Journal of Student Affairs in Africa

Volume 8 Issue 1 2020

Centring the student experience in Africa

AFRICAN SUN MEDIA

OPEN ACCESS

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.

Vision and mission
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.

Focus and scope
The *JSAA* considers theoretical, practice-relevant and reflective contributions from across the scholarly field of student affairs and professional domains of student development/student affairs, taking due cognisance that the scope is broad, fluid and context-dependent.

The scope of *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 movement, student organisations, student orientation, student policy, student politics and activism, student sport, student support, academic development (and its intersection with the student affairs co-curriculum), graduate attributes, and teaching and learning support. This list of keywords is not exhaustive. Our key focus area is the core functions of student affairs and services in Africa.

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. Submit by email to: jsaa_editor@outlook.com.

www.jsaa.ac.za

ISSN 2311-1771 (print)
ISSN 2307-6267 (electronic)
JSAA is available open access at: www.jsaa.ac.za

Indexed in the Directory of Open Access Journal, African Journals Online (AJOL) at www.ajol.info, and the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC). DHET-accredited scholarly journal in South Africa.

AFRICAN SUN MEDIA
UNIVERSITEIT STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY
OPEN ACCESS

Editorial team

Contents

EDITORIAL

Racism and Corona: Two Viruses affecting Higher Education and the Student Experience

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

Introduction

This issue comes at a time when the world is in the grip of the coronavirus pandemic and on lockdown, and when there is a worldwide outrage over the continuous violation of black bodies and the injustice and inhumanity inherent in systems and practices steeped in racism. The coronavirus and its impact on higher education, on students and Student Affairs and Services, and the devastating impact of racism in higher education and the student experience and the work it involves for Student Affairs and Services are the themes of this editorial.

Coronavirus

At no time in history has Student Affairs and Services so widely, rapidly and deeply been impacted by a health emergency. Covid-19 as the illness is called, is challenging us to develop innovative responses to this global health threat while preserving and continuing to advance the overarching values in Student Affairs. As soon as students were rushed off campuses into lockdown, Corona shined a ghastly light on the pervasive socioeconomic inequities which render the educational project in Africa and across the world unreachable to many. Universities are unequally equipped to offer equitable learning experiences to all in the best of times. As much as the same are challenged to deliver functional online and blended learning and development experiences even under normal circumstances, the migration to emergency remote teaching and service provision has thrown open even deeper fissures.

* Dr Birgit Schreiber is a member of the Africa Centre for Transregional Research at the University of Freiburg, and the Vice-President of IASAS and a member of the *JSAA* Editorial Executive. She is a Senior Consultant for Higher Education Leadership and Management and for Stellenbosch University, South Africa. Email: birgitschreiber@sun.ac.za; birgitdewes@gmail.com

** Prof. Teboho Moja is Clinical Professor of Higher Education, New York University, U.S.A. She is alo a Visiting Research Fellow at the Centre for the Advancement of Scholarship, University of Pretoria, South Africa. and an Extraordinary Professor at the Institute of Post-School Studies, University of the Western Cape, South Africa. She is *JSAA*'s Editor-in-chief. Email: teboho.moja@nyu.edu

*** Prof. Thierry M. Luescher is a Research Director of Post-schooling and Work in the Inclusive Economic Development Division of the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), Cape Town, and Associate Professor of Higher Education affiliated to the University of the Free State, Mangaung/Bloemfontein, South Africa. He is a member of the *JSAA* Editorial Executive. Email: tluescher@hsrc.ac.za

What can be offered on campus with its superior infrastructure and facilities is far from the conditions that many students are faced with in remote locations at home. Much that determines connectivity here is far beyond the reach of a university's ability to mitigate and ameliorate. And if infrastructure, technological, and personal device and data challenges were not enough, there is naturally a greatly uneven readiness of Student Affairs and teaching staff to engage in and offer emergency remote development and support. To adjust from face-to-face teaching, learning and support to online provision is a significant challenge of adjustment (not only academic, but also social, familial and economic). Student Affairs finds itself at the centre of the challenge, but at a periphery of being able to mitigate it, even though Student Affairs is precisely the best equipped and positioned to assist with such adjustments.

Student Affairs professionals became the essential service providers in higher education as they continued to work on making sure students were safe while their academics were in progress remotely. They had to make sure that students move out of residences, travel home nationally and internationally, and that Student Affairs remain in contact with them and provide all kinds of services while working remotely.

In the time of crisis, Student Affairs is needed more and different services are required of its essential workers. Yet, how can we develop graduate attributes, diversity and leadership competencies, enhance student engagement and promote social justice values on the remote? How can we support those students who are in greatest need of support: differently abled students, students with mental and physical health challenges, students impacted by gender violence, students who face alienation and have epistemological access challenges, first-year students, first generation students and students with severe financial problems, and so forth. How can we empower our students when many are excluded from learning or are attempting to learn and develop in quite unconducive conditions?

These questions and many more will be discussed in depth and across many different countries and institutional contexts in our Special Covid-19 Issue, Vol. 9 Issue 1. We will focus on the impact of Corona and the Covid-19 pandemic, as announced in the call for papers that we issued in March 2020 and which closed in May 2020. Set aside the challenges and tragedies that define the pandemic, it has been incredible to receive 112 submissions of proposals in response to this call from Student Affairs practitioners and researchers in13 African countries (and others from across the globe). It has been painful and rewarding to select from these submissions 30 proposals to accept, of which we hope to publish at least fifteen fully developed and peer-reviewed papers in the special issue. To us, the response to this call evidences that Africa's Student Affairs has been moved to action and risen to respond to this challenge like never before.

#BlackLivesMatter

At the heart of Student Affairs work are the principles of diversity, equity, redress, social justice and inclusivity, which express themselves in our practices to give every student – irrespective of their race, gender, class, religion, ability, sexual orientation, ethnicity or nationality – a fair chance to succeed in their educational aspirations and develop into

well-rounded citizens. Our anti-discrimination and diversity work would not be necessary, was it not that racism, sexism and so forth also infiltrate higher education.

The police murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, USA, on 25 May 2020 led to a global outrage against the use of excessive force by police officers – particularly against black suspects. The #BlackLivesMatter movement has given much energy, inspiration and momentum to the demonstrations against police violence. In Africa, the wave of demonstrations has been linked with an outcry against police brutality during the Covid-19 lockdown in a number of countries. In South Africa alone, at least 10 people have died at the hands of law enforcement, typically in poor, black communities. At the same time, there are reports of spikes in gender-based violence and femicide across Africa. Irrespective of lockdown, from Lagos to Mombasa, from Alexandria to Cape Town, students are taking up these social justice issues more forcefully and widespread than we have ever seen.

Student Affairs is part of these movements not only to assist students in impacting history and changing social and academic systems in effective ways, but also that participation in these movements become opportunities to empower our students as agents of social justice once they leave higher education. At the same time, similar issues have to be addressed within our institutions as students have called for the decolonization of higher education, which is a call to end racism in its various forms. Like the coronavirus, so must the scourges of racism and tribalism, sexism and homophobia, religious intolerance and classist discrimination spur us on to determined action.

Student Centring on the Lived Student Experience

In our complex contexts, centring on the lived experience of students and seeking to understand how different students and student groups navigate their living and learning experiences, continues to be a major challenge for Student Affairs in Africa. Only by doing so can we collectively grow our knowledge base and develop best practices and relevant theory.

The student-centred development and learning experience is premised on the notion of the autonomous, independent student, who takes responsibility for their development and self-directed engagement with their living and learning context as part of a life-long process. Students are constructed as active participant and responsible members of the living, learning and development higher education community who construct meaning and relevance in and through their learning and development. The student's unique and prior experience, their assumptions, beliefs and attitudes about the world and the continued reconstruction of their worldview are at the core of the student-centred development experience. Student-centred learning and development is a recognition of the student's diversity, varied engagement and learning styles.

This issue of *JSAA* contains 7 articles which implicitly and explicitly foreground student-centred learning and development, and share the focus on different kinds of students' lived experiences. In particular, they study:

- Students with financial challenges;
- Differently abled students;

- Residence students seeking common ground;
- Student biographies;
- Students who become active in protests;
- Rural residence and non-residence students; and
- First-year students.

The diversity of students, multiple facets of student living and learning, and the complexity of different contexts highlight the significance of the notion of student centredness. This issue emphasises the vast range of contextual, institutional, social and personal readiness of students to engage with the development process.

In This Issue

Sikhwari, Dama, Gadisi and Matodzi from the University of Venda report on their research of the textured impact of living and learning on their university campus, showing that experiencing the university by living and learning on campus is indeed generating better results for students than living off campus. They highlight the role of integration into the social sphere of the university as making a significant difference in the students' commitment, success and retention.

Mosia and Phasha illuminate the experience of students living and learning with disability and remind poignantly of the persistent inequities in our society and in HE. While this is widely documented, as laid out in their literature review, it continues to be a critical point in the struggle towards social justice and equity.

The experience of first-year students is the focus of a quantitative study by Uleanya and Rugbeer at the University of Zululand. It is during this period that adjustment is a crucial aspect of a successful completion of the first year and the authors demonstrate and make specific recommendations around the immense value SAS can make in this regard.

Pretorius and Blaauw in their article on subjective well-being of students add to the evidence on the role of context on student experience and conclude that the context of where and how a student is able to live and learn plays a significantly positive role in the overall student experience. In this study the subjective well-being of students is correlated to the sense of belonging and their academic experience.

The starting point of Qoza's article "Choreographies of Protest Performance as Recruitment to Activism" is the question, why and how student bystanders become involved in protest enactment. Analysing her observations and student protesters' reflections on the significance of "the vibe" or atmosphere, and its co-construction in protest performance, Qoza argues that participation in protesting may be more about co-enacting a performance – as in joining a group dance – than about identifying with a particular organisation's interests and demands.

Maseko and Stützner focus on the student residence leadership and the research questions focus on the collaboration of student leadership with institutional leadership around impacting transformation. The article elaborates on the shift towards dialogic conversation between all partners towards the pluralistic transforming space.

Masango, Muloiwa, Wagner and Pinheiro present the results of a study done on the biographical questionnaire and argue that knowing specific information about students very early on their academic career enables SAS to tailor the responses into attuned and relevant support, right in time.

Two Literature Reviews and Two Book Reviews

Following on from *JSAA*'s issue focused on living communities and residence life (*JSAA* Vol. 7(2)), we publish in the present issue two annotated reading lists of seminal historical as well as current Student Affairs literature related to student housing and residence life. They were respectively compiled by Nupur Goyal of New York University in Shanghai and Christopher J. Stipeck of NYU in New York.

We also publish two book reviews on the recently published book, *Reflections of South African Student Leaders, 1994 to 2017*, edited by Thierry Luescher, Denyse Webbstock and Ntokozo Bhengu, published in March 2020 by African Minds, South Africa. This book is part of a book series on leadership in higher education established by the South African Council on Higher Education. Both reviews describe the book in different ways as a significant sociopolitical reflection and commentary – appreciating, on the one hand, the diversity of the student leaders and their reflections, and providing, on the other hand, a caveat around the danger of 'romanticising' the 2015/16 student protests known, *inter alia*, as #FeesMustFall.

And Finally…

As customary in the first issue of the year, we want to thank our faithful expert peer reviewers, without whom this kind of indigenous knowledge creation would not be possible. The names of reviewers who helped select the articles published in our 2019 Volume 7 are listed in our 'Thank you to our reviewers'.

Finally, we also want to thank the Division Student Affairs of Stellenbosch University in South Africa for their generous contribution to making this issue possible.

How to cite:

Schreiber, B., Moja, T. & Luescher, T.M. (2020). Racism and Corona: Two Viruses affecting Higher Education and the Student Experience. *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa*, 8(1), v-ix. DOI: 10.24085/JSAA.v8i1.4178

Research article

A Comparative Study of the Academic Performance of Resident and Non-resident Students at a Rural South African University

Tshimangadzo Daniel Sikhwari,* Nkhangweleni Gloria Dama,**
Azwitamisi Milton Gadisi*** & Tshifhiwa Christinah Matodzi****

Abstract

Lack of sufficient accommodation in many South African universities has forced many students to reside outside the campus and commute to attend classes as commuter students. Research indicates that living on campus is related to gains in social and personal competence. The level of competence gained may help students living on campus (resident students) to be more successful in their courses. The purpose of this study was to compare the academic performance of resident and non-resident students at a university in Limpopo Province. The study employed a survey design. Systematic sampling and snowball sampling methods were used to select 1 769 participants from both resident and non-resident students. A questionnaire was used to collect data. The main finding from this study is that the academic performance of resident students is slightly better than that of non-resident students – hence, residing on campus is an advantage. The study concludes that campus environment, student involvement as well as student academic and social integration into the institution tend to account for effects of living on-campus versus living off-campus. Furthermore, academic and social integration of students at university are essential for study commitment, success and preventing students from dropping out. The study recommends that future research should focus on the direct influence of resident versus commuter status on such outcomes as degree aspiration, satisfaction with university and institutional persistence.

Keywords

accommodation; commitment; commuter; integration; involvement; learning environment; perception; persistence; resident students; university

Introduction

The dawn of democracy in 1994 saw an increase in demand for access to higher education in South Africa. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) had to provide sufficient accommodation as more students were studying away from home. However, most

* Dr Tshimangadzo Daniel Sikhwari is an External Supervisor of Postgraduate Research Studies at the Department of Psychology of Education, University of South Africa. Email: sikhwaritd@gmail.com

** Dr Nkhangweleni Gloria Dama is a Student Counsellor at the Student Counselling and Career Development Unit, University of Venda. Email: gloria.dama@univen.ac.za

*** Mr Azwitamisi Milton Gadisi is a Library Liaison Officer at the Disability Unit, University of Venda. Email: azwitamisi.gadisi@univen.ac.za

**** Mrs Tshifhiwa Christinah Matodzi is a Student Counsellor at the Disability Unit, University of Venda. Email: tshifhiwa.matodzi@univen.ac.za

universities could not cater for the increased numbers of students seeking university accommodation. The increased demand for quality accommodation in the South African higher education sector has been a serious matter of contention amongst students and student bodies (Gopal & Van Niekerk, 2018). Jansen and Dube (2013) report that between 2009 and 2013, the South African higher education sector experienced 39 student protests over student housing. As a direct consequence of these protests, the Minister of Higher Education, Dr Blade Nzimande, set up a task team in 2011 to investigate the national student housing crisis. The objective of the task team was to investigate the magnitude of student accommodation challenges and to offer a well-motivated solution for redressing the accommodation problem in South African universities. The task team found that the severe shortage of accommodation is causing the vast majority of students to seek off-campus accommodation which is often in unsafe areas and in unacceptable conditions (DHET, 2011).

The provision of accessible, decent and safe accommodation in South African universities is of importance for academic success of students, especially those from rural and poor backgrounds. Many students, particularly those studying in historically Black institutions, have been experiencing a shortage of accommodation on university campuses. As a result, students are forced to stay in accommodation outside the university, while others are housed inside the campus, although both resident and non-resident students are expected to complete their studies in record time. Amole (1997) defines resident students as those residing in the university residences during their studies and day students as students who reside outside the university campus; non-resident students include those residing in their own homes or in hired accommodation outside the university. It was indicated that resident students have more benefits, like access to ancillary buildings, sports facilities, religious activities and clubs, than day students. According to Timmons (2014), resident students enjoy such benefits as being able to to attend classes punctually and access to the library for longer periods, whereas non-resident students residing far from their campus, encounter difficulties in these aspects. Non-resident students, therefore, spend extensive time travelling before they arrive at the university.

Many educators believe that there should be close proximity between the living and learning environments in order to produce intellectuals who are socially integrated and mentally sound (Oluwaseyi, 2015). According to O'Toole, Peterson and Wetzel (1999), living off-campus diverts the students' time and attention towards other obligations which may deprive them of the opportunity to "develop a sense of place". Lutta (2008) assessed a number of factors related to the retention of students at a university in southern U.S.A. He found that over 75% of the students who did not return to the university for their third year lived off-campus, that is, they were commuter students. Newbold, Melita and Forbus (2011) conducted an analysis of commuter versus residential students' performance which indicated that there were several key differences between the two groups. Their results indicated that commuter students live more of their lives in the off-campus setting, and thus their support resources are likely to be off-campus as well. Students living on campus have greater access to resources, like counsellors, advisers and fellow students when

faced with any problem they may have. Astin (1985) found that, as compared to commuters, resident students had more interaction with faculty and peers, had more opportunities of involvement in extracurricular activities, were more satisfied with college, had higher degree aspirations, were less likely to drop out and were more likely to obtain a bachelor's degree after four years of college. Pascarella (1984) assessed the effects of residential living on four outcomes measures: educational aspirations, satisfaction with college, rate of progress through college, and intentions to persist after two years. Pascarella also found that living on campus versus commuting had no significant direct effect on any of the four measures. The influence of residence was nevertheless indirect and influenced by levels of involvement with faculty and peers (Pascarella, 1984). Similarly, Abrahamowicz (1988) examined the effects of involvement in college activities at a commuter institution. He found large differences in perceptions of, and satisfaction with, the college experience between students who participated in student organisations and those who did not. He concluded that many of the potentially negative effects of commuting could be alleviated by encouraging participation in student activities (Abrahamowicz, 1988).

A study conducted by Kuh, Gonyea and Palmer (2001) indicated that living on campus was related to gains in social and personal competencies. The level of competence gained may help resident students to be more successful in their courses. By contrast, commuter students were found to have slightly lower levels of interaction with faculty members and were less likely to be involved in co-curricular activities, such as clubs and internships (Kuh, Gonyea & Palmer, 2001). When commuter students compare themselves to their peers on campus, they might feel that they are at a disadvantage in terms of skills development. They may also feel that they are not involved in the essential activities of the university (Nelson, Nisra, Sype & Mackie, 2016). This may discourage these non-resident students and influence their commitment to continuing with their studies. Norris, Philhours and Hudson (2006) conducted an analysis of business students' study habits. They divided the research subjects into two groups: campus-centred students (CCS) and life-centred students (LCS). Campus-centred students lived on-campus while life-centred students lived off-campus. Their results indicated that campus-centred students had slightly higher grade-point averages (GPAs) and higher self-reported levels of academic performance.

Wilmes and Quade (cited in Jacoby, 1989) identified the following needs and concerns of commuter students:

- ***Transportation issues***: The most common concerns shared by commuter students are those related to transportation to campus, such as fixed transportation schedules, transportation costs and finding alternative means of transportation. In general, commuting is demanding in terms of time and energy.
- ***Integrating support systems***: Commuter students derive their support off-campus from parents, siblings and friends in the community. Students have to negotiate with family members and friends to establish priorities and responsibilities and to allocate time. These negotiations are more difficult if significant others have no knowledge of the challenges and opportunities of higher education. In our African culture, for example, female students may be expected to do household

chores after classes. It is important for institutions to provide opportunities for these students to learn about and to participate appropriately in campus life.

- ***Developing a sense of belonging***: Commuter students often lack a sense of belonging, of "feeling wanted" by the institution. In most cases, institutions do not provide adequate opportunities for commuter students to develop relationships with faculty, staff and other students. As a result, students do not feel connected to a place where they have no significant relationships.
- ***Multiple life roles***: Being a student is only one of several important and demanding roles in life. Commuter students include full-time students who live at home with their parents as well as fully employed adults who live with their spouses and children and attend classes as part-time students. So, some commuter students work and many have responsibilities for managing households and for caring for children, siblings or older relatives. It is therefore important that any information about campus activities is made available to them in a timely manner so that they can decide if they need to participate.

The purpose of this study was to compare the academic performance of resident and non-resident students at a university in Limpopo Province. The authors deemed it fit to do this research in a predominantly residential institution to find out if commuting to university affects commuter students' academic performance.

Theoretical Frameworks

The ecosystem model

According to Jacoby (1989), the ecosystem model indicates that unsatisfactory educational outcomes may be the result of a deficit in the environment rather than in the student. The ecosystems model is based on the beliefs that every student possesses the potential for a variety of behaviours and that a given campus environment may encourage or inhibit one or more of these behaviours. Jacoby (1989) further posits that the wide range of individual differences amongst students requires the creation of a variety of campus sub-environments. Banning and Hughes (1986) are of the opinion that successful campus design according to the ecosystems model must consider the diversity of students, and depends upon participation of all campus members, including students, faculty and staff. The ecosystem design process demands institutional change to improve the working relationship between commuter students and the campus. For example, the institution can adjust its patterns of scheduling courses and hours of operation in order to enable commuter students to attend classes or to use services without hassles (Banning & Hughes, 1986).

Involvement, talent development and integration

Jacoby (1989) declares that "the more time and efforts students invest in their learning process and the more intensely they engage in their own education, the greater will be their growth, achievement and satisfaction with the college experience and their persistence

toward attainment of their educational goals". The concept of students' involvement, incorporated into a talent-development view of higher education, holds that a high-quality institution is one that facilitates maximum growth amongst its students and that records that growth through appropriate assessment procedures (Astin, 1985). Learning and personal growth occur best in institutional environments where students' talents can be identified and developed. Tinto (1987) points out that a model for understanding the process of student withdrawal is based on the degree of social and intellectual integration within the institution. This model postulates that a student's background characteristics at the time of entry influence initial commitments to the institution and to graduation. This combination of background characteristics and initial commitments in turn influences the student's academic and social integration into the institution. Students decide to leave when they are not adequately integrated into the academic and social areas of the institution, and their background characteristics influence the decision to withdraw only indirectly (Tinto, 1987).

Transition theory

According to Jacoby (1989), a transition can be an event, such as when a first-entering student enrols in a local university while living at home. Jacoby further states that transitions change the ways individuals view themselves and alter their roles, routines and relationships within the family, the community and the institution of higher education. A transition is therefore not so much a matter of change as it is the individual's perception of the change (Jacoby, 1989). It is important that university staff be aware of the fact that some of their students, especially first years, are in a transition period and they should be prepared to assist them in adjusting to their new roles, challenges and relationships.

Methodology

Research approach and design

The present study was based on the positivist paradigm. Positivism is an approach to social research that seeks to apply the natural science model of research to investigations of social phenomena and explanations of the social world (De Vos et al., 2011). According to Babbie and Mouton (2001), positivists believe that an objective reality exists outside of personal experience that has demonstrable and immutable laws and mechanisms that can reveal cause-and-effect relationships. Positivism maintains that it is possible and essential for the researcher to adopt a distant, detached, neutral and non-interactive position (Morris, 2006). The researchers adopted a quantitative approach for this study. Quantitative research is a type of research that explains phenomena by collecting numerical data that are analysed using mathematically based methods (Creswell, 2012). The analyses consist of breaking down the data into parts to answer the research questions. Quantitative research operates with less detail than qualitative methods, but with a wider scope and more generalised level of explanation (Payne & Payne, 2004). The study employed a survey design. According to Creswell (2012), a survey design is a procedure in quantitative research in which the

researcher administers a survey or questionnaire to a group of people to identify trends in attitudes, opinions, behaviours or practices. The design was chosen because it is convenient for acquiring factual information about a large group of individuals (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

Participants

The study used systematic sampling method to select 924 participants from the population of all resident students at the university. In addition, the researcher asked selected participants (resident students) to identify day students who had registered for the same degree programmes to participate in the study; this procedure is known as snowball sampling (Creswell, 2012). Eight hundred and forty-five (845) day students were thereby selected to participate in the study, making a total of 1769 participants.

Data collection

A questionnaire was used to collect data. The questionnaire had two sections: Section 1 consisted of questions on biographical data of the participants and Section 2 consisted of closed-ended and open-ended questions on living and study conditions in students' places of residence, on-campus and off-campus. The questionnaire was given to an experienced statistician to establish its content and construct validity before it was administered to the participants. The questionnaires were hand-delivered to all selected participants, with the help of research assistants. Four male research assistants distributed 1030 questionnaires in male on-campus residences while five female research assistants distributed 1015 questionnaires in female on-campus residences; hence, the total number of questionnaires distributed in both male and female on-campus residences was 2045. Questionnaires amounting to nearly half of this total were distributed to day students by research assistants. A total of 1882 completed questionnaires were collected from both resident and non-resident students. This amounted to 86% of the questionnaires that were distributed and was regarded as a good return rate. In order to compare the academic performance of the participating students, performance records were requested from the Management Information System (MIS) office at the University.

Data analysis

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyse data. Chi-square tests of association were used to investigate (i) if there was an association between the responses to certain questions and the status of the student and (ii) whether, if a student passes all their courses or not is dependent on the status of the student. A *t*-test for independent samples was used to investigate if, on average, the academic achievement of resident and non-resident students was the same.

Ethical considerations

Participants were informed about the purpose of the research. Their participation was voluntary and they were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time. Participants' identities were confidential as they did not use their names. Permission to conduct the study was sought from the University's Research Ethics Committee.

Results

The academic performance data of resident and non-resident students for 2016 were obtained from the university's Management Information System (MIS) office. The data sets contained the number of subjects that each student enrolled for in 2016, the number of subjects passed, and the average mark across all the subjects. These records were then merged with data generated from the questionnaire using the SSPS software. The student number was used as the key variable for matching the records. The table below gives the summary of the number of courses that the students enrolled for and the number of courses passed.

Table 1: Number of subjects enrolled and passed

		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Non-resident students	Subjects enrolled	439	1	14	9.31	2.682
	Subjects Passed	439	1	14	8.29	3.000
Resident students	Subjects enrolled	556	1	18	9.29	2.918
	Subjects Passed	556	0	18	8.44	3.252

For non-resident students, the number of courses enrolled in ranged between 1 and 14. The mean was 9.31 with a standard deviation of 2.682. The number of courses passed had a similar range with a slightly lower mean of 8.21 and a standard deviation of 3.00. For resident students, the number of courses enrolled in ranged between 1 and 18. The mean was 9.29 with a standard deviation of 2.918. The number of courses ranged between zero and 18 with a slightly lower mean of 8.44 and a standard deviation of 3.252. The table below gives summary statistics for the average marks.

Table 2: Average marks

	Day or Resident students	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Average marks	Day students	439	60.55	7.151	0.341
	Resident students	556	61.59	7.870	0.334

The mean score for non-resident students was 60.55 with a standard deviation of 7.151. For resident students, the mean score was 61.59 with a standard deviation of 7.870.

Thus, resident students marginally outperformed the day students. A *t*-test for independent samples was used to ascertain if the difference in the average scores is significant. The key assumption underpinning the need of the *t*-test is that the data should be normally distributed. The histogram below shows that the distribution of the average scores does not show a serious deviation from the normal distribution, hence we could proceed to use a *t*-test.

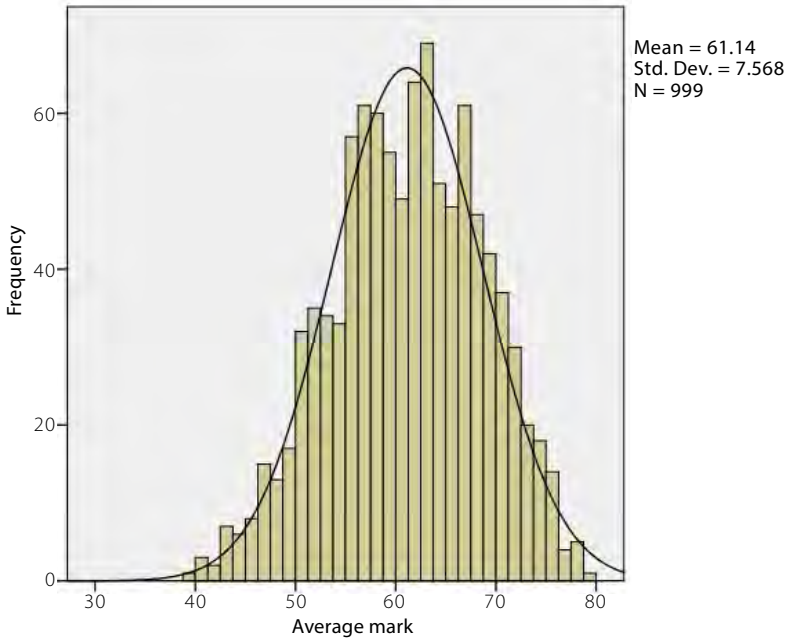


Figure 1: Histogram of final exam scores

The results of the *t*-test show that there is a significant difference in the mean score of day students and resident students (P-value = 0.00) and the difference is in favour of resident students. The lower and upper limits for the 95% confidence interval for estimating the actual difference in the mean scores for day students and resident students are 1.26 and 3.14. We are therefore 95% confident that in the population of these students, the average mark scored by a resident student is about 1.26 to 3.14% higher than that of non-resident students. The mean difference between the scores is 2.20%. The main finding from this study is that the academic performance of resident students is slightly better than that of non-resident students.

Discussion

A study by Noble, Flynn, Lee and Hilton (2007) found that the college learning climate is improved by on-campus living and exposure to other student-enhancement programmes. Schuch and Upcraft (2001) regard student residences as places where learning can be extended and practised, as well as assisting the development of interpersonal relations and leadership skills. The same authors further state that residences hence have an educational

influence on student development, both academically and socially. Khurshid, Tanveer and Qasmi (2012) conducted a study to investigate the relationship between the academic achievement and study habits of resident students and day students at a university in Islamabad, Pakistan. Day students obtained higher mean scores on a study skills inventory as well as on academic achievement than resident students. The study found that resident students had problems such as living away from home and difficulty in time management when studying. On the other hand, day students had proper study facilities available at their homes, and these enabled them to gain full concentration when studying and consequently they obtained higher academic achievement. Miller and Winston (1991) are of the opinion that the residential setting may be one of the most powerful forces influencing students' behaviour and ultimate success during their undergraduate years. Pascarella, Terenzini and Blimling (in Gopal & Van Niekerk, 2018) assert that residence halls promote a variety of desirable academic outcomes by enhancing students' involvement and engagement with their institutions.

Jones et al. (2008) interviewed students who lived in different university residences in South Africa. The interviews confirmed that suitable, safe and affordable accommodation on the university campus was the ideal for students to be able to study effectively and access the universities' resources, such as libraries, computer centres and student support services. However, the students interviewed reported varying experiences of living in residence, describing both advantages and difficulties. On the one hand, advantages were that particularly first-year students found it easier to socialise and adjust to campus life. On the other hand, common problems reported were high noise levels, which made it difficult to study at times, rooms that were uncomfortably small for sharing, the high price of residence meals and a lack of cooking facilities. Some of the students in the sample also reported that, especially in their first year, they had felt socially alienated by being labelled as poor by their relatively better-off peers in residence, although this abated in continuing years. In the Ministerial Committee Report of the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET, 2011), most institutions of higher learning indicated that they provide a variety of academic support programmes in student residences; these programmes include mentoring and tutoring, peer education, career guidance, and relationship guidance. The DHET report further indicates that "being housed in a safe, well-managed residence is both socially and academically beneficial for students, particularly those from poorer backgrounds". It is, therefore, important that an institution of higher learning should provide well-maintained and secure residences, including creating opportunities for learning within the residences.

In terms of theoretical underpinnings, the findings of this study would appear to support the notion that living on-campus substantially and positively influences a student's degree of interpersonal, social integration with both peers and faculty members during university or college study (Pascarella, 1984). Pascarella further states that it is the level of social integration, and not the mere fact of residing on-campus that directly influences university outcomes. This finding is consistent with that of Pascarella and Terenzini (1980) who focused on the developmental influences of different types of on-campus residence arrangements. They found that living on-campus may significantly influence college

outcomes, but the influence appears to manifest less through direct effects than through dramatic differences in the extent to which residents and commuters become integrated into the social system of the institution.

Based on data collected annually from first-entering students, Jacoby (1989) found that living in a campus residence as a first-year student was associated with reduced possibilities for dropping out. Similarly, living at home with parents negatively affected persistence when compared with living on campus. Amongst the most significant positive effects of living on campus versus commuting were involvement in extracurricular activities, interaction with faculty members, achievement in academic studies, leadership development, career development, social life, and satisfaction with the undergraduate experience (Jacoby, 1989). Amongst the implications for educational policymakers is the need for institutions to provide opportunities to increase commuter students' involvement. Bitzer (2009) points out that the successful academic and social integration of first-year students in higher education settings is important with regard to study commitment, study success and preventing early dropouts. Tinto (1987) has shown that the level of institutional and programmatic integration has a major influence on both student commitment and study success. Similarly, Jarvis, Holford and Griffin (1998) have pointed to the close relationship between student integration and motivation.

Limitations of the Study

The findings of this study cannot be generalised to other institutions of higher learning as it was conducted at a rural university with its unique context. If a similar study is conducted in different universities in South Africa, generalisation from the findings could be more sensible and reliable. Furthermore, this study covered a period of one year. It would be more beneficial to investigate students' academic performance over a longer period.

Conclusion

The results of the study show that a larger percentage of resident students passed all the courses they enrolled for as compared to non-resident students. The literature has shown that non-resident students are disadvantaged by several factors such as the need to commute to the university, insufficient time to consult support resources and less interaction with staff members and fellow students. Campus environment, student involvement as well as student academic and social integration into the institution tend to mediate, or account for, the effects of living on-campus versus living off-campus on academic performance. In addition, it has been shown that academic and social integration of students in institutions of higher learning is essential for students' commitment, success and preventing early student departure. Finally, future research might focus on the direct influence of resident versus commuter status on such outcomes as degree aspiration, satisfaction with university and institutional persistence.

References

Abrahamowicz, D. (1988). College involvement, perceptions, and satisfaction: A study of membership in student organizations. *Journal of College Student Development*, 29, 233-238.

Amole, O.O. (1997). *An evaluation of students' residential facilities in some Nigerian universities*. Abafemi, Awelono: Department of Architecture.

Astin, A.W. (1985). *Achieving educational excellence*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Babbie, E. & Mouton, J. (2001). *The practice of social research*. Cape Town, South Africa: Oxford University Press.

Banning, J.H. & Hughes, B.M. (1986). Designing the campus environment with commuter students. *NASPA Journal*, 24, 17-24.

Bitzer, E. (2009). Academic and social integration in three first-year groups: A holistic perspective. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 23(2), 225-245.

Creswell, J.W. (2012). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

De Vos, A.S., Strydom, H., Fouche, C.B. & Delport, C.S.L. (2011). *Research at grass roots: for the social sciences and human service professions*. Pretoria, South Africa: Van Schaik Publishers.

DHET (Department of Higher Education and Training) (2011). Report on the Ministerial Committee for the review of the provision of student housing at South African universities. Pretoria, South Africa: DHET.

Gopal, N. & Van Niekerk, C. (2018). Safety in student residences matters! *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 32(3), 172-188. https://doi.org/10.20853/32-3-2524

Jacoby, B. (1989). *The student as commuter: Developing a comprehensive institutional response*. ASHE – ERIC Higher Education Report No. 7. Washington, DC: School of Education and Human Development, The George Washington University.

Jansen, L. & Dube, A. (2013). "R1 bn for KZN student housing". *The Mercury*, 13 February.

Jarvis, P.J., Holford, J. & Griffin, C. (1998). *The theory and practice of learning*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.

Jones, B., Coetzee, G., Bailey, T. & Wickham, S. (2008). Factors that facilitate success for disadvantaged higher education students. An investigation into approaches used by the Rural Education Access Programme (REAP), NSFAS and selected higher education institutions. Athlone, Western Cape Province, South Africa. https://bit.ly/3dn2mCG

Khurshid, F., Tanveer, A. & Qasmi, F.N. (2012). Relationship between study habits and academic achievement among hostel living and day scholars' university students. *British Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 3(2), 34-42.

Kuh, G.D., Gonyea, R.M. & Palmer, M. (2001). The disengaged commuter student: Fact or Fiction? *Commuter Perspectives*, 27(1), 2-5. http://www.nsse.indiana.edu/pdf/commuter.pdf

Lutta, J.M. (2008). Factors that influence traditional-age college students to re-enroll in their third year at a research extensive university in the southern region of the United States. PhD dissertation, Louisiana State University. https://bit.ly/2V46t0f

McMillan, J.H. & Schumacher, S. (2010). *Research in education: Evidence-based inquiry*. Boston, MA: Pearson Education.

Miller, T.K. & Winston, R.B. (1991). *Administration and leadership in student affairs: Actualising student development in higher education*. Muncie, IN: Accelerated Development.

Morris, T. (2006). *Social work research methods: four alternative paradigms*. London: Sage.

Nelson, D., Misra, K., Sype, G.E. & Mackie, W. (2016). An analysis of the relationship between distance from campus and GPA of commuter students. *Journal of International Education Research*, 12(1), 37-46. https://doi.org/10.19030/jier.v12i1.9565

Newbold, J.J., Metta, S.S. & Forbus, P. (2011). Commuter students: Involvement and identification with and institution of higher education. *Educational Leadership Journal*, 15(2), 141-153.

Noble, K., Flynn, N.T., Lee, J.D. & Hilton, D. (2007). Predicting successful college experiences: Evidence from a first year retention program. *Journal of College Student Retention*, 9(1), 39-60. https://doi.org/10.2190/6841-42JX-X170-8177

Norris, S.A., Philhours, M.J. & Hudson, G.I. (2011). Where does the time go? A diary approach to business and marketing students' time use. *Journal of Marketing Education*, 28(2), 121-134. https://doi.org/10.1177/0273475306288400

O'Toole, D., Peterson, S. & Wetzel, J.N. (1999). Factors affecting student retention probabilities: A case study. *Journal of Economics and Finance*, 23(1), 45-55. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02752686

Owolabi, B.O. (2015). The effects of students' housing on academic performance at the University of Ibadan in Nigeria. *International Journal of Scientific and Engineering Research*, 6(3), 1118-1132.

Pascarella, E. (1984). Reassessing the effects of living on campus versus commuting to college: A causal modelling approach. *Review of Higher Education*, 247-260. https://doi.org/10.1353/rhe.1984.0016

Pascarella, E. & Terenzini, P. (1980). Student-faculty and student-peer relationships as mediators of the structural effects of undergraduate residence arrangement. *Journal of Educational Research*, 73, 344-353. https://doi.org/10.1080/00220671.1980.10885264

Payne, G. & Payne, J. (2004). *Key concepts in social research*. London: Sage. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781849209397

Schuch, J.H. & Upcraft, M.L. (2001). *Assessment practice in student affairs: An applications manual*. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons.

Timmons, L.C. (2014). *The uncritical commuter: The impact of students' living situations while at university*. Glasgow, Scotland: University of Glasgow (School of Psychology).

Tinto, V. (1987). *Leaving college*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

How to cite:

Sikhwari, T.D., Dama, N.G., Gadisi, A.M. & Matodzi, T.C. 2020. A Comparative Study of the Academic Performance of Resident and Non-resident Students at a Rural South African University. *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa*, 8(1), 1-12. DOI: 10.24085/jsaa.v8i1.3468

Research article

Student Experience and Quality of Tertiary Education for Students with Disabilities in Lesotho

Paseka Andrew Mosia* & Tlakale Nareadi Phasha**

Abstract

Access to tertiary education in the least developed countries, such as Lesotho, continues to be a rare experience for persons with disabilities who, despite being admitted to studies, struggle with meaningful participation. This article explores student experience of persons with disabilities studying at the National University of Lesotho. A combination of convenience and snowballing sampling techniques were used to recruit 15 staff members and 11 students enrolled in various programmes. A combination of individual semi-structured interviews and a focus group discussion were used to generate data. Findings reveal that various dimensions of student experiences are negatively affected. Students with disabilities encounter mobility challenges due to an inaccessible built environment; lecture timetables are not adapted to suit the needs of students with mobility challenges, blind students are not informed of potholes that are left uncovered and the students' request for their hostel to be adapted is not addressed. Additionally, students are not readily supported by their lecturers while some are subjected to bullying which goes unpunished and the victims receive no counselling for the resultant trauma. These factors affect the students' welfare and have an effect on their academic participation. The students are simply expected to conform to university practices. The summary of student experience, if used for assessment of quality education, demonstrates inequitable access to education for persons with disabilities. The study concludes that the institution provides poor-quality education as it fails to address the support needs of students with disabilities. The study recommends development of policies and practices that promote equity, and that student experience can be used to inform how the institution may improve access and the quality of its programmes. Equally, this study challenges students with disabilities to assert their right to an inclusive and equitable quality education.

Keywords

ableism; equitable access; quality education; student experience; students with disabilities; tertiary education

* Dr Paseka Andrew Mosia is a Senior Lecturer, Educational Foundations Department, National University of Lesotho. Email: mosia296@gmail.com

** Prof. Tlakale Nareadi Phasha is a Professor at the Department of Inclusive Education, University of South Africa. Email: phashnt@unisa.ac.za

Introduction

Despite massification of higher education in recent years, research on equality of access reveals huge disparities skewed in favour of students from middle- to high-income families (Webb, Watson, Cook & Arico, 2017). There is a clear trend that shows students from minority groups, disadvantaged backgrounds and the disabled as underrepresented (Thiele, Singleton & Pope, 2016). Reflecting on differences in access Read, Archer and Leathwood (2003, p. 262) observe that as a result of inequality in society "students from 'non-traditional' backgrounds are also disadvantaged by an institutional culture that places them as 'other'". This undoubtedly compromises student experience and quality of higher education for the vulnerable groups who are expected to prove their worth at this level of education.

