The Student Experience at Risk?

Measurement and Enhancement of Student Experience in Private Tertiary Education

Professor Sid Nair
The University of Western Australia

A/Prof Mahsood Shah
The University of Newcastle, Australia
Tertiary education in Australia includes:

- Universities (public/private)
- Non-University HE providers
- TAFE’s
- Private RTO’s
- Professional bodies like CPA
Topic at glance

- Student experience matters
- Measurement of student experience in private higher education (PHE)
- Factors influencing student choice in PHE
- Research on student experience in PHE
- Government policies on the measurement of student experience
- Why is student experience at risk?
- Way forward
Student experience matters

- Prominence of student voice
- Student experience is used to assess teaching quality
- Student experience is used to assess the level of risk
- Global trend in the use of student feedback to -
  - develop and renew courses
  - review of courses
  - assessment of teaching and course quality
  - assessment of support services
- Data is increasingly used in rankings and marketing
- Data is used on MyUniversity website, Unistats
Student experience matters

- Benchmarking performance of institutions
- Used in academic staff performance reviews and promotion
- Increased diversity of students, thus different expectations and experience
- Low satisfaction may cause attrition
- Student complaints can harm reputation of institution
- New modes of educational delivery/partnerships
Measurement of student experience in PHE

- Australian Graduate Survey (AGS): used by handful of PHE
- Internal semester based unit and teacher evaluation surveys are patchy across providers
- No standard instrument used to measure total student experience in PHE
- National VET Regulator (NVR) learner engagement survey is used for compliance purpose only, rather than enhancement
- Use of data and closing the loop is an area where limited work is being done
- Ethical issues on data collection
- Lack of triangulation of survey data (qualitative/quantitative) along with other academic outcome measures
## Factors influencing student choice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Perception</th>
<th>Access and opportunity</th>
<th>Learning environment</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Course design</th>
<th>Graduate Success</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reputation</td>
<td>Pathway to university</td>
<td>Small class size</td>
<td>Teachers from industry</td>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>Success of graduates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word of mouth</td>
<td>Stepping stone in tertiary education</td>
<td>Personalised environment</td>
<td>Easy accessibility</td>
<td>Practical nature</td>
<td>Doing well in industry</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transfer from University to private college due to referral</td>
<td>Ease of entry</td>
<td>Online learning</td>
<td>One to one interaction with teacher</td>
<td>Work experience</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Student profile (mature age in some colleges)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Completing degree via pathway</td>
<td>Hands on experience</td>
<td></td>
<td>Specialised course relevant to professions</td>
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</tbody>
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Input | Processes | Outcomes

Source: Shah, Nair, and Bennett. (2013).
Research on student experience in PHE

Government policies: Measurement of student experience

Bradley Review of Australian Higher Education (2008) concluded that a comprehensive set of measures of the quality of teaching and learning should be developed. These should include measures of the student experience and form part of a broader accountability framework focused on the achievement of outcomes.

Recommendation 7

“That the Australian Government require all accredited higher education providers to administer the Graduate Destination Survey, Course Experience Questionnaire and the Australasian Survey of Student Engagement from 2009 and report annually on the findings.” (Bradley Review, 2008, Ch 3.4)
Government policies: Measurement of student experience

- More focussed on universities
- AGS only used in universities, with lack of implementation in PHE
- New University Experience Survey (UES) only used in universities (domestic and onshore U/G)
- Development of UES did not involve PHE consultation
- Defeats the idea of “One Tertiary Education”
- No standard tool to measure offshore student experience - despite being rated as high risk by TEQSA
- Lack of benchmarking of student experience
- No mechanism to ensure comparable experience
Why is student experience at risk?

- Lack of standard measurement tools used across the HE sector
- Data collection, coding, analysis and reporting is inconsistent
- Lack of benchmarking with all providers
- Absence of systematic process to identify areas needing improvement (at national and institutional level)
- OLT funding for research in L&T does not support PHE research
- Lack of student engagement in TEQSA assessments
- Closing the feedback loop – requires improvement
TEQSA and student experience

- Lack of innovation on how to determine if student experience is at risk
- Assessment of risk is based on paper trail review
- Huge reliance on institutional collected and analysed unit/teacher evaluation data
- Current process to identify risk is based on data at overall institutional level
- No focus on assessing risk at course, faculty, campus level and partnership, online delivery mode
- No focus on assessing the experience of different cohorts of students (onshore/offshore/PG/HDR, LSES, NESB etc)
- Lack of student engagement
Way forward

- Tertiary education policies to recognise PHE >> QA
- Using standard tools such as AGS and UES
- Benchmarking student experience
- Need for a standard tool in PHE to measure student experience at teacher & subject levels
- Effective use of data in improving overall student experience
- Building capacity for design, collection, analysis and reporting of data
- Culture of closing the loop
- Use of qualitative data
- Build internal capacity for QA
Mahsood Shah
mahsood.shah@newcastle.edu.au