

The D(d)iscourse on student drop-out and attrition in TVET in South Africa

by

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OUTLINE

- TVET drop-out - the big deal
- Literature on attrition and persistence
- Academic discourse on drop-out & retention
- Student views on retention and persistence
- Lecturer(s) as retention factor ('D' and 'd')

STATE OF TVET RESEARCH

College effectiveness

- Lecturers
 - Development of knowledge and skills
 - Mentoring
 - Qualifications & TPD
 - Industry based WIL
- Programmes
 - Tourism
- Students
 - Discipline
 - Success

TVET DROP-OUT - THE BIG DEAL

- NC(V) introduced 2006/2007 as 'as a major achievement of this sector' (SACPO, 2007)
- It was (RSA, 2006):
 - Outcomes-based
 - High knowledge, high skills based
 - Includes integrated and applied competences
 - Has progression, articulation and portability
 - Contributes towards social transformation, human rights, inclusivity, environmental & social justice
- Response (Papier (2009); Maharaj (2008)):
 - Disappointment
 - Lack of acceptance
 - Systemic difficulties
 - Unacceptably high failure rates
- High failure rates in other TVET programmes
- High failure rates common in voluntary education

LITERATURE ON ATTRITION AND PERSISTENCE

- Early departure - act of leaving before successful completion, drop-out/attrition - rate of early departure
- Persistence & retention - opposite of attrition
- Attrition is common in initial post-compulsory education
- Ripple effect of retention/attrition
 - Employment
 - Income
 - Credibility (personal, institutional)
 - Economy
 - Social welfare
- There is a link between student socio-economic welfare and success
- Common factors
 - Availability of finance
 - Social environment
 - Pressure (peer, family)
 - Individual goals
- Lecturers 'are not just lecturers, we are social workers, we are policemen and women, we are bankers ... we don't just lecture, I don't just teach'

ACADEMIC DISCOURSE ON DROP-OUT & RETENTION

Psychological

- Cognitive inability

Social

- Origins - Spady - correlation between suicide and drop-out
- Integration - Tinto (SIM)
 - Effective integration (Separation, transition, integration)
- Formation - Bean (SAM)
 - Success factors (background, organisation, environment, attitude)

STUDENT VIEWS ON RETENTION AND PERSISTENCE

- Inclusion (registration, programme, classroom)
 - Registration not a positive experience, but tempered by intention
 - ‘No-where else to go’
 - ‘Wanted to be a builder’
- Student support services
 - Students did not like speaking about personal support
 - Students spoke at length about general services
- Factors beyond student control
 - Stipends ‘used to support my family’
- Other opportunities
 - Grade 12 + NC(V) L2 gained access to UOT
- Lecturers ‘going the extra mile’

LECTURER(S) AS RETENTION FACTOR (D)

- Make lecturers aware of attrition and retention factors
- Develop and empower lecturers to be the first line of intervention
- Tinto (attributes of classroom success)
 - Expectations of teachers
 - Classroom-based support mechanism
 - Student engagement
- Other studies (Canada, Romania, South Africa)
 - Being a 'good teacher'
 - Relationships
 - Passion
 - Willingness
 - High expectations
 - Going 'above and beyond'

LECTURER(S) AS RETENTION FACTOR (d)

- List variables that influenced their programme completion in order of importance
 - Teaching quality
 - Friendly teachers
 - Social interaction
 - Friends
- ‘Teaching style helps me understand the curriculum content in relation to real world context’
- ‘I would seek assistance from one specific subject teacher who has always played an encouraging and supportive role’
- ‘For academic and personal support, I have specific teachers who have assisted me since enrolment’

THANK YOU