arrival, they needed assistance with basic needs, like transportation, housing, food, shopping, SIM cards, internet access and meeting people. They hoped for staff to be available when needed. Students wanted to be treated kindly and fairly, respected, listened to, and supported. They wanted clear administrative structures and processes to follow, with

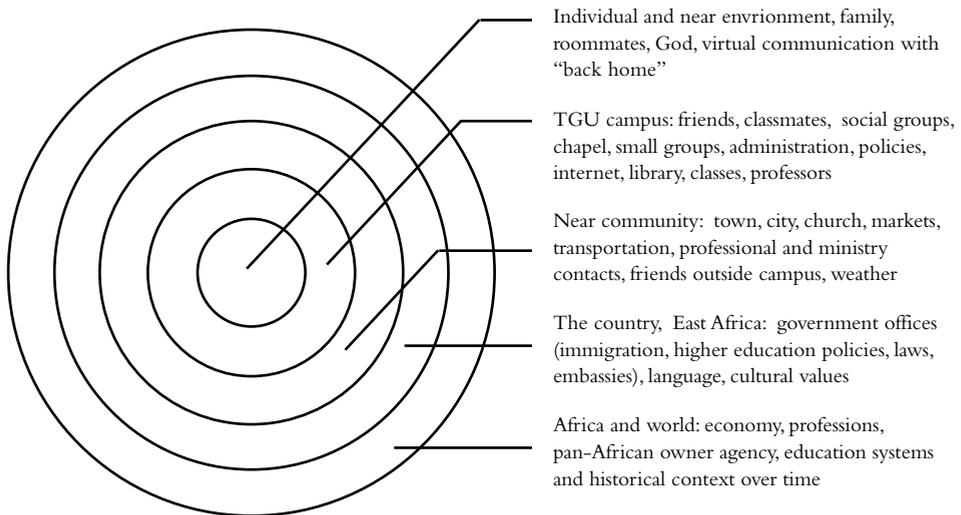
accountability of staff. They required timely access to their upkeep money. They needed valid immigration status to feel safe. Some needed support in their cultural adjustment or relationships. Some required academic support skills to help them develop confidence and competence in English, academic writing, and computer and library skills. With attention to these needs, they were able to concentrate on their higher-level needs of fulfilling their callings and the purposes for which they came to study at TGU.

The whole community can contribute to all aspects, but, at TGU, faculty focus on meeting the higher levels (self-esteem and self-actualisation) through academics, which is generally effective. Fellow students generally fulfill the love and belonging level, although they may need help making connections. The role for student affairs staff and administrative staff, therefore, is mainly addressing students' physiological and safety and security issues.

Discussion

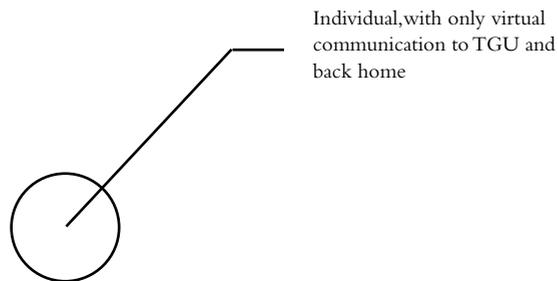
International students enter a new environment when they arrive at TGU. Even beyond campus, new international students must interface with many new sectors. Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory illustrates holistically these various sectors in the environment (Papalia, Old, & Feldman, 2004, p. 42). Adapting Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory to an international student's context at TGU may look something like the following chart:

Figure 2: TGU international student's ecological reality, adapted from Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory



In reality, the lines between the systems are not clear; they all interrelate. Yet, this chart shows a well-nestled person, tucked securely into all the systems around him/her. Internationals probably felt like that back home. However, the ecological reality for most international students upon arrival looks more like the following chart:

Figure 3: Typical international student's ecological reality upon arrival at TGU



Most TGU international students arrive with very few contacts and no local web of relationships. African systems operate on relationships. If student affairs personnel can help students to connect with others and build relationships from the very beginning, they will likely settle in more quickly and be able to focus on their studies. These relationships can help them to learn the campus culture and the environment beyond campus. Student affairs staff and administrative staff at TGU seem to focus mainly on enforcing general policies set by administration and responding to student issues as they arise. A more holistic, student-focused approach may work better to serve present international students and to facilitate attracting international students in the future. Specifically, student affairs staff can endeavour to be available, give timely information, proactively provide empathy and support, and link students to others who can help them. As noted in a previous editorial of this journal, peer interaction is key to integrating into the institution (Moja, Schreiber, & Luescher-Mamashela, 2014, p. 4). Indeed, interaction with their peers is one of the highlights for international students at TGU. Staff can facilitate this by immediately pairing them with a local student “buddy” and with an international student friend. As classes start, students can be connected with an upperclassman in their programmes and with a faculty mentor. Some students find these links themselves, but student affairs personnel have a role in making sure no one struggles silently.

