

## Articulating the gap between school and university

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## Introduction

- This paper is the result of a study on the *Dental Technology Extended First Year Programme (EFYP)* undertaken for a Masters in Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.
- The study found that:
  - learner access was widened
  - learners were successfully able to be integrated into the milieu of tertiary education



## What is Dental Technology?

- Dental Technology as a profession is concerned with the manufacture of oral and facial prostheses



## The EFYP

- Has been offered since 1995.
- Since 2004/2005 it has received DoE foundation provision funding when it became known as the EFYP.
- Participants have been placed on the EFYP because they have been identified as having the necessary academic potential for success.
- The EFYP is successful and its value identified in an external audit of foundation provision conducted at DUT in 2007.



## The Model

- Keep it simple
- Do not build the programme around the personalities of individual staff
- Obtain collective staff buy-in
- Keep the size of the programme manageable



## Success - a holistic approach

- Identify the needs for your specific programme .
- These needs include:
  - Relevant and realistic academic inputs
  - Any discipline specific supplemental skills
  - Making the learner happy in his/her learning environment
  - Being prepared to work hard to achieve your objectives.



## The gap between academic literacy practices at school and those expected at universities

- The manner that learners from disadvantaged backgrounds are taught and the results thereof has been well documented in the literature.
- *with the black schools is more like they give you, they spoon feed you what you should know – not that you go out there and find out and resource different materials for your studies.* (African lecturer, Personal communication 2007)

## The gap (2)

- The difficulty of teaching under prepared learners is that they perceive their education to be have been good.
  - *The students come in with this false sense of security that they are actually competent people, competent learners, um, the challenge for me is making them competent in terms of being responsible and accountable.*

(Lecturer, personal communication 2007)

## Gap (3)

- Dental Technology requires learners to learn a new and very foreign nomenclature.
- If literacy practice development is integrated with the acquisition of discipline specific nomenclature, significant learning occurs.
- *Ja, that subject [academic literacy] was very helpful because we get to like, act as a lecturer, be in front of the students, tell – educate the educators – I mean students about what is going on in dental technology and everything*

## Gap (4)

- Mutual collaborative learning in partnership with the academic literacy lecturer occurs.
- *Because that subject [academic literacy], you know, as a whole, put everything together for you. We were kind of like given that – the lecturer she's not with dental but we learnt from us, so from the little knowledge that we had from tooth morphology and stuff, we'll pitch it back to her so in a way, we kind of like, it's like helping us understand our work much better, because in academic literacy we worked as a class, as a group so we had presentations, we had communication skills, those kind of things.*

## Gap (5)

- academic literacy contributes significantly to helping learners manage their time.
- also serve a medium whereby a general understanding of the tertiary environment is understood and appreciated.
- *In that course the lecturer gets to tell us how do our assignments, how to adjust, how to manage our time as foundation students and just, we talk about most of everything, like if we have programmes maybe that she can help us with.*

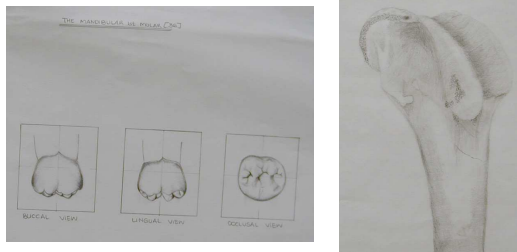
## Gap (6)

- Drawing has been identified as a skill which adds in the understanding of the practice of Dental Technology.
- Learners with no formal drawing skills are taught to draw.



At the beginning I couldn't even draw like a spider.

### Gap (7) - Technical drawing related to the programme.



### Gap (8)

- Learners relate, see value and appreciate subjects that add value to their academic life beyond their foundation year.
- I was kind of like given that artistic knowledge to know, to help me in a way that now when I do crown and bridge, like two years later, I still have that knowledge*

### Gap (8)

- The benefits of foundation provision is far greater when the course content is immediate and directly related and thus relevant to the qualification that they have registered for (McKenna, 2004; Warren, 1998).
- It was kind of like a stepping stone for me in dental skills, dental technology skills, so at first I was a bit hesitant but then....*

### Gap (9)

- Learners embrace the exposure to those foundation subjects which they believe they benefit from. Computer literacy is one such example.
- In computers I got distinction. But it was my first time doing the computer here in the tertiary side – I got distinction – so it's very easy to – it made my life easy learning those subjects such as computer*

### Social integration into the academic environment

- One of the indicators of poor performance of learners in tertiary education can be attributed to the fact that they have “no experience in the milieu of tertiary education” (Martin, cited in Martin, Blanc & Arendale, 1994:95).