Research on assessing quality of education at tertiary level describes student experience as broader than the delivery of curriculum in lecture halls to include students' social and emotional experiences of studying at this level (Benckedorff, Ruhanen & Scott, 2009). Harvey, Burrows and Green (1992, p. 1) argue that "the key factor in the assessment of quality in higher education is the student experience". Student experience reflects what they describe as 'total student experience' consisting of participation in academic activities and support of students' social and emotional needs. It addresses the academic and emotional aspects of student development which enhance the quality of education (Burrows, Harvey & Green, 1992). As Tan, Muskat and Zehrer (2016, p. 213) note, student experience at higher education level means, "teaching and learning experiences… which now increasingly include the student encounter with administrative and support services that a HEI provides". Therefore, effective teaching at tertiary level seeks to address students' cognitive and affective goals (Vnouckova, Urbancovava & Smolova, 2017). The quality of student experience is enhanced when university staff not only engage students academically but also readily support the emotional needs of vulnerable students (Hill, Lomas & MacGregor, 2003). For example, McGregor, Langenfeld, Horne, Oleson, Anson and Jacobson (2016) argue that retention of students with disabilities at tertiary level is affected by the extent to which they feel integrated in an institution's social and academic context. Student experience, therefore, requires well-coordinated efforts from various university sectors to effectively meet students' academic and psychosocial needs. In line with principles of inclusive education, when disability support is integrated within a university support structure for all students, it is less likely to make students with disabilities feel discriminated against and marginalised (Nel, Nel & Hugo, 2016).

Customarily, tertiary institutions mandate student affairs units to provide support services that enhance student experience and thus, contribute to quality in higher education (Ciobanu, 2013). In this regard, Luescher-Mamashela, Moja and Schreiber (2013) argue that student affairs departments need to adopt a holistic model and broaden their service mandate in order to achieve total student experience. They could provide comprehensive co-curricular and extra-curricular services and programmes that address students' personal needs to enhance student experience (Pansiri & Sinkamba, 2017). However, Yakaboski and Birnbaum (2013) state that student affairs units at Kenyan higher education institutions are under-resourced and therefore deficient in providing required student experience.

Another study conducted at one institution in the United Kingdom found that support services were not adequately coordinated to address the needs of students with disabilities (Pudaruth, Gunputh & Singh, 2017). Similarly, in reflecting on student experience at the University of Botswana, Pansiri and Sinkamba (2017) reveal that the institution finds it easy to finance academic programmes while downplaying the role of psychosocial support for fruitful student experience. This makes a minority group such as students with disabilities most unlikely to receive support which enhances their experience. Thus, Kearney and Kane (2006) describe student experience for the disabled at tertiary institutions globally as undermined by an exclusionary culture. Ableism dominates education provision at this level. In describing inclusive education in South Africa, Howell (2006, pp. 165-166) states that denying students with disabilities opportunity for equitable access to higher education "reinforce[s] the notion that disabled students do not have a future in higher education".

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

Social constructionism underpins the underlying values and ideologies that justify social practices reflected in students' experiences of access. This model describes persons with disabilities as oppressed and in need of advocacy for "creating a barrier-free society and developing a positive identity" for them as a minority group in society (Anastasiou & Kauffman, 2011, p. 371). Lalvani and Broderick (2013) see this discrimination as influenced by ableism, tracing its orientation from the medical model of disability. Consequently, institutional failure to accommodate the inevitable human variability is blamed on students with disabilities as failing to meet programme requirements (Skrtic, 1991). Access to education at tertiary level is pervaded by normalcy disguised as fairness where everyone is required to conform (Madriaga, Hanson, Kay & Walker, 2011). In trying to interpret this divergent view of life the social constructionist model explains this understanding of disability as a consequence of the power dynamics in society where the dominant oppresses the less privileged and creates systems which normalise inequality (Anastasiou & Kauffman, 2013). Domination by the able-bodied majority normalises exclusion of the needs of persons with disability from participating equally in mainstream education (Liggett, 1988).

From this perspective, student experiences do not form the basis for evaluating the quality of education as all students are expected to comply with predetermined institutional standards despite their diversity. This creates a situation where having a disability negatively impacts one's self-concept and emotional well-being because it "keeps them from working and limits their social life" (Darling & Heckert, 2010, p. 137), making students with disabilities less likely to demand conditions equitable to their peers without disabilities. Consequently, social constructionism challenges the discriminatory public policy and requires persons with disabilities to acknowledge challenges of having a disability but promote conditions where "stigma-based identity" is replaced by "disability pride" (Darling & Heckert, 2010, p. 133; Retief & Letšosa, 2018, p. 5).

Contextualising Students' Experiences in Lesotho

The needs of students with disabilities at secondary and tertiary education sectors in Lesotho have received inadequate attention, thus compromising their student experience (Mosia, 2014; Mosia & Phasha, 2017). First, they are underrepresented at tertiary level. Aastudy by the Council on Higher Education (CHE) in Lesotho revealed that in 2011 only two higher education institutions out of 13 registered with CHE, had enrolled a total of 10 students with disabilities. This number accounted for 0.09% of an age group of 18-35 persons with disabilities who could benefit from tertiary education, and was only 0.02% of the tertiary student population in Lesotho (CHE, 2012, p. 13). In 2014, 20 students with disabilities were enrolled at three institutions representing only 0.8% of the tertiary student population and 0.58% of persons with disabilities eligible for tertiary education (CHE, 2014, p. 36). Second, the students at both secondary and tertiary institutions face barriers such as inflexible curricula, inaccessible built environment and inadequate support services (CHE, 2012; 2014). While there is no policy promoting the right to education for learners at secondary school level, the promulgation of Higher Education Policy (HEP) gives impetus to tertiary institutions to improve access for this minority group of students. For example, section 8.3.5.2(c) of the Higher Education Policy (HEP) commits CHE to "… monitor the efforts of HE institutions, both public and private, to accommodate students with disabilities" (Kingdom of Lesotho, 2013, p. 36).

The National University of Lesotho as the focus of the current study has entrusted psychosocial support for students in the Department of Student Affairs and certain members of the academic staff working as year-level tutors but there are no specific support structures for students with disabilities. For example, subsection 3 of Ordinance No. 8 reads:

The Faculty/Personal Tutors shall be elected by the Faculty for a period of two years with the duty of assisting with and coordinating the Orientation, Registration, Counselling and preparation of academic results of students (National University of Lesotho [NUL], 2006).

The combined effect of services provided by this cadre of professional and welfare staff at the institution needs to be scrutinised. For example, Mosia and Phasha (2017) note deficiencies in the university support services for students with disabilities which are typical of the notion of ableism. They cite lack of attention to the students' needs during admission through to running academic programmes. The students have limited access to teaching and learning resources, information and communication technological (ICT) resources, including assistive devices.

Additionally, poor access is typified by blind students being denied access to programmes in certain faculties on the basis of assumed weaknesses (Matlosa & Matobo, 2007; Mosia & Phasha, 2017). For example, blind students are only admitted into programmes offered by the Faculties of Law, Education and Humanities because they lack competence in Mathematics and Statistics which form the basic requirement for other programmes (Mosia & Phasha, 2017). However, the emphasis on skills students lack downplays the institution's lack of resources to teach Mathematics and Statistics to blind students. As such, the influence of Higher Education Policy mandating institutions to 'safeguard the right

of equitable access to higher education for people with disabilities' (Kingdom of Lesotho, 2013, p. 36) is minimal. This calls for a critical re-evaluation of the institutionalised culture of exclusion typical of academic programmes generally and tertiary education programmes in particular. In an effort to depict nuances in the student experience of this minority group, the article used the following questions as guidelines:

1. How do students with disabilities experience access to education at the National University of Lesotho?
2. What values do the 'student experience' reflect about the institution's access practices?

Research Methodology

This study is a qualitative exploratory case study that is inductive, subjective and contextual (Morgan, 2014). A single case study design was most appropriate to capture the typical everyday life experiences of students with disabilities studying at a higher education institution (Bryman, 2012). It was a narrative enquiry into the students' unique experiences with staff, peers and social life at the university (Morgan, 2014).

Research location and participant selection

National University of Lesotho was established in 1945 as a Catholic institution affiliated with the University of South Africa (NUL, 2006). The Council on Higher Education reports that the university admits 43.9% of the country's undergraduate student population and an even higher percentage, 89.4%, of the postgraduate student population with 11 363 as the total number of students enrolled at the institution in 2011/2012 (CHE, 2012). This institution was selected as a research location for a doctoral study completed in 2017 with the University of South Africa and the study met basic ethics standards and posed minimal threat to the well-being of the participants. These include: informed consent, protection against harm, reciprocity, anonymity and confidentiality.

The study adopted purposive and snowballing techniques to identify a total sample of 15 members of staff and 11 students with disabilities. Purposive sampling identifies "information rich" cases (Patton, 2002). Incidentally, all staff participants and the first three students were selected purposively. As the institution lacked records of students with disabilities, snowballing was used to identify students for whom there was no readily available information about their disability statuses (Shaghaghi, Bhopal & Sheikh, 2011). Therefore, the study relied on the three student participants and staff to identify other students with disabilities they knew and were willing to share their views. Subsequently, an additional eight students with disabilities were recruited as participants for the study.

The profile of staff participants included: 10 lecturers, some of which also worked as year-level Tutors in their faculties, one Librarian, one Welfare Officer, one Counsellor, one Admissions Officer and a Special Education Needs Assistant. Identified students were in three categories of impairments namely, visual impairment (5), physical impairment (5) and hearing impairment (1), and had enrolled in six different programmes at three different

levels of study namely, Diploma (4), Bachelors' degree (6) and Postgraduate Diploma (1). In citing student participants, labels such as Participant 1 (P1), (P2) etc. will be used while career names such as Student Counsellor will be used for staff participants.

Data Collection and Analysis Methods

The study used semi-structured interviews to collect data from 15 staff members and 11 students. It also used a focus group discussion with a group of students.

In-depth interviews

The study deemed the use of semi-structured interviews most appropriate because they allowed participants to respond to questions liberally while allowing the study to gather participants' insight on the topic (Morgan, 2014). In-depth interviews were scheduled during the participants' free time. These took place at the university and lasted between 60 and 90 minutes. Participants (who happened to be Basotho nationals) were given the liberty to use Sesotho (their home language) or English for the interviews, while one Deaf participant was interviewed through the help of a Sign Language interpreter. All participants agreed to the interviews being audio-recorded.

Focus group discussion

Focus group discussions complement individual interviews in that they are able to generate ideas that mirror a social context (Breen, 2007) and the group provides a safety-net for members to express anxiety-provoking or unpopular ideas (Lederman, 1990). The exchange of ideas in focus group discussions brings new thoughts and reflections that an individual interview fails to give (Lederman, 1990). Five (two students with physical disabilities and three with visual impairments) of the 11 students who participated in the individual interviews were selected for a focus group discussion that took 90 minutes. The discussion was also audio-recorded.

Data analysis

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was used to analyse data on participants' narratives on student experience (Smith, 2011). As Smith (2004) notes, one participant's transcript was studied to establish emerging ideas about student experience, then another, until all transcripts were studied. Only when all interviews were completed did we look for points of similarities and differences. Thus, analysis started with a scrutiny of individual cases and then a search for similar or different patterns across cases (Smith, 2011). Data coding helped discern patterns that led to a theoretical understanding (Babbie, 2014) of student experience and possible quality implications of the university programmes. The final analysis resulted in themes discussed in this study. Participants' views are depicted through verbatim citations under each theme (Larkin, Watts & Clifton, 2006).

Results

This article presents findings on student experiences ranging from inaccessible physical environments, unsuitable learning resources, staff attitudes and support for their psychosocial needs which have a bearing on the total student experience.

Accessibility and suitability of infrastructure

Students with disabilities reflected on how inaccessible built environments and delayed maintenance services in their hostels affected them. Students with mobility challenges had to use stairs to access lecture halls, had to navigate unpaved grounds with potholes, had poor lighting to access the library at night, walked between lecture halls which are far apart, and had to use furniture not adapted to their needs.

Access to in-built environment

Three students encountered challenges using stairs to access lecture halls and one of the three further expressed concern with the distance between the halls. For example, one student explains:

> The fact that there are stairs says the infrastructure is not accessible for wheelchair users or those using crutches … They admit a person who falls within their scope of education provision … which university should I go to if my needs are not catered for in this university? (Participant 1, a male student with cerebral palsy)

Another student explained:

> As for lecture halls that require me to climb stairs … you find that `wow' I`ll have a delay a bit, it is not a big deal. I told myself that, OK let me act as normal as I could, and climb the stairs and just shut up about that ramp to the building.
> (Participant 2, a male student with a physical disability)

Despite a medical record thoroughly explaining a student's potential challenge with the use of stairs no adjustment was made to the timetable to ensure her classes are on the ground floor. She states:

> So we have to go to the stairs in order to reach some classes [but] my doctor explain[ed] the nature of my disability and some of the things that they have to be aware of, like in winter I don't have to use stairs. (Participant 3, a female student with cerebral palsy)

Students have a 10-minute allowance to move between successive classes. When classes are scheduled in lecture halls that are far apart, the time is inadequate for a student with mobility challenges to be on time for the next class as Participant 3 reflects:

> You find that I have 08:00 o'clock class in my faculty and 09:00 o'clock class at the BTM, so it means I have to walk long distances; when I arrive in class I`d find the lecturer has covered much and I've missed so many things. For the timetable, I don't think they even think about me.

Student experience indicates that the built environment acts as a barrier to their learning. This is corroborated by staff. For example, the Faculty of Humanities lecturer said of one student:

> Her type of disability was such that it was hard for her to attend some of the classes in the halls that were in the upper rooms. That was one thing, the second thing was, sometimes the rooms were so separated that it would allow only students who are said to be able to move from one hall to the other [timeously].

Similarly, a student counsellor observes:

> Eh, most of the administrative buildings are upstairs and there's no easy way to access such. It's quite a challenge.

Evidently, the institution makes limited efforts to accommodate mobility needs of students with physical impairments. The students adapt to existing structures despite potential challenges to their academic needs and physical health. Walkways around campus have not been adapted.

Students' ease of movement

Three students, one blind, another partially sighted and the third with a physical disability, described how lack of paving at the university posed mobility challenges for them. For example, one student recounted:

> I arrived here in 2013 and there was that [uncovered holes] condition when I arrived and I reported it. The Special Education Needs Assistant tried to talk to maintenance staff but they didn't do anything. Instead in early 2014, they opened other holes.
>
> (Participant 5, a male blind student)

Participant 5 added:

> I think the way has to be paved enough. For instance when it rains I can't walk freely; there is some water along the way, they [pavements] are not well structured, the movement is not easy because of structuring of the university … there are places that are not paved at all.

Though partially sighted and using spectacles, one student cited comparable challenges with her mobility around campus. She noted:

> When I was in first year I think I fell five times here on campus. I still remember in Titanic (hall of residence) I fell when going to buy food because maybe my mind was not on the way, I fell, had some scratches, then fell again. Well, I fell a couple of times but with time you get used to the place and you know where you can walk carefully.
>
> (Participant 6, a female student with visual impairment)

As a student with a physical disability and using crutches, Participant 2 stated:

> The reason I mostly get discouraged to use the library is that during the day one attends classes. Then you have to go to the library late in the night, so I don't travel at night because of darkness. There're lights here and there so I'm afraid I might fall.

Similar to inaccessible built environments, lack of paving creates mobility challenges to students with both visual and physical impairments and restricts their academic participation. Student experience is also hampered by unsuitable seating arrangements in lecture halls as explained below:

Suitability of furniture

Furniture in lecture halls and laboratories does not meet the students' needs as reported by two participants. For example, Participant 3 explained:

> We have these long tables and long chairs, because, I assume it's because they're saying it's a lab, so everything has to be up … I have problem with them, even though I happen to learn how to use them.

Similarly, another student complained about unsuitable furniture:

> The chairs in class, some are not, in fact none is comfortable for us people with physical disabilities. When seated on a chair I can't reach the height of a desk, so I use my lap for supporting my book to write or I stand on my feet to be able to use a desk.
>
> (Participant 4, a female student with dwarfism and Kyphosis conditions)

Furniture was not adapted to accommodate the needs of students with disabilities and this negatively affected their learning conditions.

Students' interaction with academic staff

Students with disabilities express various experiences from working with the academic staff. The experiences reflected two attitudes as follows: (a) supportive and (b) indifferent.

Supportive attitudes

Four students with disabilities considered at least one of their lecturers as tolerant and supportive and they shared experiences of positive support as follows:

> It`s been like it's only my ELG [linguistic course] lecturer who had taken the initiative to ensure that actually I get an enlarged question paper when I write my exams. So in that sense, it put me in a position to say it [support] is actually at the low ebb.
>
> (Participant 7, a male student with visual impairment)

Another student indicated:

> … it's only one lecturer who has consistently given me notes.
>
> (Participant 8, a male student with visual impairment)

Similarly, Participant 6 recalled:

> I had a lecturer who, I did statistics, understood the situation and all that, she gave me notes.

Conversely, one student shared:

> OK for now eh, many lecturers are giving me notes, they give me notes every day after the lecture because I cannot write and my interpreter cannot write as well because she's a student. (Participant 9, a female deaf student)

However, not all lecturers' initiatives of support were perceived as suitable. For example, Participant 3 is offended by lecturers who pay too much attention to her unique physical appearance. She explained:

> I don`t need to be treated that much special, I assume they take great care for me because sometimes there're these ones who think I cannot do anything and I feel like 'wow' how should it be like this? You think I'm with disability but I can do anything, it doesn't stop me to do anything. They look at us as if we are not people.

Participants, except for the deaf student, remember a few supportive attitudes. Further, not all lecturers' apparently good intentions have desired effects; they were insensitive to the student's impairment.

Indifferent attitudes

Excerpts from four students exemplify incidents where the students felt ignored by the institution and lecturers in their teaching despite their need for support.

Participant 5 opined:

> It's [support] not voluntary, I'll have to tell them first, yes I still have to approach them… some I have approached but the time for exams will arrive without having nothing, and it`s happening even now.

He added:

> When they teach, they don't take any consideration that there's a visually impaired learner in that class … who cannot see what they are pointing at.

Similarly, Participant 8 explicated:

> Other lecturers might have just been forgetful, which is human, while others normally said they knew nothing about me. You could see that they were trying and at times they just forced themselves to work with me. Some of them would say that they need to be trained before dealing with my needs but I would assure them that my challenges were not severe.

The observed indifference in lecturers discouraged the students from seeking support as Participant 1 stated:

> One may understand and say they would email the notes or give you handouts but another does not even try and you might end up offending them because they are human … It is not easy to report your problem to management several times because it appears as though you are seeking special attention or you are too demanding. You end up saying the best I can have is sufficient.

Participant 9 relied on sign language interpretation to study, but there were delayed efforts to secure a Sign Language interpreter for her. She stated:

> There were no preparations for me to be able to access information in class yet they knew that there was a deaf student admitted here. And I have to rely on that student who would be helping with interpreting services until I thought to myself the student won't be able to interpret during five years while I`m learning here.

The university seems not positioned to promote equitable access to its curricula and subsequently, it fails to mandate both academic and non-academic staff to accommodate the students' needs.

Students' experience of bullying

Students with disability explained that a hall of residence reserved for them was not adapted to address their needs. They live in one building and are expected to use the same bathroom and toilet as students of different genders. The residence is also poorly maintained. Socially, all but two students had courteous relationships with peers. Two students with physical disabilities presented contrasting experiences about their interactions with the general student population.

Participant 3 stated:

> When you move around the campus, others look at you, gossip about you, and end up laughing. You feel like 'wow!' Why should they laugh, is there anything wrong with me? I prefer people who come to me and ask, what happened? They look at us as if we are not people, we are something that they can make fun of. They'll just look at you, especially ladies … And then when you turn back and look at them, they can make these funny laugh that you can say, 'how can these people do this?'

Participant 4 revealed:

> Other students call me [names] … The environment is OK because my classmates have accepted me and help me where possible, for instance, on the stairs, disabled people are not easily recognised when it is congested. My classmates do shield me so that I'm not pushed around.

Verbal discriminatory gestures from peers only serve to confirm an environment which is not receptive of the needs of students with disabilities.

Staff perspectives of student experience

The following are examples of staff perspectives on their role in enhancing the student experience.

A Faculty of Education (FED) lecturer working as a year-level tutor noted:

> Sometimes you may not even notice. I just happen to notice this one (referring to a student with visual impairment) because this particular student in my class is a very interactive student, otherwise I wouldn't know … if there are others besides this one I don't know.

A Business Administration (BA) lecturer who also worked as a year-level tutor shared these sentiments:

> Sometimes you come to class, have one hour to deliver, they're already seated, the person is in the middle, you cannot identify disability or anything.

The excerpts of the two participants indicate that it is difficult for lecturers to identify students with disabilities in their classes and they do not deal with students as individuals. It was evident that tutors who were employed to provide psychosocial support could not provide it to students with disabilities if they could not identify them in their classes.

Moreover, any academic staff deployed as tutors are not selected on any criteria related to skills in psychosocial support. For example, the BA lecturer noted:

> We are not equipped, in fact I'm not equipped enough to do counselling but one would think of maybe academic counselling, but definitely we are less equipped. We need to be equipped further as to how we execute the counselling part of it.

A lecturer at the university's Institute for Extra Mural Studies (IEMS), also assigned tutorship, avers:

> As a coordinator I just do it [counselling] eh, just haphazardly because I`m not a counsellor but there are those arrangements and plans to have one [person] to address their psychosocial needs … Much of my work is towards administrative issues. I am also teaching though I am not teaching first year, which is the level where the student in question is.

A Sociology lecturer opined:

> The tutor is not for a particular class, but for a faculty. In FSS for example, students in one year level are in excess of two thousands, so I cannot just handle everything. I don't know how to put it but it is basically an overarching thing. It's not individual cases because look I am still a lecturer. I teach, I go to class, I have my own students, and I have my own department.

The BA Lecturer could not estimate the number of students of the year level he tutors. He expressed:

> I can't have the exact number but it's roughly around sixteen programmes.

Tutors lack skills to support the students generally. Therefore, addressing the needs of students with disabilities could be a greater challenge when they are not trained. There are multiple challenges to tutorship as evident in participants' views above. Lecturers are assigned tutorship to year level and programmes in which they do not teach and across programmes outside their departments. Tutors deal with high volumes of students' needs and may not pay attention to a particular group of vulnerable students.

Correspondingly, at the time data were collected for this study the university had two student counsellors and two welfare officers to serve a student population of approximately 11 000 students and a Special Education Needs Assistant to serve self-identified visually

impaired students. It was established that there is no coordination of services from these three classes of staff. Asked about the quality of support for students with disabilities, the Student Counsellor states:

> I would say really our students who are disabled are not supported. They are not supported at all.

Discussion

This study aimed to explore students with disabilities' experience of tertiary education at one university in Lesotho. It was conducted against the background where the country did not have a national policy on inclusive education. Nonetheless, the government committed itself to support persons with disabilities in tertiary institutions through HEP. Essentially, the disability support mandate is undermined by the university which, as any other learning institution in the country, does not have any established practice of providing an inclusive and equitable education. The following findings are evident from data presented above.

Although the university admits students with mobility challenges, it has not built ramps to enable them access to every building. These barriers do not only directly affect student experience with academic activities but also have a bearing on how they view themselves as persons with disabilities. For example, one student says he has to "act normal" and climb the stairs while another says she "learnt" to use tall laboratory chairs and tables despite possible detriment to her health. Students with disabilities are expected to adjust themselves to standards set for everyone else despite falling short of their needs as persons with disabilities. This depicts practices where the needs of minority groups are ignored and normality is used as a measure for participation in the education system.

As Lalvani and Broderick (2013) note, the university is unlikely to accommodate these student differences due to the ableism ideology dominant at this level of education. The students are expected to adapt because failure to do so would create an impression that they are less qualified for the university's programme requirements (Skrtic, 1991). Ableism is also evident in the lecturers' indifference towards the students' needs and discrimination by peers.

Eleven students with disabilities admitted at this university face various challenges. Those with visual and physical impairments have mobility challenges and there are no learning materials in appropriate formats for blind people. There were delays in securing an interpreter for the deaf student, Information and Communication Technology had not been adapted to their needs and lecturers are not trained or even mandated to support them. Students with disabilities have to learn "normally" like all students (Mosia & Phasha, 2017).

The possible intervention by the Department of Student Welfare staff is undermined by understaffing. The staff is unlikely to focus on the needs of students with disabilities when such students or their needs are not identified and particularly when the student : counsellor or welfare officer ratio is high. The findings compare with previous research which found that reliance on the Welfare Departments to support students and contribute to quality education is undermined by poor resourcing of such departments (Yakaboski

& Birnbaum, 2013). Additionally, the university's deployment of academic staff to work as tutors without training them for the responsibility suggests it undermines the role of psychosocial support for student experience (Pansiri & Sinkamba, 2017).

Therefore, Harvey et al. (1992) argues that quality education can be judged on total student experience which consists of successful fulfilment of academic and psychosocial needs of students. The National University of Lesotho does not provide quality education for students with disabilities because there is evidence that they encounter barriers to both academic and social participation (Burrows, Harvey & Green, 1992). Moreover, according to Hill, Lomas and MacGregor (2003) one of the requirements for enhancing student experience is for lecturers to actively identify and address the needs of vulnerable students. However, the university fails to do so despite the mandate from HEP to all tertiary education institutions in Lesotho (Kingdom of Lesotho, 2013). Lecturers use the ableism principle to deal with students; students are forced to adapt to set standards or be viewed as unqualified to study at this level (Skrtic, 1991) while lecturers are not expected to adapt their lectures to individual needs.

Conclusions

This study demonstrates that the University excludes student with disabilities as a minority group, from full participation in its academic programmes. Buildings are constructed for the able-bodied and teaching and learning activities are not necessarily accessible to students with disabilities; all students adapt to the standard of academia set abstractly for all. This study challenges the institution to use student experience to assess the relevance of its programmes because students with disabilities have the right to equitable access to education. Ignoring the academic, social or emotional needs of a certain group of the student population is undermining the quality of education.

References

Anastasiou, D. & Kauffman, J.M. (2011). A social constructionist approach to disability: Implications for Special Education. *Exceptional Children*, 77(3), 367-384. https://doi.org/10.1177/001440291107700307

Anastasiou, D. & Kauffman, J.M. (2013). The social model of disability: Dichotomy between impairment and disability. *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy*, 38, 441-459. https://doi.org/10.1093/jmp/jht026

Babbie, E.R. (2014). *The basics of social research.* London: Wadsworth.

Benckedorff, P., Ruhanen, L. & Scott, N. (2009). Deconstructing the student experience: A conceptual framework. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 16(1), 84-93. https://doi.org/10.1375/jhtm.16.1.84

Breen, R.L. (2007). A practical guide to focus-group research. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 30(3), 463-475. https://doi.org/10.1080/03098260600927575

Bryman, A. (2012). *Social Research Methods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Burrows, A., Harvey, L. & Green, D. (1992). *Concepts of quality in higher education: A review of the literature*. Birmingham: QHE.

CHE (Council on Higher Education) (2012). *CHE report on the state of higher education in Lesotho.* Maseru: CHE.

CHE (Council on Higher Education) (2014). *Council on Higher Education Annual Report.* Maseru: CHE.

Ciobanu, A. (2013). The role of student services in the improving of student experience in higher education. *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 92, 169-173. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2013.08.654

Darling, R.B. & Heckert, D.A. (2010). Orientations toward disability: Differences over the life course. *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education*, 57(2), 131-143. https://doi.org/10.1080/10349121003750489

Harvey, L., Burrows, A. & Green, D. (1992). *Total student experience: A first report of the QHE National Survey of Staff and Students' views of the important criteria for assessing the quality of higher education*. Birmingham: QHE.

Hill, Y., Lomas, L. & MacGregor, J. (2003). Students' perceptions of quality in higher education. *Quality Assurance in Education*, 11(1), 15-20. https://doi.org/10.1108/09684880310462047

Howell, C. (2006). Disabled students in higher education in South Africa. In: B. Watermeyer, L. Swartz, T. Lorenzo, M. Schneider & M. Priestley (Eds.), *Disability and Social Change: A South African agenda*, pp. 164-178. Cape Town: Human Science Research Council.

Kearney, A. & Kane, R. (2006). Inclusive education policy in New Zealand: Reality or ruse? *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 10(2&3), 201-219. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603110500256145

Kingdom of Lesotho. (2013). *Higher Education Policy*. Maseru: Council on Higher Education.

Lalvani, P. & Broderick A.A. (2013). Institutionalised ableism and the misguided 'Disability Awareness Day': Transformative pedagogies for teacher education. *Equity and Excellence in Education* 46(4), 468-483. https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2013.838484

Larkin, M., Watts, S. & Clifton, E. (2006). Giving voice and making sense in interpretative phenomenological analysis. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 102-120. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp062oa

Lederman, L.C. (1990). Assessing educational effectiveness: The focus group interview as a technique for data collection. *Communication Education*, 39(2), 117-127. https://doi.org/10.1080/03634529009378794

Liggett, H. (1988). Stars are born: An interpretive approach to the politics of disability. *Disability, Handicap and Society*, 3(3), 263-275. https://doi.org/10.1080/02674648866780261

Luescher-Mamashela, T., Moja, T. & Schreiber, B. (2013). Towards a professionalisation of student affairs in Africa. *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa*, 1(1&2), vii-xiii. https://doi.org/10.14426/jsaa.v1i1-2.18

Madriaga, M., Hanson, K., Kay, H. & Walker, A. (2011). Marking-out normalcy and disability in higher education. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 32(6), 901-920. https://doi.org/10.1080/01425692.2011.596380

Matlosa, L. & Matobo, T. (2007). The education system in Lesotho: Social inclusion and exclusion of visually and hearing-impaired persons in institutions of higher learning. *Review of Southern African Studies*, 5(1&2), 191-211. http://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/handle/123456789/6395

McGregor, K.K., Langenfeld, N., Van Horne, S., Oleson, J., Anson, M. & Jacobson, W. (2016). The university experiences of students with learning disabilities. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice*, 31(2), 90-102. https://doi.org/10.1111/ldrp.12102

Morgan, D.L. (2014). *Integrating Qualitative and Quantitative Methods: A pragmatic approach*. Los Angeles: Sage. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781544304533

Mosia, P.A. (2014). Threats to inclusive education in Lesotho: An overview of policy and implementation challenges. *Africa Education Review*, 11(3), 292-310. https://doi.org/10.1080/18146627.2014.934989

Mosia, P.A. & Phasha N.T. (2017). Access to curricula for students with disabilities at higher education institutions: How does the National University of Lesotho fare? *African Journal of Disability* 6(0), a257. https://doi.org/10.4102/ajod.v6i0.257

Nel, M., Nel, N. & Hugo, A. (2016). Inclusive education: An introduction. In: M. Nel, N. Nel & A. Hugo (Eds.), *Learner Support in a Diverse Classroom*, pp. 3-33. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

NUL (National University of Lesotho) (2006). *National University of Lesotho 2006/2007 calendar*. Roma: NUL.

Nusbaum, E.A. (2013). Vulnerable to exclusion: the place for segregated education within conceptions of inclusion. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 17(12), 1295-1311. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2013.826292

Pansiri, B.M. & Sinkamba, R.P. (2017). Advocating for standards in student affairs departments in African Institutions: University of Botswana experience. *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa*, 5(1), 51-62. https://doi.org/10.24085/jsaa.v5i1.2482

Patton, M.Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Pudaruth, S., Gunputh, R.P. & Singh, U.G. (2017). Forgotten, excluded or included? Students with disabilities: A case study at the University of Mauritius. *African Journal of Disability*, 6(0), a359. https://doi.org/10.4102/ajod.v6i0.359

Read, B., Archer, L. & Leathwood, C. (2003). Challenging culture? Student conception of 'belonging' and 'isolation' at a post-1992 university. *Studies in Higher Education*, 28(3), 261-277. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075070309290

Retief, M. & Letšosa, R. (2018). Models of disability: A brief overview. *HTS Teologiese Studies/ Theological Studies* 74(1), a4738. https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v74i1.4738

Shaghaghi, A., Bhopal, R.S. & Sheikh, A. (2011). Approaches to recruiting 'hard-to-reach' populations into research: A review of the literature. *Health Promotion Perspectives*, 1(2), 86-94. https://doi.org/10.5681/hpp.2011.009

Skrtic, T.M. (1991). The special education paradox: Equity as the way to excellence. *Harvard Educational Review*, 61(2), 148-206. https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.61.2.0q702751580h0617

Smith, J.A. (2004). Reflecting on the development of interpretative phenomenological analysis and its contribution to qualitative research in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 1(1), 39-54.

Smith, J.A. (2011). Evaluating the contribution of interpretative phenomenological analysis. *Health Psychology Review*, 5(1), 9-27. https://doi.org/10.1080/17437199.2010.510659

Tan, A., Muskat, B. & Zehrer, A. (2016). A systematic review of quality of student experience in higher education. *International Journal of Quality and Service Sciences*, 8(2), 209-228. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJQSS-08-2015-0058

Thiele, T., Singleton, A., Pope, D. & Stanistreet, D. (2016). Predicting students' academic performance based on school and socio-demographic characteristics. *Studies in Higher Education*, 41(8), 1424-1426. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2014.974528

Vnoučková, L., Urbancová, H. & Smolová, H. (2017). Factors describing students' perception on education quality standards. *Journal on Efficiency and Responsibility in Education and Science*, 10(4), 109-115. https://doi.org/10.7160/eriesj.2017.100403

Webb, R., Watson, D., Cook, S. & Arico, F. (2017). Graduate views on access to higher education: Is it really a case of pulling up the ladder? *Studies in Higher Education*, 42(3), 504-518. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2015.1052738

Yakaboski, T. & Birnbaum, M. (2013). The challenges of student affairs at Kenyan public universities. *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa*, 1(1&2), 33-48. https://doi.org/10.14426/jsaa.v1i1-2.34

How to cite:

Mosia, P.A. & Phasha, T.N. 2020. Student Experience and Quality of Tertiary Education for Students with Disabilities in Lesotho. *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa*, 8(1), 13-28. DOI: 10.24085/jsaa.v8i1.4179

Research article

Investigation of First-year Learning Experiences in a Rural University in South Africa

Chinaza Uleanya* & Yasmin Rugbeer**

Abstract

This study investigated the first-year experiences (FYE) of students in a South African university. Survey research design was used in the study. The quantitative method was used for data collection and 1 479 first-year students were randomly selected. The findings reveal that first-year students in the selected South African rural-based university experience certain specific challenges amongst which are poor orientation to the new context, poor knowledge of the Higher Education system, and poor educational background of parents. The study recommends that a special office under the direct line management of the dean of students be established to observe and closely monitor the progress of first-year students. This office would accommodate orientation of first years, and liaise and collaborate with appropriate offices within the institution to ensure that first-year students are properly guided and assisted in integrating without stress into the university system.

Keywords

first-year experience; orientation; placement; South Africa

Introduction

South African universities have undergone significant changes during the last few decades; however, the increased access of students has not been accompanied by equal increases in levels of student success (Akoojee & Nkomo, 2008). The low graduation output of various comprehensive South African universities has long been a cause for concern (Arends & Petersen, 2018). The Higher Education system in South Africa is expected to produce graduates, who are well equipped to contribute personally, socially and economically to the development of the country (Department of Higher Education, 2014; Allais, 2017).

The mission statement of the selected South African rural-based university is to commit itself towards producing graduates who are globally competitive and relevant to the human capital needs of the nation. At the same time, the institution is cognisant of the fact that the majority of its students come from low socioeconomic backgrounds and have additional financial challenges. Meanwhile, according to Tinto (2008), access without support is not

* Dr Chinaza Uleanya is a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Department of Educational Management and Leadership, University of Johannesburg, South Africa. Email: chinazauleanya@yahoo.com

** Dr Yasmin Rugbeer is the Director of Teaching and Learning at the University of Zululand, South Africa. Email: rugbeery@unizulu.ac.za

opportunity. In congruence, Akoojee and Nkomo (2008) and Uleanya and Gamede (2018) consider access without support as "participatory access" which is used to mean allowing students to enrol without taking cogent cognisance of the teaching and learning activities. Access without support which, according to Tinto (2008), is not opportunity means that students are enrolled at the university for different courses without tailored efforts to ensure that they get all the support required to succeed at their studies. This implies that students are enrolled without taking into consideration the available facilities that will enhance their innate abilities and skills to learn. Thus, support in this context implies providing necessary information, direction, counsel, orientation and mentorship, where possible, amongst other means of support that are capable of helping students to transition successfully into the university system and happenings on campus. Hence, the FYE at this university is an initiative which seeks to address the transitional needs and concerns that many first-year students face in their transitions from high school to tertiary education and provide the desired support.

The FYE at this university is built on the principle that every first-year student will be treated with the respect due to them, the same way other students are accorded due respect. Additionally, the FYE is premised on the principle that adjustment and transition stages require unique support, especially apparent in first year. According to Arends and Petersen (2018), seminars for first years are viewed as programmes which promote student retention and address the need of first-generation students. This is based on the idea that such seminars are informative and experiences of successful individuals are shared. This implies that first-year students can be oriented and given necessary pieces of information through seminars, in addition to other programmes such as orientation and excursions, amongst others. Meanwhile, as important as these programmes are, in some situations, the students fail to attend such organised programmes and end up missing out on the information to be passed across. Conversely, Tinto (1975) opines that the kind and quality of interactions experienced by first-year students in the institution has an impact on their academic and cultural integration. In support of this, Uleanya, Uleanya and Oluyemi (2019) opine that quality student-lecturer interaction helps students in various ways such as building self-confidence and acclimatising to the university environment. However, getting first-year students to attend seminars, orientation programmes, and to interact with members of staff remains challenging. This makes transition, adjustment and orientation difficult. In some instances, assisting the first-year students becomes challenging. Hence, the reason for this article which seeks to explore the FYE of students in the selected South African rural university, in particular the challenges that inhibit students from attending programmes organised for them. This article explores the way forward.

South African Universities

There are 26 universities in South Africa which are categorised differently based on the expected functions and degree levels. Some of the universities are categorised as Universities of Technology (UoT), Comprehensive and Traditional Universities. The focus of this study is on a selected South African university, which is both rural and comprehensive. It is categorised as a rural-based university due to its location and setting, and it is described as

a comprehensive university based on the functions it is expected to perform. For instance, according to Dani and Shah (2016), rural universities are situated in specific locations with peculiar characteristics. Flora and Flora (2013) and Uleanya and Gamede (2018) explain that rural settings in developing or underdeveloped areas are characterised by features like poor networks, untarred roads, a high level of illiteracy, a high rate of unemployment and dispersed settlement, amongst others. Many of these features describe the location of the selected university. Comprehensive universities, on the other hand, according to Gibson (2012) are established and saddled with various responsibilities, one of which is meeting the demands of their host communities and helping to enhance development in such environments where they are situated. Thus, the selected university is described as a comprehensive university as it is expected to ensure that it focuses on meeting the demands of host communities – that is, their immediate environment and the nation at large.

History of the Selected South African Rural-based University

According to a report by the Advice and Monitoring Directorate Council on Higher Education in South Africa (2010) regarding the selected rural-based university, the institution was a college with few students, staff and facilities. It was called The University College in 1960 and functioned as a constituent of the University of South Africa. The focus then was to cater for the Zulus and the Swazi. These are people from KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa and people from Swaziland respectively. However, by 1970, the status was changed and it was recognised as "The selected South African rural based university" functioning as a traditional university offering formative and professional programmes (Department of Education, 2004). According to the Self-evaluation Portfolio for the Higher Education Quality Committee Institutional Audit (SPHEQCIA) (2010), the scope of the institution changed in 2002 and it began to cater for students from countries other than South Africa and Swaziland, but majorly African countries, amongst which are: Botswana, Cameroon, Kenya, Nigeria, Zimbabwe and others. However, the basic focus remained the same, which was to cater for rural-based students (SPHEQCIA, 2010).

