

Inspirational session 21

Session's theme: Supporting student learning

Paper number: 8

Presenters: Vesa Korhonen, Mira Valkonen

Presenters' Organisation: School of Education, University of Tampere

Session's chair: To be announced later.

Session title: Student engagement and identity

Abstract:

The start and fluency of university studies can be examined from different versatile perspectives. One point of view is the engagement approach which has been internationally researched and discussed for a long both theoretically and empirically (Tinto, 1975; 2000; Kuh, 2001; Langley, 2006; Leach & Zepke, 2011). Also in Finland there have been openings to engagement related research and discussion (Mäkinen & Annala, 2011; Korhonen, 2012).

Korhonen has developed a specific engagement model for evaluation and guidance improvement purposes in higher education (see Korhonen, 2012; Poutanen et. al 2012), where the student engagement can be examined through three important and intertwined matters in the learning process: how sense of belonging to the studying field is experienced, how participation in the learning communities takes place and how necessary academic skills needed in the academic teaching-learning communities are learned and managed. Important corner stone is also the student s developing learning identity (see Wortham, 2006).

In this presentation, we examine with the engagement model how the transition to a university student is performed and how the start of studies is experienced at generalist educational fields. The study is a case study conducted in the Schools of Education and Information Sciences at the University of Tampere in 2012-13 as a part of the Campus Conexus project.

The data is collected in two phases, at first, with an online self-evaluation questionnaire (n=58) to the participants of six tutoring groups, and next, continuing with interviews (n=7) to the first year students in education. With the questionnaire first year students engagement orientations and perceptions of academic teaching and learning environments are discussed. Based on the interviews, the personal engagement experiences and challenges are examined in more detail.

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Session's theme: Supporting student learning

Paper number: 12

Presenters: Hanni Muukkonen, Mikko Inkinen, Kai Hakkarainen, Katariina Salmela-Aro, Kirsti Lonka

Presenters' Organisation: University of Helsinki

Session's chair: To be announced later.

Session title: Students' daily activities and contextual affects

Abstract:

The challenges and demands of the first university years typically include the adoption of a student role and the building of relationships with fellow students (e.g., Grob et al., 2001; Salmela-Aro, 2009). Furthermore, acculturation into the academic contexts and practices poses demands on both intellectual and self-regulatory abilities.

The purpose of the study is to examine the actual activities of first-year higher education students, and to determine what kinds of socio-emotional experiences are associated with their activities. The Contextual Activity Sampling System (CASS) research methodology and the CASS-Query mobile application have been developed for contextually tracking of participants' activities. The method relies on Ecological Momentary Assessment designed to trace real-time advancement of learning activities by frequent sampling.

75 students from 3 universities took part in a two-week follow-up, with 5 queries per days, resulting in c. 3000 responses. Students rated their positive and negative emotions, absorption, challenge, competence, and commitment, and provided an explanation of their doing at that moment. The doing responses were qualitatively categorized (Kappa .87) and examined in relation to the meaningfulness and affect variables.

The studying contexts were experienced as very challenging while competence was not very high. This can be translated to a feeling of anxiety (Csikszentmihalyi, 1995; Delle Fave & Massimini, 2005), reflecting the high demands first-year students appear to experience in higher education. On the other hand, students also reported high commitment, absorption, interest, and determination, which is likely to support them through studying tasks.

Collaborative learning generated higher levels of commitment, interest, and absorption compared to other studying activities. The results support prior findings that sporting and leisure hobbies as well as interaction have an important positive influence on well-being.