

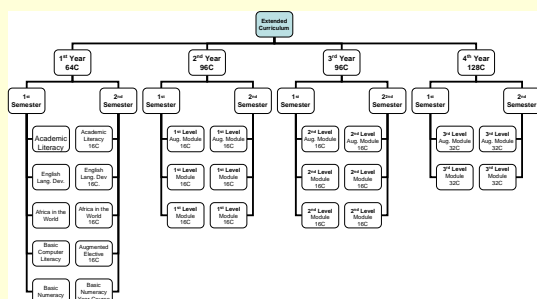
Echoes from the coalface: A quantitative and qualitative reflection on extended tutorials in the Humanities at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

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Introduction and Background

- On errant titles and ambitious content...
- What is the extended curriculum?

Degree Structure



Methodology

- Triangulation
- Quantitative - comparative data from 1351 + 53 students across seven disciplines
- Qualitative – 21 semi-structured interviews

Findings – Discipline 1

ETHS101: Applied Global Ethics
Mainstream students: 147
Extended curriculum students: 6
Discarded cases: 25
Total registered Students: 178

Pass rate		
Group	N	%
Mainstream	145	98.0%
Extended curriculum	6	100%

Assessment type	Group	Avg. Mark (%)	Mark	Difference (%)	Sig.	Avg. Z-score
Essay	Mainstream	63.36		+4.18	.842	-.0032736
	Ext. Curriculum	67.34				.0602021
Tutorials	Mainstream	68.50		+2.84	.639	-.0075048
	Ext. Curriculum	71.34				.1867685
Test	Mainstream	46.75		-0.08	.989	.0002271
	Ext. Curriculum	46.67				-.0055631
Classmark	Mainstream	58.18		-2.49	.323	-.0162080
	Ext. Curriculum	61.67				-.3079950
Exam mark	Mainstream	68.91		-0.09	.976	-.0004958
	Ext. Curriculum	69.00				.0120971
Course mark	Mainstream	65.44		-1.23	.650	-.0074456
	Ext. Curriculum	66.67				.1824179

Findings – Discipline 2

MECS101: Writing and the Media
Mainstream students: 148
Extended curriculum students: 12
Discarded cases: 11
Total registered Students: 171

Pass rate		
Group	N	%
Mainstream	136	91.9%
Extended curriculum	12	100%

Assessment type	Group	Avg. Mark (%)	Difference (%)	Sig.	Avg. Z-score
Classmark	Mainstream	65.05	+0.29	.919	-.0022866
	Ext. Curriculum	65.34			.0282011
Exam mark	Mainstream	58.41	-3.99	.257	.0255638
	Ext. Curriculum	54.42			-.3152865
Course mark	Mainstream	61.76	-1.84	.522	.0144647
	Ext. Curriculum	59.92			-.1783976

Findings – Discipline 4

PSYC101: Introduction to Psychology A

Mainstream students: 370
Extended curriculum students: 10
Discarded cases: 6
Total registered Students: 386

Pass rate		
Group	N	%
Mainstream	275	74.3%
Extended curriculum	9	90%

Assessment type	Group	Avg. Mark (%)	Difference (%)	Sig.	Avg. Z-score
Classmark	Mainstream	69.8730	+2.02703	.644	-.0039042
	Ext. Curriculum	71.9000			.1444556
Exam mark	Mainstream	47.4838	+2.11622	.656	-.0037603
	Ext. Curriculum	49.6000			.1391307
Course mark	Mainstream	56.4730	+2.02703	.622	-.0041670
	Ext. Curriculum	58.5000			.1541800

* Statistically significant difference (p<0.05)

Findings – Discipline 5

SOCY101: Introduction to Sociology

Mainstream students: 201
Extended curriculum students: 20
Discarded cases: 15
Total registered Students: 236