By 1984, the institution was given autonomy to practise as a full-fledged university like other standard universities within the country. In 2002, the university was enlisted as one of the six comprehensive universities in South Africa (SPHEQCIA, 2010). By 'comprehensive university', it means that it began to offer a mix of formative, professional and vocationally oriented programmes in which degrees are awarded. Moreover, according to the Department of Education (DoE) (2002), comprehensive universities are to be directed towards programmes ranging from formative, professional to vocational. A new campus, called Richards Bay Campus due to its location, was established. Different vocation-related degrees such as Maritime, Shipping, Transportation and Logistics, amongst others, are offered at the Richards Bay Campus. During this period, five faculties known as: Agriculture and Science, Arts, Education, Law, and Commerce and Administration were in operation. However, by 2005, the Faculty of Law was merged with the Faculty of Commerce and Administration. Hence, the university operates with four faculties since then, with each faculty having a dean and a number of heads of department who oversee the activities that take place.

Rationale for FYE in South African Universities

The increased access of students has not been accompanied by equal increases in levels of student successes, though South African universities have undergone significant changes during the last few decades. Following on the publication of the national cohort students by Scott, Yeld and Hendry (2007), it is possible to assess the efficiency of the HE sector on the basis of the performance of the 2 000 cohort of entrants. Higher education participation rates remain low in comparison to those of other countries (Council on Higher Education [CHE], 2013). The Higher Education of South Africa (HESA, 2016) report on pathways to a diverse and effective South African Higher Education system suggests that South African universities experience low participation rate due to challenges such as: funding, academic enrolment planning and quality assurance issues, amongst others. Scott et al. (2008) further state that approximately 30% of the (limited numbers of) students who enter the South African Higher Education system annually drop out during their first year of studies. However, Uleanya and Gamede (2018) state that the dropout rate is approximately 40% and it is as a result of challenges experienced by students. Uleanya, Rugbeer and Duma (2018) explain that some students who eventually graduate fail to do so in minimum time. Suffice to state that students seem to experience various challenges that make some drop out, while others struggle to complete in record time. According to Scott et al. (2008), less than 50% of the students who enrol for diplomas or degrees do not graduate, and only one in three students of the intake into three-year degrees in contact institutions graduate, even within four years. Meanwhile, according to HESA (2016), student dropouts cause very substantial losses in subsidies to Higher Education Institutions. Mitra (2011) opines that such experiences of a high dropout rate or learning challenges lead to a lack of sustainable development within the society. Suffice to state therefore that though different universities in South Africa, especially those that are rural based, experience a low intake of students, and only a few of the intakes get to graduate in record time; some eventually drop out before the completion of their first year. Naong, Zwane, Mogashoa and Fleischmann (2009) suggest that the common challenges experienced by first years include: feeling disconnected, struggling to develop good habits such as prioritising daily activities, managing time properly, as well as eating and staying healthy. Acclimating to academic expectations that may be more challenging than anticipated, managing a level of social and cultural diversity that may be different from the communities with which they are most familiar, comparing oneself to others and becoming discouraged and having difficulty managing relationships both at home and at school are considered as other challenges experienced by first-year students. Case, Marshall, McKenna and Mogashana (2018) suggest that issues bordering around financial issues, choices of students and social structures, amongst others, are factors constituting constraints for students and affect them in various ways when trying to acclimatise to their new environment (university system). Hence, the principle of Tinto (1988), which identifies factors that enhance first-year student access and progression at the university, is adopted as the reason for FYE programmes in South African universities. These principles are: (i) students should be given the opportunities to acquire skills needed for academic success; (ii) students should be given enhanced networks that extend beyond

the university and may be fostered by personal agencies to ensure maximum functionality; (iii) students should be allowed to respond to systematic retention actions; and (iv) students respond best to early interventions that address their needs, hence should be given such interventions early enough. Also, students respond well to retention programmes that are student centred, thus, teaching and learning activities should be student centred. In other words, teaching methods which promote student-centred learning should be promoted. For instance, paired learning and role playing, amongst others, should be encouraged. This should be as opposed to traditional methods where lecturers are the focus.

The FYE in the selected South African rural-based university is therefore an attempt to draw the best from current practices – nationally and internationally – and to develop, incrementally, an overarching and coherent transitional experience for incoming students. This includes cooperation and collaboration with all stakeholders within the community of the selected university.

Principles of a FYE Programme at the Selected University

The FYE is a complex process, involving many different disciplines, worldviews and understandings. It was therefore decided to base the planning and further conceptualisation of this programme on an epistemological framework that could inform the planning, structure and actions of this working group. The Integral Model as developed by Wilber (1977) is chosen. The reason for this choice is because it is open and collaborative, research based, and values participatory reflective practices, while providing the necessary structure. The Integral Model serves as a tool for linkage, leverage, correlation and alignment that informs the further development of the programme. This model characterises the FYE in the following ways: the FYE programme is holistic and possesses an encompassing body, mind and spirit. Hence, the programme is expected to be treated as such.

Also, the FYE programme is to be considered as an intentional programme which promotes wellness within a caring and invitational institution. In other words, the FYE programme in universities is desired to accommodate students from various backgrounds by giving them necessary supports through counselling, tutorials and mentoring, amongst other ways. This guides the reason for the concern, care and support to be given to first-year students before, during and after registration, orientation, lectures and examination periods. Thus, the FYE programme fosters an enabling and empowering environment to enhance student development through various counselling, tutorial and mentorship activities provided to first-year students. This is expected to help students to function better in different spheres of life to themselves, family, institution and society at large. Additionally, the FYE programme seeks collaboration and partnership within and outside the university with appropriate and supportive stakeholders such as parents, NGOs, community leaders, and government, amongst others. This is based on the ideology that the programme does not operate on its own. Support is needed from various channels. Also, the FYE programme is guided by ongoing research from multiple perspectives. This research will be the premise upon which the FYE programme of the selected university is built.

The FYE Committee Structure of the Selected University

Based on the holistic and all-encompassing nature of the FYE programme, the following structures were identified to support a fully integrated FYE approach for students in each faculty and across the two campuses of the institution. This committee structure comprised: faculty-based FYE committee representative(s) in different capabilities, various special interest and research groups representatives, and first-year representatives who made up the FYE student forum of the selected university.

The first two workshops were attended by representatives from the various faculties – deans, deputy deans, heads of departments, coordinators and departmental representatives. During the second workshop the following sectors within the selected university were identified to seek collaboration and to form the FYE Committee. This working committee was coordinated from the office of the Dean of Students Affairs (DSA). Several entities and structures added to the established working group led by the Teaching and Learning unit in collaboration with all four faculties across the university. The entities included: library staff who are responsible for providing basic readable and learning materials; housing unit which is responsible for accommodation; communication department (CMD) which is responsible for disseminating information; students' service department (SSD) which is responsible for the affairs of students within the institution; campus health clinic which is responsible for the health issues of students; admissions units which are responsible for the admission and enrolment processes of students; registrations unit which takes charge of registration matters; and financial aid units which take care of bursary and other financial matters of students. The Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) unit was also represented in the structure, as well as representatives from the Richards Bay Campus of the institution. Other units represented in the structure include protective services, sports and recreation, student faculty representatives, special interest and research groups. This makes the committee unique as universities very rarely engage across multiple sectors like this.

The researchers ensure that different faculties, departments and units within the institution are adequately represented.

A New Paradigm for Promoting Learning

This study proposes a new paradigm for promoting learning in Higher Education where students, from the very first point of contact, form an explicit partnership with the selected university. Jogee, Callaghan and Callaghan (2018) opine that many students in South African universities are alienated due to the way and manner in which the institutions are structured and the expectations of the universities. For instance, Everatt (2016) quoted in Jogee, Callaghan and Callaghan (2018) buttress this by stating that: "Students arrive and are expected to meet imported norms, seminar rooms, unknown customs, foreign authors, hard marking and the plain hard slog of tertiary education, while being young and going through their own life transitions, and doing so in 'othered' spaces, out of vernacular, and so on" (Everatt, 2016, p. 1). This is contributory to the failure and dropout rate experienced by students (Jogee, Callaghan & Callaghan, 2018). The partnership is based on success of

both the student and the institution. In both cases, success is marked by the successful completion of the programme the student has embarked on. Students provide critical information about themselves on registration. Amongst this information are their goals, their strengths, weaknesses, parents' level of education, future aspiration, and support if available. This makes the FYE a personalised institutional response to learners' needs and challenges. For the FYE to be successful, assessments have to be conducted at critical points in the first year of study (Leibowitz, 2009). Hence, the reason for this study, which aims to investigate the experiences of first-year students, using the selected South African university as a case study.

Conceptualisation of Terms

First-generation students

Lucier (2019) describes a first-generation student as one who is in the process of getting a university degree though no one in the family has ever attained such height. He further explains that as long as the parents or sibling(s) of a student are yet to get a university degree, regardless of whether they are enrolled for one or not, such student should be referred to and treated as a first-generation student. Jury, Smeding and Darnon (2015), Wilbur and Roscigno (2016) and Lucier (2019) opine that first-generation students are usually disadvantaged compared to their counterparts. This is due to the lack of exposure and inadequacy of information possessed by their family members, especially parents and older siblings. In this study, first-generation students are regarded as those studying in the selected university in pursuit of a bachelor's degree and are from homes where no one possesses such a degree or its equivalent. In other words, the said students are the first to pursue university degrees in their family. This is considered to have an impact on the academic achievement of first-generation students in various ways considering the lack of university experiences of family members.

Academic success

In this study, academic success is used to imply achievement of students with regard to their educational attainment. In other words, attainment of good results by students is referred to as academic success.

Problem Statement

The annual admission offered to students into universities is expected to aid their success in life and help them in attaining their goals. In light of this, students embark on their university journey with the hope of reading, attending lectures, writing examinations and acquiring the desired success. However, the students seem to encounter several challenges in their first year at the university and the challenges hamper their dreams and hope of succeeding as desired. Some of the students eventually drop out before the end of the first year due to the different challenges. These challenges are experienced due to different reasons and factors. Hence, the need to explore the FYEs of students in the selected university.

Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions.

1. Does the time of issuing firm offers contribute to the first-year students' performance/belonging/commitment?
2. Does an orientation programme contribute to the first-year students' performance/belonging?
3. Do the first-year students get adequate support to ensure academic success?
4. Are the FYEs of first-generation students different from those of their counterparts who are not first-generation students?

Research Methodology

The quantitative method was followed in gathering empirical data through questionnaires that were administered amongst first-year students in the selected university. The total number of student enrolment at the selected university in March 2016 was 3900. The total first-year enrolment was 3900. Approximately 38 percent (1479) of the entire first-year population was represented in the study. Hence, the 38 percent, which is a good representation of the first-year students, was used. The statistical software SPSS version 23 was used to perform descriptive and inferential statistical tests. Results are as represented in the form of graphs and tables presented below.

Results

The results of the analysed data are presented based on the research questions.

Research Question 1: Does firm offer contribute to the FYEs of students?

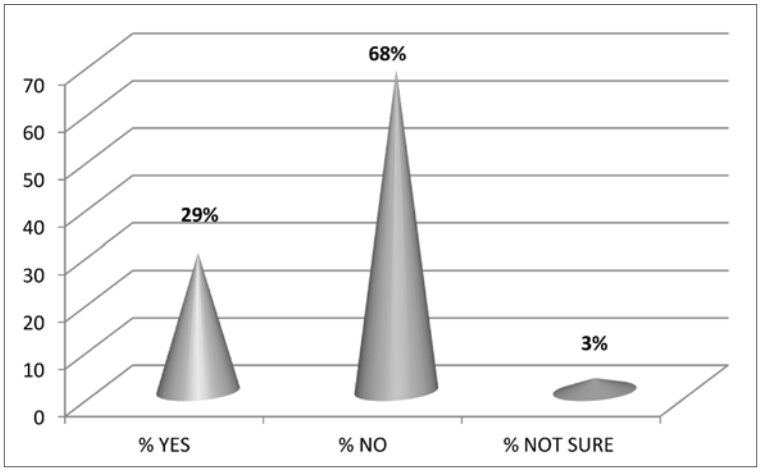


Figure 1: "Did you get a conditional/firm offer in 2015 while waiting for your final matric results?"

Figure 1 shows that the majority of the students (68%) did not receive a firm offer while waiting for their final matric results in 2015. However, a few (29%) received firm offers,

while 3% were not sure if they received firm offers. This finding suggests that delays in the issuance of firm offers by universities are caused by a range of factors amongst which are condition and availability of infrastructure, accommodation and high rate of application against few available spaces. Condition and availability of infrastructure implies the state of and actual structures like library, lecture theatre, laboratories, amongst other facilities that aid teaching and learning. Accommodation refers to the available place of abode such as hostels for students, while high rate of application against few available implies having many applications to review as against having only a few spaces. According to Gater and Isaaac (2012) it is wrong for students to be offered admission to study in dilapidated buildings. Souriyavongsa, Rany, Abidin and Mei (2013), in support of the need for suitable infrastructure prior to the admission of students, aver that poor infrastructure hampers the learning abilities of students. This implies that in order for students to be provided with firm offers, the infrastructure and accommodation available in the universities must have been duly considered and properly fixed, so as to ensure good and safe conditions for students. Suffice to state that delay in the lack of necessary infrastructure and accommodation can be attributed as factors which hindered the issuance of firm offers to first-year students in the selected university in 2016. This, however, constituted part of their FYE.

Research Question 2: Does an orientation programme contribute to the FYEs of students?

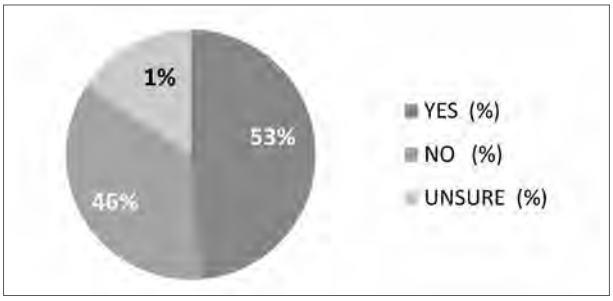


Figure 2: "Did you attend the orientation programme offered by University of Zululand?"

Figure 2 reveals that 53% of the students agree that they attended the orientation programme, while 46% did not attend and 1% of students is unsure. The reason for the non-attendance of 46% of the students could be due to personal challenges and accommodation issues, amongst others. The finding concurs with the works of McGhie (2012) and Muhuro and Kang'ethe (2016) who opine that students fail to attend orientation programmes for different reasons such as timing and poor social life style, amongst others. This is in alliance with one of the reasons for this study which aimed at exploring why students fail to attend orientation programmes organised for them despite their importance and usefulness.

Additionally, Steenkamp and Baard (2009) state that proper orientation helps to boost the learning abilities of first-year students, thereby ensuring good academic performance.

The 2017 *Students Guide* of the University of Cape Town (Faculty of Humanities, 2017b) suggests that orientation performs the following functions: release of several important pieces of information at a time in one place; helps students to start university experience on the right track; and puts students in touch with people who will provide due and necessary assistance as they progress in their studies while on campus. Suffice to state therefore that the orientation programme of the selected university might have issues with the timing of organisation and package resulting in only 53 percent attendance by students which is relatively low. This implies that such students are expected to have received certain vital information which will serve as a guide towards contributing to their success while on campus.

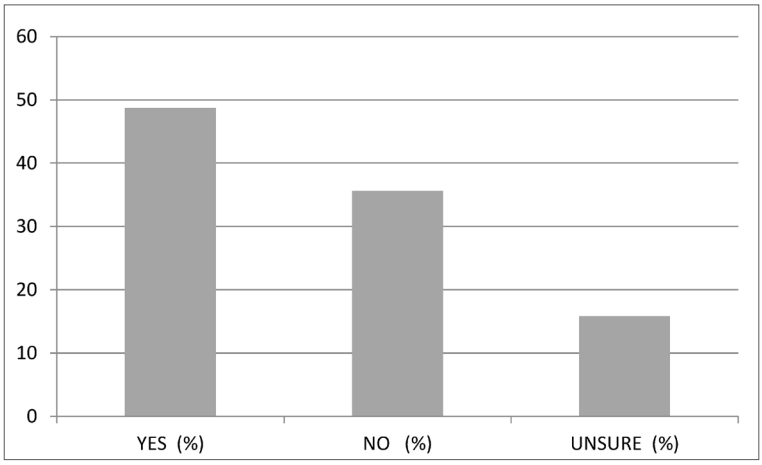


Figure 3: "Did you have a better understanding of the South African Higher Education system after attending our orientation programme?"

Figure 3 reveals that 41% of students who attended the orientation programme agreed that they had a better understanding of the Higher Education system after attending the orientation programme. However, 46% disagreed, saying that they did not have a better understanding of the Higher Education system after attending the orientation, while 13% were unsure. This finding suggests that either there are issues with regard to the orientation programme, or the students seem to be experiencing challenges that make them unable to comprehend what is done during the orientation. The work of McGhie (2012), who avers that students sometimes attend orientation programmes for social activities and not to seek and get vital pieces of information, can help to account for the low percentage in students' attendance. While, the social activities are important, some students get 'carried away' by such, rather than being focused, enjoying the social activities, and still receiving the needed information. On the contrary, the Green and Healy (2008) report for the United Kingdom Council of International Students Association (UKCISA) suggests that the poor planning of the programme and delivery of keynotes can hinder students from absorbing the information being communicated during orientation programmes. Suffice to state

that access to valuable information in relation to where support can be received, reading strategy, motivational talks, faculties and departments, amongst others, empower students.

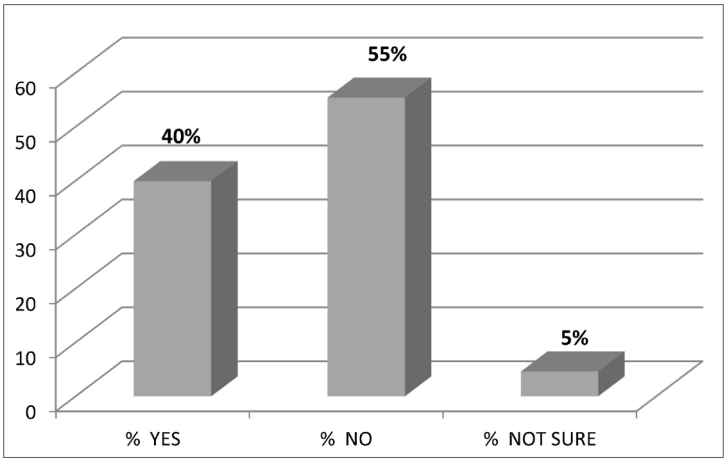


Figure 4: "I had a place to stay during orientation"

Figure 4 shows that while 40% of the students had accommodation during the orientation programme, the majority (55%) of the students had no place to stay. This finding implies that the majority of the students had challenges with accommodation during the orientation programme as some had to move from one place to another seeking somewhere to squat or travel back home. This would have contributed to their composure and ability to receive the desired information during the programme. Speckman and Mandew's (2014) states that lack of accommodation during orientation programmes and learning sessions impacts negatively on the quality of learning received by the students. Thus, lack of adequate accommodation for students during the period of the orientation programme would have hampered the quality of learning that would have taken place. Moreover, students learn better in conducive environments and when their minds are relaxed. They tend to be disturbed and experience unsettled mindsets when they fail to secure accommodation (Holgate, 2012).

Research Question 3: Do the first-year students get adequate support to ensure their success?

Table 1: Response of students on having adequate support to pass

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Valid	True	713	48.2	48.2	48.2
	False	369	24.9	24.9	73.2
	Not sure	397	26.8	26.8	100.0
	Total	**1479**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Table 1 shows the result of students' responses on having adequate support to pass the first year. The finding shows that 48.2% of the students agree that they have adequate supports such as psychological, infrastructural and academic to pass that year. However, 24.9% disagree, claiming they do not have adequate support, while 26.8% are unsure of having adequate support to pass that year. The number of students who agreed to have adequate support is less than 50% (precisely 48.2%). This suggests that students having adequate support to pass is a major challenge. Support in this regard refers to available space for lectures, accommodation and socioeconomic balance, amongst others.

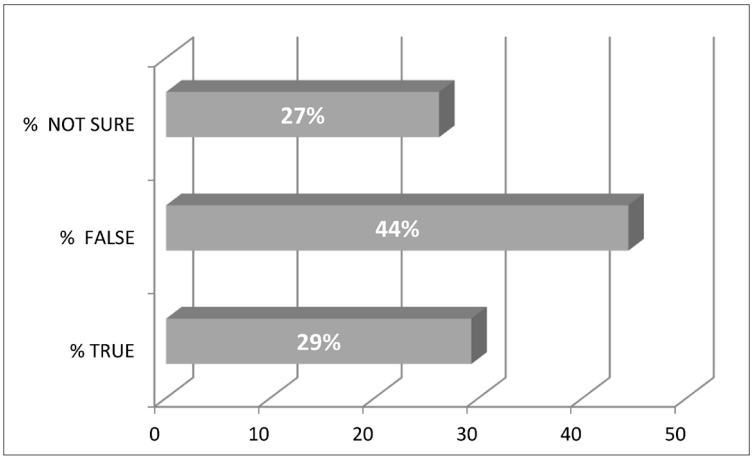


Figure 5: "If necessary, I know where to find psychological support"

Figure 5 shows that 44% of the first-year students do not know where to find psychological support. However, 29% know where to find psychological support while 27% are unsure whether they know where to find such support. This finding suggests that lack of knowledge as to where to find psychological support is contributory to the challenges experienced by first-year students. Steyn, Harris and Hartell (2014) as well as Mugume (2017) aver that first-year students do not know where to get access to the necessary supports, one of which is psychological support. A review of the 2017 first-year students' guide of the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Faculty of Humanities, 2017a) suggests that first-year students do not know their way around campus and are usually unable to access the necessary supports as and when due. Wu, Garza and Guzman (2015) aver that most international students do not know where to get necessary basic supports because they are novices in terms of both the environment and the institution. By extension, this is the case with first-year students who tend to live on the assumptions of knowing whereas they do not know where and how to access psychological support because they are new to the environment. This implies that first-year students experience certain situations within their first few months on campus due to unawareness of where and how to access certain forms of supports. Moreover, failure to adjust quickly due to lack of knowledge of where to get needed supports may contribute to their challenges and possibly affect their desired performance.

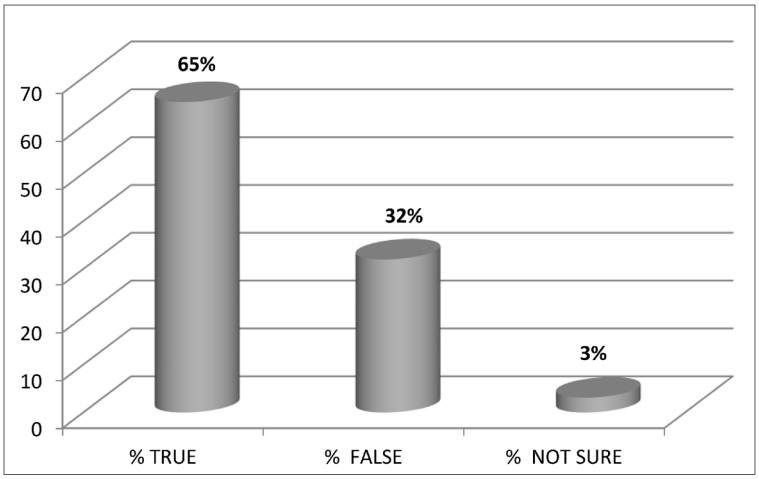


Figure 6: "I am worried about accommodation"

Figure 6 reveals that the majority of the first-year students in the selected university (65%) are concerned and worried about how to get accommodation. This suggests that the majority of the students are perturbed and hence, psychologically affected, and find it difficult to remain focused. Meanwhile, a review of the works of Hussain, Guppy, Robertson and Temple (2013), Novotney (2014) as well as Chiguvi and Ndoma (2018) shows that students are psychologically affected and find it difficult to concentrate on their studies due to lack of accommodation. Moreover, Holgate (2012) opines that lack of sufficient accommodation in South African universities has led to different crises which have impacted negatively on students. Lack of concentration of students in this regard is based on the outcome of crises which have emanated from shortage of accommodation on campus. Makoni (2014) avers that shortage of accommodation troubles students and it hinders them from staying focused. Uleanya and Gamede (2017) state that campus-based students perform better compared to their off-campus-based counterparts. This finding suggests that limited distance between lecture venues and residences, as well as extra time to students' advantage in enjoying various campus facilities, are contributory to their academic performances. Suffice to state that first-year students, desiring to obtain accommodation on campus due to benefits such as security, continuous access to campus facilities, as well as because campus students appear more integrated, and develop a stronger sense of belonging, amongst other reasons, may cause them to become worried about accommodation due to the shortage in the number of available hostels within and around the campus.

Research Question 4: Are the FYEs of first-generation students different from those of their counterparts who are not first-generation students?

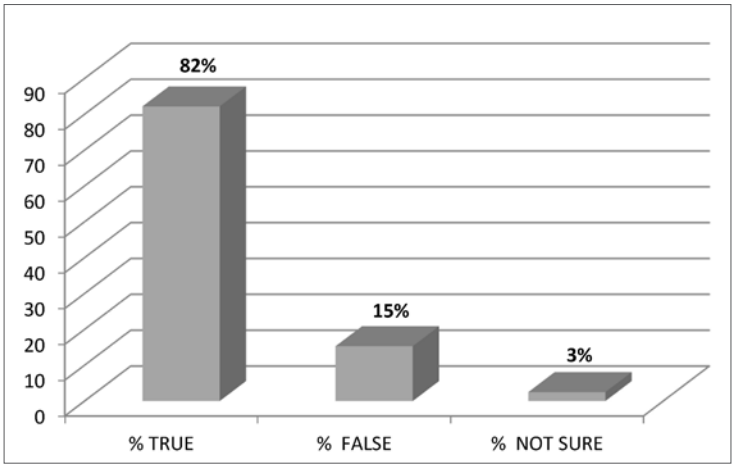


Figure 7: "I am a first-generation student (my parents did not graduate with a degree)"

Figure 7 shows that the majority (82%) of the first-year students of the selected university agree that they are first-generation students and their parents are not graduates. However, 15% disagree saying that they are not first-generation students and their parents are graduates, while 3% are unsure. The response of 82% (the majority) of the respondents stating that they are first-generation students could be attributed to the fact that the institution is a Historically Black University (HBU). This is an indication of the quest for Higher Education in such rural area where the institution is situated. First-generation students are referred to as those pursuing a degree though their parents and guardians have not completed any. This is said to put such students in a disadvantaged position. Conversely, the selected institution as a rural-based university is already disadvantaged. Hence, students in the institution will be advantaged if their parents are educated. However, the majority of them are first-generation students, meaning that they are disadvantaged both at home and within the university. This finding corroborates the works of Stebleton and Soria (2012), Jury, Smeding and Darnon (2015) and Wilbur and Roscigno (2016) who hold the view that first-generation students are disadvantaged in various ways such as exposure to classified information and experience, amongst others. Meanwhile the work of Koricich (2014) shows that most students from rural institutions of learning are first-generation students and are usually at risk of poor performance and are negatively affected academically due to lack of adequate guidance, especially from the home. Additionally, since the university is a rural university, most of its students will fall within the range of first-generation students and are prone to failing or dropping out due to lack of desired family support. Suffice to state that first-year students at the selected university will be the most vulnerable if not given adequate support and care, especially when they fall into the category of first-generation students.

Conclusion

The study explored various challenges experienced by first-year students in universities, using a selected South African rural-based university as a case study. The study indicated that many students do not attend orientation programmes, and consequently fail to benefit from the information provided. In some cases, where they do attend, they still fail to comprehend the information provided. This could be due to the level of involvement of students during such programmes, as well as their personal issues or challenges. Also, the findings of the study show that first-year students in the selected institution are prone to various challenges ranging from transition from high school to acclimatisation to the university system. The findings suggest that the challenges are caused by a lack of adequate support from appropriate quarters in both the institution and the home, especially in the case of first-generation students. For instance, some of the challenges emanate from the various forms of support received from home which in most cases is based on the educational background of parents as well as the socioeconomic background of the family. Other challenges include university accommodation, orientation programme, counselling support system and prompt issuance of firm offers to the students.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- Orientation programmes should be informative, well planned and organised, taking into cognisance factors such as time, needed facilities and personnel, amongst others. This will help to ensure that students are informed on the basic facilities available to them on campus and how to access such facilities. It will also help to show students how to navigate their way around campus towards overcoming challenges.
- The scheduled time for an orientation programme should be timely. In other words, the timing of the programme should be such that the majority of the students will be able to attend.
- Orientation programmes should be well structured and monitored to help the students stay focused and avoid all forms of distraction. This will encourage many first years to participate, and thus the desired aim of the programme will be achieved.
- Good facilitation of the orientation programme means that resourceful, motivating, innovative and well-informed personnel should be allowed to handle the orientation programme. This will help to ensure that the programme is well packaged, planned, implemented and students are well stimulated to work.
- Good mentorship programmes which give students the opportunity to relate with mentors, express themselves freely regardless of their challenges, taking cognisance of their disadvantaged background, should be provided for first-year students. This will help them to properly integrate into the university system.

- Good counselling activities should be encouraged. This is to be done through the office of the Students Service Department (SSD). It will enable the students to perform better academically and otherwise.
- Promote campus-wide focus on the student experience. By so doing, students will become aware of the activities on campus, services available for them and the necessary offices that can be of help to them in the advent of encountered challenges.
- Engage students in the intellectual enterprise and socialise students into university work expectations. This should be done periodically – at the beginning and midway into the semester or session.
- Expose first-year students to various learning opportunities – formal curriculum, student life, co-curricular programming, community-based and global experiences.
- Ensure transformation in learning by bringing together teaching, extracurricular activities, counselling, mentoring and peer tutoring during and after the orientation exercise.
- Students should be motivated to attend orientation programmes considering the benefits. This can be done by attaching and giving gifts to students who attend. This will motivate students to attend.
- Attendance of orientation programmes by students should be encouraged. This can be done by requesting lecturers and other members of staff to help to inform students on the importance of such programmes, why they should attend and ensure that they pay maximum attention to provided information. Also, senior students such as levels 2 and 3 who previously attended and benefited from such programmes, can be given opportunities to give brief testimonies of the benefits of the programmes. In addition, lecturers can be encouraged to attend such programmes. This can motivate students to attend, knowing that their lecturers will be there. Meanwhile, other exciting activities such as games, quizzes and awards can be included as motivating factors for students. Moreover, students are likely to pay more attention, knowing that they will be asked questions at the end of such programmes.

References

Advice and Monitoring Directorate (2010). *Council on Higher Education Report on University of Zululand*. South Africa: CHE.

Akoojee, S. & Nkomo, M. (2008). Access and quality in South African Higher Education: the twin challenges of transformation. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 21(3), 385-399. https://doi.org/10.4314/sajhe.v21i3.25712

Allais, S. (2017). Towards measuring the economic value of Higher Education: lessons from South Africa. *Comparative Education*, 53(1), 147-163. https://doi.org/10.1080/03050068.2017.1254985

Arends, D. & Petersen N.F. (2018), 'The role of first-year experience excursion in promoting social integration at university: Student teachers' views', *South African Journal of Childhood Education* 8(1), a543. https://doi.org/10.4102/sajce.v8i1.543

Case, J.M., Marshall, D., McKenna, S. & Mogashana, D. (2018). *Going to University: The Influence of Higher Education on the Lives of Young South Africans.* Cape Town: African Minds.

CHE (Council on Higher Education) (2013). *Annual Report 2012–2013*. Pretoria, South Africa: CHE.

Chiguvi, D. & Ndoma, J. (2018). The effects of shortage of accommodation on students' performance in private tertiary institutions in Botswana. *Journal of Economics and Sustainable Development*, 9(4), 97-104.

Dani, S., & Shah, S. (2016). Call and definition of rural university. *IOSR Journal of Economics and Finance*, 7(1), 64-66.

DoE (Department of Education) (2002). *The Restructuring of the Higher Education System in South Africa*. Report of the National Working Group, 31 January, South Africa.

DoE (Department of Education) (2004). *Creating Comprehensive Universities in South Africa: A Concept Document*. Pretoria: DoE.

Everatt, D. (2016). What must fall: Fees or the South African state? https://www.enca.com/opinion/what-must-fall-fees-or-the-south-african-state [Accessed 10 June 2019].

Faculty of Humanities (2017a). *First Year Students Guide*. Durban, South Africa: University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Faculty of Humanities (2017b). *Students Guide*. Cape Town, South Africa: University of Cape Town.

Gibson, C. (2012). New Times Demand New Scholarship I: Research Universities and Civic Engagement: A Leadership Agenda. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, 16(4), 235-248.

Green, D. & Healy, L. (2008). Planning and running orientation programmes for international students. London: U.K. Council for International Student Affairs.

HESA (Higher Education of South Africa) (2016). *Pathways to a Diverse and Effective South African Higher Education System*. Pretoria: Unisa Sunnyside Campus.

Hussain, R., Guppy, M., Robertson, S. & Temple, E. (2013). Physical and mental health perspectives of first year undergraduate rural university students. *BMC Public Health*, 13, 848-855. https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2458-13-848

Jury, M., Smeding, A. & Darnon, C. (2015). First-generation students' underperformance at university: the impact of the function of selection. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 6, 710-720. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2015.00710

Koricich, A. (2014). *The Disadvantage of Rural Students in College Enrollment and Choice*. Texas: Texas Tech University.

Leibowitz, B. (2009). What's inside the suitcases? An investigation into the powerful resources students and lecturers bring to teaching and learning. *Higher Education Research and Development*, 25(3), 261-274. https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360902839875

Lucier, K.N. (2019). What is a first-generation college student? https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-a-first-generation-college-student-793482

McGhie, V.F. (2012). Factors Impacting on First-Year Students' Academic Progress at a South African University. DPhil dissertation, Stellenbosch University, South Africa.

Mugume, Taabo. (2017). Higher education access in South Africa for students with criminal records. *Law, Democracy and Development*, 21, 25-41. https://doi.org/10.4314/ldd.v21i1.2

Muhuro, P. & Kang'ethe, S.M. (2016). Gaps associated with the timing of students' orientation programs in two institutions of higher learning in South Africa. *International Journal of Education Science*, 14(1,2), 137-144. https://doi.org/10.31901/24566322.2016/14.1-2.16

Naong, M.H., Zwane, M.G., Mogashoa, L.G. & Fleischmann, E. (2009). Challenges of teaching first-year students at institutions of higher learning. *International Education Studies*, 2(2), 170-179. https://doi.org/10.5539/ies.v2n2p170

Novotney, A. (2014). Students under pressure: College and university counselling centres are examining how best to serve the growing number of students seeking their services. *American Psychological Association*, 45(8), 36–47. https://doi.org/10.1037/e522492014-013

Scott, I., Yeld, N. & Hendry, J. (2007). A case for improving teaching and learning in South African Higher Education. Research paper prepared for the Council on Higher Education. Centre for Higher Education Development, University of Cape Town, South Africa.

Speckman, M. & Mandew, M. (2014). *Perspectives on Student Affairs in South Africa*. South Africa: African Minds.

SPHEQCIA (Self-evaluation portfolio for the Higher Education Quality Committee Institutional Audit) (2010). http://reportal.uzulu.ac.za/UZAudit/index.htm [Accessed 11 June 2019].

Stebleton, M.J., & Soria, K.M. (2012). Breaking down barriers: Academic obstacles of first generation students at research universities. *The Learning Assistance Review*, 17(2), 7-20.

Steenkamp, L.P. & Baard, R.S. (2009). Factors influencing success in first-year accounting at a South African university: A comparison between lecturers' assumptions and students' perceptions. *SAJAR*, 23(1), 113-140. https://doi.org/10.1080/10291954.2009.11435142

Steyn, M.G., Harris, T. & Hartell, C.G. (2014). Institutional factors that affect black South African students' perceptions of early childhood teacher education. *South African Journal of Education*, 34(3), 01-07. https://doi.org/10.15700/201409161107

Tinto, V. (1975). Dropout from Higher Education: A theoretical synthesis of recent research. *Review of Educational Research*, 45, 89-125. https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543045001089

Tinto, V. (1988). Stages of student departure: Reflections on the longitudinal character of student leaving. *Journal of Higher Education*, 59(4), 438-455. https://doi.org/10.2307/1981920

Tinto, V. (2008). Access without Support is Not Opportunity. Speech presented at the 36th Annual Institute for Chief Academic Officers, The Council of Independent Colleges, 1 November, Seattle, Washington.

Uleanya, C. & Gamede, B.T. (2017). Access with success: Approaches to sustainable social changes in developing african societies. *The Anthropologist International Journal of Contemporary and Applied Studies of Man*, 30(2), 174-179.

Uleanya, C. & Gamede, B.T. (2018). Comparative learning challenges among undergraduate university students in Nigeria and South Africa. *International Journal of Comparative Education and Development*, 20(2), 90-100.

Uleanya, C., Uleanya, M.O. & Oluyemi, S. (2019). Revisiting high school teachers' education. *Cogent Social Sciences*. https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2019.1653545

Wilber, K. (1977). *The Spectrum of Consciousness*. Wheaton: Quest.

Wilbur, T.G. & Roscigno, V.J. (2016). First-generation disadvantage and college enrollment/completion, *Socius*. https://doi.org/10.1177/2378023116664351

Wu, H., Garza, E. & Guzman, N. (2015). International student's challenge and adjustment to college. *Education Research International*, 1-9. https://doi.org/10.1155/2015/202753

How to cite:

Uleanya, C. & Rugbeer, Y. 2020. Investigation of First-year Learning Experiences in a Rural University in South Africa. *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa*, 8(1), 29-46. DOI: 10.24085/jsaa.v8i1.4180

Research article

Financial Challenges and the Subjective Well-being of First-year Students at a Comprehensive South African University

Marinda Pretorius* & Derick Blaauw**

Abstract

Since 1994, there has been a doubling in the enrolment of students in South Africa's public universities. Students, especially first-generation students, face numerous challenges that may impact their subjective perceptions of their well-being. In a milieu of high levels of suicide and depression amongst South Africa's student population, the understanding of the variables determining students' subjective well-being (SWB) should be deepened. This article investigates the levels and changes in the SWB of successive groups of first-year students at a comprehensive university in South Africa between 2014 and 2017. It makes use of a fit-for-purpose survey instrument. The results show that the SWB of students is influenced positively by their living arrangements and variables that have a direct influence on the educational environment in which they operate, such as feeling 'at home' and an overall level of satisfaction of the students' experience at the university. Negative variables that influence the SWB of students include concerns regarding finances and upcoming tests, and living on campus or within walking distance of campus.

Keywords

determinants; happiness; subjective well-being; university students

Introduction

In South Africa, 2015 may be remembered along with 1976 as a year in which students demonstrated their ability to alter the course of education history. The #FeesMustFall campaign forced government to reflect on the various challenges facing the higher education sector in South Africa. Decades of rapidly expanding access, along with decreasing government subsidies, led higher education institutions to face a number of challenges. Higher education institutions must attempt to meet enrolment targets, but at the same time ensure quality education (Simkins, 2016).

Many of the students currently enrolled at higher education institutions are first-generation students, whose parents and families are making significant sacrifices for them to be amongst the more than 1 million students in South Africa. Students who were able

* Dr Marinda Pretorius is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Economics at the University of Johannesburg, South Africa. Email: marindap@uj.ac.za

** Prof. Derick Blaauw is a Professor in the School of Economic Sciences at the North-West University, South Africa. Email: derick.blaauw@nwu.ac.za

to secure a spot at one of South Africa's higher education institutions face a myriad of challenges that may impact their lives and subjective perceptions of their well-being. This is especially true for first-generation students. They have no prior familial experience of higher education and, as a result, no reservoir of knowledge upon which to draw as to how to adapt to their new lives (Christie, Tett, Cree, Hounsell & McCune, 2008). As a result, strong emotions of displacement, anxiety and guilt can all be part of the daily lives of first-generation students, alongside the more accepted emotional responses of hopeful anticipation, pleasure and enhanced self-esteem (Christie et al., 2008).

Subjective well-being (SWB) encompasses a person's present assessment of his/her satisfaction with life and happiness (Dave, Tripathi, Singh & Udainiya, 2011). The application of SWB in the field of economics has gained momentum during the last few decades. According to MacKerron (2012) SWB is linked to economics through macroeconomic issues as well as behavioural, environmental and ecological economics. The increasing connection with economics is indicative of a necessary move towards "more realism in the study of economic behaviour and provides an interface with psychological and sociological aspects underlying economic choices" (Blaauw & Pretorius, 2013, p. 180).

Although theory suggests that students should have higher levels of subjective well-being (SWB) than, for example, the urban poor (Cox, 2012), this may not necessarily be the case within the context of the burden of expectations on students. The daily realities of being a student include struggles to afford food, accommodation, study material and other necessities for their optimal functioning. The issues of general student well-being, and specifically mental health, have become prominent in higher education in recent years (Luescher, Schreiber & Moja, 2018). Data collected from more than 1300 South African students in 2013 revealed that not only are rates of suicidal ideation higher amongst these students than the general population, but they are also higher than student populations in other parts of the world (Bantjes, Kagee, McGowan & Steel, 2016).

