

Implementing Effective Strategies to Improve Teaching and Learning in Higher Education: Balancing the Engagement Acts between Lecturers And Students

Authors : Jeffrey Sipiwe Mkhize

Abstract : Twelve years of schooling for most South African children, particularly those children from disadvantaged past, are confronted with numerous and diverse challenges. These challenges range from infrastructural limitations, language of teaching, poor resources and varying family backgrounds. Likewise, schools are categorized to signify schools' geographic location, poverty lines, societal class and type of students that the school are likely to enroll. Such categorization perpetuates particular lines of identities that are indirectly reinforced by the same system that seeks to redress. South African universities prefer point systems to determine students' suitability to gain access to their programmes. Once students are admitted based on the qualifying points there is an assumed equity in the manner in which they receive tuition. They are assumed as equal; noting the widened access to South African universities as means to redress past inequalities. Given the challenges, inequalities, it is necessary to view higher education as a site for knowledge construction that is accessible to all students. Epistemological access is key to all students irrespective of their socio-economic status. This paper seeks to contribute to the discourse of student engagement using lecturer-student relationship as a lens to understand this phenomenon. Data were generated using South African Survey of Student Engagement, focus group interviews, semi-structured one-on-one-interviews as well as document analysis. The focus was on students registered for the first year of a Bachelor of Education degree as well as lecturers that teach high risk modules in this qualification at the same level. The findings suggest that lecturers are challenged by overcrowded classrooms and over-enrolled modules; this challenge hampers their good intentions to become more efficient and innovative in their teaching. Students lack confidence in approaching lecturers for assistance. Collaborative learning has stronger results and students believe in self-support to deal with their challenges based on their individual strengths. Collaborative learning is key to student academic performance.

Keywords : collaborative learning, consultations, student engagement, student performance

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