Pass rate		
Group	N	%
Mainstream	161	80.1
Extended curriculum	20	100

Assessment type	Group	Avg. Mark (%)	Difference (%)	Sig.	Avg. Z-score
Tutorials	Mainstream	68.1960	+10.30100	.004*	-.0094807
	Ext. Curriculum	78.5000			.0095199
Test 1	Mainstream	61.7214	+13.97861	.006*	-.0368021
	Ext. Curriculum	61.7000			.0632115
Test 2	Mainstream	75.4627	+7.07731	.009*	-.0541361
	Ext. Curriculum	82.5000			.0439672
Essay	Mainstream	62.6460	+2.05223	.405	-.0777324
	Ext. Curriculum	64.7000			.1782507
Classmark	Mainstream	61.4956	+8.60438	.000**	-.0852364
	Ext. Curriculum	72.1000			.0582258
Exam mark	Mainstream	50.9165	+3.81648	.211	-.020342
	Ext. Curriculum	54.7330			.2049404
Course mark	Mainstream	57.2377	+6.24027	.004*	-.0083460
	Ext. Curriculum	63.5000			.0912012

* Statistically significant difference (p<0.05)

** Statistically significant difference (p<0.01)

Findings – Discipline 6

GEOG110: Human Environments

Mainstream students: 122
Extended curriculum students: 11
Discarded cases: 8
Total registered Students: 141

Pass rate		
Group	N	%
Mainstream	86	70.5%
Extended curriculum	8	72.7%

Assessment type	Group	Avg. Mark (%)	Difference (%)	Sig.	Avg. Z-score
Practicals	Mainstream	69.0820	+1.46349	.674	-.0109663
	Ext. Curriculum	70.5455			.1219585
Tests	Mainstream	56.3689	-6.64158	.128	.0396883
	Ext. Curriculum	49.7273			-.4401790
Essay	Mainstream	58.1967	+2.53055	.497	-.0177627
	Ext. Curriculum	60.7273			.1970042
Classmark	Mainstream	59.8115	-1.90238	.537	.0161569
	Ext. Curriculum	57.9091			-.1791944
Exam mark	Mainstream	49.8607	+0.04844	.991	-.0001060
	Ext. Curriculum	49.9091			.0033934
Course mark	Mainstream	55.1475	-0.78390	.810	.0062040
	Ext. Curriculum	54.3636			-.0699171

Findings – Discipline 7

LAWS11L: Introduction to Law

Mainstream students: 193
Extended curriculum students: 11
Discarded cases: 35
Total registered Students: 239

Pass rate		
Group	N	%
Mainstream	107	55.4%
Extended curriculum	10	90.9%

Assessment type	Group	Avg. Mark (%)	Difference (%)	Sig.	Avg. Z-score
Test 1	Mainstream	56.8705	+8.22044	.179	-.0234902
	Ext. Curriculum	65.0909			.2946015
Test 2	Mainstream	50.3886	+3.06594	.612	-.0085006
	Ext. Curriculum	53.4545			.1491464
Classmark	Mainstream	51.6974	+5.57532	.297	-.0174903
	Ext. Curriculum	59.2727			.3066750
Exam mark	Mainstream	46.7047	+4.65897	.386	-.0145369
	Ext. Curriculum	51.3636			.2550571
Course mark	Mainstream	50.3212	+5.22421	.300	-.0173683
	Ext. Curriculum	55.5455			.3047346

Qualitative Findings

- This data is drawn from the in-depth interviews with 21 access students. The data is broken in themes located under three broad categorisations:

- Tutorials
- Tutors
- Access identity and social capital

Tutorials – General thoughts

- Students were asked about what they thought generally about the extended tutorials.
- Responses exclusively positive.
- Tutorials as instrumental in interrogating the lectures and readings.
- Attributed to the small class sizes and individual attention with participatory, discursive communication peer to peer.