### Social integration (2)

- The benefits that accrue from mentorship programmes are well documented (Please paper for references).
- Mentoring plays an important role in the Department of Dental Sciences' efforts to integrate EFYP learners into the programme and into the tertiary environment.

### Social integration (3)

- Mentoring is considered vital to the integration of learners.
- We have found that the benefits of mentoring are significant and should be considered, within the context of higher education, as a vehicle to improve learner performance.

### Social integration (4)

- *At-risk learners often find it easier to relate to their peers rather than to the traditional university systems (McKavanagh, cited in Clulow & Brennan, 1998).*
- *The mentorship programme. It is really helpful. There are some of the things that you could like tell your peer, somebody or a mentor and there is stuff that you can't really go to your lecturer and talk to.*

### Social integration (5)

- Another learner had this to say
- *Sometimes it's very hard to approach a lecturer, especially being new, in the new tertiary environment, and stuff. You find it easier to talk to your peers rather than your lecturers, ja, somebody who can actually relate to what you're going through, who understands what you're going through*

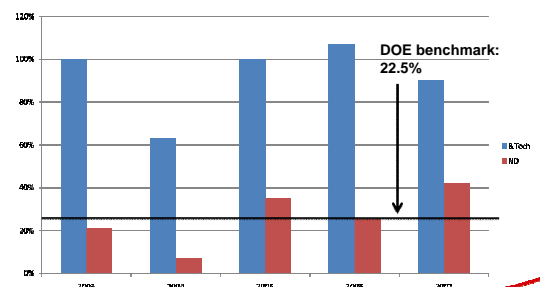
### Social integration (6)

- Mentors often challenge learners to perform academically.
- *they [mentors] want to know how you're doing to work with your pracs and they do it every day, there's no way that you can tell them that no, I'm doing well.*

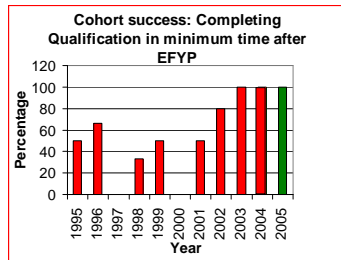
### Should all learners attend programmes that look holistically at learner integration?

- The projected national average throughput rate for 2007 was 16%
- DUT - 19%
- The DoE benchmark graduation rate is 22.5%.

### Graduation rates Dental Technology



## Success after completing the EFYP



## Success of the EFYP

- The integrated approach of teaching on the EFYP appears to have been universally recognised.

- Some of them wish that they were [EFYP learners] – *that it is unfair that they are not associated with the mainstream [learners] whereas we have this background of EFY so they think it would have been better for them to enter the EFY first and then come to the mainstream.*

## Success of the EFYP

- New mainstream learners turn to EFYP for help.
- Actually they came up to me for help most of the time because I've done some of the practical work.*

## Conclusion

- A holistic approach to integration of learners into the milieu of tertiary education coupled with a well defined academic programme with specific emphasis to the Dental Technology programme was primarily responsible for learner success.

## Success factors include (1):

- Introducing academic literacy as a compulsory component of at least one subject so that learners can be inducted into reading, writing and other practices expected of them in their particular discipline. This allows for a discipline-specific space in the curriculum where the expectations of the programme can be overtly developed.

## Success factors include (2 & 3):

- Foundation provision must offer subjects that empower learners with skills that are needed for their particular qualification. An example is *Dental Drawings and Carvings*, which is designed to improve manual dexterity skills in Dental Technology.
- Peer mentorship programmes.

## Other significant factors

- Teaching the EFYP in there own dedicated teaching venue
- A dedicated EFYP lecturer



**Thank you for your time and  
patience.**

## • References:

- ☺ For a complete list of references please refer to the paper as they appears on the conference CD.