

Attainment of students from diverse ethnic backgrounds: an institutional case study

Work in progress

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Structure of session

- Background
- Method
- Phases
- Research questions
- Findings
- Discussion
 - issues raised
 - student centred factors
 - teacher centred factors

Background

This case is a highly ethnically diverse institution with a mission to “promote participation” and “strive for excellence in learning and teaching”

1. In the light of concerns over the attainment of students from black and minority ethnic (BME) backgrounds
2. Ongoing project at one university to explore connections between learning and teaching strategies and the retention, progression and attainment of BME students.
3. Project conducted by external body (IPSE)
4. Data from student records, an online survey of second year students, and interviews with teaching staff.

Rationale

There is strong evidence to suggest that it is their experience of learning and teaching that has the greatest impact on the progression and achievement of students.

It is therefore imperative that learning and teaching at KU reflects the needs of students across ethnic backgrounds.

Aim

To provide evidence in relation to specific institutional Learning and Teaching Strategic Assessment goals to enable Faculties and the Academic Development Learning and Teaching team to instigate measures to raise the progression and attainment of BME students.

Method

- Produce a detailed analysis of undergraduate student records in relation to attainment and ethnicity
- Analyse data from an online student experience survey with second year undergraduates in relation to ethnicity
- Explore staff perceptions of issues of ethnicity and attainment in relation to the University's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy.
- Report and discuss the above findings, placing them in the context of related previous research.

Management

- University priority, Internally funded by ADC, Supported by HEPP
- Project specification put out to tender
- Overseen by steering group consisting of:
 - DVC (Chair)
 - Director of ADC
 - Head of L&T
 - Head of Equality and Diversity
 - Head of WP
 - HEPP manager
 - Faculty Reps x2
 - Project leader

Issues

- inter-relationships between students' social and cultural identities and institutional cultures and practices.
- integration (Tinto 2002) and 'belonging' (Read, Archer et al. 2003; Stuart, Lido et al. 2009)
- BME isolation in HE (Connor et al)
- BME choice of university influenced by a desire to be in a culturally diverse institution (Reay, Davies et al. 2001; Archer, Hutchings et al. 2003).
- The importance of the presence of BME staff (Bird 1996; Connor, Tyers et al. 2004)

More Issues

- Black students less likely to benefit from strong social networks (Stuart, Lido et al. 2009).
- Type of assessment may impact on the differential levels of attainment of BME students
- Minority ethnic groups tend to report lower levels of satisfaction with teaching and learning than majority White students
- Recent Equality legislation reinforces the importance not only of developing robust institutional policies, but also of assessing the impact of institutional policy and practice on different groups.

Method – 4 phases

Phase 1: *Profiles* Detailed analysis of undergraduate student records will be carried out to address the questions:

1. What are the differences in performance/success between ethnic groups at KU for individual subjects and courses?
2. Does the relative performance of BME and White students depend on assessment types?
3. Is the pattern of student progression between levels different across ethnic groups?

Phase 1

4. Does anonymised marking of assessments affect the difference in attainment between BME and White group?
5. Is the pattern of BME progression different between traditional and non traditional entrant indicators - such as socio economic class?
6. Is bilingualism a factor for student progression and attainment?
7. Is take up of a personal tutor (named member of academic staff) a factor in the differential progression and attainment of BME and White students?

Phase 2: *Student experience*

Quantitative and qualitative data have been collect from an online student experience survey with second year undergraduates. This data-set, of some 790 respondents, will be analysed to address the questions.

Does the response rate and satisfaction with the learning and teaching experience differ significantly between ethnic groups?

Does satisfaction with the learning and teaching experience of students relate to their progression and attainment differently depending on ethnic background?

Does analysis of the respondent comments indicate differences between BME and White students in perceptions and attitudes to learning and teaching?

Does the data-set enable us to identify those students most 'at potential risk' in their third year so that their progress can be closely monitored and support targeted?

Phase 3

The views of staff from the Science and Business & Law faculties will be obtained through a series of structured interviews in which the LTAS goals will be discussed in relation to the challenges, issues and rewards experienced in teaching ethnically diverse students. In particular,

- How aware are staff at senior and other levels of what the data reveal?
- What actions are taken at Faculty management levels to address any perceived problems?
- What do individual staff and course teams do to help students stay committed and succeed in their study?
- What specific practices do staff use to help promote the learning of BME students retain them?
- What institutional factors impact on the way staff teach and interact with ethnically diverse groups?