

Managing the Multiplicities of Graduate Level Education! Are Master's Students' Expectations Matched by their Experiences?

Robin Clark* & Jane Andrews*

*Aston University, Birmingham, B4 7ET. UK

Corresponding Author: j.e.andrews@aston.ac.uk

With rapid increases in student fees reflecting moves towards a QUASI Market model of Higher Education in the UK and across much of the Western World^[1], many universities find themselves having to meet progressively higher levels of student expectations^[2]. This is particularly the case at undergraduate level, where increases in fees over the past decade have far exceeded inflation. Yet with so much attention on 'consumer savvy' undergraduates, the question of whether Master's level students' expectations are matched by their experiences is one which remains largely unanswered. Grounded in an empirically grounded approach to learning and teaching developed by the paper authors^[3], this paper sets out to being to answer this question. In doing so it makes a distinctive contribution to debates about graduate level engineering education and concludes with a number of recommendations.

Discussion: The 'MSc: Managing Expectations' Project analyses the expectations and experiences of Graduate level Engineering Management Students over a two year period. Focusing on the 'student experience', three main concepts are identified as being particular relevant to enhancing learning^[3]: *Relationships*: *Variety*: *Synergy*.

Relationships: Based on empirical research, the significance of *Relationships* within the academic environment is discussed with particular attention being paid to the value of students' social and academic support networks, including academic tutoring.

Variety: Grounded in a statistical analysis of 'engagement data' together with survey and interview findings, the concept of *variety* critically examines students' perspectives and experiences of different approaches to learning and teaching.

Synergy: Possibly the most important concept discussed within this paper, the need for constructively aligned curriculum is extended to reflect the students' *apriori* knowledge and experience as well as employer and societal demands and expectations.

The conclusion brings the different concepts within the discussion together, providing a set of practical recommendations for colleagues working both at graduate and undergraduate level.

References

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3. Clark, R. & Andrews, J. (2014). Relationships, Variety & Synergy [RVS]: The Vital Ingredients for Scholarship in Engineering Education? A Case-Study. *European Journal of Engineering Education*. 39.6. pp. 585-600.