Further studies

Further studies on international student support are needed. Researching ‘best practice’ models of new international student orientation and ongoing international student support at universities around Africa would be helpful. Researching international student adjustment in Africa would also prove fruitful, such as studies on the differences between various groups of students (i.e, from certain regions or first-time travellers) in order to customise orientation for various groups.

Conclusion

TGU administration and student affairs must serve the end goal of the university, which is educating students to transform their world. The quality of the non-academic services plays

a critical role in international students' educational experiences. For quality educational experience, quality administration and student support services are foundational.

To build strong student support programmes, a clear understanding of international students' experiences is essential. From there, policies and services can be revisited and developed that deal with real student issues in specific universities, from a holistic perspective. Various players on campus have different roles in this. Student affairs and administrative staff can particularly impact in the areas of information, basic needs, safety/security and connections. When international students are adequately supported in their non-academic campus experiences, they can focus better on their academics. Educational institutions that support international students well will find that their impact spreads across the world when students graduate. They may also attract more international students.

Acknowledgement

The author would like to recognise the international students who participated in this study and voluntarily shared their experiences.

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BOOK REVIEW

Wingate, Ursula (2015). *Academic Literacy and Student Diversity: The Case of Inclusive Practice*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters

Reviewed by Thengani H. Ngwenya*

Academic Literacy and Student Diversity (2015) is a book that will appeal to both experts and novices working in the field of academic literacies in higher education. This is not just another textbook on academic literacy but an incisive critique of the often taken-for-granted conceptions of academic literacy and its role in curriculum design and pedagogy. The book is a valuable and welcome contribution to the swiftly growing and reputable *New Perspectives on Language and Education* series. Adopting a scholarly approach that eschews unnecessary jargon, the author provides a wide-ranging and theoretically grounded overview of approaches to academic literacy and successfully dispels myths and misconceptions about academic literacy. By foregrounding disciplinary conventions and practices, the book seeks to promote a truly student-centred approach to higher-education pedagogy. The aims of the book are succinctly and lucidly captured in the book's introductory chapter:

1. To address common misunderstandings regarding students' academic literacy needs, most notably the perception that it is writing only that constitutes the problem; that it is mainly language proficiency that causes deficiencies in writing; and that this problem only affects certain student groups.
2. To examine existing models of literacy/writing pedagogy and consider their suitability for literacy development of diverse student populations.
3. To propose a model of inclusive academic literacy instruction and present an intervention study in which aspects of this model were applied (Wingate, 2015, p. 3).

The book's central thesis is that massification, globalisation, internationalisation and related higher-education policies have resulted in the creation of bewilderingly complex and diverse student populations in various parts of the world. The author argues that contemporary discourses on academic literacy characterised by notions of deficiency and remediation need to be supplanted by new and more nuanced approaches to academic

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literacy instruction. Wingate succeeds in convincing the reader that these approaches need to be transformational and inclusive by moving literacies, in their various forms, from the periphery of disciplinary epistemologies to the centre. The argument that academic literacy should not be designed for the so-called non-traditional student pervades all the chapters of the book, including those that are recognisably theoretical in orientation. The author's intention is clearly to disabuse mainstream academics of the misguided view that academic literacy is a set of reading and writing skills required by students from underprivileged backgrounds in order to cope with the demands of higher education. In this regard, the underpinning philosophy of the book is both egalitarian and transformative. Perhaps the most intellectually exciting section of the book is the chapter in which Wingate outlines the principles of an inclusive model of academic literacy instruction. Writing like the seasoned student development practitioner that she is, Wingate provides practical examples of approaches that have been implemented in a variety of disciplinary contexts. The resources provided, including a comprehensive bibliography on the topic, will be invaluable to researchers and academics teaching in higher education.