Excerpts – General thoughts on tutorials

- *"I think they came in handy because hmmm.... we had a special treatment; if you like you got a chance to ask questions. We didn't get intimidated by the crown where you can't even ask questions to the lecturer, so small classes were an advantage, yah (nods)."*
- *"I found them very helpful, because we got to engage in discussions in these tutorials. It was unlike the mainstream where you just given work to go do at home. Here we engaged in a lot of discussions which made us understand more."*
- *[T]he tutorials tried to make things easier for us, and we got to engage and participate a lot more in extended tutorials".*
- *"They were useful to me, because it was my first time being in the mainstream lectures and I was so scared [and] felt like deregistering. But came the extended tutorial and the tutors explained everything and it became easier."*

Tutorials – Extra time investment

- Students were asked what they thought of the extra burden of compulsory augmented tutorials.
- In general, they felt that these tutorials were worth the time investment due to the payback the received in the form of a better understanding of the discipline and the enjoyment.
- And (surprisingly) they were fun!

Excerpts – Extra time investment

- *"No, actually I didn't mind, I didn't mind because hmmm....I think the university is all about that and once you accept that it becomes a like a part of you, and you don't mind how much you have been given."*
- *"No, even though it was not for marks I still enjoyed it"*
- *"I did not mind because hmmm [...] the tuts were fun and I enjoyed them."*
- *"...if you look at it in terms of support you get, it was a lot but okay, yah and I didn't mind because it was useful."*

Tutorials – Usefulness

- Students were asked several questions to assess the perceived usefulness of the augmented tutorials for engaging with the discipline in terms of reading, writing and assessment as well as personal development.
- Responses indicate a high attribution of personal success and academic development to the augmented tutorials.
- Shows the usefulness of the tutorials in embedding the student into the discourse of the discipline and the university as a whole.

Excerpts – Usefulness

- *"Academically I'm better off than I think I would have been. Maybe I would have dropped out because I do not think I was prepared for mainstream at the time."*
- *"It improved the way I write my essays and the academic knowledge now is more than when I first came, so it helped."*
- *"I've gained a lot of confidence, just me as a person and about my potential academically."*
- *"Yes, they were very useful, because in most cases lecturers during the mainstream lectures used these big terms which were difficult to understand. So tutors in extended tutorials would explain them and help us understand, because there we got to ask questions."*

Tutorials – Participation

- Students were asked about how comfortable they felt participating in the extended tutorials.
- Responses show high levels of participatory engagement in tutorials
- Common citing of familiarity with peers, small class sizes and an encouraging environment.

Excerpts – Participation

- *"I was with the people that I was used to and secondly the tutor was encouraging and was very supporting and there was much respect among us, there was no opinion that was stupid and all that."*
- *"Yah, because we were a small group and most of us were friends. So it was not like mainstream where there were lots of people and you feel shy to talk."*
- *"... you know it's easy it's more like, you know, you get to understand each other as a very small family."*
- *"Yah, I felt very comfortable because, in these tutorials they gave us the discretion to be who we are"*

Tutors – Perceived knowledge

- Students were asked what they felt about the knowledge and capabilities of their tutor.
- Responses indicate a high perceived knowledge base and level of preparedness among the tutors regarding their disciplines and tutorials.

Excerpts – Perceived knowledge

- *"They were very knowledgeable in a way that I cannot even explain (smiles). I mean when they explained the terms, I mean they just explained the chapter into few words and there was also that passion that you saw and that made you think no, I must listen to this guy."*
- *"Yah, she was very knowledgeable, hmmm...she always came prepared... hmmm... and you could see the passion when she explains."*
- *"... they always came prepared to the tutorials. Which can be an advantage because, I mean, someone can be knowledgeable but if [they] are not prepared it doesn't make any difference."*

Tutors – Availability and relationship

- Students were asked what they felt about the availability of their tutor as well as what they felt about the tutor/student relationship.
- Responses show a high level of availability and a close working relationship between students and tutors.