The high levels of depression and even suicide amongst South Africa's student population provide *prima facie* evidence that our understanding of the variables determining students' subjective well-being is in urgent need of re-evaluation and deepening. Bantjes et al. (2016) strongly suggested that more research is needed to investigate the psychosocial variables associated with these phenomena, especially within the cultural and socio-economic context of South Africa. This article attempts to adhere to this call by investigating the levels and changes in the SWB of successive groups of first-year economics students at a comprehensive university[1] in the heart of Gauteng between 2014 and 2017. Students at comprehensive universities come from diverse schooling backgrounds with unique characteristics and circumstances facing them (Pretorius & Blaauw, 2014).

Improving our understanding of the daily lives of students can assist universities in improving their proactive strategies to assist first-year students in their transition

1 A comprehensive university in the South Africa context can be defined as a university that offers a combination of theoretically-oriented university degrees as well as vocational oriented diplomas and degrees (HESA, 2005).

into university life (the first-year seminar is a good example of one of these strategies), increasing the likelihood of academic success to the benefit of the student and institution alike. Furthermore, the study may help to identify a broad range of relevant and topical issues concerning students and their outlook on life in South Africa's higher education sector. It is with good reason that Luescher et al. (2018) point out that student affairs in particular are implicated in finding solutions to the issues identified in current research.

The remainder of the article will discuss the relevant literature, choice of research population, research design and empirical strategy. This is followed by the results, discussion as well as possible policy implications and avenues for further research in this important field of study for South Africa's higher education landscape.

Relevant Literature: Students and Subjective Well-being

The study of happiness and subjective well-being is an ever-growing area of research in economics (Kahneman & Krueger, 2006; Mangeloja & Hirvonen, 2007, p. 26). The evolvement of studying subjective well-being within the realm of economics can be traced back to the seminal work of Richard Easterlin (1974; 2001). The body of literature that has emerged since then is comprehensive and concludes that the notion of subjective well-being is linked to a range of socioeconomic and other cultural features of countries around the globe (Diener, Diener & Diener, 2009).[2] Economists have focused their attention in this field on the relationship of subjective well-being and aspects such as earnings, economic growth, income inequality, inflation, institutions, human development index, consumption, globalisation and unemployment (Mangeloja & Hirvonen, 2007, p. 26).

The study of subjective well-being falls within the broader strand of literature on psychological and social well-being, known as the hedonic approach of studying well-being (Negovan, 2010). The hedonic approach looks at well-being in terms of happiness and of the experience of pleasure combined with the absence of pain (Negovan, 2010).

Within this approach, numerous prior studies have investigated the determinants of quality of life (QoL) or subjective well-being amongst university and college students; however, this is mostly within a developed country context (Botha, Snowball, De Klerk & Radloff, 2013; Pretorius & Blaauw, 2014). Even in developed countries, the fulfilment of basic needs is the cornerstone of explaining students' subjective well-being (Türkdoğan & Duru, 2012). The key assumption here is that emotions such as happiness can only be experienced if human needs are sufficiently met (Türkdoğan & Duru, 2012). Interestingly, the needs for freedom, fun and power tend to be more important in this regard than the other basic needs such as the need for survival, love and belonging (Türkdoğan & Duru, 2012). Chow (2005) found similar results in a study amongst students in Canada. As expected, basic needs such as housing conditions were statistically significant in explaining their general quality of life. Notably, however, the impact was smaller than other variables, such as self-esteem, relationship with a significant other, socioeconomic status, academic

2 See, for example, Frey's and Stutzer's (2002) book titled *Happiness and Economics* as well as Dolan, Peasgood and White (2008) for an extensive and well-documented overview of these factors and determinants.

success and financial security (Chow, 2005; Michalos, 2008; Flynn & MacLeod, 2015). These findings are supplemented by further studies that show similar results, but add explanatory variables related to the quality of teaching and resources available to students (Chan, Miller & Tcha, 2005; Nielsen, Newman, Smyth, Hirst & Heilemann, 2017).

Chan et al. (2005) studied the possible determinants of happiness amongst students at the University of Western Australia in 2003. Using an ordered probit model (which accommodates for the ordered nature of the SWB dependent variable), they found possible linkages between happiness and a set of variables. These include grades, friendships developed, school facilities, opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities, and lecture quality. School work, time management and relationships formed in university proved to be the most significant of these (Chan et al., 2005). Mangeloja and Hirvonen (2007) compared their results with the Chan et al. (2005) study and found similar results. The most significant effects on the students' levels of satisfaction were social relationships, resources available to them, as well as the broader educational environment and extracurricular activities.

The broader education environment and its influence on the subjective well-being of students do not function in a vacuum. Nielsen et al. (2017) recently studied the influence of instructor support, family support and psychological capital on the subjective well-being of postgraduate business students in Australia. They defined the personal psychological capital (PsyCap) of students as their "personal psychological resources of self-efficacy, hope, resilience and optimism" (Nielsen et al., 2017, p. 2099). They found positive relationships between instructor support and subjective well-being, as well as between PsyCap and subjective well-being (Nielsen et al., 2017). Furthermore, PsyCap mediated the association between instructor support and subjective well-being. Family support, on the other hand, moderated this mediated relationship so that the relationship was stronger amongst students with lower levels of family support (Nielsen et al., 2017).

Furthermore, the unique demands and pressure of university life are also an important consideration in studying students' subjective well-being. Eckersley (2011) states that in Australia, 48% of university students were psychologically distressed and many faced the risk of developing mental disorders. According to Eckersley (2011), national surveys of American college students revealed similar results. Nine in ten American college students reported that they often feel overwhelmed by all they had to do and felt exhausted, anxious, angry and depressed.

The fear of non-completion demands specific attention (Negovan, 2010). Challenges that may heighten the possibility of not completing one's degree are, for example, insufficient *ex-ante* information about the programme and the institution. Other concerns are the financing of studies, accommodation and transport (Yorke & Longden, 2008). This finding is especially important within the context of many higher education institutions in South Africa, where a significant portion of the student population comprises first-generation students who are often far from their homes, in a new and demanding environment. The significance of being a newcomer to university life features in a number of studies internationally (Bewick, Koutsopoulou, Miles, Slaa & Barkham, 2010).

At a university in the United Kingdom, Bewick et al. (2010) investigated the psychological well-being of students from all faculties from pre-registration to the second semester of the third year of study. Results clearly showed that greater stress is experienced by students who start university compared to pre-university levels (Bewick et al., 2010). Interestingly, the levels of stress were higher in the first semester (Bewick et al., 2010). It is clear that university is a time of heightened levels of stress. Understanding these issues better can inform universities to facilitate the support necessary throughout students' studies to enable them to finish successfully. Furthermore, studies have found differences in the levels of happiness and optimism between male and female students (Srivastava & Agarwal, 2013; Dar & Wani, 2017). Dar and Wani (2017) found such a result for India.

Within the South African context, the subjective well-being of students is not yet receiving the same levels of research attention as elsewhere in the world. However, important work has been done in this regard. Notable is the work of Møller (1996), who investigated the dynamics of life satisfaction amongst students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Botha et al. (2013) focused their attention on satisfaction with residence life, in particular at Rhodes University in South Africa. Botha et al. (2013) pointed towards the importance of student attributes, such as demographics, and other variables, such as race, gender, sexual orientation, age, socioeconomic status, self-esteem, drug and alcohol use, learning style, and academic achievement. Variables endogenous to the institutions refer to issues such as living conditions, social spaces, leisure activities and the culture on campus (Botha et al., 2013).

Pretorius and Blaauw (2014) conducted an exploratory study on the subjective well-being of first-year students at a comprehensive higher education institution. Apart from the elements highlighted by previous international and local studies, they found additional variables in particular that are of importance for first-year students' subjective well-being. Positive aspects forthcoming from their results were the fact that the university was the institution of choice for the student; feeling 'at home'; knowing exactly how the university functions; and taking part in or watching sport (Pretorius & Blaauw, 2014). Negative influences were identified as worries about tests, studying less than 10 hours per week and living on campus (Pretorius & Blaauw, 2014).

Türkdoğan and Duru (2012, p. 2444) summarised the issue of subjective well-being of students, stating that:

> It can be said that the students who have the ability to make choices and to express themselves freely, … who feel themselves worthy and successful, who have enough safety and shelter conditions, and who have good relationships with special people in their lives, are more close to happiness than the others.

This study will use the variables identified in the international and South African literature as variables in econometric models to investigate the contributing factors playing a role in the levels of subjective well-being of students at one of South Africa's biggest universities. The choices of research population, research design and empirical strategy are discussed next.

Research Methodology

Survey instrument

The research design for this study was quantitative. The study followed the example of the literature and utilised a survey-based research approach to investigate the possible variables contributing to the subjective well-being of first-year economics students within the context of related pressures on students in South Africa. To this end, a fit-for-purpose survey instrument was developed. The survey instrument evolved from the pioneering work of Van Zyl (2010). The survey was tested by conducting a trial run on a group of students and the survey was subsequently adjusted in multiple iterations. Potentially ambiguous questions and other problems in the survey instrument were identified and addressed.

After the development phase of the survey, the necessary ethical clearance was obtained from the relevant faculty's ethics committee. All associated ethical concerns were addressed, such as the need for anonymity and being voluntarily involved in the research project. A trained senior tutor was used to collect the data during tutorial sessions of the target group of students. The students have compulsory economics tutorial sessions every week. Before each session, the tutor explained the objectives of the study. The willingness of students to participate in the study was also confirmed before the survey was conducted.

The survey was completed every year from 2014 to 2016 by first-year economics students. The data for 2014 were collected in August 2014, whereas the data for 2015 and 2016 were collected in February 2015 and 2016, respectively. The data were captured and cleaned in the month after collection, in each of the respective years to provide an adequate dataset. The sample sizes for each year were 529 (24% of the research population), 641 (29%) and 647 (29.4%) students who completed the survey. This gave a total pooled sample of 1817 students (27.5 % of the research population) over the three years. The following sections provide the details of the data and variables as well as the econometric framework of the empirical analysis.

Data and variables

The dependent variable in the study is labelled as 'Happiness'. The variable is a Likert scale measure of the self-reported subjective well-being (SWB) of individuals. The variable is based on question M5 of the first wave of the National Income Dynamics Study (NIDS), which reflects the subjective well-being of individuals: 'Using a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 means "Very dissatisfied" and 10 means "Very satisfied", how do you feel about your life as a whole right now?' (NIDS, 2008:26). Figure 1 reveals the percentage of responses to the subjective well-being question per scale. Out of the 1817 responses in total over the three years, 18% of the students indicated that they were 'very satisfied' with their lives as a whole when the survey was conducted. Only 2% specified that they were 'very dissatisfied' with their lives when the survey was conducted. The majority of the student responses in the sample are clustered around the upper bounds of the research question, indicating the relative happiness of students at the institution.

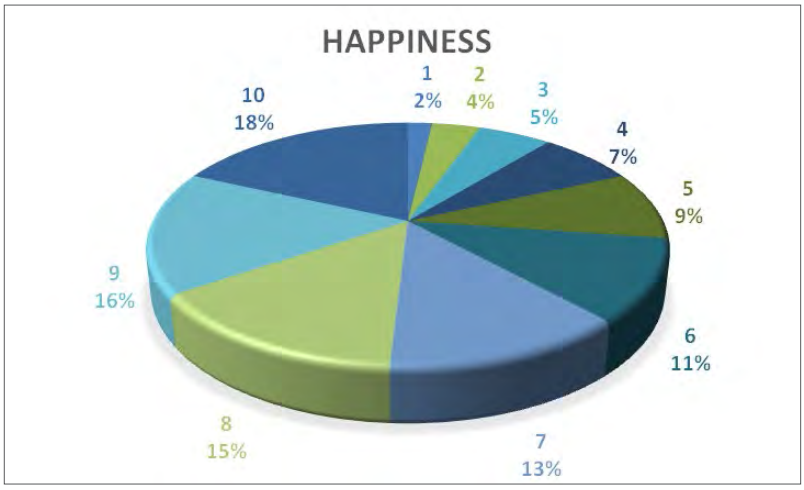


Figure 1: Summary of happiness amongst first-year economics students at a comprehensive institution, 2014-2016 *(Source: Survey data)*

Table 1 displays the basic demographic statistics of the students who participated in the survey over the respective sample years and in total. The ages of the respondents ranged from 17 to 35 years (with an average of 19 years), and there were slightly more female than male respondents. Furthermore, the majority of the respondents were South African-language and English-speaking. The respondents were mainly South African born: 100% of respondents were from SA in 2014, 96.3% in 2015 and 94.9% in 2016. The respondents in 2015 and 2016, who were not born in South Africa, were mostly from neighbouring countries. It can also be seen that, of the South African born respondents, most were born in Gauteng.

Table 1: Respondent demographic statistics

	2014	2015	2016	Total
Females (%)	320 (60.5%)	350 (54.6%)	353 (54.6%)	1023 (56.3%)
Males (%)	209 (39.5%)	291 (45.4%)	294 (45.4%)	794 (43.7%)
Total	529 (100%)	641 (100%)	647 (100%)	1817 (100%)
African (%)	412 (77.9%)	506 (78.9%)	533 (82.4%)	1451 (79.9%)
Coloured (%)	24 (4.5%)	29 (4.5%)	28 (4.3%)	81 (4.5%)
Indian/Asian (%)	35 (6.6%)	49 (7.6%)	38 (5.9%)	122 (6.7%)
White (%)	53 (10.0%)	52 (8.1%)	45 (7.0%)	150 (8.3%)
Other (%)	5 (1.0%)	5 (0.8%)	3 (0.5%)	13 (0.7%)
Total	**529 (100%)**	**641 (100%)**	**647 (100%)**	**1817 (100%)**
English	206 (38.9%)	243 (37.9%)	220 (34.0%)	669 (36.8%)
Sesotho	36 (6.8%)	36 (5.6%)	39 (6.0%)	111 (6.1%)

	2014	2015	2016	Total
Sepedi	48 (9.1%)	45 (7.0%)	67 (10.4%)	160 (8.8%)
IsiZulu	99 (18.7%)	110 (17.2%)	135 (20.9%)	344 (18.9%)
IsiNdebele	9 (1.7%)	2 (0.3%)	6 (0.9%)	17 (0.9%)
Xitsonga	26 (4.9%)	25 (3.9%)	30 (4.6%)	81 (4.5%)
Afrikaans	21 (4.0%)	23 (3.6%)	8 (1.2%)	52 (2.9%)
Setswana	35 (6.6%)	70 (10.9%)	53 (8.2%)	158 (8.7%)
IsiXhosa	22 (4.2%)	29 (4.5%)	37 (5.7%)	88 (4.8%)
Tshivenda	15 (2.8%)	29 (4.5%)	17 (2.6%)	61 (3.4%)
SiSwati	11 (2.1%)	22 (3.4%)	20 (3.1%)	53 (2.9%)
Shona	0 (0.0%)	4 (0.6%)	9 (1.4%)	13 (0.7%)
Other	1 (0.2%)	3 (0.5%)	6 (0.9%)	10 (0.6%)
Total	**529 (100%)**	**641 (100%)**	**647 (100%)**	**1817 (100%)**
Gauteng	294 (55.6%)	343 (55.6%)	361 (59.5%)	998 (56.9%)
Mpumalanga	51 (9.6%)	51 (8.3%)	52 (8.6%)	154 (8.8%)
KZN	54 (10.2%)	64 (10.4%)	67 (11.0%)	185 (10.6%)
EC	19 (3.6%)	18 (2.9%)	23 (3.8%)	60 (3.4%)
Limpopo	75 (14.2%)	83 (13.5%)	69 (11.4%)	227 (12.9%)
NW	23 (4.3%)	34 (5.5%)	20 (3.3%)	77 (4.4%)
Free State	11 (2.1%)	14 (2.3%)	6 (1.0%)	31 (1.8%)
NC	1 (0.2%)	4 (0.6%)	3 (0.5%)	8 (0.5%)
WC	1 (0.2%)	6 (1.0%)	6 (1.0%)	13 (0.7%)
Total	**529 (100%)**	**617 (100%)**	**607 (100%)**	**1753 (100%)**

Source: Survey data

The survey instrument included various questions in order to identify possible variables that affect student happiness. The questions in the survey included demographic details, variables that normally are of concern for students, social and academic interaction variables, travel and living arrangements and university-related variables. Table 2 encapsulates the explanatory variables considered for the empirical analysis.

Table 2: Explanatory variables considered in the models

Variable	Description
	Demographic variables
Age	The age of students during the time of the survey. The mathematical squared value (Agesq) was also included in the empirical models as suggested in the SWB literature.
Gender	Male or female

Variable	Description
Language	Predominant language of student – English, Sesotho, Sepedi, IsiZulu, IsiNdebele, Xitsonga, Afrikaans, Setswana, IsiXhosa, Tshivenda, SiSwati, Shona and other
Race	African, coloured, white, Indian/Asian and other
Province	The majority of the respondents were from South Africa. Categories for each of the nine provinces were included – Gauteng, Mpumalanga, KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape, Limpopo, North West, Free State, Northern Cape and Western Cape.
	Concerns
Finances	Worries about the financing of studies.
Food problems	Problems affording or attaining food.
Test worries	Worries about upcoming tests.
Transport	Problems with transport to and from university.
	Interaction: Social or academic
Contact	Personal contact was made with a lecturer and/or tutor during the academic year.
Culture	Participation in or attendance of cultural activities at the university.
Sport	Participation in or attendance of sport activities at the university.
Friends	Students who have made friends at the university.
First-year seminar	Attendance of the First-year seminar (FYS) in January before the commencement of lectures.[3].
Missed	The number of tutorials and lectures that were missed during a normal week.
	Travel and living arrangements
Distance campus	Distance of residence from campus – on campus or within walking distance, 30 minutes or less from campus or more than 30 minutes from campus.
Happy live	Happiness in terms of current residence.
Live	Place of residence – on campus, home, commune, family or other.
Transport used	Type of transport mostly used to get to campus – taxi, private car, walking or other.

3 During these sessions there are opportunities to meet your fellow students through a team-building activity and people get the opportunity to listen to various role players at the University in terms of its everyday activities and functions.

Variable	Description
	Other university related variables
Choice	Whether the university was the institution of choice or not.
Expect	Students understand what is expected of them from lecturers.
Study hours	Hours spent studying outside of class time, per week – less than 10, 10 to 15, 16 to 25, 26 to 35 and more than 35 hours.
Home	Feeling 'at home' at the university.
University function	Understand how the university functions.
Satisfaction	Overall level of satisfaction of the students' experience at the university – satisfied, neutral and dissatisfied.

Source: Survey instrument

The econometric models that were used in the study will be discussed next.

Econometric framework

In empirical studies that estimate subjective well-being, normally two types of models are used: ordinary least squares (OLS) regressions and ordered response models. Ordered response models take the qualitative and ordinal nature of the dependent variable into account. This study followed the practice of estimating both the OLS and the ordered response models. The coefficients of the OLS model are mostly used for interpretation.

According to Long and Freese (2006), the ordered probit model is specified as follows:

$$y_i^+ = \beta X_i + \varepsilon_i \qquad (1)$$

where y_i^+ is an unobservable latent variable that represents the happiness of student i ordered from 1 to 10, and X_i represents a vector of context-specific and basic explanatory variables. Furthermore, β represents a vector of coefficients for each variable in the vector X_i and ε_i represents a random and normally distributed error term. The categories of the observed variable y_i^+ are mapped from the probability outputs corresponding to the following cut points (Long & Freese, 2006):

$$\mathbf{1}\ if\ y_i^+ < \tau_1 \quad @\mathbf{2}\ if\ \tau_1 \le y_i^+ < \tau_2\ @\mathbf{3}\ if\ \tau_2 \le y_i^+ < \tau_3\ @\mathbf{4}\ if\ \tau_3 \le y_i^+ < \tau_4\ @\mathbf{5}\ if\ \tau_4 \le y_i^+ < \tau_5$$
$$@\mathbf{6}\ if\ \tau_5 \le y_i^+ < \tau_6\ @\mathbf{7}\ if\ \tau_6 \le y_i^+ < \tau_7\ @\mathbf{8}\ if\ \tau_7 \le y_i^+ < \tau_8\ @\mathbf{9}\ if\ \tau_8 \le y_i^+ < \tau_9\ @\mathbf{10}\ if\ y_i \qquad (2)$$

Initially, all explanatory variables were included in the pooled OLS model and the pooled ordered probit model. Thereafter, the individual annual models were considered and compared for the ordered probit models only. The results of the final regression models are discussed in the next section.

Results and Discussion

All variables were considered in the initial OLS and ordered probit model for the pooled data. Thereafter, the insignificant variables were omitted. The results are represented in Table 3. The same variables identified in the pooled models were tested for significance for the annual individual ordered probit models and the results are presented in Table 4.

The results will be discussed according to the general themes of variables identified in the data and variables section, i.e. demographic variables, concerns, interaction (social or academic), travel and living arrangements and other university related variables.

Table 3: Final pooled model results

	OLS		Ordered Probit	
	Coef	Prob	Coef	Prob
C	1.3332	0.5923		
Age	0.4061	0.0721 *	0.2597	0.0705 *
Agesq	-0.0094	0.0653 *	-0.0059	0.0672 *
Finances	-0.1801	0.0559 *	-0.0955	0.1040
Test worries	-0.6446	0.0000 ***	-0.4300	0.0000 ***
Friends	0.2633	0.0929 *	0.1497	0.1249
First-year seminar	0.1770	0.0852 *	0.1178	0.0659 *
Distance campus	-0.2835	0.0051 **	-0.1777	0.0048 ***
Happy live	0.4571	0.0000 ***	0.2661	0.0000 ***
Live commune	0.3520	0.0016 ***	0.2281	0.0010 ***
Expect	0.3794	0.0182 **	0.2080	0.0376 **
Home	0.4071	0.0003 ***	0.2482	0.0004 ***
Study 25 to 35 p/w	0.4302	0.0046 ***	0.2651	0.0051 ***
Satisfied with university	0.9213	0.0000 ***	0.5830	0.0000 ***
Dissatisfied with university	-1.7030	0.0000 ***	-0.9073	0.0000 ***
R-squared		0.2523		
Adjusted R-squared		0.2441		
Pseudo R-squared				0.0685
Sample size	1817		1817	
, **, * 10%, 5%, 1% level of significance, respectively*				

Source: Survey Instrument

Table 4: Annual ordered probit models results

	2014		2015		2016	
	Coef	Prob	Coef	Prob	Coef	Prob
Age	0.9612	0.2482	0.4052	0.0326 **	0.1103	0.6411
Agesq	-0.0227	0.2745	-0.0089	0.0344 **	-0.0029	0.6014
Finances		#	-0.1606	0.0581 *	-0.0536	0.5177
Test worries	-0.2960	0.0020 ***	-0.3263	0.0007 ***	-0.5248	0.0000 ***
Friends	0.2191	0.2058	0.1326	0.3726	0.1507	0.2530
First-year seminar	0.1028	0.3317	0.1324	0.1399	0.1084	0.2397

	2014		2015		2016	
	Coef	Prob	Coef	Prob	Coef	Prob
Distance campus	-0.0076	0.9418	-0.2880	0.0029 ***	-0.0926	0.2770
Happy live	0.4380	0.0000 ***	0.1911	0.0414 **	0.3196	0.0005 ***
Live commune	0.0198	0.8626	0.2800	0.0069 ***	0.2087	0.0323 **
Expect	-0.0675	0.6818	0.2601	0.0712 *	0.1857	0.1875
Home	0.3166	0.0050 **	0.2852	0.0044 ***	0.2166	0.0285 **
Study 25 to 35 p/w	-0.0051	0.9688	0.2905	0.0356 ***	0.2804	0.0338 **
Satisfied with university	0.4570	0.0000 ***	0.6339	0.0000 ***	0.5686	0.0000 ***
Dissatisfied with university	-0.5738	0.0156 **	-0.6680	0.0106 **	-0.9358	0.0000 ***
Pseudo R-squared		0.0517		0.0659		0.0737
Sample size	529		641		647	
, **, * 10%, 5%, 1% level of significance, respectively.* *# The finances variable was not included in the 2014 survey.*						

Source: Survey Instrument

Demographic Variables

The only demographic variables that were significant in the pooled OLS and ordered probit models were age and age squared of the respondents. It is customary to include the age variable as well as the mathematical squared value of age as two separate variables in econometric models to accommodate for the potential non-linearity in the relationship with the dependant variable (therefore a quadratic relationship). If the age variable has a positive relationship with the dependent variable and the squared variable a negative relationship, it means that, as people get older, the effect of age is lessened on the dependent variable. However, if both the age and the age squared variables have a positive effect on the dependent variable, the effect is stronger on the dependent variable as people get older. In the individual annual models, age and age squared were only significant in 2015. The age and age squared variables respectively show a positive and negative relationship with happiness. The quadratic relationship therefore indicates that, as students get older, the effect of age on happiness is reduced. Considering that the sample is for a large part a homogenous group, it is not surprising that there are no other significant demographic variables.

Concerns

Finances and test worries are the two concerns variables that were significant in the pooled OLS model. The finance variable represents worries that students experience in terms of the financing of their studies. Test worries reflect students' fears about upcoming tests. Test worries are very significant in the pooled ordered probit model, but the finances

variable is only significant at the 11% level of significance. It is noteworthy that the finances variable is only significant in the annual ordered probit model for 2015 (the finances variable was unfortunately not included in the 2014 survey), but it was no longer significant in the 2016 ordered probit model.

The significance of the finances variable in 2015 could be a reflection of the start of the #FeesMustFall campaign. Although the #FeesMustFall protests only occurred in the middle of October of 2015, it appears that the worries regarding the increase of fees were already playing a role at the start of the year when the surveys were conducted. Furthermore, the non-significance in 2016 could be ascribed to the announcement of no tuition-fee increases for 2016 by the South African government. Worries regarding upcoming tests are a significant factor influencing the happiness of students negatively, as it is highly significant throughout all the individual sample years, respectively.

Interaction: social or academic

In the pooled OLS model, one social interaction variable, friends, is significant with the expected sign. This variable indicates whether a particular student has already made friends at university. When the pooled ordered probit model was estimated, the significance of friends changed to significant only at a 13% level of significance. Friends turned out to be insignificant in the annual ordered probit models. Other studies (for example, Mangeloja & Hirvonen, 2007, and Chan et al., 2005) emphasised that social relationships were an imperative determinant of happiness and therefore the insignificance of the friends variable from the annual ordered probit models is surprising. It seems that making friends does not have a direct influence on the SWB of students at this institution. This is an important avenue for further research.

Furthermore, one academic interaction variable, first-year seminar (FYS), is significant with the expected sign in the pooled OLS as well as the ordered probit model. FYS was not significant in the annual ordered probit models. The FYS variable is indicative of the annual orientation session that takes place at the beginning of the academic year. This gathering serves as an information session to students in terms of the everyday activities and functions of the university. There is also an opportunity for students who are enrolled for the same programmes to meet each other and take part in team-building activities. The insignificance of this variable in the annual ordered probit models shows that this engagement does not have a direct effect on the SWB of students.

Travel and living arrangements

In terms of variables that are categorised under travel and living arrangements, there are three variables that were significant in the pooled OLS and ordered probit models. The first is the distance campus variable, which indicates how far students live from the campus. On campus and within walking distance were collapsed into one category and it shows a negative relationship with happiness; therefore, students' happiness is decreased when they live on campus or close to campus. This finding could allude to the questionable quality

of student accommodation in and around campuses (as reported in the Soudien report in 2008). The within walking distance variable and its significant negative relationship with happiness reflect the issues of overcrowding and increased crime levels experienced on and around the campus. Incidents of crime and overcrowded student accommodation were often reported in the local media, government departments and academic literature for the last decade. See, for example, DHET (2011), Mbara and Celliers (2013) and De Villiers (2018). These results accentuate the need for university management to put further emphasis on issues of student safety.

The other two travel and living arrangement variables that were significant in both the pooled OLS and the ordered probit model were happy life and live commune. The happy live variable indicates the happiness of students in terms of their current residence. This variable was also significant in all three years of the annual models. The live commune variable represents students who live in communes, and this variable was only significant in 2015 and 2016. These two variables emphasise the importance of living arrangements in the happiness of students.

Other university-related variables

The last category of variables, which are all university-related, has the most significant variables. Expect, home, study 25 to 35 p/w, satisfied with university and unsatisfied with university were all significant in the pooled OLS and ordered probit models. The expect variable refers to the situation where students completely understand what is expected of them from their lecturers. This variable was only significant in the 2016 annual model. Home, satisfied with university, and unsatisfied with university were all significant in each one of the annual models. The home variable refers to students feeling "at home" at the university. The two satisfaction variables denote the overall level of satisfaction of the students' experience at the university. Lastly, the study 25 to 35 p/w variable was not significant in 2015, but it was significant in 2016 and 2017. This variable specifically refers to the hours spent studying outside of class time, per week. The study by Mangeloja and Hirvonen (2007) revealed that one of the most important impacts on students' happiness is the educational environment. The adjustment process to the new environment at university will be much easier on students if they feel at home at the university and know what is expected of them. These results raise important considerations for university management and even academic units and faculties.

Conclusions, Policy Considerations and Areas for Further Research

One of the main challenges that is facing the higher education sector in South Africa is reflected in the results of this study: finances. Issues of finances for university students constituted a significant negative contributor to the SWB of students in 2015 – as was evident in the #FeesMustFall campaign, which was directly linked to this ongoing problem.

The SWB of students is influenced positively by their living arrangements (those who are happy with their current residence and those that live in a commune) as well

as variables that have a direct influence on the educational environment in which they operate. Students will adjust to the new university environment more easily if they feel 'at home' at the university and know exactly what is expected of them. Negative variables that influence the SWB of students include concerns regarding finances and upcoming tests. Living on the campus itself or if you live within walking distance of campus also influenced SWB negatively. The results in terms of the off-campus variable and the issue of crime and overcrowding are a call to university management to increase its levels of cooperation with law enforcement agencies and the metro in order to improve the experience of those living off campus. In the words of a police officer quoted by De Villiers (2018), "They (students) have a lot to worry about. They don't need to worry about being robbed."

The insignificance of the FYS in the annual ordered probit models suggests that the frequency of these first-year seminars may not be enough for students to gain the intended benefit of engaging with fellow students and getting to know the inner workings of the university. Supplementing these with additional seminars in the second semester may enhance the benefit for the students and impact positively on their first-year experience and its concomitant challenges.

Overall, the results show that every possible effort is needed to increase students' chances of achieving the success expected of them by the social norms and structures of our society. This may ultimately be the best way to enhance their experience of student life and their associated SWB. Added to that, academic success is an important factor in achieving the private and social returns on the investment in South Africa's higher education sector that our limited resources require of us. Ultimately, that is the only way to ensure that future generations of students face less of the added pressures that weigh first-year students down, making it difficult to go through the doors of learning with confidence and a high likelihood of succeeding.

References

Bantjes, J.R., Kagee, A., McGowan, T. & Steel, H. (2016). Symptoms of posttraumatic stress, depression, and anxiety as predictors of suicidal ideation amongst South African university students. *Journal of American College Health*, 64(6), 429-437. https://doi.org/10.1080/07448481.2016.1178120

Bewick, B., Koutsopoulou, G., Miles, J., Slaa, E. & Barkham, M. (2010). Changes in undergraduate students' psychological well-being as they progress through university. *Studies in Higher Education*, 35(6), 633-645. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075070903216643

Blaauw, D. & Pretorius, A. (2013). The determinants of subjective well-being in South Africa – an exploratory enquiry. *Journal of Economic and Financial Sciences*, 6(1), 179-194. https://doi.org/10.4102/jef.v6i1.283

Botha, F., Snowball, J., De Klerk, V. & Radloff, S. (2013). Determinants of student satisfaction with campus residence life at a South African university. Economic Research Southern Africa (ERSA) (Working paper no. 388).

Chan, G., Miller, P. & Tcha, M. (2005). Happiness in university education. *International Review of Economics Education*, 4(1), 20-45. https://doi.org/10.1016/S1477-3880(15)30139-0

Chow, H. (2005). Life satisfaction amongst university students in a Canadian prairie city: A multivariate analysis. *Social Indicators Research*, 70(2), 139-150. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-004-7526-0

Christie, H., Tett, L., Cree, V.E., Hounsell, J. & McCune, V. (2008). 'A real rollercoaster of confidence and emotions': learning to be a university student. *Studies in Higher Education*, 33(5), 567-581. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075070802373040

Cox, K. (2012). Happiness and unhappiness in the developing world: life satisfaction amongst sex workers, dump-dwellers, urban poor, and rural peasants in Nicaragua. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 13(1), 103-128. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-011-9253-y

Dar, A.A. & Wani, M.A. (2017). Optimism, happiness, and self-esteem amongst university students. *Indian Journal of Positive Psychology*, 8(3), 300-304. https://doi.org/10.15614/ijpp/2017/v8i3/161893

Dave, R., Tripathi, K.N., Singh, P. & Udainiya, R. (2011). Subjective well-being, locus of control and general self-efficacy amongst university students. *Amity Journal of Applied Psychology*, 2(1), 28-32.

De Villiers, R. (2018). Police identify student crime hotspot in Auckland Park. https://bit.ly/3d9AK3O [Accessed 25 February 2019].

DHET (Department of Higher Education and Training) (2011). Report on the Ministerial Committee for the review of the provision of student housing at South African universities. https://www.cput.ac.za/storage/services/procurement/ministerial_report_housing.pdf [Accessed 25 February 2019].

Diener, E., Diener, M. & Diener, C. (2009). Factors predicting subjective well-being of nations. *Social Indicators Research Series*, 38, 43-70. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-90-481-2350-6_2

Dolan, P., Peasgood, T. & White, M. (2008). Do we really know what makes us happy? A review of the economic literature on the factors associated with subjective well-being. *Journal of Economic Psychology*, 29(1), 94-122. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.joep.2007.09.001

Easterlin, R.A. (1974). Does economic growth improve the human lot? Some empirical evidence. In: P.A. David & M.W. Reder (Eds.), *Nations and households in economic growth: Essays in honour of Moses Abramovitz*. New York: Academic Press, 89-125. https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-205050-3.50008-7

Easterlin, R.A. (2001). Editorial: Subjective well-being and economic analysis: a brief introduction. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, 45(3), 225-226. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0167-2681(01)00143-3

Eckersley, R. (2011). A new narrative of young people's health and well-being. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 14(5), 627-638. https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2011.565043

Flynn, D.M. & MacLeod, S. (2015). Determinants of happiness in undergraduate university students. *College Student Journal*, 49(3), 452-460.

Frey, B. & Stutzer, A. (2002). *Happiness and Economics*. Princeton University Press.

HESA (Higher Education of South Africa) (2005). SA higher education. http://web.archive.org/web/20050301015907/; http://www.sauvca.org.za/highered/ [Accessed 13 February 2014].

Kahneman, D. & Krueger, A.B. (2006). Developments in the measurement of subjective well-being. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 20(1), 3-24. https://doi.org/10.1257/089533006776526030

Long, J.S. & Freese, J. (2006). *Regression Models for Categorical Dependent Variables using Stata*. Texas: Stata Press.

Luescher, T.M., Schreiber, B. & Moja, T. (2018). Towards student well-being and quality services in student affairs in Africa. *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa*, 6(2), v-viii. https://doi.org/10.24085/jsaa.v6i2.3317

MacKerron, G. (2012). Happiness economics from 35,000 feet. *Journal of Economic Surveys*, 26(4), 705-735. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6419.2010.00672.x

Mangeloja, E. & Hirvonen, T. (2007). What makes university students happy? *International Review of Economics Education*, 6(2), 26-41. https://doi.org/10.1016/S1477-3880(15)30105-5

Mbara, T.C. & Celliers, C. (2013). Travel patterns and challenges experienced by University of Johannesburg off-campus students. *Journal of Transport and Supply Chain Management*, 7(1), Art. #114, 8 pages. https://doi.org/10.4102/jtscm.v7i1.114

Michalos, A.C. (2008). Education, happiness and wellbeing. *Social Indicators Research*, 87(3), 347-366. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-007-9144-0

Møller, V. (1996). Life satisfaction and expectations for the future in a sample of university students: A research note. *South African Journal of Sociology*, 27(1), 16-26. https://doi.org/10.1080/02580144.1996.10430699

Negovan, V. (2010). Dimensions of students' psychosocial well-being and their measurement: validation of a students' psychosocial well-being inventory. *Europe's Journal of Psychology*, 6(2), 85-104. https://doi.org/10.5964/ejop.v6i2.186

NIDS (National Income Dynamics Study) (2008). *Adult questionnaire, National Income Dynamics Survey*. SALDRU, UCT School of Economics, Cape Town.

Nielsen, I., Newman, A., Smyth, R., Hirst, G. & Heilemann, B. (2017). The influence of instructor support, family support and psychological capital on the well-being of postgraduate students: a moderated mediation model, *Studies in Higher Education*, 42(11), 2099-2115. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2015.1135116

Pretorius, M. & Blaauw, P.F. (2014). Happiness amongst first-year students at a comprehensive tertiary institution – an exploratory study. *Journal of Economic and Financial Sciences*, 7(2), 467-484. https://doi.org/10.4102/jef.v7i2.151

Simkins, C. (2016). Funding. South African higher education reviewed: two decades of democracy. In: *Kagisano (10), Council on Higher Education*, 39-115.

Soudien, C. (2008). Report of the ministerial committee on transformation and social cohesion and the elimination of discrimination in public higher education institutions. https://bit.ly/2zHYhvi [Accessed 8 October 2019].

Srivastava, N. & Agarwal, S. (2013). Self-esteem amongst young adults: a comparative study. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Invention*, 2(3), 59-61.

Türkdoğan, T. & Duru, E. (2012). The role of basic needs fulfilment in prediction of subjective well-being amongst university students. *Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice*, 12(4), 2440-2446.

Van Zyl, A. (2010). *The predictive value of pre-entry attributes for student academic performance in the South African context*. D Ed et Phil thesis, University of Johannesburg, South Africa.

Yorke, M. & Longden, B. (2008). *The first-year experience of higher education in the UK, final report*. The Higher Education Academy, York, United Kingdom.

How to cite:

Pretorius, M. & Blaauw, D. 2020. Financial Challenges and the Subjective Well-being of First-year Students at a Comprehensive South African University. *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa*, 8(1), 47-63. DOI: 10.24085/jsaa.v8i1.4181

Research article

Choreographies of Protest Performance as Recruitment to Activism

Phiwokazi Qoza*

Abstract

This article seeks to understand why some bystanders to protest transcended to become actors in protests during the re-emergence of wide-spread student activism in an institution of higher education in South Africa during 2015. For this purpose, a performance ethnography is employed in the observation and analysis of protest performances. The article shows that in encountering an atmosphere of protest, there emerged a relation of feeling, referred to as "feeling the vibe or atmosphere", which those who became protest performers resolved in ways which increased their capacity to act in favour of co-constituting that atmosphere. In the encounter between the body of bystanders and the atmosphere of protest, non-linear somatic communication, characterised by active and passive gestures and postures, occurred through which protest performers developed contact and connection with other bodies as a result of the displacement of space. Therefore, this article suggests that participation in activism can be about going with the flow of movement in an uncertain and ambiguous moment and is not limited to an identification with the pre-existing organisation of preferences and interests as the creativity of movement produces a social space – a performed becoming in space.

Keywords

affect; becoming; protest song; student activism as performance; student politics

Background and Context

A majority of institutions of higher education in South Africa were sites of protest action between 2015 and 2017. What started at the University of Cape Town as #RhodesMustFall inspired proxies in other historically white institutions, such as 'Rhodes So White' and 'Open Stellies' at Rhodes University and Stellenbosch University respectively, echoing similar grievances and using similar strategies of protest such as occupations and university shutdowns (Bosch, 2017; Ngidi, Mtshixa, Diga, Mbarathi & May, 2016). The protest action that occurred in the period from 2015 to 2017 has been compared to the emergence of student activism during apartheid in both historically white and historically black institutions as students arranged and participated in coordinated protest events. Similar to their counterparts in Senegal, Kenya and South Korea during the second half of the

* Ms Phiwokazi Qoza is in Research Grants Management at the Allan Cormack House, the University of Cape Town. She holds an MA in Political and International Studies from Rhodes University, South Africa. Email: phiwo.qoza@uct.ac.za

20th century, South African students became the "vanguard of democratic defiance" in their actions against the administration of the apartheid state through the university (Bianchini, 2016; Macharia, 2015; Makunike, 2015; Mazrui, 1995). In the postapartheid era, there has been an increase in higher education participation rates, but access to the 'ivory towers' has been offset by perceptions of an institutional inability to manage massification (Cele, 2014; Luescher et al., 2015; Reddy, 2004). It could be said then that in both the apartheid and the postapartheid period, student activism in South Africa has always been about a perception students have about the management of the state through the university.

