

Contents lists available at [ScienceDirect](http://www.sciencedirect.com)

# Learning, Culture and Social Interaction

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/lcsi](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/lcsi)

Full length article

## How do they find their place? A typology of students' enculturation during the first year at a business school

Tobias Jenert\*, Taiga Brahm, Luci Gommers, Patrizia Kühner

*Institute for Business Education and Educational Management, University of St. Gallen, Dufourstrasse 40a, 9000 St. Gallen, Switzerland*

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history:

Received 3 May 2016

Received in revised form 30 November 2016

Accepted 5 December 2016

Available online xxxx

#### Keywords:

Student transition

Enculturation

Dropout

Retention

### ABSTRACT

Students' experiences of their first year of studying are of prime importance for their further development in Higher Education (HE). Consequently, the first year and the related phenomena of student performance, retention, and dropout have been extensively studied. Research shows that during the first year, the individual student's ability or failure to adapt to the new socio-cultural environment influences his/her academic success. Yet, surprisingly little is known about the actual processes through which students integrate into the socio-cultural context of HE. Applying a socio-cultural approach, our qualitative interview study followed 14 university students through their first year, investigating why some students experience an easier transition into HE compared to others. Our research results in a typology of four transition types characterized by their orientation towards the socio-cultural context of studying.

© 2016 Published by Elsevier Ltd.

### 1. Introduction

A sound body of research has shown that students' experiences of their first year of studying are of prime importance for their further development in Higher Education (HE) (Briggs, Clark, & Hall, 2012; Leese, 2010). This initial phase has been extensively researched to better understand the transition into HE as well as the phenomena of student performance, retention, and dropout (Allen, 1999; Bruning, 2002; DeShields, Kara, & Kaynak, 2005; Tinto, 1998). Accordingly, previous research has identified various variables influencing the transition into HE, applying three different theoretical lenses. First, various personal variables have been investigated, the most prominent being students' cognitive ability, academic self-efficacy, anxiety, and student motivation (Busato, Prins, Elshouta, & Hamaker, 2000; DeBerard, Spielmans, & Julka, 2004; McKenzie & Schweitzer, 2001; Robbins et al., 2004). Second, college effectiveness research has a long tradition of identifying contextual variables that help students transition successfully into HE and minimize dropout (Chapman & Pascarella, 1983; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Third, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have been conceptualized as social communities or cultures with specific norms, values, and procedures (Tinto, 1993, 1998; Venuleo, Mossi, & Salvatore, 2014).

It has been shown that during the first year, the individual student's ability or failure to adapt to the new socio-cultural environment influences his/her academic success (Brooman & Darwent, 2013; Tinto, 1993, 1998). More specifically, as Venuleo et al. (2014) emphasized, the educational subculture to which students adhere is an important predictor of retention or dropout after the first year of studying.

Although research stresses the importance of the socio-cultural dimension of first-year study experiences (Brooman & Darwent, 2013; Tinto, 1998; Venuleo et al., 2014), surprisingly little is known about the actual processes through which students

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: [tobias.jenert@unisg.ch](mailto:tobias.jenert@unisg.ch) (T. Jenert).

integrate into the socio-cultural context of HE (Christie, Munro, & Fisher, 2004; Christie, Tett, Cree, Hounsell, & McCune, 2008). Socio-cultural theory assumes that constructs, such as motivation, result from a dynamic interaction between personal perceptions and the social and material contexts in which a person is immersed (Cole & Wertsch, 1996; McInerney & van Etten, 2002). To get a better understanding of how students find their place in HE, the interrelations between their individual characteristics and the socio-cultural context to which they do or do not belong call for closer investigation.

The following qualitative study contributes to the lack of research on this topic and thus to the literature on the transition into HE in two ways. First, building on the previous research on individual and social-cultural conditions of successful students' transition (Sections 2.1 and 2.2), this study focuses on students' individual development, their perception of the 'dominant culture', and their own positioning with regard to that culture. Applying a socio-cultural approach, the study considers both personal aspects as well as social and structural contexts of HE to investigate why some students experience an easier transition into HE compared to others. Second, we develop a typology of transition modes based on our empirical investigation of first-year students at a Swiss university.