Excerpts – Availability and relationship

- *"They were approachable and they were very friendly, because even now we are still friends. ... [If I find problems I still email (tutor's name) and say I have got this question, I'm confused, what clues can you give me. And he responds."*
- *"I went to his office, I don't know how many times. At no time he would say he was too busy, you knock he says come, you ask, he explains. I think he is a very friendly guy."*
- *"... he was brilliant, he was the person you could talk to anytime man, I mean he was really good."*
- *"... even after the extended classes we were able to contact them, with any questions and they did not mind at all. Even if you meet them on the way, you could stop them and say no, I've got this particular problem can you assist me and they will be able to assist you."*

Access – An access identity?

- Often what goes on outside of the classroom is as important as what goes on within it. Students were asked to reflect on issues of identity and social capital related to being an access student.
- Responses show a pattern of an initial sense of otherness and alienation which is usually replaced by a sense of worth and belonging.

Excerpts – An access identity?

- *"Oh... now I'm not a qualified student to be at varsity, so now I have to bridge and do all those things. But the warmth that I found at access, I can say I was happy cause even now, I can say I have no regrets, I've gained a lot in this access programme."*
- *"I felt very low, like I'm not at the same level with the other students and I was not like the other students, like mainstream you see who were considered hmmm... able to perform at the varsity level. But as time went by I realized that hmmm.. it was just a significant stage I had to go through."*
- *"When we first came here, there was that negative mentality. Oh! We are in access which means that we do not qualify to be in the university, we were shy, but by the second semester when we were doing electives, we recognized that it was better we started there, you know access helped us a lot."*
- *"... because I remember during registration when you meet other students and you tell them what you do, they were like "Oh you just wasting your year" they had this bad attitude towards us, the mainstream students."*
- *"I knew the advantages of being an access student, I can not say that it was a disadvantage, so I did not feel different at all."*

Access – Social Capital

- Observations in class pointed to a strong sense of belonging and utilisation of social capital amongst the access students.
- Students were asked to reflect on how this group coherence was leveraged.
- This solidarity was often shown to translate into informal group learning strategies which continue to feature in the mainstream.

Excerpts – Social Capital

- *"I could say that we are a team, they are my friends, brothers and sisters"*
- *"I mean we have become friends with each other, I mean close friends, I mean its easy to say hey guys since we are doing this, lets sit down and discuss."*
- *"... we studied together, especially for exams and to discuss tutorial problems"*
- *"Yah, I mean we still study together and share our academic and personal problems. So yah, I think the relationships with the other students from access have been great and helped me a lot."*
- *"Yah, these friends I talk to even if I don't understand some of the academic work. I say hey guys, help me out here I don't understand something."*
- *"... even in [mainstream] tut groups we sit together in the tut groups and the other mainstream guys will sit over there."*
- *"... we got together to discuss our academic work, the past tests question papers and to, to discuss the assignments ...even our personal problems 'cause... in access I found my best friends and we talk about anything."*

Discussion

- Although a new programme, the extended curriculum is already reaping rewards for the students involved. The quantitative data point to a marked positive impact on class marks and pass rates among the extended curriculum students.
- The qualitative data show the experiences of the students to be largely positive with an enduring impact which is instrumental in shaping the students academically.

Discussion points

- Despite being from backgrounds characterised by a paucity of academic capital, these students are performing quantitatively better than mainstream students. This highlights an effective pedagogy which needs to be further explored and explicated. This will be done through follow up discussions with tutors and other contact personnel.
- Importance is placed on the crucial role of tutors in the extended curriculum which indicates a need for rigorous selection criteria and retention strategies within the programme.
- Based on the qualitative data, a suggestion is made that tutors are positioned as mentors with self selecting contact sessions in place if students require these.
- Although it is crucial to have a materials based structure to the tutorials, a degree of flexibility to allow responsiveness to student-driven demands should be built in.
- The existing social capital amongst students be encouraged and supported.