The problem of why a pre-existing discontent gains a new sense of urgency when it does and why protesting individuals act the way they do needs further exploration. How does the change in perception which seeks to remedy the status quo come into being? In this article, Rhodes University, a historically white institution which has been widely noted for its political apathy, provides the context from which to suggest that choreographies of protest performance have the power to affect an individual to transform from spectator to actor in protest.

Method

This research has employed qualitative research methods in the phenomenological paradigm to draw out a performance ethnography informed by observation and semi-structured, open-ended interviews. Qualitative research is concerned with the experiences of individuals and groups in their interactions and usage of various communication styles, and the analysis of documents, such as images, film and music, which capture those experiences (Angrosino, 2007). In response to student activism research traditions, there was a search for patterns in experience through observation and the search for explication through interviews.

There is no universally accepted technique to conducting an observation, but note-taking is common practice amongst ethnographers. Various ethnographers posit that observation is a whole body perception as information is registered beyond what the eyes can see but speaks to all the senses (Angrosino, 2007; Blackman & Featherstone, 2010; Parviainen, 2010). According to Pink (2009), in doing a sensory ethnography, the researcher self-consciously and reflexively attends to and accounts for sensory information. For instance, attending to sensory information in the field entails taking notes when something just does not feel right or when an exchange between actors seems important. The researcher's intuition is their "immediate apprehension" of what is going on and the relationship between research, the researched, and the activity of research implies that phenomenology is a "philosophy of intuition" (Giorgi, 2002, p. 9; Janesick, 2001, p. 532). A research project is aimed at responding to a gap in the signification of an experience and oftentimes that gap is discoverable in the *pas de deux* performed by intuition and creativity (Janesick, 2001).

In addition to observation, fourteen people who had been selected through the technique of purposive sampling were approached for interviews. Although purposive sampling is non-random, it differs from convenience sampling in that the researcher

relies on his or her judgement to select research participants based on the qualities that the participants possess (Etikan et al., 2016; Guarte & Barrios, 2007; Marshall, 1996). The selection was informed by knowledge of the research area accrued from observation, and the participants reflect the demographics of Rhodes University with a majority of them being African and female (Matthews, 2015). Interview candidates were sought on the basis that they had been registered at Rhodes University for more than five years at the time of the interviews (2017) and the rationale for this was that they had been students at Rhodes prior to the outbreak of student activism in 2015, during and shortly after the protest wave.

Prior to interviews, there were a number of questions, informed by the background and context, which were prepared and designed to provide structure to the interviews. However, each interview had a character of its own as it accommodated digressions and often followed up on reflections or statements made by participants. For instance, what a participant said was often repeated as a question or followed up with a "what do you mean?" There were instances of "tell me more about…". Whereas Agrosino (2007) states that the semi-structured aspect of the interview should naturally follow the open-ended aspect of the interview, the interviews that inform this study often started out structured and then became open-ended. Interviews took place in public spaces such as local coffee shops, the Rhodes University library and grounds. All interviews were recorded by the 'voice memo' app on the researcher's smartphone and they lasted between 45 minutes and an hour. They were subsequently transcribed verbatim without the assistance of convenient software applications (apps).

Spontaneity and the Emergence of Protest Action

It has been argued that protest action is part of the repertoire that disgruntled individuals and groups use to communicate preferences and interests as claims or demands (McAdam, 1986; Polleta & Jasper, 2001; Tilly, 1978; Tarrow, 1993). The manner in which they protest varies and protest repertoires are both historically situated and spontaneous (Anisin, 2016; Flesher Fominaya, 2015; Georgsen & Thomassen, 2017). Tilly (1978) argues that protest has been significantly routinised through the expansion of civil society organisations and social movements. However, when spoken of, spontaneity either refers to the behaviour of a group of actors in their subversion of the available and institutionalised dispute resolution mechanisms by engaging in informal protest, or on the other hand, spontaneity refers to and is contingent on factors beyond the scope of the interests and preferences of a group of actors. In their analysis of the 2012-2013 rape protests which occurred in parts of India, Chaudhuri and Fitzgerald (2015) privilege the lack of identifiable interest groups and decentralised decision-making as creating room for spontaneity in protest events. Similarly, Polletta (1998, pp. 136-141) argued for spontaneity emerging in cases where there appears to be "a lack of bureaucratic planning" which, in turn, produces radical action outside of the institutionalised norm. Whereas Sitrin (2009) has argued that on-the-go horizontal decision-making is a strategy in itself, the likes of Aelst and Walgrave (2001, pp. 476-480), Chandhuri and Fitzgerald (2015) and Rosenthal and Schwartz (1989) view spontaneity as rare for it is only triggered under certain conditions.

To historically situate the re-emergence of protest at Rhodes University, research participants were asked whether there was a political culture prior to the emergence of protest in March 2015, to which some of the participants responded:

> Um … no, not really. I don't think … not that I was aware or involved. It didn't feel like there was one. (Interview with Amie)

> No. not at all. There was nothing … I don't remember. (Interview with Reggie)

> On campus?!? I wasn't politically active anywhere because I had decided that any alliance-related politics are not for me. (Interview with Bo)

> No, actually. I wasn't politically inclined to join SASCO [South African Students Congress] or DASO [Democratic Alliance Student Organisation], but when I got here in terms of the political climate it was virtually non-existent even though the students have SRC elections and all of that. (Interview with Somila)

Somila, a research participant, mentions two student organisations and the Students' Representative Council (SRC) which, historically, have organised meetings and protests in South African institutions of higher education (Koen et al., 2006). At the time of the re-emergence of protest, there was no national student union which represented student interests to the extent that NUSAS purportedly had in historically white institutions during apartheid (Mckay, 2015) and none of the aforementioned student organisations initiated the protest action which the participants took part in.

In the absence of an organisation of student interests, recent studies into the emotions of protest posit that certain events or situations, referred to as 'moral shocks', often raise a sense of outrage which is addressed via collective action (Jasper, 1998; Polletta & Jasper, 2001). At the time when research participants embarked on their first protest performance, it was widely reported that they did so in response to and under the influence of the actions of Chumani Maxwele, who threw faeces at the then statue of Cecil John Rhodes at the University of Cape Town (UCT) (Pett, 2015). The statue in question, however, had been subject to numerous acts of defacement prior to the events of March 2015 and those did not lead to wide-spread collective protest; thus, a sense of outrage is not sufficient cause for collective protest action (Knoetze, 2014; Olson, 1971).

Moreover, resource mobilisation scholars posit that prior to protest action, there must be the generation and adoption of an injustice frame.

> A misfortune must become conceived as an injustice or a social arrangement must become viewed as unjust and mutable. In each case, a status, pattern of relationships, or a social practice is reframed as inexcusable, immoral or unjust. (Snow et al., 1986, pp. 466, 475)

At the time of the emergence of protest performance, there had been no political climate which would propel individuals to identify with the organisation of student interests or sufficient outrage to bind individuals in a network of outrage, and as a result, the participants had no frame with which to "locate, perceive, identify and label" occurrences, events or situations as justifying protest action prior to its occurrence (Goffman, 1974, p. 21).

Instead, a significant number of research participants claimed that they had been drawn to attend some of the political activities[1] which occurred between 2015 to 2017 due to the atmosphere and vibe of the protest:

> It's … it's … the atmosphere is electrifying cause you are gravitating towards other people coming together … the singing, the dancing, the demands they are making. You gravitate towards the entertainment value of being involved in the protest. Cause you see the people are chanting and singing. It's interesting and it's lively. (Interview with Hefe)

> I didn't even know the words of the songs initially, but I wanted to join in … it's like … The vibe. You can feel it. It's so fun. (Interview with Asande)

> It's a lively atmosphere. So certain people gravitate towards that atmosphere – not necessarily they like what's being said, but they just like the atmosphere around the student protest. (Interview with Bo)

To understand how one feels an atmosphere, there needs to be an enquiry into how that atmosphere is constituted through an image that gives a sense of being in that atmosphere (Brennan, 2004). This calls for a protest event analysis that "goes into the moment" to reveal "the lived immediacy of experience" offered by the atmosphere of protest (Pred, 2005, p. 11 in Thrift, 2008, p. 16). In approaching the atmosphere of protest, consideration is given to the idea that "protest almost always assumes an audience, onlookers for whom the events are 'played out'" (Kershaw, 1997, p. 260). As such, Asande, a research participant, stated that she was initially a bystander to protest, watching the gathering of bodies, and heard the tuning of protest songs and then subsequently joined the protest. The interest is the encounter of the bystander body with the performance of protest which propels them to transcend from an observer to an actor in protest. Since protest is made up of singing and movement, it is what has been traditionally considered as a performance and hence it will now be imagined as protest performance.

Choreographies of Protest Performance: From Protest Song to Movement of the Body

Performance is often contested for being an elusive term; for instance, it can be argued that "any event, action, item or behaviour can be examined 'as' performance" (Schechner, 1998, pp. 361-362). This entails both what has traditionally been thought to be performance, e.g. theatre, music, dance, art, etc., which often is rehearsed for desired effect; that which is socialised through the repetition of norms and fear of sanctions, such as being "in place"; and "a wider range of human behaviours" which burst out of improvisation (Roach, 1995, p. 46). Since the early 1990s, performance has enjoyed a privileged status in the turn to embodiment prior to representation (Butler, 1997; Thrift, 2004, 2008). Judith Butler's work on 'performative behaviour' spearheaded an engagement with performance in "… places and situations not traditionally marked as the performing arts such as how people play

1 Political activities can include, but are not limited to protest, marches, rallies, meetings, occupations etc.

gender, heightening their constructed identity, performing slightly or radically different selves in different situations (Schechner, 1998, pp. 361-362).

Performance involves relations, interaction and participation between two or more bodies that constitute the performance (Fischer-Litche, 2008, p. 32). Whereas some literature places emphasis on the physical co-presence of bodies, it is common for some bodies to be an imagined other, contributing to the overall performance in absentia (Goffman in Burns, 1992, p. 112). On the one hand, performance is the art of the present; a constellation of forces that is ephemeral and disperses as soon as the event is consummated (Martin, 1998, pp. 188-189; Thrift, 2008, p. 136). Thus, performance is infamous for its ephemeral status for as the body transitions between postures, there is the creation of a passive present by the future present of the next posture which becomes the vanishing point of the just occurring posture (Siegal, 1972).

To follow the immersion of body into performance, the performance is opened via song. The effects of song have been researched through experiments conducted in a controlled environment or through a musical anthropology of how people use music to construct their social reality. In the former, research participants who do not perform or create music have been asked to rate the arousal, valency and dominance of short video or audio clips through observation, questionnaires and semi-structured interviews (Christensen et al., 2016; Sokhadze, 2007). Following this, it has been argued that through contagion, imagination and expectation, "music has the potential to induce collective affective phenomenon, such as behavioural, physiological and neural changes, in large groups of people" (Christensen et al., 2016, p. 91).

How do musical effects manifest outside of controlled quantitative research experiments? One of the contributors to the 2010 *Body and Society Journal on Affect*, Hendricks (2011, pp. xvii-xviii) proposes that listening and noticing call for "a practical methodology where sound is subject, a vehicle and a medium for thinking" and to do so, *Sonic Bodies* encourages a "thinking through sound" instead of "thinking about sound". In the African Noise Foundation's published documentary *Decolonising Wits*, styled as 'Decolon I Sing: Wits', Kaganof (2015) captures a number of protest songs in duration of which two are sampled below to draw out the structure of protest song during the 2015 student activism in historically white institutions:

Caller: *'Senzeni Na?'* (What have we done?)

Responders: *'Senzeni Na? Senzeni Na!?'* (What have we done? What have we done?!) x 4

Caller: *'Sono Sethu* … (Our only sin …)

Responders: *Sono Sethu Bubu'mnyama'* (Our only sin is that we are black)

Caller: *Aya'ncancazela* (They are trembling)

Responders: *Aya'ncancazela* (They are trembling)

Caller: *Aya'ncancazela* (They are trembling)

Responders: *Aya'ncancazela* (They are trembling)

Callers and Responders: *Aya'ncancazela Amabhunu/Amabhulu Ayebulale uChris Hani*
(The Boers who killed Chris Hani are trembling)

Caller: *Uthi' Masixole Kanjani?* (How are we supposed to forgive/ be at peace?)

Responders: *Uthi' Masixole Kanjani?* (How are we supposed to be at peace?)

Callers and Responders: *Uthi' Masixole Kanjani Amabhunu/Amabhulu Ayebulale uChris Hani*
(How are we supposed to forgive/ be at peace when the Boers killed Chris Hani?)

The above transcripts illustrate that the structure of protest song, and by extension, its performance, are characterised by repetition. What is repeated makes it possible to compare and contrast the traction of some protest songs as against others; to evaluate the degree of intensity that carries the performance of protest song in one space and not another; to distinguish the tone used or rhythm built when particular songs are played or sung and not others; and to follow schemas used to constitute the performance of protest.

Whenever a protest song is sung, it is at the discretion of its performer to select a particular chant and tempo, but most South African protest songs are short in length and have two main parts – that of a caller and that of responders (Kaganof, 2015; Mbuli, 1996; Ngema, 1992). The antiphony begins with a leading voice asking or stating something which the rest of the group repeats or confirms back to him or her (Kaganof, 2015; Mbuli, 1996; Ngema, 1992). Although protest song is structured by the antiphony, a number of those featured in the Lee Hirsch (2003) documentary *Amandla: A revolution in four part harmony* state that in duration, there is no universal order of protest song and the manner in which the crowd follows or unfollows the song being led is spontaneous. The caller may employ the schema of serenade, which entices the audience and invites it to participate in the potential of song. An invitation can be accepted or rejected in a number of ways: song might be ignored, song might be followed and the audience may reject the initial caller by following a different caller which changes the song in duration. This is typical of "songs of persuasion" which appeal to the listener and attract them into their duration (Denisoff, 1966; Vail & White, 1978; Widdess, 2013).

According to participant reflections, upon hearing a song there was a common 'feeling of the atmosphere or vibe' which propelled actors to gravitate towards the site where the song was being performed. Theories of emotion would suggest that a state of feeling illustrates an emotions schemata, for only when the subject becomes aware of itself does it produce "human actuality" which is personal and biographical (Damasio in Wetherell, 2012, p. 35). Moreover, the process of event evaluation, through which the feeling or sensation becomes perceived, has to be checked against previous experiences and represented as the said state of feeling (Scherer, 2004, p. 244; Shouse, 2005, p.1). Indeed, a relation of feeling speaks to how the dynamics of an event are felt and it is a perception of the atmosphere or vibe of protest (Massumi, 2002; Phillips-Silver & Trainor, 2005). What delineates feeling as an emotion, however, is when it is appraised. That is, the feeling only becomes subjective after the fact of its actualisation.

Prior to its actualisation and at the time of emergence in its liminal becoming, the feeling is not only viscerally sensed, but it opens the body to variation in its capacity or power to act and change in any direction, which is the manifestation of affect (Georgsen & Thomassen, 2017; Lobo, 2013; Massumi, 2002). The theory of affect offers several propositions as to how the body acts on certain potentials and not others. Deleuze and Guattari (1987), in their interpretation of Spinoza, posit the body actualises potential in becoming that which increases or decreases its capacity to act. Massumi (1995; 2002) interprets the movement of intensity as an event perception that is automatic, and prior to event appraisal, thus speaking to the unconscious away from psychoanalysis. Similar to Massumi, Thrift (2004; 2008) argues that there is a story to and a logic in the movement of the body that is prior to representation but can be assembled from performances and practices. The body, which varies in power or capacity to act, implicates an event of the somatic nervous system (motor expression in the face and body) (Massumi, 2002; Scherer, 2004). The somatic nervous system receives and relays information through exteroceptors, interoceptors and proprioceptors (Moore & Yamamoto, 2012, p. 13). The first, exteroceptors, receive information via the five senses of vision, hearing, smell, touch and taste, which is passed on to the second, interoceptors, to accept, ignore or modify by the third, proprioceptors, which orientate the response to be carried out as motor activity (Moore & Yamamoto, 2012, pp. 13-14).

In those who transcend from being a spectator of the performance to an actor in the performance, the imperceptible rhythm of song is received by distant senses of hearing and oftentimes vision, which is then resolved in ways that increase the body's capacity to act. The resolution of imperceptible forces and intensities can show forth as

> … automatic reactions, non-conscious, never to be conscious remainders, outside of expectation and adaptation, as disconnected from meaningful sequencing, from narration. [They are] narratively de-localized, spreading over the generalized body surface.
>
> (Massumi, 1995, p. 85)

The body displays and embodies a rhythm in the duration of song through which the face nods, smiles, frowns, sighs, manoeuvres the tongue to whistle, ululates, looks up and down, expresses joy and sadness, etc. (Kaganof, 2015). The intensity moves down the body; starting with the placement of arms in an infinity cross underneath the breasts with the thumbs touching the flesh inside the elbow bend and the four fingers resting on the lower part of the upper arm, to the opening of the arms, drawing in the elbows towards the abdomen, bringing in the hands to momentarily clap in front of the body or the reaching of the hands overhead initiating or following synchronised clapping. Once overhead, the formation of fists by the hands swaying back and forth, the shifting of the body weight from the left side to the right side parallel to the fists above or the hands clapping and fingers rhythmically snapping. There is often the lowering of the upper body to give the lower body ease to waddle back and forth or to rhythmically stomp the feet in one place, followed by the lifting of the feet to a 90-degree angle to fire out knee kicks, full body jumps, and the take-off from one space to the next – a movement through which the participants march in

formation while being used by the song and in turn using the song to communicate with one another. If the song is losing momentum, it is common for a participant to bolt to the front of the crowd or to the middle of the circle if the crowd is in a semi-circle or circle to lead a new song and to motion the crowd to sing their parts back to them (Kaganof, 2015).

Protest Performance as Recruitment to Activism

Earlier literature on activism has failed to account for the emergence of spontaneously organised relations between bodies. It merely argued that when it was there, it organised collective minds in the instances of haphazard decision-making and strategy, but as it plays out in choreographies of protest it signals a kinaesthetic intelligence which is not only a sense of movement, but orientates the movement forms that sustain or amplify the intensity of protest. The immersion of bodies in protest performance is self-referential as the participants did not join the protest due to an adherence to the structure of song, an "intense identification with the values of an organisation" or the "pre-existing organisation of preference structures" which has been said to "dispose an individual towards participation" (McCarthy & Zald, 1977, p. 1236; McAdam, 1986, p. 64; Oberschall, 1973). In choreographies of protest, the body receives and conveys rhythmic properties; participants initially observed and then attended to the atmosphere through movement in their improvisation of a shared point of contact, such as rubbing their elbow with one hand while the other is drawn to their chest when standing which is improvised to clapping of hands in formation with the collective body. Participants often stated that they were not aware of the complexity of their movements, but rather were 'going with the flow' during an uncertain and ambiguous moment. The lack of divergence from the atmosphere, referred to as 'going with the flow', becomes interesting because although the movement was spontaneous and improvised, it either sustained or amplified the intensity of the atmosphere or vibe that was initially encountered. According to those who study human kinaesthetics, spontaneous movement has form because in its emergence, bodies evaluate exteroceptors and interoceptors, make necessary proprioceptive adjustments and relay responses which appear as coordinated motor activity (Gardner, 1983, in Parviainen, 2010).

Relations of encounter are premised on somatic dialogue between actors through which the body assumes a passive and active role, listening and receiving the frequencies of other bodies through multiple sensory orientating systems and responding to them or initiating movement which is then listened to and received by other bodies (Albright, 1997; Henriques, 2011; Stahmer, 2011). Whereas Thrift (2008) proposes there is a certain identity in entrainment to a common mood, Polletta and Jasper (2001) advance that collective identity might be based on the connections one has to members of a group. Once somatic dialogue has been developed through subsequent performative acts in choreographies of protest, which have been attributed with fostering the imagination of an alternative reality, referred to as utopia, to the 'world out there' (Kershaw, 1997; Moore & Yamamoto, 2012). This has played out in the displacement of space via the expression of unity as difference in human shields, die-ins, and occupations. What can be gathered is that the coming together of bodies is productive for it obliges individuals to protest along with or on behalf of

bodies in performances of protest; individuals in protest become invested in the contact and connections which bind them and the somatic dialogue between actors does develop as a preferred affinity of interest for the actors of protest performance. Thus, in an instance of protest performance, unity of movement bypasses socio-linguistic schema in recruiting individuals to activism and such recruitment occurs as a response to and as a product of the communication between bodies.

Conclusion

Although the operation of power in society can be observed in the collective embodiment of the ideologies which keep bodies in place, the liminal and performative emergence of movement of the body creates difference in space through relations of encounter which transgress the ordering of bodies by breaking with the structure of the previous context and norms of place. The movement of the body, in the atmosphere of protest, is an event through which the body rejects the previously held image of being in space by adopting, through embodiment, a new movement image of becoming in place. Becoming a protest performer is a somatic event whereupon rhythm of song triggers a relation of feeling which is resolved by the extension of the body and is imagined as one of the primary means through which bodies are recruited into participation in activism. Such participation is deduced from the 'going with the flow' of movement during an uncertain and ambiguous movement. Thus, protest performance is in response to being affected by the atmosphere in ways which implicate sensation and movement as an effect of the encounter with the socially constructed space. When the body in motion is positioned as a sign of agency in relation to the imposition of structure in norms, rules and regulations, and laws about 'being in place', it becomes clear that the movement under consideration is not just any movement; it is the type of movement that breaks away from structure by becoming liminal and performative. The difference in-between before and after in space-time images is accomplished as the creativity of movement produces social space – a performed becoming in space.

References

Aelst, P. & Walgrave, S. (2001). Who is that (wo)man in the street? From the normalisation of protest to the normalisation of the protester. *European Journal of Political Research*, 39(4), pp. 461-486. https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.00582

Albright, A.C. (1997). *Choreographing Difference: The Body and Identity in Contemporary Dance*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press.

Angrosino, M. (2007). *Doing Ethnographic Observational Research*. London: Sage. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781849208932

Anisin, A. (2016). Repression, spontaneity, and collective action: the 2013 Turkish Gezi protests. *Journal of Civil Society*, 12(4), 411-429. https://doi.org/10.1080/17448689.2016.1239607

Bianchini, P. (2016). The three ages of student politics in Francophone Africa: Learning from the cases of Senegal and Burkina Faso. In: T.M. Luescher, M. Klemenčič & O.J. Jowie (Eds.), *Student Politics in Africa: Representation and Activism*. Cape Town: African Minds.

Blackman, L. & Featherstone, M. (2010). Re-visioning body and society. *Body and Society*, 16(1), 1-5. https://doi.org/10.1177/1357034X09354558

Bosch, T. (2017). Twitter activism and youth in South Africa: The case of the #RhodesMustFall. *Information, Communication & Society*, 20(2), 221-232. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2016.1162829

Brennan, T. (2004). *The transmission of affect*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Burns, T. (1992). *Erving Goffman*. London: Routledge.

Butler, J. (1997). *The psychic life of power: Theories in subjection*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Cele, M.B.G. (2014). Student politics and the funding of higher education in South Africa: The case of the University of the Western Cape, 1995-2005. Doctoral dissertation, University of the Western Cape, South Africa.

Chaudhuri, S. & Fitzgerald, S. (2015). Rape protests in India and the birth of a new repertoire. *Social Movement Studies*, 14(5), 622-628. https://doi.org/10.1080/14742837.2015.1037261

Christensen, J.F., Pollick, F.E., Lambrechts, A. & Gomila, A. (2016). Affective responses to dance. *Acta Psychologica*, 168, 91-105. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.actpsy.2016.03.008

Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. (1987). *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Massumi, B. (transl.). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Denisoff, R.S. (1966). Songs of persuasion: A sociological analysis of urban propaganda songs. *The Journal of American Folklore*, 79(314), 581-589. https://doi.org/10.2307/538223

Eliasoph, N. (1990). Public culture and the presentation of the political celf: A study of the public sphere in the spirit of Erving Goffman. *Theory and Society*, 19, 465-494. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00137622

Etikan, I., Musa, S.A. & Alkassim, R.S. (2016). Comparison of convenience sampling and purposive sampling. *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics*, 5(1), 1-4. https://doi.org/10.11648/j.ajtas.20160501.11

Fischer-Lichte, E. (2008). *The Transformative Power of Performance*. Oxon: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203894989

Flesher Fominaya, C. (2015). Debunking spontaneity: Spain's 15-M/Indignados as autonomous movement. *Social Movement Studies*, 14(2), 142-163. https://doi.org/10.1080/14742837.2014.945075

Georgsen, M.E. & Thomassen, B. (2017). Affectivity and liminality in ritualised protest: Politics of transformation in the Kiev uprising. *Theory & Psychology*, 27(2), 198-214. https://doi.org/10.1177/0959354317700288

Giorgi, A. (2002). The question of validity in qualitative research. *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology*, 33(1), 1-18. https://doi.org/10.1163/156916202320900392

Goffman, E. (1974). *Frame analysis: An essay on the organization of experience*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Guarte, J.M. & Barrios, E.B. (2007). Estimation under purposive sampling. *Communications in Statistics – Simulation and Computation*, 35(2), 277-284. https://doi.org/10.1080/03610910600591610

Gusfield, J.R. (1971). Student protest and university response. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 395(1), 26-38. https://doi.org/10.1177/000271627139500104

Henriques, J. (2011). *Sonic Bodies: Reggae Sound System, Performance Techniques, and Ways of Knowing*. New York: Continuum.

Hirsch, L. (2003). *Amandla! A revolution in four-part harmony* [DVD]. Santa Monica, CA: Artisan Home Entertainment.

Janesick, V.J. (2001). Intuition and creativity: A pas de deux for qualitative researchers. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 7(5), 531-540. https://doi.org/10.1177/107780040100700501

Jasper, J.M. (1998). The emotions of protest: affective and reactive emotions in and around social movements. *Sociological Forum*, 13(3), 397-424. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1022175308081

Kaganof, A. (2015). *Decolonising Wits* [DVD]. Directed by Aryan Kaganof. South Africa: African Noise Foundation.

Kershaw, B. (1997). Fighting in the streets: Dramaturgies of popular protest 1968-1989. *New Theatre Quarterly*, 51(3), 255-276. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266464X0001126X

Knoetze, D. (2014). 'Tokoloshes' vandalise Rhodes statue. *Cape Argus*, 23 May. http://www.iol.co.za/news/crime-courts/tokoloshes-vandalise-rhodes-statue-1692902 [Accessed 20 June 2017].

Koen, C., Cele, M. & Libhaber, A. (2006). Student activism & student exclusions in South Africa. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 26, 404-414. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2005.09.009

Lobo, M. (2013). Affective energies: Sensory bodies on the beach in Darwin, Australia. *Emotion, Space and Society*, 12, 101-109. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emospa.2013.12.012

Luescher, T.M., Klemenčič, M. & Jowi, O.J. (Eds.) (2016). *Student Politics in Africa: Representation and Activism*. Cape Town: African Minds. https://doi.org/10.14426/jsaa.v3.i1.99

Macharia, M.J. (2015). Comrades' power: Student representation and activism in universities in Kenya. *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa*, 3(1), 19-34. https://doi.org/10.14426/jsaa.v3i1.90

Makobela, R. (2001). Selective inclusion: Transformation and language policy at the University of Stellenbosch. In: R. Makobela & King, K. (Eds.), *Apartheid no More: Case Studies of Southern African Universities in the Process of Transformation* (pp. 59-72). Westport, Conn: Bergin and Garvey.

Makunike, B. (2015). The Zimbabwe student movement: Love-hate relationship with government? *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa*, 3(1), 35-48. https://doi.org/10.14426/jsaa.v3i1.91

Martin, R. (1998). Staging crisis: Twin tales in moving politics. In: Phelan & Lane (Eds.), *The Ends of Performance*. New York: New York University Press.

Marshall, M.N. (1996). Sampling for qualitative research. *Family practice*, 13(6), 522-526. https://doi.org/10.1093/fampra/13.6.522

Massumi, B. (1995). The autonomy of affect. *Cultural Critique*, 31, 83-109. https://doi.org/10.2307/1354446

Massumi, B. (2002). *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect & Sensation*. Durham: Duke University Press. https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822383574

Matthews, S. (2015). White privilege & institutional cultures. In: S. Matthews & P. Tabensky, (Eds.), *Being at 'Home': Race, Institutional Cultures & Transformation at South African Higher Education Institutions*. Durban: UKZN Press.

Mazrui, A.A. (1995). The polity and the university: An African perspective. In: B.S. Senvo & K. Adjibolosoo (Eds.), *The Significance of the Human Factor in African Economic Development* (pp. 165-181). Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers.

Mbuli, L. & Semenya, C. (1996[2010]). *Amakhamandela (Not Yet Uhuru)* [CD]. South Africa: Columbia Records.

McAdam, D. (1986). Recruitment to high-risk activism: The case of freedom summer. *American Journal of Sociology*, 92(1), pp. 64-90. https://doi.org/10.1086/228463

McCarthy, J.D. & Zald, M.N. (1977). Resource mobilization and social movements: A partial theory. *American Journal of Sociology*, 82(1), 1212-1241. https://doi.org/10.1086/226464

McKay, C.E.A. (2015). A History of the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS), 1956-1970. Doctoral dissertation, University of South Africa.

Moore, C.L. & Yamamoto, K. (2012). *Beyond words: Movement Observation and Analysis*. Second edition. London: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203806074

Mugume, T. & Luescher, T.M. (2015). The politics of student housing: Student activism and representation in the determination of the user-price of a public–private partnership residence on a public university campus in South Africa. *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa*, 3(1), 1-17. https://doi.org/10.14426/jsaa.v3i1.89

Ngema, M. (1992 [2006]). Safa Saphel' Isizwe. *Sarafina* [CD]. USA: Warner Bros. Records and Quest Records.

Ngidi, N.D., Mtshixa, C., Diga, K., Mbarathi, N. & May, J. (2016). Asijiki' and the capacity to aspire through social media: the #feesmustfall movement as an anti-poverty activism in South Africa. In: *Proceedings of the Eighth International Conference on Information and Communication Technologies and Development*. ACM. https://doi.org/10.1145/2909609.2909654

Oberschall, A.R. (1973). *Social Conflict and Social Movements*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Olson, M. (1971). *The Logic of Collective Action*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Parviainen, J. (2010). Choreographing resistances: Spatial-kinaesthetic intelligence and bodily knowledge as political tools in Activist Work. *Mobilities*, 5(3), 311-329. https://doi.org/10.1080/17450101.2010.494838

Pett, S. (2015). It's Time Dead White Men Moved On. *City Press*. 10 May. http://city-press.news24.com/Voices/Its-time-dead-white-men-moved-on-20150510 [Accessed 2 May 2016].

Phillips-Silver, J. & Trainor, L.J. (2005). Feeling the beat: movement influences infant rhythm perception. *Science*, 308 (5727), 1430. https://doi.org/10.1126/science.1110922

Pink, S. (2009). *Doing Sensory Ethnography*. London: Sage. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446249383

Polletta, F. (1998). "It was like a fever…" narrative and identity in social protest. *Social Problems*, 45(2), 137-159. https://doi.org/10.1525/sp.1998.45.2.03x0163g

Polletta, F. & Jasper, J.M. (2001). Collective identity and social movements. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 27(1), 283-305. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.27.1.283

Pred, R.J. (2005). *Onflow: Dynamics of consciousness and experience*. Cambridge, MA: A Bradford Book. https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/5139.001.0001

Roach, J. (1995). Culture and performance in the circum-Atlantic world. In: A. Parker & E.K.Sedgwick (Eds.), *Performativity and Performance*. London: Routledge.

Rosenthal, N. & Schwartz, M. (1989). Spontaneity and democracy in social movements. *International Social Movement Research*, 2, 33-59.

Schechner, R. (1998). What is performance studies anyway? In: P. Phelan & J. Lane (Eds.), *The Ends of Performance* (pp. 357-362). New York: New York University Press.

Scherer, K.R. (2004). Which emotions can be induced by music? What are the underlying mechanisms? And how can we measure them? *Journal of New Music Research*, 33(3), 239-251. https://doi.org/10.1080/0929821042000317822

Shouse, E. (2005). Feeling, emotion, affect. *M/C Journal – A Journal of Media Culture*, 8(6), 26-32.

Siegal, M. (1972). *At the Vanishing Point*. New York: Saturday Review Press.

Sitrin, M.A. (2009). *Everyday revolutions: Horizontalism and autonomy in Argentina*. London: Zed Books.

Snow, D.A., Rochford Jr., E.B., Worden, S.K. & Benford, R.D. (1986). Frame alignment processes, micromobilization, and movement participation. *American Sociological Review*, 51(4), 464-481. https://doi.org/10.2307/2095581

Sokhadze, E.M. (2007). Effects of music on the recovery of autonomic and electrocortical activity after stress induced by aversive visual stimuli. *Applied Psychophysiology and Biofeedback*, 32(1), 31-50. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10484-007-9033-y

Stahmer, E. (2011). [Dis]connected: segmenting the elements that constitute Contact Improvisation as a form of communication. Doctoral dissertation, Barnard College, New York.

Tarrow, S. (1993). Cycles of collective action: Between moments of madness and repertoire of contention. *Social Science History*, 17(2), 281-307. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0145553200016850

Thrift, N. (2004). Intensities of Feeling: Towards a spatial politics of affect. *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography*, 86(1), 57-78. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0435-3684.2004.00154.x

Thrift, N. (2008). *Non-Representational Theory: Space, politics, affect*. Oxon: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203946565

Tilly, C. (1978). Collective Violence in European Perspective. *CRSO Working Paper, 178*, University of Michigan.

Vail, L. & White, L. (1983). Forms of resistance: songs and perceptions of power in colonial Mozambique'. *The American Historical Review*, 88(4), 883-919. https://doi.org/10.2307/1874024

Wetherell, M. (2012). *Affect and emotion: A new social science understanding*. London: Sage. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446250945

Widdess, R. (2013). Schemas and improvisation in Indian music. In: R. Kempson et al. (Eds.), *Language, Music and Interaction* (pp. 197-209). London: College Publications.

How to cite:

Qoza, P. 2020. Choreographies of Protest Performance as Recruitment to Activism. *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa*, 8(1), 65-78. DOI: 10.24085/jsaa.v8i1.4182

Research article

Finding Common Ground towards Progressive Transformation in Student Residence Spaces: Residence Committee Members as Bricoleuric Brokers

Neo Pat Maseko* & Shawn Stützner**

Abstract

This article stemmed from discussions related to residence committee members and their role as leaders within their communities. The ideas presented during these conversations gave rise to a research interest for a conceptual exploration of collaborative and progressive social transformative brokering within a complex context. In particular, the identified interest within this context relates to finding common ground, between, inter alia, student affairs management, and residence committee (RC) management in residence spaces. The specific focus is the RC leadership team as strategists who are positioned to deal with potential conflict resolution in policy interpretation and enactment. The argument presented here has to do with the extent to which they can do this in a manner that facilitates the collegial and amicable interpretation of policy in residence communities. Inherent within this is the notion of managing the potential disjuncture between policy formulation and policy implementation. The primary question about this concern finds expression in how RCs move from being part of active cultural residence spaces to critical participants in dialogic conversations as part of a multi-perspectival progressive transformation strategy. Indeed, while bringing about transformation, the dynamic issues of brokering cohesion within a context of ideological and political complexity remain. Given the inherent situational complexities, the article adopts a bricoleuric theoretical thread that requires a multi-perspectival orientation. In this regard, appropriate components of critical complexity theory, critical system theories, transformative learning, and hope theory account for this theoretical approach. A further consideration is that of a positionality of finding progressive and transformative common ground. In this regard, the argument revolves around examining the systemic factors that bear relevance for actualising the envisaged intention, that is, common ground in the interests of the common good. At stake in this argument is the notion of RC identity and their role in building a values-based residence system of policy interpretation and enactment, while bridging the ideological divide and finding common ground between the expectations of student affairs management and the residence community.

Keywords

bricoleuric approaches; common ground; complexity theory; dialogic; hope theory; identity; management; progressive; student transformation; system theories; transformative learning

* Dr Patricia Barbara Neo (Neo Pat) Maseko was previously (and at the time of submission) a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the University of the Free State. She is currently a Research Associate at the Global Research Centre in Gauteng, South Africa. Email: neomaseko9@gmail.com

** Mr Shawn Stützner was Senior Officer: Residence Head & Residence Dialogues Coordinator, University of the Free State, South Africa, at the time of submission. Email: shawnstutzner@gmail.com

Introduction

This article is the result of an invitation to participate in an informal information-sharing session with the residence committee (RC) members of a South African institution of Higher Learning. The leadership structures of an RC represent residences and their constituents, the students. There are over 28 residences on the campus, each led by a residence head (RH) managing the RC and the residence space. The discussions involved 9 RCs and the RH who oversee a residence of over 180 students. The dialogue revolved around the role of the RCs as emergent leaders with a background of student activism, particularly non-violent radicalism, and their ideological navigation of this context. It became apparent, through the discussions, that there was an underlying tension, which gave rise to an existential identity dilemma. The aforesaid emanated from their dual role as student representatives on the one hand and representatives of management structures on the other.

The point of departure of this exploration was a realisation that there was a need for a navigational tool for finding common ground for common good within the complex terrain of student affairs management and RC management. This dual role would also entail recognising that residence communities and spaces encompass a broad spectrum of elements. The RC's ability to navigate the divide between the expectations of student affairs management and the residence community members is a significant factor. It is necessary to appreciate the complexities of creating a common good between the RC's identity and their managerial and leadership role, and in building a values-based residence system. What is worth noting here is the extent to which RCs can progressively manage the holistic philosophical tension between their role-function as RCs and them representing the residence community. This article explores the role of residence committees as agents of transformation in the implementation of policy dictates. Appropriate attention to the issue of cultural identity in contexts of progressive transformation is essential. In this regard, the bricolage[1] and its key components, namely, complexity theory, critical systems theory, transformative learning, and hope theory, are presented as critical elements of navigating the complex contexts of residence spaces for the attainment of the common ground of progressive transformation.

The RCs as Transformative Brokers of Policy Dictates

The specific focus of this conceptual article is the nature and extent of the RC management and student engagement space as that of transformation brokering in a context of policy enactment and its impact upon residence communities. Of significance in this encounter is the implicit or explicit implications it carries for the well-being of

1 The French word bricolage "consists of the adaptive processes by which people imbue configurations of rules, traditions, norms, and relationships with meaning and authority. In so doing, they modify old arrangements and invent new ones, but innovations are always linked authoritatively to acceptable ways of doing things. These refurbished arrangements are common responses to changing circumstances" (Cleaver, 2012, p. 34). In a qualitative-inquiry-as-bricolage, the intention is to look at the research question from multiple disciplinary perspectives (Hammersley, 2008, p. 65; Joshee, 2008, p. 641).

residence communities. At the time of the informal discussions and at the time of writing this article, the student leadership development programmes of the institution seemingly touched on four categories: generic, specialised leadership forum training, mobilisation, and ad hoc training (student support). All these forums play a critical role in student leadership development. In this article, specific attention focuses on supporting the role of RCs as holistic, beneficial policy brokers who serve the interests of both management and residence communities. Strengthening the capacity of RCs informs the expectation of a cultural shift from positions of student activism (Koen, Cele & Libhala, 2006) as members of residence community spaces, to positions of leadership (Nel, 2016) as facilitators and co-creators of potential pathways to a functional common ground.

The view espoused here is that there is a need to re-envision the role of RCs as supportive policy brokers who serve the interests of both management and residence communities. In an approach of student leadership development, the presupposition is towards a paradigmatic shift from a position of radical RC activism (as student leaders, serving the sole interests of students) to non-radical activism from the perspective of simultaneously being members and representatives of leadership. Here, the distinction between radical and non-radical activism is that the former often resorts to drastic (and sometimes violent) measures to bring about change. Radical activism has, in recent times, also manifested itself in what has become known as fallism[2] (Hendricks, 2018). Conversely, non-radical activism recognises the need for a process that takes current situational dictates into account, which might require time to effect the desired transformation. It should be noted that, in this instance, transformation refers to significant structural, systemic and ideological changes (Speckman & Mandew, 2014, p. 47). Finding the middle road between the two poles of the spectrum (radical and non-radical activism) is presented as part of a strategy to facilitate the creation of a transformative common ground between student affairs management committees and student residence communities.

Cultural Identity within Spaces of Progressive Transformation

Of critical importance, within the context of this discussion, is the assertion that, while facilitating and contributing towards the envisaged transformation, the dynamic issues of ideological and political complexity remain The primary question in this regard focuses on how RCs move from being part of active cultural identity spaces within residences to engage in dialogic mediatory conversations as leaders. Accordingly, dialogic engagement is a part of a multi-perspectival and multi-cultural progressive transformation strategy. A subsidiary question to this would be what navigational tools the RCs use to facilitate the requisite ability and agility from being a constituent of the collective residence community towards being a part of RC management as part of leadership structures. Inherent in these questions are issues of dialogism, identity and progressive transformation (Price, Wallace,

2 "Fallism was coined as a term to describe the ideological drive of disruption, and seeing the fall of something in mobilising around the symbolism of oppression and struggle, most notably challenges continued discrimination and exclusion on the basis of race, class, sex and the exclusionary nature of capitalism and the commodification of higher education" (Kotze, 2018, p. 112).