## 2. Theoretical background

For many students, entering HE is a decisive moment in their life with implications that reach far beyond merely changing the educational institution. Successful transition requires students to develop an identity and a sense of belonging to the new socio-cultural context of HE (Perry & Allard, 2003). Concerning the academic requirements of HE, students have to adapt or develop their learning strategies to respond to various challenges, such as greater learner autonomy or higher amounts of content to be mastered (Donche, Coertjens, & Van Petegem, 2010; Donche, De Maeyer, Coertjens, Van Daal, & Van Petegem, 2013). Consequently, many students experience the transition into HE as a shock that may impede their academic success and even lead to dropout even though they have the intellectual ability to master the academic requirements (Briggs et al., 2012; Dyson & Renk, 2006; Gale & Parker, 2012; Kuh, Cruce, Shoup, & Kinzie, 2008; Leese, 2010; Tinto, 1993). Although being described as a common phenomenon, this transition shock may be experienced very differently, depending on each student's individual life situation as well as their psychological dispositions.

Often, students in HE stop living with their parents, having to adjust to a lifestyle and to a social environment that is fundamentally different from what they have known before. To some extent, it is even necessary to disconnect with their previous environment, e.g. loosening the ties to parents and friends from home (Tinto, 1993, 1998). In addition to that, HE increasingly manages to attract so-called "non-traditional students", whose personal background and life situation may deviate significantly from that of "traditional" first-year students. Stemming from social/familial backgrounds with little or no experiences with HE, entering tertiary education at a later age (e.g. after having founded a family or completed a non-academic apprenticeship) and/or working a significant amount of time besides their studies, previous studies show that those students may experience the transition into HE in fundamentally different ways compared to their "traditional" counterparts (Bowl, 2001; Dill & Henley, 1998; Gilardi & Guglielmetti, 2011; Laing & Robinson, 2003).

Below we take a closer look at different factors that are likely to influence the way in which students deal with shock of transiting into their new life in HE.

### 2.1. Personal variables: self-efficacy, emotions, motivation

Empirical research has identified a number of personal variables that influence vulnerabilities or resiliency of students with regard to the challenges associated with transitioning into HE. Ample evidence suggests that academic self-efficacy, i.e., the feeling that one will be able to master the challenges of HE studies, has a positive influence on students' academic performance as well as on their general well-being, motivation to learn, and orientation towards deep learning strategies (Fenollar, Román, & Cuestas, 2007; Hsieh, Sullivan, & Guerra, 2007; Lau, Liem, & Nie, 2008; Martin, Colmar, Davey, & Marsh, 2010; Prat-Sala & Redford, 2010). Students with high self-efficacy find it easier to master the challenges of developing their identities as learners within the new educational context. In a longitudinal study with first year university students, Chemers, Hu, and Garcia (2001) found that self-efficacy and optimism of first-year students were positively related to their academic performance, health, general satisfaction, adaptability to learning requirements, and determination to remain within HE. Self-efficacy also helps students master the challenges of autonomous learning that distinguish HE from secondary school contexts (Macaskill & Denovan, 2011).

Academic emotions, particularly study-related anxiety, have been shown to affect academic performance and retention (Pekrun, Elliot, & Maier, 2009; Pekrun, Götz, & Perry, 2005; Pekrun, Götz, Titz, & Perry, 2002; Pekrun & Linnenbrink-Garcia, 2012; Villavicencio & Bernardo, 2013). Hailikari, Kordts-Freudinger, and Postareff (2014) found that students experienced a range of emotions, both positive and negative, during their first study year. Although students reported satisfaction and enthusiasm, they more frequently reported dissatisfaction, confusion, and anxiety. The study also found a positive relationship between the absence of negative emotions and study progress as well as achievement (Hailikari et al., 2014). Positive emotions can result from mastering academic challenges in HE as well as from belonging to the community of students or to a HEI with a high reputation. Tinto (1993, 1998) found that successful transition and retention require students to distance themselves to a certain degree from the social context in which they were immersed before entering HE.

Negative emotions have been investigated in some depth, focusing especially on test anxiety and subject-related forms of anxiety. Cognitive test anxiety develops from students negatively comparing their own performance to those of their peers, worrying excessively about the consequences of bad test results, and losing confidence and self-worth (Cassady & Johnson, 2004). Subject-

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/4939926>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/4939926>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)