Relying on the work of Ochs (1986), Duff (2007, 2010) and other theorist-practitioners, Wingate presents a carefully argued case for the adoption of the language of socialisation and socio-cultural theory as analytical frameworks for interpreting both academic literacy instruction and the systematic and gradual mastery by students from diverse social and academic backgrounds of the defining conceptual basis of university disciplines. For Wingate, being academically literate denotes demonstrable and effective communicative competence in particular academic contexts. Needless to say, this conceptualisation of academic literacy neither equates nor conflates communicative competence with language proficiency or with the ability to write well. Wingate reminds both the specialist and the novice in this area that literacy, especially as the word is used in higher education contexts, is often inextricably linked to the very foundations of what constitutes knowledge in a particular discipline or set of related disciplines. As she explains in this book, academic literacy is understood as the ability to communicate competently in an academic discourse community:

In academic contexts, the social situations and core activities are mainly concerned with knowledge construction, presentation and debate, and accomplished through genres (such as the lecture, the research proposal or the essay). These genres are in turn achieved through contextually appropriate language functions (such as reporting, reasoning, proposing, hedging). (2015, p. 7)

Throughout the book the author presents a compelling argument in favour of embedding academic literacies in disciplinary discourses of which they are an indispensable conceptual and foundational component. The underlying theme of the book is thus both profound and illuminating: teaching academic literacy is not always distinguishable from teaching the content of a particular discipline or subject. Wingate's understanding and presentation of the argument for merging literacy 'skills' with subject content knowledge resonates with the ideas of Lee Shulman, who promotes what he describes as "signature pedagogies"

that derive from disciplinary and professional ways of thinking (Shulman, 2004; Pace & Middendorf, 2004; Gurung, Chick & Haynie, 2009).

The major achievement of this well-researched and eminently readable book is its blurring of artificial boundaries between subject content knowledge and written and spoken language. It is, Wingate argues, the language that provides epistemological access to the facts, procedures, and conceptual foundations of disciplinary and, by extension, professional discourses and “ways of being”.

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A reading list for practitioners and scholars of student affairs in Africa

Compiled by Tom Ellet*, Birgit Schreiber** and Travis T. York***

† Denotes repeats.

Edited for accuracy by Kgalaleo Leeuw and Thierry M. Luescher

Dr Tom Ellet's reading list

Boyer, E. (1987). *College: The undergraduate experience in America*. New York: Harper & Row.

Kramer, G. & Associates. (2007). *Fostering student success in the campus community*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Kuh, G. (2009). Understanding campus environments. In McClellan, G.S., Stringer, J. & Associates (Eds.), *The handbook of student affairs administration*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

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Important internet texts:

ACPA Statement of Ethical Principles and Standards. Go to link: http://www.acpa.nche.edu/sites/default/files/Ethical_Principles_Standards.pdf

ACPA: Professional Competency Areas for Student Affairs Practitioners: Rubrics for Professional Development. Go to link: <http://www.acpa.nche.edu/sites/default/files/professional-comp-rubrics.pdf>

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Dr Birgit Schreiber's reading list

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Prof. Travis York's reading list

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- (Note: Though this text is geared for student affairs professionals at faith-based institutions, it has incredibly rich conversations about the nature of student affairs that extend beyond any particular faith. There is also an excellent discussion of worldview and values within our profession as well as a very nice, but brief, exploration of the history of student affairs.)
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Josephine Cornell recently completed her masters degree in Psychological Research at the University of Cape Town. Her dissertation focused on transformation in higher education, specifically exploring the experiences of black students at a historically ‘whites-only’ university, using a Photovoice methodology. She is currently a research psychology intern at the UNISA-MRC’s Institute of Social and Health Sciences, Violence, Injury and Peace Research Unit and Masculinity, Tradition and Social Change Programme. She is working on projects exploring race, gender, sexuality and transformation in higher education and the drivers of violence in public protest.

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Janice Horsager Rasmussen is a PhD candidate at Africa International University, Nairobi, studying education with an international emphasis. Her research interests include teaching and learning in international classrooms, adult education pedagogies and curriculum. In addition, she teaches education courses as a Doctoral Teaching Fellow, and served as International Student Coordinator in Student Affairs from 2010 to 2014. She has lived in East Africa since 1995. Until 2008, Horsager Rasmussen taught at Lake Victoria Christian College in Mwanza, Tanzania. Before 1995, she was an Assistant Professor and Extension Educator with the University of Minnesota Extension Service for six years. In her last post there, she led a multicultural staff of 13 in community nutrition education. She received her MA in Home Economics Education in 1992 and BS in 1986.