Verezub & Sinchenko, 2019; Louw, 2012). A progressive transformation that implies, amongst other things, the attainment of common ground. In this instance, the interpretation and enactment of policy dictate the conceptualisation of common ground. The ability to create conditions that are conducive to amicable co-existence, such as negotiation skills, is viewed as part of the envisaged progressive transformation, irrespective of the undercurrents of potential conflict.

This article thus presents the bricoleuric theoretical orientation (Lévi-Strauss, 1966; Kincheloe, 2001; Kincheloe, McLaren & Steinberg, 2011; Kincheloe, 2011; McLaren & Kincheloe, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) as a tool to conceptualise and actualise the complexity of finding common ground and attaining progressive transformation.

Associated Theoretical Approaches and Considerations of the Bricolage

This section focuses on theoretical approaches about a terrain characterised by contextual complexities. This issue addresses a noteworthy theoretical lens appropriate for an exploration of these new complex multiple dimensions. Given the attendant complexities of the setting of student residence spaces, the article adopts a bricoleuric theoretical approach that requires a multi-perspectival orientation. The metaphor of a jazz ensemble or that of a colourful tapestry is often used to depict the multi-logical and multi-perspectival nature of the bricolage (Kincheloe, 2008; Kincheloe & Berry, 2004).

In the instance of this article, the bricoleuric theoretical approach comprises critical complexity theory, critical system theories, transformative learning and hope theory (Lévi-Strauss, 1966; Denzil & Lincoln, 2005; Kincheloe, 2001, 2011). The context of this discussion engages in the interaction commonly understood as the bricolage within bricoleuric research. The research builds from postmodern understandings and multiple disciplinary perspectives, employing multiple methods of inquiry as well as diverse theoretical and philosophical underpinnings (Given, 2008, p. 641). Bricoleurs examine the "complex, dense, reflexive, collage-like creation that represents the researcher's images, understandings and interpretations of the world or phenomenon under analysis" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 6). We fully recognise the delimitation of sources supporting diversity and inclusion on gender-neutral terms relating to bricoleuric research. However, with the feministic voices of contestation around the engendered use of this non-gender-neutral term (Wheeler & Bangor, 2015, p. 8) and within the context of this discussion, we present the terms bricoleur (male) and bricoleuse (female) to represent those who engage in this type of research. Of further note is the fact that the RC members, as potential brokers of peace in a complex and potentially conflictual space, could also be labelled as potential bricoleurs and bricoleuses (Wheeler & Bangor, 2015, p. 8).

Complexity theory within a terrain of complexity

The bricolage, as a multi-perspectival lens that is "grounded on an epistemology of complexity," Kincheloe's (2011, p. 254) is an appropriate multi-perspectival lens for this terrain of complexity because it takes into account the complexities of the lived world. Within this context, bricoleurs and bricoleuses move into the domain of complexity

that transcends mono-dimensional reductionism. Bricoleurs/bricoleuses, acting on the complexity principle and operating in the complexity zone, understand that in its embrace of complexity, the bricolage constructs a far more active role for humans. Complexity occurs both in shaping reality and in creating the research processes and narratives that represent it. Such an active agency rejects deterministic views of social reality that assume the effects of particular social, political, economic and educational processes. At the same time and in the same conceptual context, this belief in an active human agency refuses standardised modes of knowledge production (Kincheloe, 2011, p. 255). Of relevance to this discussion is the fact that residence spaces lend themselves to complexity because of the heterogeneous composition of all parties.

Complexity theory as it pertains to residence communities

Bricoleurs/bricoleuses operating in a terrain of complexity understand that they must transcend the tendency of reductionism and struggle to comprehend the processes of complexity. For example, the central focus of the relationship in being an RC considers the dynamics of the self, being an RC representative within the residence culture, and holding a managerial element of leadership. Who we are as human beings is dependent on the nature of such relationships and connections. Of significance for this discussion is the fact that bricoleurs/bricoleuses understand that in such complex contexts, diverse epistemologies will develop as a result of different historical and cultural locales, within and outside of self. The issue of multiple epistemologies emerges in these locales of complexity (Stewart, 2001; Wolf-Bronwyn, 2013). Depending on where stakeholders and role players stand in the multi-dimensional and complex web of reality, they will come to see and understand different phenomena in different ways (Kincheloe, 2011; Denzil & Lincoln, 2005).

The fundamental idea to understand complexity is the notion that all narratives obtain meaning not merely by their relationship to material reality but from their connection to other narratives (Kincheloe, 2011). Concerning the context of this discussion, the interactions of residence committees and residence communities constitute a complex terrain. Concomitant to this idea of complexity is the notion of the "literacy of complexity" that understands the intersecting roles and social locations of all human beings and the multiple layers of interpretations of self, contexts and social actors involved (Kincheloe, 2011, p. 257). Adding to this complexity is the layer of the intricate power relations of the dialogical practices within the three-layered complex contexts comprising, in this case, management, student residence committees and communities that fall under the scrutiny of this discussion.

What is of significance in these contexts is the idea that there are fictive elements to all representations and narratives.[3] In other words, the contextual fields that form the

3 The attribution of fictive elements, namely, romance, tragedy, satire, comedy, and absurdism, will not sit well with some researchers. Kincheloe (1997, pp. 66-67) explains, however, that the fictive mechanics furnishes the foreclosure of worldview in the triad of reality-ficition-imaginary synergy, explaining that it endows the creative imaginary with an enunciated grounding. He says the recognition of the synergy produced in this relationship is a key to the reconceptualisation of qualitative research narratives.

foci of this discussion highlight fictive dimensions that may be influenced by a variety of forces, including linguistic factors, narrative employment strategies and cultural prejudices (Kincheloe, 2011, p. 259). The narratives that stem from cultural biases towards the 'other' are a further consideration in the specific ways in which these cultural biases and assumptions shape and interact with knowledge reception and production – thus drawing attention to the possible fictive (and possibly distorted) representations and constructions of the other narrative from a different perspective. Those, as mentioned above, are often the constituent (mis)representations and (mis)interpretations that give rise to conflict and act as a barrier to finding common ground in contexts of the complexity such as the context of residence spaces.

Bricoleurs/bricoleuses operating in the complexity zone understand that knowledge can never be autonomous or be complete in and of itself. Within the context of this discussion, the residence management, RCs and residence communities are the intersecting contextual fields. Viewing the world from a mono-dimensional perspective is too complex (from an exclusionary perspective) to facilitate the attainment of common ground (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005), and bricoleurs/bricoleuses are opposed to what could constitute reductionist monological knowledge. In understanding new ways of dealing with the complications of the social, cultural, psychological, and educational life within the structures of residence communities is at the forefront of complexity. Of particular interest is the interpretation and enactment of policy to find common ground within the context of this discussion.

Finding common ground brings into view the issue of knowledge production (and reception), which is a far more complicated process, with more impediments to the act of making sense of the world. This logic aligns with Lévi-Strauss' (1966) initial conceptualisation of the bricolage. His concept originated from an understanding of the complexity and unpredictability of the cultural domain. With this in mind, the central issue straddling the divide between cultures is the position of the RCs. That is, balancing the culture of the residence systems from which their positions of power accrue, and the committees to whom they are accountable as part of the leadership structures.

Critical systems theory and thinking within the bricolage

Systems thinking emerges because of the interplay of the residence structure and its constituents. In this instance, the network comprises relevant members of institutional management, RCs, student residence members and numerous stakeholders. It is, therefore, essential to take note of the different elements within these roles. A further consideration is a cognisance of how a system functions. An analysis in this approach seeks to understand the role of the different elements and behaviour of each component with specific regard to practical systemic functionality. Finally, systems thinking entails the aspect of synthesis that is about appreciating the interrelated components of a network. Being able to learn about the interlinking dynamics and combining that knowledge with how it behaves amongst other interrelated systems, helps to identify better solutions for a problem (Stroh, 2015). In this

context, this knowledge implies the ability of the RC to broker a peaceful interpretation of policy implementation within residence communities.

A central assumption of systemic thinking is put forward by Campbell, Coldicott and Kinsella (1994, p. 16); Louw (2012, p. 14) and Gharajedaghi (2011, p. 89). They argue that human systems operate because of the meaning that members ascribe to the activities around them. Indeed, this dynamic is always purposeful towards decision-making and wise repositioning that can cause attitudinal change. Furthermore, systemic thinking focuses on holistic thinking to avoid monolithic views and reductionism and what the bricolage seeks to avoid (Kincheloe, 2011, p. 266). When RCs entangle the culture, activities of the residence space, and the policy of management, they place a certain meaning to the problem in how they represent the students and management. For instance, out of fear of the expectations of management's policy, the meaning may be: "I will turn my attention away from the students caught drinking in their bedrooms so that I can remain part of the culture of the residence." In this case, their allegiance to the culture of the residence might supersede their management identity. The potential outcome of such action hampers a collaborative approach in the interests of progressive transformation and cultural competence. Systems thinking thus necessitates a transformative dialogic.

Transformative Learning as a Pivotal Part of Conciliatory Cultural Proficiency

A dialogic that takes the theoretical underpinnings of transformative learning into account (Mezirow, 1991; 1998; 2006) is imperative in the pursuit of common ground. The tenets of transformative learning are constructivist in orientation. In reality, interpretation implies how things appear in an individual's experience and are central to how they make sense of them. The interpretation of meaning has to do with perspectives and schemes. Perspectives entail "broad sets of codes, namely sociolinguistic codes, psychological codes, and epistemic codes" (Mezirow, 1994, p. 223). Individuals' socialisation, dispositions, and meaning-making regimens influence perspectives. Schemes have to do with "the constellation of concepts, beliefs, judgements and feelings which shape a particular interpretation" (Mezirow, 1994, p. 223). A key component of transformative learning is the ability to change one's perceptions and schemes through reflection. The relevance of this is that reflection lays the foundation for transformative cultural proficiency (Arriaga & Lindsey, 2016, p. 18).

Transformative learning requires that RCs reflectively familiarise themselves with systemic factors, including their interpretations and proclivity towards these factors that get in the way of progressive transformation. Critical questions in this regard are: what elements could we foreground that can help all stakeholders to get to the destination that breaks the cycle of that which carries the potential of anarchism? A further critical question in this regard is: what poses the possibility of dictatorial authority? Inherent in these questions and assumptions are issues of dialogism and progressive transformation, to find a middle ground.

In this regard, facilitation skills are critical in the dialogic encounter because they can break the cycle of mono-dimensionalism in relation to perspectival positions (Berry,

2011, p. 282). It is interrupting this sequence that ties in well with the views espoused by bricoleurs and bricoleuses who are averse to reductionist views, which preclude other aspects of the system under scrutiny. Given this, such aversion opposes views and values regarded as divergent and conflictual. In the process, it shifts away from not acknowledging or allowing for difference and diversity. Here, it is necessary to point out that the RCs, as brokers of peaceful policy implementation, should display the ability to recognise that difference should refrain from adopting a position of animosity. In this regard, one of the traits of conflict resolution is negotiation skills that assist with the navigation of potentially explosive situations (Havelock & Zlotolow, 1995, p. 10).

Additionally, the ability of the RC to be well versed in the culture of residence spaces and the training they have of the policy of the university enables them to mitigate against negativity (Moloi, 2016). An attendant result is that they are a valuable resource concerning institutional memory, which equips them with navigational skills for traversing between two (or more) cultures. For example, a student leader from a South African campus has mentioned how residences are significant to the student community. Essentially, RCs in residences give students a sense of ownership, citizenship and identity. Moloi (2016) explains how residence primes are, at times, more influential than most SRC officers. The reason is that they champion the aspirations of their residences and serve as the link to management. In other words, considering the RCs privileged position, they can navigate a space that straddles two cultural divides – these are the culture of management and the culture of residence communities. Furthermore, in this way, they carry the potential for cultural proficiency as envisioned by Arriaga and Lindsey (2016). In other words, RCs can potentially be resource providers for transformative and progressive purposes. Therefore, the inferred view is that, as transformation agents, they have the potential to use the cultural capital they have from both sides of the divide – that of the residence committees and communities – for transformative purposes.

Within the context of our work and experience the RCs are student representatives appointed by the residence students. As representatives, they communicate information from management to the residence. In certain instances, RCs relay information from the perspective of being a student and not from their leadership position. The differences between the expectations of students and management are, at times, so disparate that they cause desperation and endless conflicting agendas. Indeed, RCs serve as a conduit between residences and management regarding the implementation of policy dictates.

Very often, RCs are student representatives appointed strategically by students. The students' approach is for the RCs to represent them by being faithful to the traditions of the residence. In truth, living in the same residences while still holding on to the same cultural identities before their election into leadership consequentially keep RCs intact with their fellow residence community members. It is through these traditions that RCs communicate information from management to students. However, facing a new challenge of paradigm-shifting to assimilate the new 'double-identity' of being student residence representatives while simultaneously serving as representatives of management remains a key issue. The main objective in this second identity, namely, that of occupying positions of

leadership, is that they are also expected to contend with executing the policy, which is an execution of finding common ground rooted in hope.

The role of hope theory in conflict resolution

Meaningful dialogue requires motivation between students, RCs, and management. As RCs still living within their robust cultural residence spaces and management requiring the implementation of policy, it can constitute a slippery and complex navigational terrain. The precedent necessitates a more collaborative approach between these stakeholders for the actualisation of common ground. It is envisioning the consensus as a focal point for looking at the complexities of diversity from a conciliatory and systems perspective that augur well for progressive transformation. The assumption is that systemic success stems from holism, where the notion of differences should not translate into counter-productiveness, but rather, it should foster the facilitation of a common consensus.

When looking at the scenario above, it becomes evident that the attempts at brokering sustainable progressive transformation have implications for communal and social transformation. Without transformation based on a theory of hope, the following three often manifest: "revenge/retaliation, excuse/apology/denial, and hatred/violence/destruction. All three attack the realm of human dignity and integrity" (Louw 2003, p. 396). In this regard, the collaboration can be carried further to broker peace through goals and pathways of hope. Accordingly, Snyder (2002) distinguishes between high hope and low hope, with the former being the best positioned for achieving the desired results wherein progressive transformation attains a common ground.

Contrary to the above, low hope is a state of being that is affected by negative contexts, whereas high hope can transcend and counter various contexts of difference. In the context of this discussion, this starts within specific residence spaces, moving internally into the general university community and outwardly into communities. These attempts are, therefore, intended to serve the interests of the common good within and outside of the institution. The essential argument here is that the relationship dynamic between student affairs management and the RCs carries far-reaching implications for sustainable hope in residence communities, with implications for community development and civic leadership engagement.

Notably, RCs, transitioning between students' interests and management policies, need to strengthen a clear sense of identity within the complexity of this space. The issue of identity comes into play concerning the dilemma of the RCs in straddling the divide between a residence culture that embraces a certain ideology and their position as leaders who have to abide by and apply institutional policy dictates. The argument of hope connected to identity can indeed be that the value of inter- and intra-human communication impacts the relational dynamic of human dignity (Louw, 2012, p. 55). Substantially, the challenge for the RCs is the responsibility of negotiating a collaborative space – firstly, from an internal dialogical space to create communicative linkages that counter difference and secondly, to create an enabling environment for diversity and

cultural competence (Arriaga & Lindsey, 2016). Therefore, the argument presented here is that identity and human dignity are critical components in a collaborative and progressive transformation of hope towards finding common ground.

For example, McGeer (2004, pp. 101, 102) explains that hope involves a complex dynamic of attitude, emotion, activity and disposition because it is, more deeply, a unifying and grounding force of human agency. That is, both conceptually and developmentally, human agency must primarily and distinctively feature hope. She quotes Snyder (1995, 2000) by explaining that indeed, hope is a cognitive activity that involves setting concrete goals, and negotiating and navigating pathways of hope to achieve those goals through one's willpower or agency.

Discussion

The pursuit of common ground points towards the need for a dialogic encounter in which the RC members can help the students and management find and make the best use of strengthening capacity. These resources entail a bricoleuric dialogic encounter of collaboration. This article argues, therefore, that dialogue should have a critical space in residences as it opens up the process for talking about tensions in symbols, traditions and systems. For example, Schirch and Campt (2007, p. 68) emphasise that dialogue is a process for talking about tension-filled topics and that it is increasingly apparent that people are seeing the need for better ways of talking. For that matter, it is essential to point out that both formal and informal dialogue, without the guidance of a facilitator, can lead to subjective opinions. Indeed, the diverse contexts of residence spaces give rise to patterns of behaviour which are ideological, cultural and political within the broader residence community. A study conducted on student interaction based on residence design reveals that residence contexts carry the potential for conflict. Their findings reveal that many students have interactions in close proximity to their own room and in their respective corridors (Brandon, Hirt & Cameron 2008, p. 70). However, it is in these spaces that the policy is deemed to restrict the students' personal space. For example, there are limitations on students as to how much noise they can make and that they cannot smoke in their room or corridor. Fines apply if they are caught drinking alcohol in their rented space or if they have guests sleeping over or doing anything that would be regarded as a contravention of policy dictates. The assumption is that the ground for tensions may include the notion that policy enforces unfair living conditions on students. This is often related to the lack of residence spaces for student interaction. However, it is in these spaces that the policy is deemed to restrict the students' personal space, thus creating a paradoxical situation. Caught in this potentially conflictual dialogic encounter between students and management are the RCs. In RCs avoiding cutting corners in their responsibilities, it draws attention to the need for effective dialogue between people of diverse experiences and beliefs, which usually requires a process that should be guided by a facilitator (Schirch & Campt, 2007, pp. 114-115). It is increasingly apparent that people are seeing the need for better ways of talking. In this regard, the dialogue is a process for talking about tension-filled topics

(Schirch & Campt, 2007, p. 68). For example, it is accepted in residence for fellow students to consider behavioural patterns that are reflective of ideological, cultural and political nuances within the broader residence community. At stake is residence dialogue that conflicts with policies that universities stipulate for such spaces. In this regard, there are forms of dialogue in which residence students protest against these policies.

Consequently, the RC's quality of leadership captures the conflictual dialogic encounter between students and management. Indeed, what is commonly found in this dialogic encounter is the conflictual dialogue between diverse cultural identities, experiences and belief systems needing more dialogic peaceable means. We argue here that collaborative and progressive social transformation calls for a dialogic approach aimed at drawing together different pathways into common perspectival positions of hope.

Conclusion

To this end, the argument presented here is that the RCs have an obligation as student leaders to find and agree upon a common consensus of eliminating every obstacle that would threaten or hinder the attainment of the objective of academic success and overall multi-layered wellness. A significant step in this process is a shared understanding of the terms and rules of engagement in this journey of finding common transformative ground. For example, the interpretation and implementation of the policy should be carefully considered in a multi-perspectival process. In this regard, a bricoleuric approach that encompasses emergent complexity theory, critical systems theory, transformative learning and hope theory, as presented, are useful navigational tools. This approach, we conclude, will augur well for a transformative unifying common ground that will be progressively cognisant of the multi-dimensional nature of residence spaces. This approach would be to find a middle ground that equips the RCs to negotiate and navigate their way in the complex cultural divide between RC leadership and residence membership. The envisioned result is positive ramifications for the RC's future role as culturally progressive leaders with an impact on creating pathways for transformative civic engagement.

References

Arriaga, T.T & Lindsey, R.B. (2016). *Opening doors: an implementation template for cultural proficiency*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Berry, K.S. (2011). Embracing radical research: Key works in critical pedagogy. In: K. Hayes, S.R. Steinberg & K. Tobin (Eds.), *Key works in critical pedagogy. Bold Visions in Educational Research*. Volume 32 (pp. 279-284). Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense Publishers. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6091-397-6_2

Brandon, A., Hirt, J.B. & Cameron, T. (2008). Where you live influences who you know: Differences in student interaction nased on residence hall design. *Journal of College & University Student Housing*, 35(2), 62-79.

Campbell, D., Coldicott, T. & Kinsella, K. (1994). *Systemic Work with Organizations: A New Model For Manager and Change Agents*. London: Karnac Books.

Cleaver, F. (2012). *Development through Bricolage: Rethinking Institutions for Natural Resource Management*. New York: Routledge.

Denzin, N. & Lincoln, Y. (Eds.) (2005). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research*. Third edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Gharajedaghi, J. (2011). *Systems Thinking: Managing Chaos and Complexity. A Platform for Designing Business Architecture*. Third edition. Burlington, MA: Elsevier Science.

Given, L.M. (2008). Politics of Qualitative Research. In: *The Sage encyclopedia of qualitative research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412963909

Hammersley, M. (2008). Bricolage and Bricoleur. In: L.M. Given (Ed.), *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*. Volumes 1&2 (pp. 65-66). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Havelock, R.G. & Zlotolow, S. (1995). *The Change Agent's Guide*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Educational Technology Publications.

Hendricks, C. (2018). Decolonising universities in South Africa: rigged spaces? *International Journal of African Renaissance Studies – Multi- Inter- and Transdisciplinarity*, 13(1). https://doi.org/10.1080/18186874.2018.1474990

Joshee, R. (2008). Politics of Qualitative Research. In: L.M. Given (Ed.), *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*. Volumes 1&2 (pp. 640-643). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Kincheloe, J. (1997). Fiction Formulas: Critical Constructivism and the Representation of Reality. In: Tierney, W. & Lincoln, Y. (Eds.), *Representation and the text*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Kincheloe, J. (2001). Describing the bricolage: Conceptualizing a new rigour in qualitative research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 7(6), 679-692. https://doi.org/10.1177/107780040100700601

Kincheloe, J.L. (2008). *Knowledge and critical pedagogy: An introduction*. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-8224-5

Kincheloe, J.L. (2011). On to the next level: Continuing the conceptualization of the bricolage. In: K. Hayes, S.R. Steinberg & K. Tobin, *Key works in critical pedagogy. Bold Visions in Educational Research*. Volume 32 (pp. 253-277). Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense Publishers. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6091-397-6_21

Kincheloe, J.L. & Berry, K.S. (Eds.) (2004). *Rigour and complexity in educational research: Conceptualizing the bricolage*. Maidenhead, U.K.: Open University Press.

Kincheloe, J.L., McLaren, P. & Steinberg, S. (2011). Critical pedagogy and qualitative research: Moving to the bricolage. In: N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research*. Fourth edition. (pp. 163-178). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Koen, C., Cele, M.B. & Libhaber, A. (2006). Student activism and student exclusions in South Africa. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 26(4), 404-414. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2005.09.009

Kotze, J.S. (2018). On decolonisation and revolution: A Kristevan reading on the hashtags student movements and fallism. *Politikon*, 45(1), 112-127. https://doi.org/10.1080/02589346.2018.1418216

Lévi-Strauss, C. (1966). *The savage mind*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Louw, D.J. (2003). Fides quaerens spem: A pastoral and theological response to suffering and evil. *Interpretation*, 57(4), 384-397. https://doi.org/10.1177/002096430005700404

Louw, D.J. (2012). *Network of the Human Soul: On Identity, Dignity, Maturity, and Life Skills.* Stellenbosch, South Africa: African Sun Media. https://doi.org/10.18820/9781920338626

McGeer, V. (2004). The art of good hope. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 592(1), 100-127. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716203261781

McLaren, P. & Kincheloe, J. (2007). *Critical pedagogy: Where are we now?* New York: Peter Lang.

Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative Dimension of Adult Learning*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Mezirow, J. (1994). Understanding transformation theory. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 44(4), 222-232. https://doi.org/10.1177/074171369404400403

Mezirow, J. (1998). On critical reflection. *Adult Learning Quarterly*, 48(3), 185-198. https://doi.org/10.1177/074171369804800305

Mezirow, J. (2006). An overview of transformative learning. In: P. Sutherland & J. Crowther (Eds.), *Lifelong learning: Concepts and contexts* (pp. 24-38). New York: Routledge.

Moloi, A. (2016). *Holding My Breath: A memoir*. Kindle edition. Auckland Park, South Africa: BlackBird Books.

Nel, C. (2016). *What if power, anxiety and love lie at the heart of leadership?* TED Aruba, 23 September. The Village Leadership Consulting. https://bit.ly/313JIxq [Accessed 12 November 2019].

Price, S., Wallace, K., Verezub, E. & Sinchenko, E. (2019). Student learning assistants: the journey from learning advice to creating community. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 43(7), 914-928. https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877X.2018.1425379

Schirch, L. & Campt, D. (2007). *The Little Book of Dialogue for Difficult Subjects: A Practical, Hands-On Guide*. Kindle edition. Intercourse, PA: Good Books.

Snyder, C.R. (1995). Conceptualizing, measuring and nurturing hope. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 73, 355-360. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6676.1995.tb01764.x

Snyder, C.R. (2000). *Handbook of hope: Theory, measures and applications*. San Diego, CA: Academic Press.

Snyder, C. (2002). Hope Theory: Rainbows in the Mind. *Psychological Inquiry*, 13(4), 249-275. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327965PLI1304_01

Speckman, M. & Mandew, M. (Eds.) (2014). *Perspectives on Student Affairs in South Africa*. Somerset West, South Africa: African Minds.

Stewart, P. (2001). Complexity theories, social theories and the question of social complexity. *Philosophy of the social sciences*, 3(1), 322-360. https://doi.org/10.1177/004839310103100303

Stroh, D.P. (2015). *Systems Thinking for Social Change: A Practical Guide to Solving Complex Problems, Avoiding Unintended Consequences, and Achieving Lasting Results*. White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing.

Wheeler, S.L. & Bangor, P. (2015). *Reseacher as bricoleuse rather than bricoleur: a feminizing corrective note*. https://bit.ly/2YUzIDR

Wolf-Bronwyn, M. (2013). *Using Complexity Theory for Research and Program Evolution*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199829460.001.0001

How to cite:

Maseko, P.B.N. & Stützner, S. 2020. Finding Common Ground towards Progressive Transformation in Student Residence Spaces: Residence Committee Members as Bricoleuric Brokers. *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa*, 8(1), 79-91. DOI: 10.24085/jsaa.v8i1.4183

Reflective practice

Design and Implementation of a Student Biographical Questionnaire (BQ) Online Platform for Effective Student Success

Mxolisi Masango,* Takalani Muloiwa,** Fezile Wagner*** & Gabriela Pinheiro****

Abstract

Knowing relevant information about students entering the higher education (HE) system is becoming increasingly important, thus enabling higher education institutions (HEIs) to design effective student-centred support programmes. Therefore, HEIs should ascertain all relevant information about their students before the commencement of the academic year. Doing so means that institutions have a head start in understanding the types of support that will be required for different students throughout the year. This article describes the design, implementation and application of a student biographical questionnaire (BQ) online platform at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), as well as some of the lessons learned in this regard.

The BQ online platform was fully implemented for the first time in January 2016 during the student registration process and has now become an integral part of the university student registration process. Once data collection and analysis is done, a BQ report is compiled and presented to various high-level decision-making structures of the university. The Faculty Student Advisers are the most critical users of the BQ data, as they utilise the data to inform and improve the various student support interventions that each faculty is providing. The planning process for BQ data collection includes questionnaire review; updates on the BQ online platform; testing of the BQ online platform; stakeholder meetings and BQ training of involved stakeholders. Some of the lessons learned when implementing this online platform include buy-in and support from University Management; understanding of the BQ online platform by those dealing directly with students during the registration process; and continuous review and improvements of the BQ online platform. The BQ online platform has proven to be a valuable tool in providing Wits with a head start in understanding the needs of the students and the support they might require to succeed in their first year of study.

Keywords

biographical questionnaire; first-year students; student success; student support; South Africa

* Dr Mxolisi Masango is Head, Analytics and Institutional Research Unit (AIRU), University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa. Email: mxolisi.masango@wits.ac.za

** Ms Takalani Muloiwa is a Researcher, Analytics and Institutional Research Unit, University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa. Email: takalani.muloiwa@wits.ac.za

*** Ms Fezile Wagner is a Researcher, Analytics and Institutional Research Unit, University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa. Email: fezile.mdluli@wits.ac.za

**** Ms Gabriela Pinheiro is a contracted Researcher, Analytics and Institutional Research Unit, University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa. Email: gabrielasofiapinheiro@gmail.com

Introduction

The South African higher education system currently accommodates almost a million students in public university institutions (CHE, 2016). This has been made possible by government's deliberate attempts to achieve massification and improve access, particularly by students belonging to previously disadvantaged groups (CHE, 2013).

Both internationally and locally, students coming into the higher education system are faced with increasing levels of responsibility and significant challenges (Civitas Learning, 2018; Kuh et al., 2007; Selesho, 2012; Wilson-Strydom, 2010). In addition, the transition to higher education presents a substantial turning point for students, in both academic and social aspects (Bojuwoye, 2002; Nel, Troskie-de Bruin & Bitzer, 2009; Tinto, 1993).

In the South African context, a number of studies have been conducted at the various higher education institutions (HEIs) with the aim of trying to understand and highlight the importance of student transition from high school to university (Bitzer & Troskie-de Bruin, 2004; Bojuwoye, 2002; Kotzé & Kleynhans, 2013; Nel, 2008; Nel, Troskie-de Bruin & Bitzer, 2009; Selesho, 2012). A study conducted by Wilson-Strydom (2010) found that the transition experience was difficult for almost all the respondents, irrespective of whether the students came from schools considered as having good resources and academic performance or not. Four categories of transitional issues from school to university were identified in a study conducted by Nel (2008). These categories are: Academic – which include unrealistic academic expectations and lack of academic skills; Social – which include the lack of parental and social support; Cultural – which relate to diversity, minority or previously disadvantaged groups and social integration; and Socio-Economic or Financial – which relate to students worrying about payment of their tuition fees, textbooks, transport, accommodation and other associated costs.

The term "at risk" is generally used to describe students who are more likely than other students to attrite from HE systems, based on a number of documented factors (Tinto, 2014). At-risk students tend to require higher levels of academic and non-academic support from the university, because they are likely to find the transition to university even more challenging than the average student (Selesho, 2012; UFS CTL, 2018).

Early-warning systems are systems which enable easy identification of at-risk students who usually require extra academic and/or non-academic support before, and/or early in the course of the academic year, with the primary objective of providing such students with support before it is too late and their chances of success are compromised. Research suggests that waiting until mid-year examinations is often too late to provide students with the necessary support that they might require to succeed (Hundermark, 2018; Kotzé & Kleynhans, 2013; Kuh, 2008; Kuh et al., 2007; Tinto, 2014). Instead, the use of early-warning systems can serve as a preventative approach that protect students against premature attrition from HE systems (Tinto, 2014; UFS CTL, 2018; Varney, 2012). Early-warning systems can take various forms and involve several strategies, that can be used prior to and throughout the academic year.

It is important to note that as a population, first-year students experience high attrition rates in HEIs, but there is immense variation amongst these students. Iteratively, this alludes

to the importance of knowing relevant information about the students entering the system, so that interventions and support programmes can be student-centred, as opposed to one-size-fits-all (Bitzer & Troskie-de Bruin, 2004; Hundermark, 2018; Kuh et al., 2007). Additionally, this highlights the importance of tailoring student support in nuanced ways, considering all the different factors that make up the experience of the incoming student.

Academically, a significant problem for students entering the HE system is under-preparedness. Under-preparedness is caused partly by the interdependence and lack of coordination between tertiary, secondary and primary education, where dysfunction in one of these sectors initiates negative consequences in the others (Chetty & Pather, 2015; SANRC, 2017; Selesho, 2012; Wilson-Strydom, 2010). In South Africa (SA), greater synergy between primary, secondary and tertiary education sectors would likely facilitate easier university transitions for students (Strydom et al., 2016). However, at local and global levels, many government and/or public schools face continued challenges that prevent the adequate delivery of teaching and learning services to primary and secondary students, with significant deficits in resources such as qualified teaching professionals, funding, textbooks and safe and/or functional learning facilities (Chetty & Pather, 2015; Grayson, 1997; Nel, 2014; Webbstock, 2016).

Predominantly, academic challenges arise not because students are academically untalented, but partly because they often have no clue of what university experiences might encompass. Internationally, more especially in SA, these academic problems are experienced more profoundly by students with low levels of proficiency in the English language. At most HEIs, English is the predominant medium of instruction (Bojuwoye, 2002; Kerr, 2018; Kotzé & Kleynhans, 2013; Nel, 2014). Hence, in cases where students are not proficient in the language, they encounter serious difficulties in understanding course material in order to fulfil minimum academic requirements.

Local and international literature has foregrounded numerous non-academic challenges that students face in HE systems (Chetty & Pather, 2015; Kuh et al., 2007; Nel, 2014; Selesho, 2012; Tinto, 2014; UFS CTL, 2018; Webbstock, 2016; Wilson-Strydom, 2010). As is the case with academic challenges, non-academic challenges are multiple and complex, arising for many, interlinked reasons. Primarily, non-academic challenges occur because students entering HE systems often do so from historically-underserved and disadvantaged positions. As such, many students lack the cultural capital that is necessary in order to make successful transitions to HE environments (Chetty & Pather, 2015; Kerr, 2018; Kuh et al., 2007; Nel, 2014). However, financially-related challenges tend to be particularly prevalent for students – especially if they originate from economically-challenged backgrounds. Literature highlights the intensity of the financial challenges encountered by university students, suggesting that academic pressures are often augmented because of non-academic stressors. First-generation students, tend to be even more vulnerable to financial stress than others (Kuh et al., 2007; Nel, 2008). This evidence reveals that students do not leave socioeconomic inequalities behind when entering systems of HE (Tinto, 2014).

Realistically, it is not possible for HEIs to address every challenge of the student experience – especially because these institutions have little control over students' pre-entry characteristics (Tinto, 2014). Pre-entry characteristics include aspects such as socioeconomic background; family situation; health status; educational experience; attitudes; behavioural aspects and skillsets (Kuh et al., 2007; Nel, Troskie-de Bruin & Bitzer, 2009). For these reasons, pre-entry student attributes have been identified as fixed – existing outside the parameters of institutional student success interventions (Tinto, 1993; 2004; 2006; 2014; Nel, Troskie-de Bruin & Bitzer, 2009). However, despite having little control over students' pre-entry attributes, HEIs can engage in purposeful, intensive practices that can contribute towards transformation and greater success for the students coming into the HE system.

Research suggests that HEIs should ascertain any and all relevant information about their students before the commencement of the academic year (Bitzer & Troskie-de Bruin, 2004; EAB Global, 2018; Hundermark, 2018; Kuh et al., 2007; Tinto, 2014). Doing so means that institutions have a head start in understanding exactly the types and levels of academic and/or non-academic support that will be required for different students throughout the year. Identifying at-risk students calls for reliable, consistent data on all the students entering the institution (Hundermark, 2018; Kuh et al., 2007; Tinto, 2014). This data gives the institution a greater understanding of academic and non-academic needs of students entering the system. While pre-entry factors do not necessarily fall within the institution's direct control (Tinto, 2014), gaining insight into these aspects may assists HEIs in understanding how to serve their students in optimal ways to ensure success (Chetty & Pather, 2015).

The above gives an account of the intricacy of factors linked to the student experience and student academic outcomes in HEIs. It renders the traditional variables of race and gender inadequate in penetrating the depth and complexity of a modern student, 25 years postapartheid. Student characteristics, even within the same race and gender groups, are no longer homogenous (Parker, 2006). It is therefore critical that HEIs begin to collect more detailed and relevant data on students in addition to traditional proxies, as these may not sufficiently capture the length and breadth of student needs. To this end, this article aims to describe the design, implementation and application of a student biographical questionnaire (BQ) online platform at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), Johannesburg, commonly known as the Wits Student BQ, as well as some of the lessons learned in this regard.

University Context

Wits is a research-intensive university located in the centre of the Johannesburg metropole, the economic hub of SA. With five faculties consisting of 34 schools, Wits registered about 39 000 students in 2018 of which 64% were undergraduates and 36% postgraduates. About 6 000 first-year students constituted the undergraduate student population in 2018, making this a significant proportion of the undergraduate student population.

Wits has committed through its Learning and Teaching Plan (2015/2019) to broaden the participation of students from diverse backgrounds (rural, black, female, disabled, and

mature students) and to provide them with appropriate support for achieving greater success with access.

In 2015, as part of the Kresge Foundation funded project known as the Siyaphumelela 'We Succeed' initiative, Wits started designing the student BQ online platform. In 2016, the online platform was implemented and the student BQ information was collected for the first time from all first-year undergraduate students. One of the main objectives of the Wits Siyaphumelela project was to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the students coming from high school to Wits in an attempt to establish their readiness for university, understanding how the socioeconomic background would influence their chances of success at university and the relevant interventions that they may require to succeed in their first year of study.

Conceptual Framework

This work is guided by Tinto's Longitudinal Model of Individual Departure (1993), which suggests that a student's withdrawal, defined as the departure of a student from a university campus, is based on a cascade of experiences over a period of time which includes prior schooling, institutional experiences and their level of integration. Tinto's model describes that students enter the institution with differing family backgrounds, including social status, parental education and size of the home community; personal attributes, namely gender, race and physical handicaps; skills, namely intellectual and social skills; financial resources; dispositions (intentions and commitments); and various pre-university educational experiences (such as high school results).

Tinto's model highlights how institutional commitment plays a fundamental role in supporting the integration of students in formal and informal structures of the academic and social system, empowering them to persist. According to Tinto, some students are unable to cope with the demands of the university environment, both social and intellectual. These students are usually unable to make the necessary adjustments and eventually withdraw. The lesser a student is integrated into the academic and social communities of the institution, the more likely the student will withdraw. External demands placed on students, like family support and work obligations, can also influence a student's decision to withdraw. When the academic and social systems of the institution provide inadequate support to students, the additional external demands placed on the student can result in increased intentions to withdraw (Tinto, 1993).

The framework for pre-university intervention (Nel, Troskie-de Bruin & Bitzer, 2009) suggests that universities can play a role at school level to prepare prospective students more effectively for university studies and thus facilitate an easier school–university transition. The framework proposes three levels of the student transition phase, namely pre-entry, enrolment or access and post-enrolment. It points to the interdependence of factors that play a role at school level before students enter university and in their transition to HE. There are various academic, social, emotional, cultural and financial factors that impact on the transition. These factors are interdependent, and no single factor can be regarded as being more important than the others.

Design of the BQ Online Platform

BQ process

The student BQ online platform was fully implemented for the first time at Wits in January 2016 during the student registration process with the approval of the University Registrar and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC): Academic. However, the initial attempt of incorporating the BQ online platform as part of the standard registration process in 2016 was accompanied by serious technical problems. This challenge delayed the student registration process as well as the achievement of the Wits enrolment targets timeously. The online platform was then suspended until the technical problems were sorted out. This resulted in the collection of the student BQ data using a paper-based approach in 2016. Subsequently, the technical problems associated with the BQ online platform were successfully resolved and the online platform has since become part of the student registration process.

The BQ collects information on student background from all first-time first-year undergraduate students. Table 1 depicts the questions contained in the student BQ online platform. The BQ data is then stored in the student information management system (SIMS) together with the rest of the student information already existing in relation to student application and the registration processes.

Table 1: Questions contained in the student biographical questionnaire (BQ) online platform

Personal Information★	Home Information	School Information	University Information
	Facilities at home	Location	Tuition payment
Special needs (disability)	Location	Classification#	Accommodation payment
	Home language	Facilities at school	Living expenses payment
	First-generation status	Language of instruction	Accommodation arrangements
	Education background	Class size	Mode of transport to university
	Economic status	School fees payment	Distance travelled to university
	General support provision	Mode of transport to school	Part-time employment
	Parent(s)/guardian occupation	Usage of online apps/sites	Fears/concerns about 1st year at university
			Registered for 1st/2nd/3rd choice of study

★ *Personal Information includes additional personal, matric and demographic information obtained by joining the unique student identifier (student number) to other information available on SIMS. Student ID is automatically populated since the students complete the questionnaire online using their student profile.*

Personal Information*	Home Information	School Information	University Information
# *Classification includes school quintile information which is obtained from the Department of Basic Education (DBE) database using the school Education Management Information System (EMIS) numbers. The Quintile system is used by the South African Government mainly for the purpose of distributing school allocation, which is the amount of money that the government gives to public ordinary schools every year. Schools belonging to Quintile 1 are considered to have poor resources whereas Quintile 5 schools are considered to be well resourced (Mestry & Ndhlovu, 2014).*			

The BQ online platform has been designed by the Wits ICT and Academic Information and Systems Unit (AISU) teams (in collaboration with the AIR unit) in such a way that when a student completes his/her online registration, by clicking the 'Complete/Submit' button, on the Wits Self-service portal, a link for the student BQ online platform appears immediately with further instructions on how to complete the questions and navigate the BQ online platform.

