



Using PTEEP scores to restructure an extended degree programme

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The case study

- University of JHB, class of 2007 and 2008
- Extended degree science students.
- Multiracial, multicultural and mixed gender.
- Poor matric results, relative to university “norms”

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However...

- Represent the elite of the SA school system – passed matric maths and science HG.
- Issues of transformation.
- National skills shortage.
- THEREFORE: granted access – but what about success??

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Through put and first year failure

- A national priority.
- All universities are grappling with this issue.
- Funding, ethical dilemmas and underprepared students.
- Nationally first year failure is at least 30%, some have recorded up to 77%.

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Aims of the study:

- (1) To ascertain what are reliable predictors of success?
- (2) To determine if the extended intervention was positive i.e. successful.
- (3) Could PTEEP be used to inform teaching and learning?

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Predictors of success: 2 choices

- (1) Matriculation English scores and (2) PTEEP

WHY:

Language is a barrier to learning (Cottrell, 2001)

Language enables deep learning (Cummins, 1996, Zamel, 1998 and Biggs, 2003).

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Placement Test in English for Educational Purposes (PTEEP) of UCT



- To widen access – id students who can cope at university or who need additional support if admitted.
- De Groot (2003): PTEEP as a better predictor of success than matric English.
- Valid predictor of success at UCT.

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Findings



- 2007 study showed PTEEP to be a reliable predictor of success. Especially for students exiting well resourced high schools with English as the medium of instruction.
- All students with a PTEEP English score of over 60% passed.

Findings: Predictions of PTEEP in 2007



- Pre intervention PTEEP mean was 46.19%.
- Geography term 1 results, mean: 44.81%
- June exam: 47.67%
- November exam: 51.2%
- Year: 55.4%
- Final: 53.5% (calculated on a 50:50)
- Post intervention PTEEP: 56%

Findings



- 2007 use of PTEEP as a baseline assessment tool demonstrated that the extended joint LFS/Geography intervention was successful.
- Increase in PTEEP test scores post intervention, especially for ESL students from township schools.

Pre and post intervention scores, 2007



- Mean pre intervention PTEEP was 46.19%.
- Mean post intervention PTEEP was 56%.
- Most improvement was with ESL students:
- Females: 46.3 % to 54.5%
- Males: 34.9% to 51.2%

Beneficiaries:



- Overall, ESL students improved from 38.7% to 52.8%.
- Overall, EFL students improved from 56.7% to 60.2%:
- EFL Males from 43.3% to 55.63%
- EFL Females from 52.7% to 56.61%

The intervention:



- Integrated language and academic course.
- Study manual (not textbook).
- Extended time for assessment
- Team teaching with AD.
- Small classes
- Extended time and additional support (tutors and writing consultant)
- Student centred approach
- Overt teaching of academic skills.

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ESL students



- Hail from disadvantaged schools and lack language proficiency, as well as argumentative skills and study skills.
- ESL students all performed very poorly initially in PTEEP.
- Weak correlation between PTEEP scores and academic scores for Geog due to intervention

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Analysis



- Matric EFL appears to be a reliable indicator of success, but with a caveat (motivation).
- Matric ESL clearly lack language proficiency.
- Discrepancy of 20% between matric scores and PTEEP for ESL students.
- Academic performance is still strongly correlated with language proficiency DESPITE the intervention.

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EFL students



- They have the language proficiency and perform well in PTEEP (although scores are lower than for matric).
- But some demonstrate a surface approach to learning.
- Additionally, individual motivation appears to be a crucial factor.

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Gender issues



- On the surface, gender does not matter, but:
- Female students outperformed males on PTEEP and in Geography.
- Female ESL students benefitted the most from the intervention.
- Outperformed their PTEEP from the beginning.
- Were able to adopt a deep approach quicker?

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Does race matter?



- UJ is unique – extended degree is not a ghetto course only for PDIs.
- On the surface, it looks as if race does matter – but not if PTEEP is used.
- PDIs coming from ex-Model C schools perform on par with, or outperform white students.

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School matters!!



- Students entering university from well resourced schools with EFL are at a significant advantage over those who write ESL and hail from a poorly resourced school.
- Thus: PTEEP scores are an indicator of preparedness for university.

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What about motivation?



- Motivation matters. Students who perform well on PTEEP but who are not interested in science or geography simply do not achieve success:
- Poor class attendance, failure to submit work, poor standard of work (passive resistance!)

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So who are the high risk students?



- Students from poorly resourced schools in general due to language deficiencies.
- Black male students from these schools in particular due to the extra time needed to develop a deep approach to learning.
- EFL students with surface approach and lack of motivation

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Also high risk:



- Poor career choice students who lack motivation in the discipline.
- Thus: Career guidance is a cost that universities and parents simply cannot afford to not afford!!
- Target those who perform well in PTEEP.

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Conclusion of 2007 study



- Extended degrees certainly help PDIs achieve access and success.
- One year is insufficient as the deficit is great, PTEEP scores demonstrate this.
- PTEEP allows us to identify class issues not just race in terms of transformation.
- And we should look at 'class apartheid'
- PTEEP a better predictor than matric English

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Way Forward: 2008



- Can quickly ID at risk students from PTEEP scores and focus on them.
- Motivation (esp with EFL students.)
- Tackle the surface approach to learning.
- Even more contact time: Tutors and writing consultants time formalised.
- Scaffolded assignments and examination support.

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2008 restructuring: Writing



- 2 hour weekly writing classes run by a Geog graduate who was training in teaching academic writing skills.
- Used the content from the Geog to scaffold skills.
- Linked writing class activities to assignments.

2008 restructuring: Peer teaching



- Timetabled 2 one hour tuts per week for whole year.
- Tutor is post-grad Geog student.
- Assists with assignments, takes content to greater depth, actively engage with material.

2008 restructuring: Drafting



- All students must submit 2 drafts of assignments.
- Get academic writing feedback, addressing the question/s; logic, cohesiveness etc.
- Use this feedback to redraft and resubmit.

2008 restructuring: Assessment



- Assessment: as transparent as possible e.g. use of rubrics.
- Assessment time increased e.g. 2 hours for tests, not 1. 3 hours for exams not 2.
- Study and test writing skills taught throughout the year.
- Supp June exam for those who failed.
- June exam downgraded to a test. Counts less (weighting) and can be returned to students for discussion and as a teaching tool.

2008 restructuring: Mentoring



- Extensive mentoring by lecturer
- Follow up on absenteeism.
- Sms students.
- Encourage personal contact.
- Know each student.

2008 restructuring: Additional teaching time



- Geog "clinic" in the July holidays (free):
- By "invitation only" (weakest students, ID via PTEEP).
 - Handwriting
 - Grammar
 - Study skills
 - Motivation
 - Reading
 - Writing
 - Use Geog content

To date:



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- Only 2 students do not have a pass mark for mid year.
 - Once again, no student with 60% or more for PTEEP has failed.
 - Overt targeting of the black male township students is successful. They have significantly outperformed their PTEEP scores.
 - Motivation is still an issue – students with good PTEEP who fail or do not perform well.