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Dr Juan-Claude Lemmens is Head: Research and Innovation (Higher Education) at the Department for Education Innovation, University of Pretoria, South Africa. His current role as Head includes: strategic management of higher education; higher education policy

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Dr Thierry M. Luescher (Luescher-Mamashela) is Assistant Director of Institutional Research at the University of the Free State, South Africa. Prior to this he was Senior Lecturer in Higher Education Studies and Extraordinary Senior Lecturer in Political Studies at the University of the Western Cape, and a Senior Researcher at the Centre for Higher Education Transformation (CHET) in Cape Town. He obtained his PhD in Political Studies from the University of Cape Town in 2009. Thierry researches, teaches and consults on matters of international and comparative higher education, with particular interest in the nexus of higher education with politics in Africa, higher education policy and governance, student politics, the student experience of higher education, and higher education development in Africa. He has published in local and international scholarly journals including *Studies in Higher Education*, *Tertiary Education and Management*, the *South African Journal of Higher Education* and *Perspectives in Education*, as well as chapters in books, including *Knowledge Production and Contradictory Functions in Higher Education in Africa* (edited by Nico Cloete, Peter Maassen and Tracy Bailey, 2015) and *Strengthening Community University Research Partnerships: Global Perspectives* (edited by Budd Hall, Rajesh Tandon and Crystal Tremblay, 2015). He is a member of the international advisory board of the *Makerere Journal of Higher Education*, editorial board member of the series *African Higher Education Dynamics*, and journal manager and founding member of the Editorial Executive of the *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa*. Thierry is the editor of the book *Student Politics in Africa: Representation and Activism* (with M. Klemenčič and J.O. Jowi, to be published in 2016). His publication list can be viewed at: www.thierryluescher.net.

Teboho Moja

Prof. Teboho Moja is clinical professor of higher education at New York University. Her teaching experience includes high school and university levels. Moja has held key positions at several South African universities, including being appointed chair of the Council of the University of South Africa (UNISA). She has held positions as professor extraordinaire at the University of Pretoria and the University of Johannesburg (South Africa) and has been visiting professor at the University of Oslo (Norway) and University of Tampere (Finland). Teboho was instrumental in setting up the Centre for Higher Education Transformation (CHET) in South Africa and is currently serving as the chair of its board. In addition,

she has served on the boards of international bodies such as the UNESCO Institute for International Education Planning and the World Education Market. She has also served as executive director and commissioner of the National Commission on Higher Education (1995–1996), appointed by President Mandela. Before joining New York University, Teboho served as a special advisor to two ministers of education in post-1994 South Africa. Moja has authored several articles on higher education reform issues in areas such as the governance of higher education, policy processes, and impact of globalisation on higher education, and co-authored a book on educational change in South Africa. Teboho is editor-in-chief and member of the Editorial Executive of the *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa*.

Ana'dhavelli Naidoo

Prof. Ana'dhavelli Naidoo is Deputy Director: Academic Support in the Department for Education Innovation, University of Pretoria, South Africa. This role includes providing strategic leadership to the university on students' academic development. In her present position she has oversight of both professional development provided to academic staff, and institutional research carried out in the department. She is involved with the planning and implementation of the university's induction programme for new staff members. She also manages the Faculty Student Advisors who work in the nine faculties attending to issues of support for students. This particular role requires that she has links to the various support structures available at the institution. Her responsibility extends to managing the support being provided to students through international scholarships and grants. As part of her involvement in student support, Ana has developed the Extended Academic Orientation Programme for first-year students at the University of Pretoria. This has been implemented for two years, since 2014. Her interest over the past five years has grown to focus on student retention and success.

Thengamehlo (Thengani) Harold Ngwenya

Prof. Thengamehlo (Thengani) Harold Ngwenya is an Associate Professor and Director of the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching at the Durban University of Technology in South Africa. Apart from his qualifications in Literary Studies, he also holds a masters degree in Higher Education Management and a Postgraduate Diploma in Tertiary Education. Prof. Ngwenya has lectured in Literary Studies and Education Management at various South African universities for the past 25 years. He was a Deputy Dean responsible for teacher professional development in the Faculty of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal from January 2005 to April 2008. Prof. Ngwenya has published journal articles, research reports and book chapters on the theory and practice of autobiographical writing, South African literature and education management. He is on the editorial boards of the *Journal of Literary Studies* and *Alternation: Interdisciplinary Journal for the Study of the Arts and Humanities in Southern Africa*. In his current position, Prof. Ngwenya leads a team of academic development practitioners who work closely with academics in the areas of curriculum, staff and student development.