Alternatively, a student is able to complete the BQ questions at a later stage by signing into the University's Student Self-service Portal. The easy-to-use BQ online platform is located on the 'Additional Self-service' page with instructions and tips on how to complete the questions. Figure 1 is a screenshot representation of the first page of the BQ online platform.

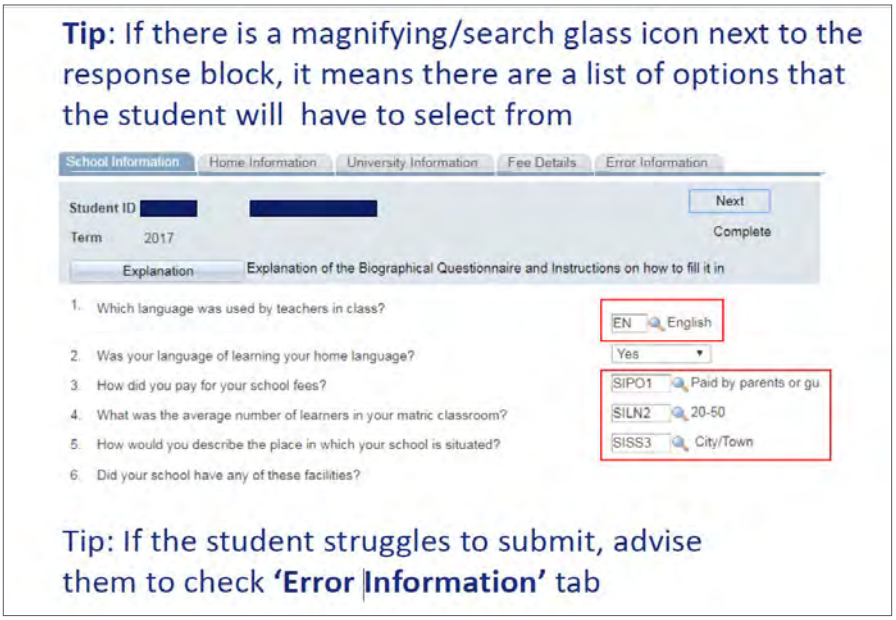


Figure 1: A screenshot depicting the first page of the student BQ online platform

Monitoring of BQ data collection

As soon as students start completing questions on the BQ online platform, an electronic submission report is generated daily. The BQ Daily Submission Report contains figures on the total number of first-year students who have completed their registration, total number of first-year students who have completed the BQ questions and total number of first-year students who have not completed the BQ questions. These figures are further categorised based on the five faculties to reflect the BQ completion rates per faculty.

A BQ Weekly Submissions Report, containing a high-level summary of completion numbers per faculty and some of the key findings at that point of data collection (i.e. first generation, tuition payment plans, fears and concerns, etc.), is distributed on a weekly basis, to the Wits Student Success Steering Committee, a structure that is driving the student success agenda at Wits. The committee is made up of the DVC: Academic, University Registrar, Dean of Student Affairs, Assistant Deans for Teaching and Learning from each faculty and Head of AIRU, amongst others.

Using data from the BQ submission reports, follow-up emails are sent (using the BQ help desk email) to those students who have not completed the questionnaire by the end of weeks 3 and 4 after the commencement of the registration process. By the end of week 5, a short message (SMS) campaign is undertaken with the assistance of the Student Enrolment Centre. During this campaign, SMSs are sent out to students who have not yet completed the BQ. By the end of week 6, a call campaign is conducted with help from the University's Call Centre. The Call Centre agents call each student who has not completed the questions on the BQ online platform, encouraging the students to complete the BQ questions and providing assistance where necessary. All these monitoring initiatives have a significant impact on the overall responses from the students (Figure 2).

In ensuring that most of the first-year students are able to complete the BQ questions before the start of the academic programme and that they are provided with the necessary support in this regard, the university Orientation-Week (O-Week) Digital Literacy sessions are also utilised to train and assist students on how to complete the BQ using the online platform.

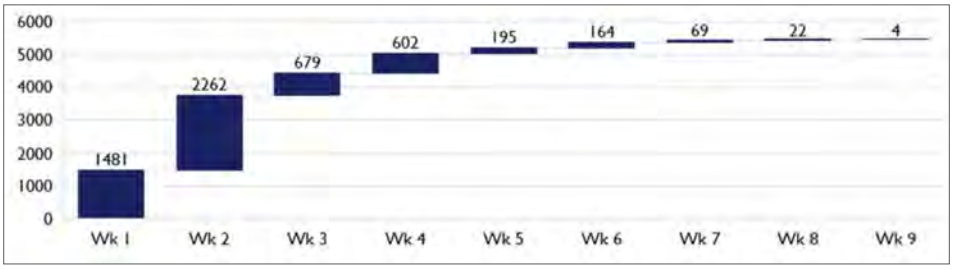


Figure 2: Number of questionnaires completed by students at the end of each week after commencement of the registration process in 2019

BQ data collation and analysis

The Power Business Intelligence (PowerBI) and Tableau software are utilised when linking and visualising the collected BQ data with other student datasets (e.g. matric results, school quintile, etc.). Approved and designated institutional researchers are responsible for the analyses of the BQ data. The overall student BQ response rate has improved significantly since the start of the project in 2016 (Figure 3). In the last four years, the BQ response rate has increased by 19% to 99% (i.e. Total Respondents = 5 478; Target Population = 5 595) in 2019.

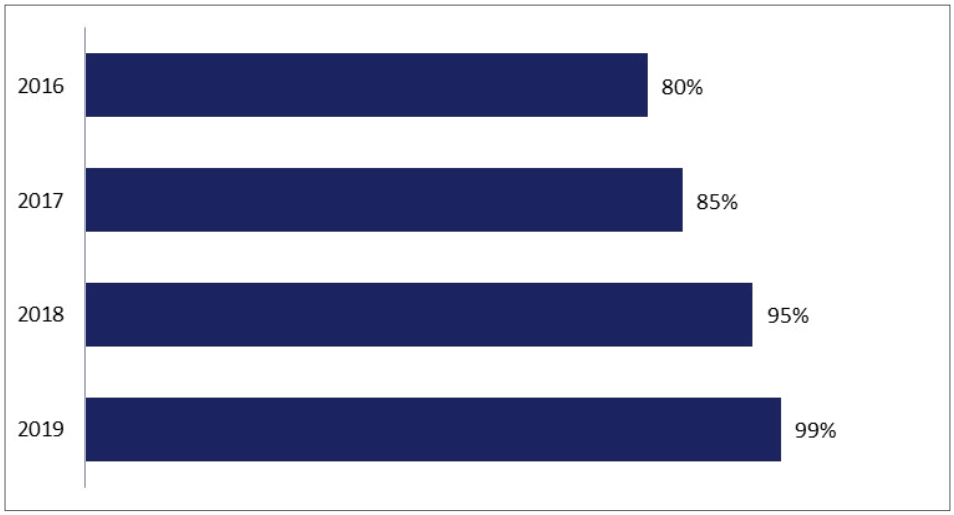


Figure 3: Student BQ response rate from 2016 to 2019

Use and Application of the BQ Data

An official student BQ report is published based on the collected and analysed BQ data for the current academic year. The BQ report is presented to the various decision-making structures of the university including the University Council, University Forum, Senior Executive Team (SET), Senate: Teaching and Learning, and Student Success Steering Committees, amongst others.

In addition, the BQ report is made available to the faculties and schools, student support departments and other student success stakeholders in the university. The Faculty Student Advisers (formerly known as the Faculty At-Risk Coordinators) are the most critical users of the BQ data as they utilise the data to inform and improve the various student support interventions that each faculty is providing to the students to ensure that the students succeed in their first year of study. The student BQ data for faculties is packaged into an easy-to-use dashboard (Student success dashboard using Tableau and PowerBI) based on the requirements and needs of each faculty.

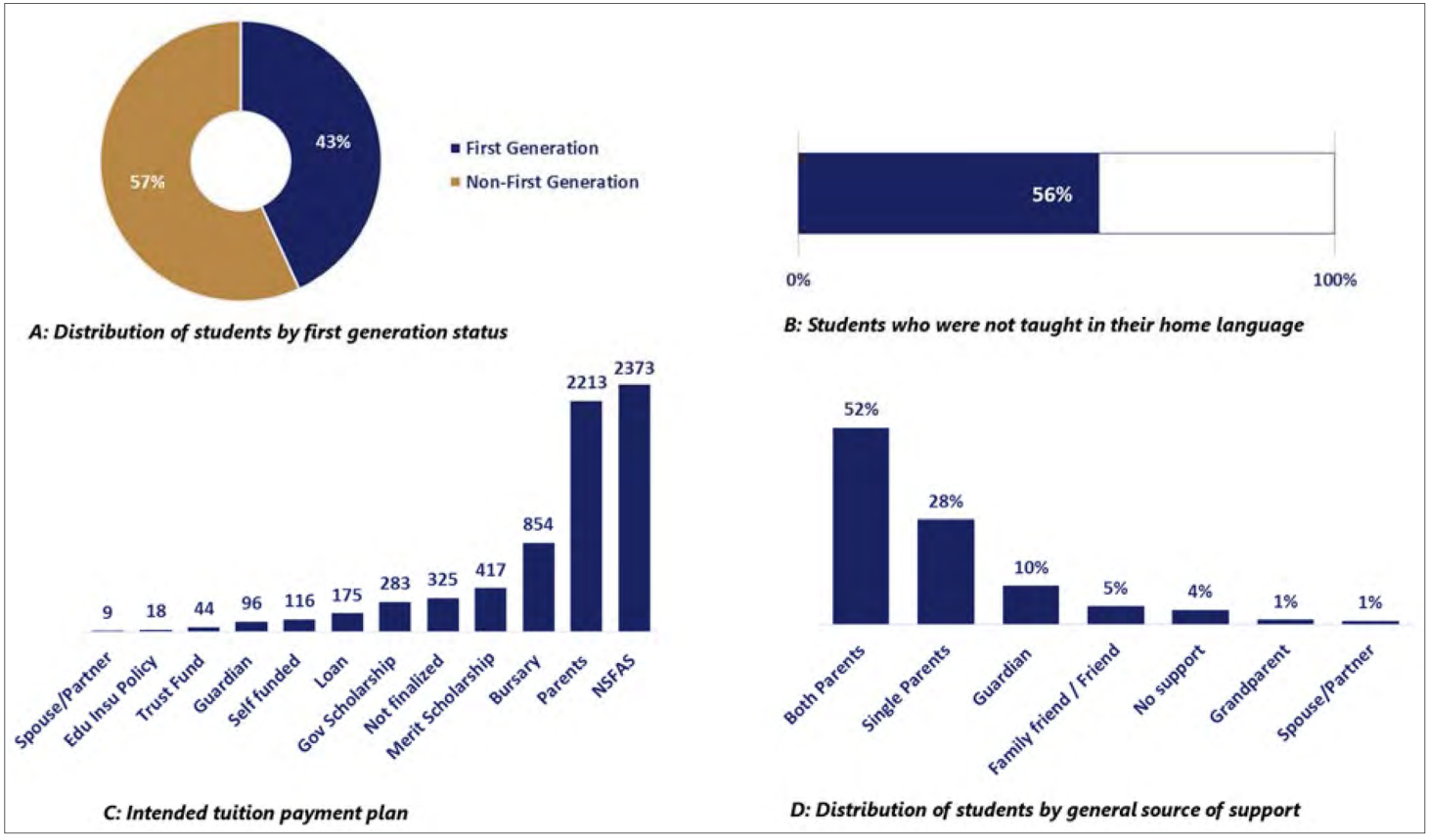


Figure 4: An example of some of the variables analysed from the 2019 Student BQ data. A: Distribution of students by first-generation status; B: Students who were not taught in their home language; C: Intended tuition payment plan; D: Distribution of students by general source of support. Edu Insu Policy = Education Insurance Policy, NSFAS = National Student Financial Aid Scheme.

Since the main aim of this article is to reflect and describe the process of designing, implementation and application of the BQ online platform at Wits, only four variables shown in Figure 4 will be discussed in detail. The four variables are First-generation Status, Language of Instruction, Mode of Tuition Payment and General Source of Support, information that is critical in understanding the incoming first-year students and in the planning of responsive student support interventions by the various faculties.

In 2019, 43% of the first-year students studying at Wits were first generation, meaning that these students were first in their families to study at a university (Figure 4A). Studies have shown that first-generation students tend to have higher attrition rates than their peers; they often experience more difficulties and challenges in transitioning and adapting to the new university environment and tend to lack adequate family support (Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak & Terenzini, 2004; Selesho, 2012; Wilson-Strydom, 2010). First-generation students often have parents with lower levels of academic achievements; as a result these parents lack the requisite parental support and understanding of the university environment necessary to encourage their children during their studies (Fike & Fike, 2008; Nel, Troskie-de Bruin & Bitzer, 2009).

More than half of the first-year students (56%) at Wits were not taught in their home language, meaning that their home language is not English (Figure 4B). Students' low levels of proficiency in the language of instruction have been shown to have an impact on the academic performance of the students. The lack of confidence in English deters them from participating fully in class or consulting with lecturers (Bojuwoye, 2002). In addition, students who have the language of instruction as an additional language were found to have difficulty in understanding the course material (Eisleen & Geyser, 2003).

The majority of the first-year students were relying on their parents and the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) for tuition payment (Figure 4C). A concerning number of the students had not yet finalised their tuition payment plans at the time of registration. Students with financial difficulties, such as challenges in the acquisition of funding to pay tuition fees, residential accommodation, food and other necessities like clothes and textbooks, have been found to experience additional stress during their studies (Bojuwoye, 2002). The additional stress has a negative impact on their retention and academic success. These students tend to have difficulties in concentrating on their studies as they worry about whether they will be able to complete their studies (Hundermark, 2018). On the other hand, research has shown that students who receive financial support tend to have high retention rates (Fike & Fike, 2008).

Almost half of the first-year students (52%) were receiving general support from both parents while studying at the university, while 4% had no general source of support (Figure 4D). Nel's framework for pre-university intervention largely fits into the context of general source of support for students. Nel and co-workers (2009) argue that a support network, such as parents, plays an important role in the successful transitioning from school to university, especially with regard to the emotional well-being of students. They further argue that the support role that parents play in the transition phase is essential to students' successful adjustment, regardless of their own educational level. A stronger likelihood

of attrition of students who came from single-parent households was observed in exit interviews conducted with students who deregistered in 2015 by Hundermark (2018). The role that friends and peers play as support structures has been found to be increasingly important in the transition phase (Nel, Troskie-de Bruin & Bitzer, 2009).

Hence, it is important for HEIs to understand such information about the new incoming first-year students as this may provide insights on the challenges that might be experienced by the students and the relevant support they may need to succeed in their first year of study.

BQ Planning for the Following Academic Year

The planning process for BQ data collection for the following academic year begins in the early part of the second semester of the current academic year. The following stages form part of the BQ planning process:

- **Questionnaire review**: This stage entails critical reviewing of the questions in the BQ online platform by the various faculties and student success stakeholders. Ambiguous questions are rephrased for better clarity; redundant questions are removed; and new questions are added, depending on the current problematic areas faced by students and the university.
- **Updates on the BQ online platform**: The ICT and AISU teams update the BQ online platform based on the technical glitches/problems encountered by students during the data-collection period in the current academic year.
- **Testing of the BQ online system**: Just before the end of the current academic year and at the beginning of the new academic year, the BQ online platform is tested by various stakeholders for operational accuracy and optimal performance. Any concerns/challenges uncovered through this exercise are communicated to the AISU and ICT teams for rectification.
- **Stakeholder meeting**: All the stakeholders who are affected and involved with the BQ data collection process (e.g. Student Enrolment Centre, ICT, AISU, Registrar's Office, Faculty Registrars, Student Affairs, Call Centre and Marketing) are invited to a planning meeting where they discuss the challenges encountered with the BQ data collection in the current academic year and ways of improving the whole BQ process going forward. Timelines for the data collection in the new academic year are also discussed in detail and agreed upon.
- **BQ training of involved stakeholders**: All the stakeholders who deal directly with students during the registration process are trained on how to navigate and complete the BQ online platform as well as how to answer the most frequently asked questions. This training takes place just before the start of the registration process and conducted by one of the institutional researchers.

Lessons Learned

Below are some of the lessons that were learned through the process of implementing the student BQ online platform at Wits:

- **Buy-in and support from University Executive Management**: This is one of the most critical aspects when introducing a new initiative such as the student BQ online platform which will have an impact on the overall student registration process and student success at an institution. Romano (2018) argues that leading student success is less about pursuing numerous initiatives but more about changing the culture of a university. He further states that articulating the reason for change and helping others understand why change is needed, must precede any conversation about new initiatives. Hence, it is essential for university leaders to invest first in building and maintaining a culture of student success – a culture that should permeate the university with the ultimate aim of improving the student experience.

Buy-in is broadly defined as a personal and professional commitment to actively engage in a process, task or initiative (French-Bravo & Crow, 2015). In their study, Thomson and co-workers (1999) constructed a two-dimensional emotional-intellectual matrix to visualise levels of commitment and understanding. Their findings demonstrated that the higher the understanding and commitment of a leader, the stronger that leader will advocate for the implementation and success of a new initiative.

- **Involvement of all university stakeholders dealing with student success**: For this initiative to be successful, the reasons and benefits of collecting the BQ data should be appreciated by these stakeholders. This is the university sector that gives inputs on the current areas of student success that require urgent attention, thus identifying and proposing new questions to be added to the BQ tool.

Romano (2018) posits that improving student success will not be the result of one initiative or the work of one unit or department; it will be the result of collective effort at the university with the aim of breaking down the silos and focusing holistically on students. It must be borne in mind that students do not see universities as the units or departments on which the institutions are structured; they see only one institution. As a result, the involvement of all university stakeholders dealing with student success is essential when implementing an initiative such as the student BQ.

- **Understanding of the BQ online platform by stakeholders dealing directly with students during the registration process**: Personnel dealing with student registration and enquiries are at the forefront when it comes to questions raised by students regarding the BQ online platform. Provision of relevant training to these stakeholders is critical in ensuring the success of this initiative.

Effective communication, including clearly articulated and relatable desired outcomes and goals to reach those outcomes, have been cited by Thomson and co-workers (1999) as essential components for the stakeholders responsible for implementing a new initiative such as the BQ. Trust in the competence and experience of those implementing the initiative, and in stakeholders participating in the initiative has also been shown to be important (Dooley & Fryxell, 1999).

- **Sharing of the BQ data and findings with faculties**: The most effective use of the BQ online platform lies in the ability of sharing the BQ data with the faculties as early as at the start of the academic programme so that the faculties are able to use this data to

inform and improve the student support programmes that they are providing to students. In addition, the data can assist teaching staff with improving their teaching strategies to effectively communicate with and support students. This is the premise for using early-warning systems, such as the BQ data, to ensure that students are provided with the necessary support before it is too late in the academic year (Hundermark, 2018; Kotzé & Kleynhans, 2013; Kuh, 2008; Kuh et al., 2007; Tinto, 2014).

- **Continuous review and improvements on the BQ online platform**: This entails a critical and objective review of the BQ online platform for identification of areas of improvements and those requiring changes. Any technical failures on the BQ online platform will negatively impact the registration of new students, which is a critical process that the university cannot afford to compromise.

Park and co-workers (2013) state that continuous improvement is not synonymous with improving all institutional processes, but rather iterative and gradual in nature. This statement is especially true in the context of the observed success of the student BQ at Wits in the last four years. Continuous improvement entails effective diagnostic review that is based on proper root cause analysis. The process generates evaluative feedback, including the identification of practices that must inform the current improvement planning, actions and decision-making. During the implementation of the initiative, relevant stakeholders regularly monitor the progress, discuss and analyse what is working or not working and make any necessary adjustments to the improvement plan (Dawson, McWilliam & Tan, 2008).

Through the continuous review and improvement of the BQ process, the following activities were identified as necessary in ensuring successful implementation:

BQ help desk

A help desk aimed at assisting students with queries related to completing questions on the BQ online platform was established in 2018. The BQ help desk has three major components:

- **Face-to-face contact**, which enables students to walk in at the AIRU office for personal assistance regarding completion of the BQ questions;
- **Electronic contact**, which enables students to send their queries using email to the BQ help email address; and
- **Telephonic contact**, which enables students to call designated staff members in the AIRU office for telephonic assistance regarding the BQ online platform.

BQ student consultants

In 2019, we introduced the use of student interns, who were deployed to the registration hall where some of the student registration activities were taking place. This ensured that first-year students were readily assisted with completing the BQ online platform, while they were finalising their registration processes.

Limitations of the Student BQ Online Platform

One major limitation of the BQ online platform is that it presents an analysis of data which is based on self-reported information by the students. Although this cannot be deemed precisely accurate given that it is based on self-volunteered information, approaches to validate and verify the data can be employed. These include triangulation of some of the BQ data variables with other university datasets such as the payment of tuition and accommodation fees as well as accommodation arrangements.

The BQ online platform is able to capture the students' circumstances as reflected by the students at the time of registration or beginning of the academic year. It is a known fact that students' circumstances undergo continuous changes and can be very unpredictable. Therefore, innovative ways are required to ensure that the BQ online platform is able to update the changes in circumstances of the students as they go through the various stages of the university to completion of their studies.

Conclusion

Student characteristics are not homogeneous; as a result, HEIs are increasingly attended by a diversity of student population from various regions and backgrounds, with markedly different academic, social, emotional, cultural and financial experiences. Knowing relevant information about the students entering the HE system can assist institutions to better prepare by providing the incoming students with the necessary support they may need to succeed.

The BQ online platform has proven to be a valuable tool in providing Wits with a head start in understanding the kinds of students that are entering the university, the university readiness of first-year undergraduate students and the support that these students require to succeed in their first year of study.

Some of the possible future research projects envisaged from the BQ data include using statistical analysis to rigorously test and validate the reliability of the BQ questions (and data thereof), identifying potential predictors for students at risk of failing and/or dropping out, and developing an evaluation framework to assess the impact of the support interventions provided to the students identified as being at risk of failing and/or dropping out.

Ethics Statement

The study was approved by the University of the Witwatersrand Human Research Ethics Committee (Protocol Number: H18/05/13).

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

Funding

This work was supported by the Kresge Foundation under the Siyaphumelela 'we succeed' initiative.

Acknowledgment

The authors would like to thank Mr N. Cele, former Director of Strategic Planning Division (SPD) at Wits, for his conceptual contribution to the design of the project.

References

Bitzer, E. & Troskie-de Bruin, C. (2004). The effects of factors related to prior schooling on student persistence in higher education. *South African Journal of Education*, 24(2), 119-125.

Bojuwoye, O. (2002). Stressful experiences of first year students of selected universities in South Africa. *Counselling Psychology Quarterly*, 15(3), 277-290. https://doi.org/10.1080/09515070210143480

CHE (Council on Higher Education) (2013). *A proposal for undergraduate curriculum reform in South Africa: The case for a flexible curriculum structure. Report of the Task Team on Undergraduate Curriculum Structure*. Pretoria, South Africa: CHE. https://bit.ly/37ZBebZ

CHE (Council on Higher Education) (2016). *South African Higher Education Reviewed. Two decades of democracy*. Pretoria, South Africa: CHE.

Chetty, R. & Pather, S. (2015). Challenges in Higher Education in South Africa. In: J. Condy (Ed.), *Telling Stories Differently: Engaging 21st Century Students Through Digital Storytelling* (1-6). Stellenbosch, South Africa: African Sun Media.

Civitas Learning (2018). *Butler App Case Study*. Increased Student Adoption with New Student Mobile App. https://www.civitaslearningspace.com/student-mobile-solution-increases-engagement/

Dawson, S.P., McWilliam, E. & Tan, J. (2008). Teaching smarter: how mining ICT data can inform and improve learning and teaching practice. Annual Conference of the Australasian Society for Computers in Learning in Tertiary Education (pp. 221-230), Deaking University, Melbourne, Australia.

Dooley, R.S. & Fryxell, G.E. (1999). Attaining decision quality and commitment from dissent: The moderating effects of loyalty and competence on strategic decision-making teams. *Academy of Management Journal*, 42(4), 389-402. https://doi.org/10.5465/257010

EAB (Education Advisory Board) Global (2018). *A Student-Centered Approach to Advising Redeploying Student advisors to Create Accountability and Scale Personalized Intervention*. https://eab.com/research/academic-affairs/study/a-student-centered-approach-to-advising-study/

Eisleen, R. & Geyser, H. (2003). Factors distinguishing between achievers and at-risk students: A qualitative and quantitative synthesis. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 17(2), 118-130. https://doi.org/10.4314/sajhe.v17i2.25305

Fike, D.S. & Fike, R. (2008). Predictors of first-year student retention in the community college. *Community College Review*, 36(2), 68-88. https://doi.org/10.1177/0091552108320222

French-Bravo, M. & Crow, G. (2015). Shared governance: role of buy-in in bringing about change. *The Online Journal of Issues in Nursing*, 20(2). https://bit.ly/2YvYM5g

Grayson, D.J. (1997). A holistic approach to preparing disadvantaged students to succeed in tertiary science studies. Part II. Outcomes of the Science Foundation Programme. *International Journal of Science Education*, 19(1), 107-123. https://doi.org/10.1080/0950069970190108

Hundermark, G. (2018). Who are our first-year at-risk Humanities students? A reflection on a first-year survey administered by the Wits Faculty of Humanities Teaching and Learning Unit in 2015 and 2016. *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa*, 6(2), 85-97. https://doi.org/10.24085/jsaa.v6i2.3311

Kerr, K. (2018). *Promoting and Establishing an Effective Campus-Wide Academic Advising System*. Doctoral dissertation, University of Nebraska–Lincoln. https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cehsedaddiss/294/

Kotzé, M. & Kleynhans, R. (2013). Psychological well-being and resilience as predictors of first-year students' academic performance. *Journal of Psychology in Africa*, 23(1), 51-60. https://doi.org/10.1080/14330237.2013.10820593

Kuh, G.D. (2008). *High-Impact Educational Practices: What They Are, Who Has Access to Them and Why They Matter*. https://provost.tufts.edu/celt/files/High-Impact-Ed-Practices1.pdf

Kuh, G.D., Kinzie, J., Buckley, J., Bridges, B.K. & Hyek, J.C. (2007). *Piecing Together the Student Success Puzzle: Research, Propositions, and Recommendations*. Wiley Interscience. https://bit.ly/31bqlSR

Mestry, R. & Ndhlovu, R. (2014). The implications of the National Norms and Standards for school funding policy on equity in South African public schools. *South African Journal of Education*, 34(3), 1-11. https://doi.org/10.15700/201409161042

Nel, B.P. (2014). Student advising as intervention for enhancing the academic auccess of "at-risk" students at a comprehensive university in South Africa. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(27), 732-739. https://doi.org/10.5901/mjss.2014.v5n27p732

Nel, C. (2008). *The transition from school – A university's role in pre-entry*. Stellenbosch University, South Africa: Centre for Prospective Students. https://bit.ly/3dqziuh

Nel, C., Troskie-de Bruin, C. & Bitzer, E. (2009). Students' transition from school to university: Possibilities for a pre-university intervention. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 23(5), 974-991. https://doi.org/10.4314/sajhe.v23i5.48811

Park, S., Hironaka, S., Carver, P. & Nordstrum, L. (2013). *Continuous improvement in education*. White Paper: Advancing Teaching – Improving Learning. Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, https://bit.ly/3hVgZRl

Parker, K. (2006). The effect of student characteristics on achievement in Introductory Microeconomics in South Africa. *South African Journal of Economics*, 74, 137-149. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1813-6982.2006.00054.x

Pascarella, E.T., Pierson, C.T., Wolniak, G.C. & Terenzini, P.T. (2004). First-generation college students: Additional evidence on college experience and outcomes. *Journal of Higher Education*, 75(3), 249-284. https://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.2004.11772256

Romano, C.D. (2018). *Culture change first, then student success*. https://er.educause.edu/blogs/2018/6/culture-change-first-then-student-success

SANRC (South African National Resource Centre) (2017). *The First Year Experience in Higher Education in South Africa: A Good Practices Guide*. http://sanrc.co.za/digital-publications/SANRC-FYE-Good-Practice-Guide/files/assets/common/downloads/publication.pdf

Selesho, J.M. (2012). Making successful transition during the first year of university study: Do psychological and academic ability matter? *Journal of Social Sciences*, 31(1), 1-10. https://doi.org/10.1080/09718923.2012.11893009

Strydom, F., Loots, S., Oosthuysen, A., Hen-Boisen, L., Henn, M. & Posthumus, H. (2016). *Engaging the #Studentvoice: SASSE Annual Report*. University of the Free State, South Africa: Surveys of Student Engagement. https://bit.ly/3hX8epT

Thomson, K., De Chernatony, L., Arganbright, L. & Khan, S. (1999). The buy-in benchmark: How staff understanding and commitment impact brand and business performance. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 15(8), 819-835. https://doi.org/10.1362/026725799784772684

Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition*. Second edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226922461.001.0001

Tinto, V. (2004). *Student retention and graduation: Facing the truth, living with the consequences. Occasional Paper No. 1*. Washington, DC: Pell Institution for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education.

Tinto, V. (2006). Research and practice of student retention: What next? *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, 8(1), 1-19. https://doi.org/10.2190/4YNU-4TMB-22DJ-AN4W

Tinto, V. (2014). Tinto's South Africa Lectures. *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa*, 2(2), 5-28. https://doi.org/10.14426/jsaa.v2i2.66

UFS CTL (University of the Free State Centre for Teaching and Learning) (2018). *Creating Pathways for Student Success*. https://www.siyaphumelela.org.za/documents/5b30f4f776a1b.pdf

Varney, J. (2012). Proactive (Intrusive) Advising! *Academic Advising Today*, 35(3). https://bit.ly/3i73ZrY

Webbstock, D. (2016). Overview. *South African Higher Education Reviewed Two Decades of Democracy* (section 1). https://bit.ly/3dwBNLi

Wilson-Strydom, M. (2010). Traversing the chasm from school to university in South Africa: A student perspective. *Tertiary Education and Management*, 16(4), 313-325. https://doi.org/10.1080/13583883.2010.532565

How to cite:

Masango, M., Muloiwa, T., Wagner, F. & Pinheiro, G. 2020. Design and Implementation of a Student Biographical Questionnaire (BQ) Online Platform for Effective Student Success, *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa*, 8(1), 93-110. DOI: 10.24085/jsaa.v8i1.4184

Literature review

A Suggested Reading List for Residential Life and Housing Research

Christopher J. Stipeck*

As college campuses continue to house more students, build additional facilities and offer a variety of programmatic options to residents, the literature becomes equally expansive. A vast array of options exist, but the following references were selected because of the robust review of research they provide, the practical nature of the content, the exploration of various residential life models and facilities, or to increase an understanding of the value that intentional programmes add to students' residential experiences. The selected references are also predominantly books. I would encourage readers to subscribe to the Association of College and University Housing Officers – International (ACUHO-I) journal, which regularly publishes the latest and most relevant research globally in the field. A brief introduction to the selected literature is provided.

Student Learning: Environments, Models and Programmes

Blimling, G.S. (2014). *Student learning in college residence halls: What works, what doesn't, and why*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119210795

Inkelas, K.K., Jessup-Anger, J.E., Benjamin, M. & Wawrzynski, M.R. (2018). *Living-learning communities that work: A research-based model for design, delivery, and assessment*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.

Both books provide an excellent analysis of a broad spectrum of recent and fundamental research in the field. Dr. Blimling is one of the most published and experienced residential life professionals and he successfully crafted a book that aggregates relevant research studies with a pragmatic lens explicitly focused on developing living environments that are supportive of student learning. This book is primarily geared to practitioners considering types of residential life models, and especially those weighing how to integrate more intentional student programmes with measurable outcomes.

Amongst some of those student programmes are living learning communities (LLCs). These are residential housing initiatives that bring students together on a dedicated floor or in a specific residence hall, often with an affiliated faculty member, and grounded in an academic or cultural theme built to develop community through common learning experiences. Dr Inkelas – the most established researcher in this area – provided a comprehensive framework for the creation and implementation of LLCs grounded in

* Dr Christopher J. Stipeck is currently the Director of Residential Staff and Programs at New York University. Email: chris.stipeck@nyu.edu

nearly 20 years of research. A common challenge of LLCs research is the large variety within the typology of such programmes. This book successfully aggregates the research from US-wide studies to provide clear direction on how to maximise student outcomes through a suggested LLC structure.

Some other related examples:

Schroeder, C.C. & Mable, P. (1994). *Realizing the educational potential of residence halls*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Strange, C.C. & Banning, J.H. (2001). *Educating by design: Creating campus learning environments that work*. The Jossey-Bass Higher and Adult Education Series. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Winston Jr., R.B. (1993). *Student Housing and Residential Life: A Handbook for Professionals Committed to Student Development Goals.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Student Learning Outcomes

Mayhew, M.J., Rockenbach, A.N., Bowman, N.A., Seifert, T.A., Wolniak, G.C., Pascarella, E.T. & Terenzini, Y. (2016). *How college affects students (Vol. 3): 21st century evidence that higher education works*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

Mayhew et al. published the third edition of one of the most influential series of research publications in student affairs. Although this robust book is not specifically about residential life, it is an impressive synthesis of relevant outcomes to any staff or researcher in student life. In some respects, the relevance to residential life is quite literal. The authors reviewed a decade of research (2002-2013) related to the relationship of living on campus and retention – and provided an analysis of the decreasing influence between the two since the prior two additions. Other outcomes included in this text are broader, such as cognitive, moral or psychosocial development at large.

Policy, Practice and Facilities

Dunkel, N.W. & Baumann, J.A. (Eds.) (2013). *Campus housing management*. Columbus, OH: The Association of College and University Housing Officers-International.

Garvey, J.C., Nicolazzo, Z. & American College Personnel Association (2018). *Trans* policies and experiences in housing and residence life*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.

Yanni, C. (2019). *Living on campus: An architectural history of the American dormitory*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press. https://doi.org/10.5749/j.ctvdmx05s

In perhaps the most international friendly option, Dunkel and Baumann developed a six-book series geared towards practice and policy for residential life professionals. Volumes include the past, present and future of residential life, residential education, facilities, business information and technology, auxiliary services and partnerships, and staffing and leadership. Written by a group of practitioners, this series was designed to help improve student experiences and enhance residential life organisations of all sizes, locations and budgets. Any level of leadership can reference editions in this book series regularly.

Residential life has a major influence on the college experiences of trans* students. The authors review ways that living on campus influences significant outcomes for trans* students, including a sense of belonging, safety and well-being. In addition to the research,

the authors discuss policies that can help improve the residential experience for this population. Administrators seeking ways to make their housing experience more inclusive of students who identify with any or no gender identity could benefit from reading this book.

Finally, the residential experience on college campuses is centuries old and Carla Yanni captures the cultural significance of tradition. This book reviews the roles that residential halls have played in American higher education from the early days of Harvard to the more modern, 21st-century halls. Yanni successfully connects student needs to building design so, although this historical review is US-based, the commentary on the architectural style would be informative for any reader.

How to cite:

Stipeck, C.J. 2020. A Suggested Reading List for Residential Life and Housing Research, *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa*, 8(1), 111-113. DOI: 10.24085/jsaa.v8i1.4185

Literature review

Recommended Reading List: Residential Life

Nupur Goyal*

This list is a curated compilation of articles and books that are recommended reading for pertinent topics within Residence Life. These readings were chosen as they provide a historical perspective of housing and residential life systems at colleges and universities as well as their adaptation in the United States, elaborate on the diverse aspects of residence life, and highlight the many benefits of living on campus. This list further highlights readings that discuss diverse aspects of residence life like staffing needs, living-learning communities, expectations for student conduct, US-based literature, and more.

By no means is this an exhaustive and all-encompassing list on topics related to residence life. However, it is a good starting point that spans a significant period of time and offers key insights. Unfortunately, much of the research and publications on this topic discuss aspects of residence life in the United States.

Some noteworthy readings in this list include the book *The Resident Assistant: Working with College Students in Residence Halls*, authored by Blimling and Miltenberger (1981), which describes the history of residence halls, starting with early models for housing from the United Kingdom and their gradual adaptation in the United States. This book also illustrates frameworks like *In Loco Parentis*, the Student Personnel Point of View, the Student Development Approach, and the rationale behind colleges and universities focusing on the holistic development of the undergraduate student.

Next, the publication *Learning Reconsidered 2* by Richard Keeling (2006) was an important document that convinced readers that the construction of meaning in a college setting no longer occurs only in the academic context. This document emphasises that academic learning and undergraduate student development processes come together in a format that requires all the resources of the college to function together in an integrated manner. Furthermore, residence halls were considered an important venue for this form of student learning and development.

In *Learning Reconsidered 2*, Keeling shares that successful integration of academic and co-curricular student learning experiences result in the student achieving many gains like orientation to their college environment, success in their studies, achieving a sense of belonging to the college, progressively understanding themselves, developing lively

* Dr Nupur Goyal is Director of Residential Life and University Community Standards, New York University, Shanghai. Email: ng25@nyu.edu

and significant interests and goals, learning to live with others, developing individuality and responsibility, and ultimately preparing for constructive career goals. For these key takeaways, *Learning Reconsidered 2* is a seminal document for readings on the topic of residence life.

The article by A.W. Astin (1973) established early on that undergraduate students in residence halls expressed more satisfaction with student friendships, faculty–student relationships, institutional reputation, and social life and that students were less likely to drop out and more likely to attain a baccalaureate degree in four years. Astin also shares that living in a residence hall during the first year was the most important environmental characteristic associated with finishing college. These factors made the development and success of residential campus living a crucial goal for colleges and universities.

The positive impact of residence halls is further explained in the book *Realizing the Educational Potential of Residence Halls* by Schroeder and Mable (1994). This book addresses the need for integrating students' formal academic experiences with their informal out-of-class experiences within the residence halls. This book focuses on the role of residence halls in student development, describes various programmes and initiatives for promoting student learning in residence halls, and illustrates the educational impact of college residence halls in detail. The book *Residence Hall Assistants in College* by M.L. Upcraft (1982) also affirms the important function of college residence halls to positively impact the academic performance of students living in the halls.

Similar to Blimling and Miltenberger, Upcraft (1982) also provides a historical timeline for the Resident Assistant position within US colleges and universities and articles by Pike (1999) and Pike, Schroeder and Berry (1997) confirm the importance and prevalence of the educational impact of Residence Halls. Next, Blimling and Miltenberger (1981) discuss the staffing needs of residence halls and the development of the Resident Assistant role and professional staff needs. The Resident Assistant role is a common factor amongst most colleges and universities and is being developed, adapted and finessed since its inception. In 2017, authors Beeny, Kolkmeier and Mastronardi Fisette produced tools for residence life staff for use in their everyday work with students. These modern tools are extremely helpful in designing intentional and impactful services, programmes and initiatives for residence life.

In his recent book, *Student Learning in College Residence Halls: What Works, What Doesn't, and Why*, Gregory Blimling (2015) discusses how the peer environment in residence halls advances student learning through best practices for community building and designing environments that produce measurable learning outcomes. In their book *Living-Learning Communities That Work: A Research-Based Model for Design, Delivery, and Assessment*, authors Kurotsuchi Inkelas, Jessup-Anger, Benjamin and Wawrzynski examine the research on the design, administration and assessment of living-learning communities. This book highlights the importance for structuring the peer environment in college residence halls to advance student learning and how these practices support student retention, learning and success.

Apart from all the positive outcomes of living in the residence halls, the book *Conduct and Community* by Hudson, Holmes and Holmes (2018) analyses several case studies and the experiences of experienced professionals to develop a practical resource for higher education professionals about student conduct in the on-campus residential setting. While earlier publications emphasised the positive correlation of on-campus living with gains for students, this book examined various aspects of student conduct in the residence halls and its impact on the experience of college students.

The final three chapters and books mentioned in this reading list include comprehensive literature on the influence of residence halls on students (Blimling, 1993), the process of creating campus environments that bolster student success (Strange & Banning, 2015) and a detailed discussion about Student Housing and Residential Life (Winston, Anchors & Associates, 1993).

This reading list offers evidence that students who have lived in college residence halls had a more enriched student learning experience, exceeded their predicted learning and development, were more involved in academic, extracurricular and social activities, and earned higher grade point averages, despite differences in ability (Upcraft, 1982). Moreover, there is a call for increasing internationalisation of college campuses to support the large and growing international student population in the United States, who often choose to live in the campus residence halls. This reading list will be beneficial to faculty and administrators who work with residential students and will help these stakeholders to understand the philosophy behind the work being done and to design services and programmes that support their vision.

History of Residence Life

Astin, A.W. (1973). The Impact of Dormitory Living on Students. *The Educational Record*, 54, 204–210.

