

HOW FIRST YEAR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS DEVELOP SUCCESSFUL ACADEMIC AND ESPECIALLY AEW CAPABILITIES: AN ACTIVITY THEORY ANALYSIS

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Abstract

Considerable attention is being afforded to the First Year Experience (FYE) of University students to enhance student retention and success. The literature highlights the importance of social capital (Bourdieu, 1993; Engestrom,1987; Tinto, 2012; Wacquant, 2014) and acquiring academic skills and, in particular, argumentative essay writing (AEW), in the FYE is seen to be influential for student success (Tinto, 2012; Kuh, 2013).

The aim of this study is to identify implications for informing the improvement of AEW and academic skills within the context of the FYE. Moreover, the study will use a mixed methods approach by way of survey and semi-formal interviews.

I will analyse the data and make deductions regarding the findings. I will code the data - this be done as it is collected, and will include, among other things, the date of the survey and interviews, who completed them and the number of returns.

In conclusion, locating the study within the theoretical and conceptual framework of cultural activity theory (Engestrom, 1987; Bourdieu, 1993) provides a means to describe the dynamic interactions of the various personnel including lecturers and students in teaching and learning. Balancing the descriptive and interpretive elements of this study with structure and organisation will enhance the explication of the findings. In doing so, this study represents a credible contribution to the field and offers a viable approach for future investigations.

Keywords: University, First year experience, social capital, Activity theory.