Birgit Schreiber

Dr Birgit Schreiber is Senior Director of Student Affairs at Stellenbosch University, South Africa. She has published in national and international academic journals, presented research papers and keynotes at national and international conferences and given lectures at the University of California, Berkeley, the University of Leuven in the Netherlands and the University of Oslo, Norway. She is currently appointed as Extraordinary Professor at the University of the Western Cape, South Africa. She was a visiting scholar at the University of California, Berkeley. She has been a member of the national executive and boards of various national professional organisations, including the South African Association of Senior Student Affairs Professionals (SAASSAP) and Southern African Federation of Student Affairs and Services (SAFSAS), and is the Africa Regional Coordinator of the International Association of Student Affairs and Services (IASAS). She is a founding member of the Editorial Executive of the *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa*.

Thembeke Shange

Thembeke Shange is a student development and support practitioner at Tshwane University of Technology in Pretoria, South Africa. She currently works as Programme Manager for Life Skills. She also provides e-tutoring for English Studies at the University of South Africa. Previously, as a high school teacher for 13 years, she served as Head of Department for Languages, and also provided school counselling services. Thembeke has presented at local and international conferences. Her research interest is in technology-based teaching of English. She is an aspiring researcher in student learning in higher education and is currently reading for a D.Tech. at the Tshwane University of Technology.



SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTRE

FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE AND STUDENTS IN TRANSITION

FYE What's Up #07

The South African National Resource Centre for the First Year Experience and Students in Transition (SANRC) will be hosting its 2nd annual FYE Conference on 25-27 May 2016 at the Southern Sun O.R. Tambo International Airport in Johannesburg.

Introduction

The broad theme of the Conference is aimed at providing South Africa's FYE knowledge community with a reflective space for critically examining and understanding FYE practice and strategies in both a South African and global context.

Conference Theme:

"A Practitioner's Perspective: Toward a Critical Understanding of FYE Practice and Strategies to Support Academic Success in the First Year and Beyond"

Please click on [this link](#) for further details

SANRC FYE CONFERENCE 2016

READ MORE at
www.sanrc.co.za

KEY DATES:

Abstract submission deadline: 05 February 2016

Notification of accepted abstracts: 01 March 2016

Registration opens: 01 March 2016

Final Paper and Presentation submission: 10 May 2016

Contact us at
admin@sanrc.co.za

Call for papers



Vol 4 Issue 2 2016
Open call

Submissions are invited from student affairs practitioners and researchers in student affairs and higher education studies. The *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa* is seeking contributions for its Volume 4 Issue 2 (2016). The Editorial Executive of the *JSAA* welcomes theoretical, practice-relevant, and professional-reflective contributions from across the scholarly field and professional domains of student affairs and services that are relevant to the African higher education context. Details of the scope and focus and editorial policies of the Journal can be found under 'JSAA About' on the Journal's website www.jsaa.ac.za. Particularly welcome are:

- Case studies and comparative studies of innovative practices and interventions in student affairs in the context of African higher education (e.g. in career development, citizenship development, community engagement and volunteering, counselling, leadership development, residence management, student sport, teaching and learning, student engagement, student governance and politics, as well as all aspects of student life);
- Conceptual discussions of student affairs and development, and key enablers and inhibitors of student development in Africa;
- High-level reflective practitioner accounts of an empirical, normative or conceptual nature. By this, we mean both critical-reflective accounts of practices as well as personal reflections which can provide the building blocks for future case studies and the development of grounded theory;
- Explorations of the nexus of student affairs theory, policy and practice in the African context and beyond; and
- Syntheses and explorations of authoritative literature, theories, and professional trends related to student affairs in Africa.

The Journal also publishes relevant book reviews and professional and conference reports and notices from scholarly associations and institutions.