Blimling, G.S. & Miltenberger, L.J. (1981). *The Resident Assistant: Working with College Students in Residence Halls*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall-Hunt.

Keeling, R. (2006). *Learning Reconsidered 2: A Practical Guide to Implementing a Campus-Wide Focus on the Student Experience*. American College Personnel Association, The Association of College and University Housing Officers – International, Association of College Unions International, National Academic Advising Association, National Association for Campus Activities, National Association for Students, Personnel Administrators and the National Intramural-Recreational Sports Association.

Schroeder, C.C. & Mable, P. (1994). *Realizing the Educational Potential of Residence Halls*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Upcraft, M.L. (1982). *Residence Hall Assistants in College*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Student Learning in Residence Halls

Beeny, C.K., Kolkmeier, K. & Mastronardi Fisette, D. (2017). *Learning Reconsidered: Making a case for BASIC*. Columbus, OH: The Association of College and University Housing Officers-International.

Blimling, G.S. (2015). *Student Learning in College Residence Halls: What works, what doesn't, and why?* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119210795

Living-Learning Communities

Kurotsuchi Inkelas, K., Jessup-Anger, J.E., Benjamin, M. & Wawrzynski, M.R. (2018). *Living-Learning Communities That Work: A Research-Based Model for Design, Delivery, and Assessment*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.

Pike, G.R. (1999). The Effects of Residential Learning Communities and Traditional Residential Living Arrangements on Educational Gains During the First Year of College. *Journal of College Student Development*, 40(3), 260-284.

Pike, G.R., Schroeder, C.C. & Berry T.R. (1997). Enhancing the Educational Impact of Residence Halls: The Relationship between Residential Learning Communities and First-Year College Experiences and Persistence. *Journal of College Student Development*, 38(6), 609-621.

Student Conduct in Residence Life

Hudson, J., Holmes, A. & Holmes, R.C. (2018). *Conduct and Community*. Columbus, OH: The Association of College and University Housing Officers-International.

General Readings

Blimling, G.S. (1993). The Influence of College Residence Halls on Students. In: J. Smart (Ed.), *Higher Education: A Handbook of Theory and Research*, 350-396. New York: Agathon.

Strange, C.C. & Banning, J.H. (2015). *Designing for Learning: Creating Campus Environments for Student Success*. Second edition. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons.

Winston, R.B., Anchors, S. & Associates (1993). *Student Housing and Residential Life*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

How to cite:

Goyal, N. 2020. Recommended Reading List: Residential Life, *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa*, 8(1), 115-118. DOI: 10.24085/jsaa.v8i1.4186

Book review

Luescher, T.M., Webbstock, D. & Bhengu, N. (Eds.) (2020). *Reflections of South African Student Leaders, 1994 to 2017*. Cape Town, South Africa: African Minds.

Reviewed by Imkhitha Nzungu*

Animated by the voices of 12 former student leaders representing Students' Representative Councils (SRCs) from a few public universities across the country, *Reflections of South African Student Leaders, 1994 to 2017* situates the discourse-shifting #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall movements as an inevitable progression after two decades of governmental and institutional shillyshallying on urgent issues confronting the progressively diverse national student body. The compilation is the second in the Reflections series, counterbalancing its predecessor, *Reflections of South African University Leaders, 1981 to 2014.*

Chapter 1 of 14 features a literature review, outlining the legislative background of the SRC and the research project's methods and aims. The final chapter synthesises and makes recommendations based on the middle 12 chapters, which see transcriptions of the interviews conducted by the editors with the former student leaders. Due to the study's interview approach, each of the twelve interviewees is credited as co-author of their own chapter. This is alongside the Council on Higher Education (CHE) and Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) affiliated editorial team consisting of project co-leaders Thierry M. Luescher (HSRC) and Denyse Webbstock (formerly CHE), and Ntokozo Bhengu (CHE).

Each chapter introduces a new personality distinguishable not only by name, but by their personal history, diction, experience, tone and ideological bent. It is also these idiosyncrasies which should curb generalising findings from these case studies to all sectors of the South African student population then and now. Moreover, and as the editors acknowledge, since the interviewees no longer occupy these positions, the accounts are retrospective and so benefit from hindsight in terms of contextualisation and potential rationalisation of past decisions and actions, which at the time may have been whimsical or not as considered as the distance of reflection under controlled conditions may make them seem. The reader is at the filtering mercy of both interviewee accounts and editorial focus. Limited in the former by the random distortions of human memory and, in the latter, by the scope of enquiry permitted by the mostly fixed questionnaire.

Despite the sample size, the relatively wide range of interviewee demographics reflects the diversity of the SRC electorate: South African university student bodies. Linguistic gender markers demonstrate an overrepresentation of male former student leadership.

* Ms Imkhitha Nzungu is a former student and master's graduate of Stellenbosch University, South Africa. Email: imkhitha@africanminds.co.za

In terms of ethnicity and socioeconomic background, most of the participants hail from varying degrees of historical structural disadvantage. However, due to the diachronic and longitudinal nature of the study, socioeconomic situation can be regarded as spectral for some of the participants, a product of class mobility. Therefore, while it may have been more varied during their student years, this may have changed at the time of interview recording. All interviewees were gainfully employed when the interviews were conducted; the sectors of the economy in which they were occupied vary from public to private to the in-between. Another unintentional commonality within the group concerns academic background during their SRC years, 'with most having studied broadly in the social sciences … and having been undergraduate students' (page 12).

All interviewees are politically aware, varying in involvement, degree, orientation and political party affiliation. Political orientation spans a progressive spectrum, from liberal to leftist, leaning more towards a left-wing populist orientation. Although mostly variable as regards type, location, historical and present-day (dis)advantage in terms of institution, considering that only university ex-student representatives feature in the study, it is a wonder that the editors chose to omit 'university' from the title. Moreover, the student leadership histories of some specific institutions are more fleshed out than that of other singly occurring universities. In this way the research project's representativeness is undermined.

SRC: Self or Special Interest? Popularity Contest? Vehicle for Redress?

Politics is mostly spectacle, but for many in a nation in which opportunities for social mobility are limited by avenues and access, politics can be reputation building and/or laundering spectacle. With many, as suggested by their short biographies, socialised into and accustomed to a politics of want and unmet basic community needs, some interviewees appear to have approached their membership in the SRC as a form of and forum for retroactive redress of wider economic and social justice ills.

Without undermining their career success or even the hardships many of these former student leaders had to overcome to make something of themselves, arguably, this outcome affirms David Maimela's observation that 'universities are instruments of hierarchy … inasmuch as they are also instruments of levelling the playing field' (page 123). Similarly, while lauding present-day student bodies for their participation in student politics, Muzi Sikhakhane problematizes this aspect of active participation by highlighting an observable characteristic of contemporary politics: "[the] fact that *politics attracts people who are in it for themselves*" [own italics] (pages 28-29).

Considering the country's recent and costly experience with corruption at the highest levels of government, it stands as testament of the limiting nature of a fairly fixed questionnaire that no follow-up questions were posed in response to Sikhakhane's comment (e.g. whether that view could be applicable to himself or others and their roles in the SRC). This is remarkable because reference to corruption within SRC ranks is made in the ex-student leader accounts. Further, as some interviewees acknowledge, there are some student leaders – seemingly unaffiliated to university sanctioned structures like the SRC –

whose lives and aspirations may have been stalled or halted due to their activism. Students who were either expelled from their respective institutions of higher learning or even imprisoned as a result of security force intervention in student protest action. The treatise presents us with the stories of only those who *made it*, failing to represent the experiences of those who did not.

Interests conflicting with that of university management and the strained relations and misunderstandings between the two groups likely to attend that; the extra responsibility that comes with such a position are to be expected of student leadership experience. However, although certain powers come with student representation, restrictions abound. An example of such constitutional limitations is the term length of SRC office (particularly as opposed to university management term lengths): a year. This leaves little time for students to find their bearings, receive training (which is not guaranteed), define their mandate as a body, negotiate ideological differences, familiarise themselves with wider student body concerns, delegate positions and tasks, prepare for sessions in student body assemblies, Senate and Council; all while still being, in most instances, full-time students – not to mention human beings.

Without diminishing student leadership gains, one wonders about the potential efficacy of such an overpressurised structure. But, especially considering the recurring student body concerns that went unaddressed for two decades and eventually culminated in the Fallist movements of 2015/16, what even is the metric for SRC success? Whose interests are (better) served by short SRC term limits? Because, arguably, errors in continuity are likely to have contributed to these perennial student demands going unanswered by management all the years since 1994. Similarly, in some cases, lack of solidarity between incoming and outgoing SRCs and failures in institutional memory may also have stalled progress on these issues – at least on the student politics front. Relatedly, a further source of division is the seeming mirroring of national political party partisanship in student politics. While it is somewhat justifiable (due to skewed student-institution power dynamics), the intervening years have seen modestly tangible, far-reaching benefits from the involvement of national political parties in student affairs.

Petrifying Progress

(***Mandela unleashed***)

A recurring theme in the former students' recollections of their experience in leadership is the goal of representing majority student body interests, especially concerning issues of accommodation, financial and academic exclusion, governance, alienating institutional culture and transformation. For all the gains it tracks, the compilation serves just as well as a general disillusioning time capsule, particularly of the time-honoured South African tradition of fraught student-institution-government relations. The complex dynamics are captured in the following recollections by Muzi Sikhakhane (Wits SRC president, 1994/95):

> As students … we needed [the ANC] to help us by engaging with the institutions of higher learning so that we could not just use the new political dispensation to blunt student struggles, but use it to tell universities it's time … to confront their own prejudices.
>
> (page 26)

Prishani Naidoo (Wits SRC vice-president, 1995/96):

> From about '95, '96, you got … two representatives to Council, two representatives to Senate … We would put things on the agenda, and I can remember one of the senior professors saying … in a debate on fees … *'Your voices have been heard and you have been consulted.'* And I said to him, *'But consultations don't just legitimise a process. It means, if you were heard, you must have some impact on the process.'* [own italics] (page 50)

In his instance of national government and institutional collusion in stymying student leadership advocacy for student demands, David Maimela (UP SRC member 2003) echoes an incident similar to one recalled in Prishani Naidoo's chapter about that very issue and both stories feature a towering figure:

> … it must have been '95 when there was a total national shutdown of universities. Madiba called in the National Executive Committee of SASCO, and … said … that, 'Your demands are basically legitimate, and we hear them, and we are going to deal with them. Agreed?' And the SASCO leadership said, 'Agreed.' And then … he said …, 'You will also call off the protest. You know students have to go back to class.' *There was no agreement there, because Madiba walked out of the meeting*, faced the journalists, and announced that, 'SASCO has agreed with me, and the national shutdown is called off and students are going back to class.' And then the SASCO leadership was shocked, but Madiba was Madiba, so you cannot say no now … [laughs]. [own italics] (page 125)

Reflecting on the tactical differences she observed between the SRC during her term and that which emerged around #FeesMustFall, Zukiswa Mqolomba (UCT SRC president, 2006/07) posits:

> So, this SRC is more destructionist and we were more reformist. [sic] Believing that we could actually use the structures in governance. I think … students became frustrated that things were not changing through mere representation of students in different forums of the university. I think it's because … the old guard is pretty much still dominant at universities across the country, in particular the previously advantaged universities … So, the transformation agenda is progressing slowly … And they are the ones who would determine the curriculum and the agenda of the universities, they are the ones taking up the majority of positions in Senate and Council. (page 169)

What even is Cooperative Governance?

Reflections of South African Student Leaders, 1994 to 2017 introduces the concept of cooperative governance as the philosophy underpinning legislatively mandated student representation in public higher learning decision-making bodies and structures. However, as the excerpts above suggest, the theory still has a way to go towards becoming credible and reliable practice. Inconsistencies in implementation and quality of outcomes could be observed

soon after its establishment and so went on to colour the experience of subsequent ex-student leaders.

For many first-years of previously disadvantaged backgrounds universities remain alienating and disorientating. This is an experience echoed by many of the ex-student leaders upon their arrival at these institutions. As Jerome September recalls his initial experience of institutional culture at UCT: 'It was a very foreign world, a very alien world. It was that stuff [streaking traditions and drinking in residence during first-year orientation], but it was also more subtle things: behaviours in the dining halls; what is appropriate and what is expected of you' (pages 62-63). Thinking about the pernicious and specific forms institutional alienation can take at university, Mpho Khati (UFS SRC vice-president, 2015/16) highlights the intersection of race and socioeconomic status as a significant determinant inaugurating the university experiences of underprivileged students in the process of seeking accessible and affordable accommodation:

> … universities I don't think were created with black people in mind, because of how it is difficult for us to navigate university space. For example, if you come from Limpopo or wherever, and you have to look for space or for res, there is no waiting residence or area where you can stay in this window period while you are still looking for accommodation. There are a lot of students that, after registering, they are going back to the train station or are just trying to sleep wherever they can. *This institution, was it created with us in mind?* Maybe it is one of the things that need to be addressed now that large groups of people are still coming and they don't have the resources like the other group. [own italics]
>
> (page 275)

Interviewee analyses of the student and national political situation during their terms and in light of the Fallist movements are incisive and informative. This encompassing sociopolitical commentary further exposes the narrowness of the study's focus. While the discriminating impulse is a focused research project rule-of-thumb, the study seems to presume the implicit justice of the SRC's existence as a body as it insufficiently engages the subject critically. Some participants remark on the necessity of setting personal political inclinations aside in the name of wider student body representation. However, that this is, ideally, a politician's function is never addressed as a counter, particularly in instances where former student leaders – even rightfully – criticise the deficiencies of and distance themselves from current national politics. Without such editorial steering, in many of the accounts one perceives a tendency to view the SRC solely as some form institutional watchdog, when, in practice, it is more akin to a parastatal.

Desperate Hope

Reflections of South African Student Leaders, 1994 to 2017 makes a valuable contribution to understanding the leadership experiences of the post-1994 crop of former students. This is relevant not only to budding student leadership, but, as a reader and former student interested in democratic South Africa formal education, exposure to the perspective of ex-student leaders on relations between student representatives and university management was instructive for me too, having never directly participated in these structures. It provided

a window, albeit limited and retroactive, into some of the familiar and unique histories, hardships and the groundwork born thereof of a previous generation of students that may have facilitated my own university experience.

The study is also useful as a resource for charting a course for future institution-government-student (leadership) relations. The success thereof must hinge on recognising that, while they plague cooperative governance progress, failures in understanding and communication – on all sides – are to be expected and mitigated; and that each group has and recognises different kinds of languages of communication for different reasons, including history, ideology and urgency. Frank communication and deliberate attempts at mutual understanding are required to facilitate the process.

Nevertheless, although relations between university management and student representation are ultimately variable from one institution to the next, depending on the year and the personalities involved, that these problems persist even after the groundbreaking Fallist student movements reveals a wider legacy of structural failings.

How to cite:

Nzungu, I. (2020). Review on Luescher, T.M., Webbstock, D. & Bhengu, N. (Eds.). *Reflections of South African Student Leaders, 1994 to 2017*. Cape Town, South Africa: African Minds. (2020). *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa*, 8(1), 119-124. DOI: 10.24085/jsaa.v8i1.4187

Book review

Luescher, T.M., Webbstock, D. & Bhengu, N. (Eds.) (2020). *Reflections of South African Student Leaders, 1994 to 2017*. Cape Town, South Africa: African Minds.

Reviewed by Birgit Schreiber*

The book, *Reflections of South African Student Leaders, 1994 to 2017*, edited by Thierry Luescher, Denyse Webbstock and Ntokozo Bhengu, presents an original perspective on the period before and during the university student protests of 2015 and 2016, not only as it is made up of student leaders' voices, but also in that it adopts a 'bottom up' approach where students themselves contextualise their own experiences. A lot has been written about the university managements' experience of this period – see for instance Jansen's *As by Fire* (2019) and Habib's *Rebels and Rage* (2018) – but this collection of student leaders' voices and the discussion of their reflections is a significant first.

This book is part of a South African Council on Higher Education series, following the *Reflections of South African University Leaders, 1981 to 2014*, which covered the reflections of eight university vice-chancellors and deputy vice-chancellors. The new book is made up of select 12 student leaders' voices and it offers us unique voices and personal narratives to help understand the period prior to and during the escalation of South African university protests of 2015 and 2016.

What is particularly captivating is that the chapters offer the 'raw' data from which the final discussion is drawn. This rich data in the form of verbatim narratives offer the reader an opportunity to draw own conclusions and follow the arguments presented in the final chapter, and to establish authenticity of material.

The book is well presented with easy overview and solid coherence. The introduction lays out the format and this is revisited in the final chapter. The headings in the chapters are well structured and because this structure is repeated in each chapter, it is easy to follow, quick to read and has great logic throughout. The chapters are simultaneously stand alone and part of the coherent whole.

The interpretation in the final chapter takes a particular position and, in my view, neglects some, perhaps, more 'uncomfortable' analyses. Perhaps this is so because the student leaders give themselves, retrospectively, somewhat more purpose and a higher moral ground than the burning ground on which they stood during student activism. I am somewhat missing a broader discussion of alternative explanations of why student leaders chose to behave and lead in a particular way. Some of the alternative reasons for student leaders'

* Dr Birgit Schreiber is a member of the Africa Centre for Transregional Research at the University of Freiburg, and the Vice-President of IASAS and a member of the *JSAA* Editorial Executive. She is a Senior Consultant for Higher Education Leadership and Management and for Stellenbosch University, South Africa. Email: birgitschreiber@sun.ac.za; birgitdewes@gmail.com

behaviours may include personal socialcultural experiences: some of the student leaders themselves describe their social and cultural background as being shaped by, to quote the students themselves as saying 'township culture' (while this is an uncomfortable concept for me, I am letting the data speak for itself, see page 71: "… we would see people doing the toyi-toyi in the street and we would just join them not knowing what was happening"). Socialisations in and by 'township culture' as described by some of the students may have been a significant influence.

Student protest is not a neat affair; some protest becomes destructive action. It is possible that some students transferred particular ways of engaging from previous environments to the campus environment, thus making assumptions about how difference and disagreements are resolved in the world (including the university). Using combative ways to engage is not an obvious result of having been frustrated by a university. Using combative ways to engage is a particular feature of some South African 'township culture' (as was mentioned by the student leaders, page 71) where issues around public services, schools and welfare functions are sometimes contested via these combative means (after other means failed, perhaps). This kind of engagement style is transferred from sociocultural contexts prior to arrival at university to the university itself. This is the kind of engagement style that the universities are not ready for and with which they need to find mechanisms on how to engage with and how to use these engagement styles as an opportunity for development.

The interpretation in the final chapter could also include other influences on student leaders' behaviours, decisions and plans. One student leader explains that "I think for SASCO, the contradiction was that SASCO falls under the ANC, so they can't sort of boycott their own government" (page 213). There was a powerful, toxic and openly secretive relationship with national political offices, which commandeered and puppet mastered the campus-based political parties. I was personally and powerfully involved with these dynamics as senior Student Affairs executive in the South African university space. Students themselves were often at the mercy (via payment and funding, via promises of future political positions, etc) of national political influences. This is briefly mentioned on page 226, but could be given more prominent status as a significant influence on university protests of 2015/2016.

The book, certainly in the final chapter, argues explicitly that the student campaigns drove the decolonisation agenda and perhaps this, to me, is a somewhat romantised view on the university protests of 2015/2016. The universities themselves, staff, academics and management were part of this drive, motivated for it, theorised it, made significant changes in curriculum, in institutional culture markers, in budget allocations, and in various other aspects that manifest decolonisation. I would not agree that students' mobilisations were *the* key driver as suggested by the book. The changes in decolonisation which have started at universities is also a function of the staff and academics' age and culture. The 'old ivory tower' culture, which hides behind discussions on academic autonomy to avoid change, has been replaced by social justice activists who are now in senior positions, and are of substantial numbers and calibre to create enough momentum at universities to make significant changes.

Perhaps overall, it seems that a particular voice and type of leader was selected, and mention is made (page 17) that some student leaders opted to not participate and this could have been more elaborated on: if the book aims to be a broad representation then it is important to consider why some student leaders did not wish to reflect on their role as student leaders, on their experience or their time as student leader. This is an area that could have received more attention: which student leaders are speaking here, who is not speaking? Inevitably, one does not hear all voices, and yet it is the neglect of some voices that may offer versions of reality that are most uncomfortable to us. I am missing a more critical discussion and interpretation in the final chapter of student leaders' reflection. The overall argument seems to propose a generalisable position that student leaders were informed, deliberate and motivated by social justice ideals. I cannot share that view, and I do not think the data support such a purist interpretation and that a more nuanced offering could be made. Student leaders are part of the South African combative and complex sociocultural landscape; this could, in my view, be more emphasised. Student leaders reveal in their narratives that there was manipulation from national political offices, that the need to support families motivated some arguments to increase NSFAS, that decolonisation was a nebulous notion, that using memoranda and marches were often used to coerce. This view is perhaps 'uncomfortable' but is offered by the student leaders themselves and needs to be engaged with.

Overall, reflecting on university protests of 2015/2016, the question remains if perhaps intense university protests is an ongoing feature of our university lives, given what we have seen since 2016 where GBV and poverty keep marring student and institutional life. We have seen the #socialjusticeactivists mobilising the collective power during the 2016 GBV marches and the 2020 #BlackLivesMatter movement, and universities would do well to support these social movements with students, with and along student leaders. The question is less about whether student and university leaders disagree or agree on issues, but how these are contested and debated: via virulent protest or via deep transformation that is sustainable and enriching to the overall educational project. Perhaps these two aspects are part of one process. Either way, it is up to universities to use the protests as a period of opportunity for student and institutional development.

I recommend this book to all students, student leaders, university staff and leadership – it was a rare feature of the 2015/2016 protest to hear calm and reflective student voices, so this is a chance to catch up on that.

References

Council on Higher Education (2016). *Reflections of South African University Leaders, 1981 to 2014.* Somerset, South Africa: African Minds.

Habib, A. (2018). *Rebels and Rage: Reflecting on #FeesMustFall.* Johannesburg, South Africa: Jonathan Ball Publishers.

Jansen, J. (2019). *As by Fire.* Cape Town, South Africa: Tafelberg Publishers.

How to cite:

Schreiber, B. (2020). Review on Luescher, T.M., Webbstock, D. & Bhengu, N. (Eds.). *Reflections of South African Student Leaders, 1994 to 2017.* Cape Town, South Africa: African Minds. (2020). *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa*, 8(1), 125-127. DOI: 10.24085/jsaa.v8i1.4188

Author biographies

Prof. Derick Blaauw is Professor in the School of Economic Sciences at North-West University (Potchefstroom campus), South Africa. Prior to taking up this position, he lectured economics at the University of Johannesburg and at the Soweto and Bloemfontein campuses of Vista University. His research interests are mainly in the field of labour and development economics. His current work focuses on the socioeconomic dynamics of vulnerable groups in the informal economy, such as car guards, day labourers and waste pickers. He has received a C3 rating from the National Research Foundation in 2020 and has published in accredited national and international journals.

Dr Nkhangweleni Gloria Dama is a Student Counsellor in the Student Counselling and Career Development Unit at the University of Venda. Her main responsibilities include counselling and therapy to students with personal problems, and to provide student and career development programmes at the University. Her areas of research include career counselling, student development and support programmes in institutions of higher learning. She is actively involved in community and school outreach programmes, including career guidance.

Mr Azwitamisi Milton Gadisi has been a Library Liaison Officer in the Disability Unit, Center for Higher Education Teaching and Learning, at the University of Venda for the past four years. He was previously employed in the unit as an adapted Technology Practitioner for ten years. His passion for working with disabled students started in 1994 when he became partially sighted after an accident and was cemented by working for thirteen years at the Tshilidzini School for Special Education in Thohoyandou, South Africa, as an educator in the section for the blind. His research interest lies in inclusive education. He gave a presentation at the international world conference on special needs education at The Temple University in Philadelphia, U.S.A., on challenges facing visually impaired students in higher education. He participated in a research project on capacity building for the prevention and management of learner pregnancy in schools as a video capturer of all the sessions and consolidated, edited and telescripted the final product. Mr Gadisi completed his BA in Education at the University of Venda. He attained his master's in Public Management from the University of Venda and is currently registered for a PhD in the School of Management at the University of Venda. He is actively involved in provincial and national matters of the South African National Council for the Blind. He is currently also the treasurer of the Limpopo Provincial Council for the Blind.

Dr Nupur Goyal currently serves as the Director of Residential Life and University Community Standards at New York University (NYU) Shanghai. In her role, she oversees the residential experience, housing operations, and university community standards, helping students create an engaging, inclusive and supportive community at NYU Shanghai.

She has previously worked at NYU New York and NYU Abu Dhabi in diverse areas of Student Affairs. She has a PhD in Higher and Postsecondary Education from NYU (New York). Her research interests include international higher education, leadership development, and career coaching.

Prof. Thierry M. Luescher is a Research Director of Post-schooling and Work in the Inclusive Economic Development Division of the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), Cape Town, and an affiliated Associate Professor in Higher Education Studies at the University of the Free State (UFS), Mangaung, South Africa. Before that, he was Assistant Director for Institutional Research at the UFS, a Senior Lecturer in Higher Education Studies and extraordinary Senior Lecturer in Political Studies at the University of the Western Cape, and a Senior Researcher in the Centre for Higher Education Transformation (CHET), Cape Town. He has a Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education from the UFS and obtained his PhD in Political Studies from the University of Cape Town. 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, student affairs, and higher education development in Africa. He has published in local and international scholarly journals, along with several chapters in internationally edited books. He is a founder and editor of the *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa*, and member of the editorial boards of the *Journal of College Student Development*, *Makerere Journal of Higher Education* and *African Higher Education Dynamics*. Thierry recently edited the book *Student Politics in Africa: Representation and Activism* (with M. Klemenčič and J.O. Jowi, 2016). His publication list and links to open access downloads can be viewed at www.thierryluescher.net.

Dr Mxolisi Masango is the Head of the Analytics and Institutional Research (AIR) Unit at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), South Africa. He holds a PhD from the University of Pretoria. Mxolisi started his career as a Researcher at the Agricultural Research Council (ARC), where he spent more than 10 years. During this time, he led multiple research projects, secured several research grants and published numerous peer-reviewed articles in local and international journals. After leaving the ARC, he joined Wits where he is currently involved in various institutional research activities as well as projects focused on student success. Mxolisi is the Project Leader of the Wits Siyaphumelela project, funded by the Kresge Foundation. In addition, Mxolisi is the Deputy-President of the Southern African Association for Institutional Research (SAAIR).

Dr Patricia Barbara Neo (Neo Pat) Maseko has been a Postdoctoral Researcher in the Faculty of Education at the University of the Free State, South Africa, since 2016 and has also been involved in ad hoc teaching of undergraduate students. Currently, she is a Research Associate at the Global Research Centre in Gauteng, South Africa. She holds a PhD in Education from the University of Pretoria, South Africa. Her teaching career covers a broad spectrum of Applied Language in Education and Business Communication studies.

She has worked as an Education Consultant for the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria, where she was primarily providing academic support for curriculum design and development as well as for re-curriculation processes. She formed part of the Directorate of a private higher education institution as an Academic Development Manager, responsible for material development and the monitoring and evaluation of learning programmes.

Mrs Tshifhiwa Christinah Matodzi is a Student Counsellor in the Disability Unit, Centre for Higher Education Teaching and Learning, at the University of Venda. Her main responsibility is career and individual counselling as well as academic support for students with disabilities. She holds a master's in Psychology and is a registered Independent Psychometrist with the Health Professions Council of South Africa. Currently, she is a doctoral student at the University of Fort Hare, South Africa.

Prof. Teboho Moja is Clinical Professor of Higher Education at New York University. She is also a Visiting Research Fellow, Centre for the Advancement of Scholarship at the University of Pretoria (South Africa), and an Extraordinary Professor at the Institute of Post-School Studies, University of the Western Cape (South Africa) Her teaching experience includes high school and university levels. Teboho has held key positions at several South African universities, including being appointed Chair of the Council of the University of South Africa. She has held positions as Professor Extraordinaire at the University of Pretoria, the University of Johannesburg and the University of the Western Cape, and has been Visiting Professor at the University of Oslo (Norway) and the University of Tampere (Finland). She was instrumental in setting up the Centre for Higher Education Trust (CHET) in South Africa and is currently serving as 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 to 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. She 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. She is a founding member and Editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa*.

Dr Paseka Andrew Mosia is a Senior Lecturer in the Educational Foundations Department of the National University of Lesotho. He teaches courses on inclusive education and supervises master's and doctoral students in the same field.

Ms Takalani Muloiwa is a Researcher and BI Analyst in the Analytics and Institutional Research Unit, University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), South Africa. She obtained her master's in Demography and Population Studies from Wits. Takalani previously worked for an education organisation, New Leaders Foundation, as an Analyst in Data, Monitoring and Evaluation. Prior to this, she was a Research Assistant in the Centre for Researching

Education Labour. Takalani leads various institutional research projects, including the Student Biographical Questionnaire, Graduate Exit Survey and the Feeder Schools Study. She is also involved in university rankings and project monitoring and evaluation.

Ms Imkhitha Nzungu is a former student and master's graduate of Stellenbosch University, South Africa.

Prof. Tlakale Nareadi Phasha works in the Department of Inclusive Education at the University of South Africa (Unisa), where she teaches and supervises master's and doctoral students in inclusive education. She is currently leading the Unisa team, which has partnered with the British Council on EU co funded project, "Teaching for All: mainstreaming Inclusive Education in South Africa". Teaching for All is an ambitious teacher development project that aims to provide all teachers in South Africa with the skills to teach inclusively in diverse classrooms.

Ms Gabriela Pinheiro is a contracted Researcher in the Analytics and Institutional Research Unit at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits). She holds a master's in Social and Psychological Research from Wits. Her research interests include gender-based violence, campus and student health, community psychology and gender psychology. She is currently completing her research internship at the Unisa Institute for Social and Health Sciences.

Dr Marinda Pretorius is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Economics, College of Business and Economics, University of Johannesburg, South Africa. In her research, she focuses on various economic fields, including subjective well-being, sovereign credit ratings and forecasting methods of macroeconomic variables. Her current research is centred on subjective well-being issues of students and car guards. She has published in various national and international journals.

Ms Phiwokazi Qoza holds an MA in Political and International Studies, Rhodes University, South Africa. Her current research interest in pursuance of a doctorate is on the adaptation of Fourth Wave Feminism by young black women in Cape Town, South Africa, with performances which have been defined as 'Transactional Sex' as a case study to explore the many ways they manipulate, accept or reject the male gaze in their negotiation of the self between online personas and lived experience.

Dr Yasmin Rugbeer is the Director of Teaching and Learning at the University of Zululand, South Africa. Previously, she served as Director of the Vice-Chancellor's office at the same institution.

Dr Birgit Schreiber is a member of the Africa Centre for Transregional Research at the Alberts-Ludwig-Universität Freiburg, Germany, and the Vice-President of IASAS, the Executive Editorial for the *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa*, a consultant for Higher

Education Leadership and Management, and for Stellenbosch University, where she is leading the Secretariat for the International Network for Town and Gown Universities. Prior to this, she was the Senior Director of Student Affairs at Stellenbosch University and the Director of the Centre for Student Support Services at the University of the Western Cape (UWC) in Cape Town. She holds a PhD from UWC. Birgit has published in national and international academic journals and books on student support and development, has presented research papers and keynotes in national and international conferences, and has given lectures at UC Berkley, the University of Leuven, and the University of Oslo. She was a visiting scholar at the UC Berkeley, where she was involved in their Student Affairs department. She has been a member of the national executive of various professional organisations, including the South African Association of Senior Student Affairs Professionals (SAASSAP), and the Southern African Federation of Student Affairs and Services (SAFSAS).

Dr Tshimangadzo Daniel Sikhwari is a former Senior Educational Development Practitioner in the Centre for Higher Education Teaching and Learning (CHETL) at the University of Venda, South Africa. He joined this institution in 1998 after serving for almost 20 years as a teacher in several secondary schools. He holds a master's in Psychology of Education from the University of South Africa (Unisa) and a PhD in Educational Psychology from the University of Johannesburg. He has worked for almost 20 years at the University of Venda as career counsellor, academic developer, researcher, and supervisor of postgraduate studies. He has authored and co authored more than 18 manuscripts published in reputable national and international journals, as well as research reports, and has presented and co presented papers at national and international conferences. Dr Sikhwari has retired from the University of Venda and is currently working as an independent Researcher and external supervisor of postgraduate studies at Unisa. His areas of research interest include teaching and learning, student academic development, career development, and academic performance in higher education.

Dr Christopher J. Stipeck is currently the Director of Residential Staff and Programs at New York University. He has 15 years of experience working in residential life and housing. His research includes measuring student outcomes and environments (including living–learning programmes), staff burnout, residential curriculum, and first-generation student support systems. He is also a reviewer of articles published in JSAA.

Mr Shawn Stützner has over 19 years of experience in developing expert support processes with students and adults dealing with conflict and complex thinking patterns. He holds a master's in Clinical Pastoral Care from Stellenbosch University. Specialising in HIV/AIDS, he assists in therapeutically improving the participation of disadvantaged individuals and groups of networks through a praxis of hope in promoting human dignity. Guiding learners and professionals struggling with inappropriate worldviews, behaviour and attitudes, he takes a restorative approach towards purposefulness and responsible living

regarding norms and values. His recourses provide successful care, integration, mentoring, transformation, evaluative planning, emotional management, stress control and guiding well being amongst students and adults. He coordinates campus dialogues, providing initiatives related to social justice, social cohesion and social inclusion. Additionally, his dialogic engagement focuses specifically on symbols, systems, traditions, and patterns of behaviour as they relate to engagement amongst higher education students and companies from diverse social, cultural, political and economic backgrounds. Furthermore, he deals with complex diverse processes as they relate to stereotypes held amongst African tribal clashes, issues of identity, racism, cultural and religious diversity, gender issues, academic exclusion, and food insecurities. He has extensive experience in addressing health, well being, and quality of life in church organisations, companies, universities and therapeutic settings.

Dr Chinaza Uleanya is a Postdoctoral Fellow and Researcher in the Department of Educational Management and Leadership at the University of Johannesburg, South Africa. He obtained his doctoral degree from the University of Zululand, South Africa.

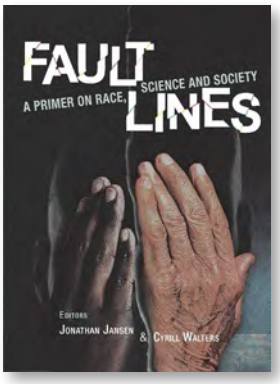
Ms Fezile Wagner is a Researcher in the Analytics and Institutional Research Unit at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), South Africa. She holds a BSc Hons (Microbiology), a BA Hons (Development Studies), an MAgr (Food Security), and is currently pursuing a PhD in Public Health. She has experience in leading research projects in the fields of food security, student success, higher education and mental health. Her research has culminated in both local and international peer-reviewed journal publications and presentations at national and international conferences. Fezile is currently a co-investigator on several active grants.

Thank you to our reviewers

The *JSAA* Editorial Executive wishes to thank the peer reviewers of Volume 7 of the *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa* for their time and expertise in evaluating and helping to select and improve the submissions received:

Jon Braddy
Luc Chicoine
Adam Cooper
Tony Crawthon
Liezl Dick
Natalie Dixon
Johan Groenewald
Denver Hendricks
Billy Huff
Catherine Hutchings
Shose Kessi
Delia Layton
Mike Louw
Henry Mason
Allen McFarlane
Taabo Mugume
Marguerite Muller
Thando Njovane
Adesoji Oni
Finzi Saidi
Birgit Schreiber
Maurice Shirley
Alta Steenkamp
Chitja Twala
Susan van Schalkwyk
Roelof van Wyk
W.P. Wahl
Lise Westaway
Christian Williams

Publications by AFRICAN SUN MeDIA



Fault Lines: A primer on race, science and society
by Jonathan Jansen & Cyrill Walters (Eds.) (2020)

What is the link, if any, between race and disease? How did the term *baster* as 'mixed race' come to be mistranslated from 'incest' in the Hebrew Bible? What are the roots of racial thinking in South African universities? How does music fall on the ear of black and white listeners? Are new developments in genetics simply a backdoor for the return of eugenics? For the first time, leading scholars in South Africa from different disciplines take on some of these difficult questions about race, science and society in the aftermath of apartheid. This book offers an important foundation for students pursuing a broader education than what a typical degree provides, and a must-read resource for every citizen concerned about the lingering effects of race and racism in South Africa and other parts of the world.

ISBN 978-1-928480-48-8 R375 302 pages
ISBN 978-1-928480-49-5 R300 (e-book) DOI: 10.18820/9781928480495

Scholarly Engagement and Decolonisation: Views from South Africa, The Netherlands and the United States
by Maurice Crul, Liezl Dick, Halleh Ghorashi & Abel Valenzuela Jr. (Eds.) (2020)

Considering that one of the core tasks of academia is to provide social critique and reflection, universities have an undeniable role to formulate the contours of a more inclusive academia in contrast to visible and normalised structures of exclusion. Translating such ambitions into transformative practices seems to be easier said than done. The authors mirror the challenges and achievements of academics and practitioners in three national contexts, which could serve as a foundation for academia to move towards dismantling elitist and privileged-based assumptions, and formulating new forms of knowledge production and institutional policies, inside and outside academia.

ISBN 978-1-928314-56-1 R430 406 pages
ISBN 978-1-928314-57-8 R350 (e-book) DOI: 10.18820/9781928314578

AFRICAN SUN MeDIA is an integrated content manager and specialist supplier of publishing and printing services for the higher education market and the private sector. We publish under the imprints SUN PReSS, SUN MeDIA and SUNLiT. Most of our publications are available in electronic and print formats at:

orders@africansunmedia.co.za Amazon Kindle & Paperback
africansunmedia.store.it.si (e-books) Google Books | Takealot | Facebook

Visit www.africansunmedia.co.za for more information.

Submissions

Please register as an author and read the Author Guidelines at https://www.journals.ac.za/index.php/jsaa/about. Submissions must be made by email to the Journal Manager, Ms Maretha Joyce, at mjoyce@sun.ac.za. Submissions in response to special calls for papers must also be made directly to the guest editors concerned (see Call for Papers).

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. student lifecycle, orientation, 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 ethical requirements of social research have been considered and fully complied with.
2. 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).
3. The submission file is in MS Word, OpenOffice, or RTF document file format.
4. 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.
5. The text adheres to the stylistic and bibliographic requirements outlined on the Journal's website.
6. The Journal uses the APA author–date referencing system.
7. If submitting to a peer-reviewed section of the Journal, i.e. as a research article or reflective practioner account, the instructions in Ensuring a Blind Peer Review must have been followed.
8. If submitting a proposal for the Dialogue section, a Call/Notice, or a Comment/Critique, this should be emailed directly to the Journal Manager.

9. The final text of the article has been professionally edited and proofread prior to submission.
10. 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.
11. Permission to reproduce any copyrighted material has been obtained and can be produced should this be requested by the Editorial Excecutive.

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 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 and adherence to the requirements of ethical social research, scope and interest, and accessibility.

Publishing and dissemination policies

Cost of publishing
There are no processing fees or page fees. No costs accrue to authors of articles accepted for publication.

Licensing notice
Authors who publish with this Journal agree to the following terms:

Authors retain copyright and grant the Journal right of first publication with the work simultaneously licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution License that allows others to share the work with an acknowledgement of the work's authorship and initial publication in this Journal.

Authors are able to enter into separate, additional contractual arrangements for the non-exclusive distribution of the Journal's published version of the work (e.g. post it to an institutional repository or publish it in a book), with an acknowledgement of its initial publication in this Journal.

Authors are permitted and encouraged to post their work online (e.g. in online research repositories or on their website), as it can lead to productive exchanges, as well as earlier and greater citation of published work.

Open access policy
This Journal provides open access to its e-journal content. Free copies can be downloaded from the Journal website at http://www.jsaa.ac.za, and from co-hosting sites e.g. http://ajol.info. Authors are encouraged to place copies of their final articles in their institution's research repository.

Print copies/subscription

- Online subscriptions to the e-journal are free of charge. Please register at https://www.journals.ac.za/index.php/jsaa/index.
- Printed copies of past issues of the Journal (Vol. 1 to Vol. 4(1)) can be ordered from the following online bookstores: African Books Collective http://www.africanbookscollective.com/; Amazon Books http://www.amazon.com or directly from African Minds http://www.africanminds.co.za.
- Printed copies from Vol. 4(2) and following can be ordered directly from African Sun Media at orders@africansunmedia.co.za.

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.

AFRICAN SUN MEDIA
UNIVERSITEIT STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY
OPEN ACCESS

ISSN 2311-1771 (print)
ISSN 2307-6267 (electronic)