



# Effect of Course Choice on Student Success

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# South African Foundation Programmes

- ▶ Political situation in South Africa caused great educational inequalities
- ▶ Whether the arguments are economic or social justice, there is a well-established Access/Foundation Programme culture in South Africa
- ▶ Well-researched

# Case Study

- ▶ Factors Influencing access students' persistence in an undergraduate science programme: A South African case study
- ▶ Fred Lubben, Bette Davidowitz, Andy Buffler, Saalih Allie, Ian Scott
- ▶ International Journal of Educational Development
- ▶ 2010
- ▶ Expands on previous paper indicating that students on vocational programmes more likely to persist

# Factors Affecting Success

- ▶ Black students success about half that of white students
- ▶ Student Experiences
- ▶ Social and emotional adjustment as, or more, important than academic
- ▶ Note the importance of engagement vs alienation

# Social Cognitive Career Theory

- ▶ **Social Cognitive Career Theory** Lent *et al* (1994)
- ▶ Two categories identified:
  - ▶ Personal factors e.g. interest, perceived abilities, flexibility
  - ▶ Contextual demands e.g. perceived social and political demands, role conflicts and role models
- ▶ Disadvantaged students more likely to see barriers to careers such as academic requirements, role conflicts, destabilising life events

# The study

- ▶ Interviews with students about their motivations, career focus and thoughts on discontinuation
- ▶ Small study, but indicates that career focus supports persistence on a programme, helping increase student motivation

# Our data

- ▶ Initial analysis of success rates for Foundation students at Durham
- ▶ Divided into vocational – e.g. Medicine, Pharmacy, Education, Law and non-vocational – e.g. History, English, Anthropology, Physics
- ▶ Findings better outcomes for those on vocational courses

# Questions

- ▶ Business degrees – vocational or not?
- ▶ Do students with certain attributes select vocational degrees?



# Implications

- ▶ Admissions
- ▶ Programme Design
  - ▶ Finding opportunities for career focus
  - ▶ Very targeted courses rather than general ones
- ▶ Student support
  - ▶ Career advice early on
  - ▶ Role models from previous students