Please email the Journal Manager, Dr Thierry Luescher, with any queries or suggestions

for contributions (Email: jsaa_editor@outlook.com). To send us a manuscript for consideration, please register as an author and consult the submission guidelines on the Journal's website (www.jsaa.ac.za). Manuscripts can be submitted directly to the Journal Manager via email. The *JSAA* is a peer-reviewed publication and adheres to the ASSAf Guidelines for best practice in scholarly publishing. The Journal is committed to assisting emerging scholars and professionals in developing promising manuscripts to the point of publication.

The **closing date** for receiving papers to be considered for Volume 4 Issue 2 is 31 May 2016.

Please note: There are no processing fees or page fees. No costs accrue to authors of articles accepted for publication.



The International Association of Student Affairs and Services was officially founded on March 1, 2010. The purposes of IASAS are to:

- Strengthen and diversity cooperation among individuals and organizations in the student affairs and services field worldwide.
- Promote the student affairs and services profession at the international level through advocacy with governmental and higher education organizations, networking and sharing information among practitioners and student groups, and encouraging high quality preparation and professional development programs.
- Provide a platform for the improvement of multi and intercultural communication and understanding.
- Promote the welfare of students in higher education worldwide through collaboration with international governmental and non-governmental organisations and addressing such issues as access, retention, quality, student rights, and the cost of higher education.

IASAS utilizes technology for conducting most of its activities. This includes such applications as the IASAS website, email, internet and video conferencing, and social networks, etc. Occasional face-to-face meetings are held in various locations around the world and in conjunction with existing meetings of international, national, and regional groups whenever possible.

IASAS Africa Regional Coordinator:
Dr Birgit Schreiber (South Africa), Email: africaregion@iasasonline.org
IASAS website: <http://www.iasasonline.org>

Latest publications by African Minds



The goal of the book *Perspectives on Student Affairs in South Africa* is to generate interest in student affairs in South Africa. The chapters contained herein are based on best practice, local experience and well-researched international and local theories. The chapters deal with matters pertaining to international and national trends in student affairs: academic development, access and retention, counselling, and material support for students coming from disadvantaged backgrounds. They are linked to national and international developments, as described in the first two chapters.

This publication will assist both young and experienced practitioners as they grow into their task of developing the students entrusted to them. All contributors are South Africans with a great deal of experience in student affairs, and all are committed to the advancement of student affairs in South Africa. The editors are former heads of student affairs portfolios at two leading South African universities.

Perspectives on Student Affairs in South Africa is edited by M. Speckman and M. Mandew and was published in May 2014 by African Minds. It is available in print from the publisher's website www.africanminds.org.za. The full PDF can be downloaded free of charge from the same site.



Knowledge Production and Contradictory Functions in African Higher Education

Edited by Nico Cloete, Peter Maassen & Tracy Bailey, 2015.

“This volume brings together excellent scholarship and innovative policy discussion to demonstrate the essential role of higher education in the development of Africa and of the world at large. Based on deep knowledge of the university system in several African countries, this book will reshape the debate on development in the global information economy for years

to come. It should be mandatory reading for academics, policy-makers and concerned citizens, in Africa and elsewhere.” – Manuel Castells, Professor Emeritus, University of California at Berkeley.

It is available in print from the publisher's website www.africanminds.org.za. The full PDF can be downloaded free of charge from the same site.

Submissions

Please register as an author and read the Author Guidelines at www.jsaa.ac.za. Submissions must be made by email to the Journal Manager at jsaa_editor@outlook.com.

The *JSAA* typically has themed issues. However, submissions that fall within the general scope and focus of the Journal can be made at any time and may be published irrespective of the overall theme of the Journal. Particularly encouraged are open-theme manuscripts that address the following:

- Case studies of innovative practices in student affairs in the context of African higher education (e.g. in teaching and learning, residence management, student governance, student counselling).
- High-level reflective practitioner accounts.
- Explorations of the nexus of student affairs theory, policy and practice in the African context and beyond.
- Conceptual discussions of student development, and key enablers and inhibitors of student development in Africa.
- Explorations of authoritative literature, theory and professional trends related to student affairs in Africa.

Please note that there are different requirements for different types of manuscripts:

- **Research articles:** Contributors are encouraged to submit research-based manuscripts. Research articles must include an extensive consideration of recent literature and relevant theory. Research-based articles must be original and research-based and must make a significant conceptual (or empirical or normative) contribution relevant to the scope and focus of the *JSAA*. The length must be approximately 5 000 words, including all references, notes, tables and figures. Manuscripts should be accompanied by an abstract of approximately 150–300 words.
- **Reflective practitioner accounts:** High-quality reports on professional campus practice are screened and reviewed according to the same criteria as for research articles, albeit with a different emphasis. Unlike a research article, they do not need to include an extensive consideration of recent literature and theory, but they must nonetheless comply with standard academic convention and scholarly practice. Reflective practitioner articles must be original, must make a significant empirical contribution, and must significantly enhance our understanding of student affairs practice within their respective scope and focus. Typical length should be 2 500–5 000 words. Manuscripts should be accompanied by an abstract of approximately 150–300 words.
- **Book reviews** should be between 800 and 1 000 words in length. Competent reviews of key student affairs books are published at the discretion of the Editorial Executive.
- **Comments and critique**, of no more than 2 500 words, are also welcome.
- **Proposal for the Journal's Dialogue/Interview section and Calls and Notices** should be emailed directly to the Journal Manager. The publication of calls and notices (for conferences, vacancies, etc.) may incur a nominal fee.

Authors are required to check their submission's compliance with all of the following items, and submissions that do not adhere to these guidelines may be returned to authors.

1. The submission has not been previously published, nor is it before another journal for consideration (or an explanation has been provided in Comments to the Editor).
2. The submission file is in MS Word, OpenOffice, or RTF document file format.
3. The text is double-spaced; uses a 12-point font; employs italics rather than underlining (except with URL addresses); and all illustrations, figures and tables are placed within the text at the appropriate points, rather than at the end.
4. The text adheres to the stylistic and bibliographic requirements outlined on the Journal's website.
5. The Journal uses the APA author–date referencing system.
6. If submitting to a peer-reviewed section of the Journal, i.e. as a research article or reflective practitioner account, the instructions in Ensuring a Blind Review must have been followed.
7. If submitting a proposal for the Dialogue section, a Call/Notice, or a Comment/Critique, this should be emailed directly to the Journal Manager.
8. The final text of the article has been professionally edited and proofread prior to submission.
9. The front page of the manuscript indicates the Section under which it is proposed that the article be published, i.e. Research Article (peer-reviewed); Reflective Practice (peer-reviewed); or Book Reviews/Dialogues/other contributions.

10. Permission to reproduce any copyrighted material has been obtained and can be produced should this be requested by the Editorial Team.

Section review policy and process

The *JSAA* publishes research articles (peer-reviewed); high-quality reflective practitioner accounts (peer-reviewed); dialogues/interviews (non-reviewed); and book reviews (non-reviewed). The Journal is committed to assisting emerging scholars and professionals in developing promising manuscripts to the point of publication.

Editorial commentary

Open submissions Indexed Peer reviewed

Research articles and professional practitioner accounts

Open submissions Indexed Peer reviewed

Campus dialogue/interview section

Open submissions Indexed Peer reviewed

Book reviews

Open submissions Indexed Peer reviewed

The editorial and peer-review policy adheres to the *ASSAf National Code of Best Practice in Editorial Discretion and Peer Review for South African Scholarly Journals* (ASSAf Council, 2008). All submitted manuscripts undergo an initial careful examination by the Editorial Executive Committee to ensure that authors' submissions fall within the mission, scope and focus of the *JSAA* and conform to scholarly best practice. Qualifying scholarly research-based articles and high-quality, relevant reflective practitioner accounts are blind-reviewed by at least two peer reviewers, who would typically be members of the International Editorial Advisory Board of the *JSAA*. Peer reviewers have proven scholarly and/or professional expertise in the subject matter of a manuscript. Reviewer reports are assessed by a member of the Editorial Executive and form the basis of any decision by the Editorial Executive on how to proceed with a manuscript. The suitability of a manuscript is evaluated in terms of originality, significance, scholarship, scope and interest, and accessibility.

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Journal of Student Affairs in Africa

The Journal of Student Affairs in Africa (JSAA) is an independent, peer-reviewed, multi-disciplinary, open-access academic journal that publishes scholarly research and reflective discussions about the theory and practice of student affairs in Africa.

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Book review

Wingate, Ursula (2015). Academic Literacy and Student Diversity:

The Case of Inclusive Practice. Bristol: Multilingual Matters

Reviewed by Thengani H. Ngwenya

Further reading

A reading list for practitioners and scholars of Student Affairs in Africa

Compiled by Tom Ellet, Birgit Schreiber and Travis T. York

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