

# The different challenges university students face



Students entering university level studies face many challenges. Not only are the students presented with obvious challenges such as learning and interpreting subject specific information to obtain their degree, or the social aspects of entering a new environment, they must also learn the appropriate methods of discourse within the university knowledge community. Students enter university from a vast array of personal contexts. Such experiences influence an individual's understanding and communication skills, therefore the university must make allowances for such varied experiences in the teaching of its programs. By offering varied and alternative methods of learning, it is believed that a greater number of students will have greater interest and knowledge retention, leading to successful knowledge transmission. This essay will review some methods that can be utilised for academic success.

One aspect of knowledge transmission in university learning is to understand academic discourse. Ballard & Clanchy (1988, p. 8) assert that “ Becoming literate in the university involves learning to ‘ read’ the culture, learning to come to terms with its distinctive rituals, values, styles of language and behaviour”. This encompasses the student understanding the use of the spoken, written and visual language in the academic community. With the knowledge of academic discourse, the student can interpret and create understanding of their own, known as deep learning (Marton et. al., 1997 as cited in Northedge, 2003, p 26). Similarly, not having a thorough understanding of the academic discourse may result in mis-interpreting the linguistic style used in academic settings, and results in poor understanding and presentation of knowledge from the student.

Andresen (1994) speaks of 5 fallacies regarding university level studies, and specifically discusses 'knowledge transmission'. Knowledge is one's internal interpretation of external information – stimuli is applied, processed in the short term memory and may or may not be transferred to long term memory for later retrieval (Trigwell & Prosser, 1997). But how is knowledge transferred? One learns by constructing their own understanding of the information being fed to them and this is influenced by the medium from which they are learning from. As mentioned, students' different personal contexts will influence how they approach and interpret the information fed to them and the resulting knowledge they acquire. Biggs (1993 as cited in Trigwell & Prosser, 1997) proposed the '3P model of learning' as pictured below:

This model depicts the various ways in which students approach learning – what they do to learn, their attitudes and beliefs about learning, perception of the content and its delivery, learning outcomes and course design resulting in the knowledge transmitted. Many varied mediums exist to transmit information – from the spoken lecture, to visual aids, e-learning modules and textbooks. Incorporating different learning styles including auditory, visual, kinesthetic and tactile (Dunn, 1995 as cited Ukpokodu, 2010, p 30) accommodates the diverse array of students' learning methods.

Andresen (1994) suggests methods to incorporate to course content design to allow for various learning approaches to increase knowledge transmission.

Apart from hard work and study on the part of the student in order to gain knowledge, Andresen suggests the creation of collaborative work groups (p

5) where students assist each other by sharing their knowledge and

<https://assignbuster.com/the-different-challenges-university-students-face-essay-samples/>

understanding within a small team of fellow students. This may be in the function of a group essay, shared assignments, collective problem solving and class discussions (p 5). The opportunity to discuss and teach one another is highly important for effective knowledge transmission, to give the opportunity for peer and self assessment. Communication of this manner reinforces ones understanding and creates confidence in the knowledge they have gained.

Further to developing confidence in ones understanding, an important skill for retaining knowledge is critical thinking. Attributes of critical thinking, as discussed by Warren (1995) are checking for factual claims, assumptions, observations, compare and contrast of works, looking for clarification or challenging arguments, as well as maintaining an open mind, sensitivity, decisiveness and willingness to investigate the claims made. Warren describes critical thinking as an aspect of reflective thinking- the three components are critical and creative thinking and content knowledge. By analysing and evaluating articles for oneself, the knowledge is set deeper into cognitive perception and fosters deep learning.

There is no simple, straight forward method to successfully transmit knowledge between individuals. Universities accommodate a large array of individuals: there are different cultures, back grounds, family units, social experiences and prior knowledge which all influence how the individual may learn or instruct. As there is such a great diversity in the types of people within the university, there needs to be great diversity in the teaching methods for successful academic results. Providing students and teachers with a common language in academic discourse fosters effective

<https://assignbuster.com/the-different-challenges-university-students-face-essay-samples/>

communication. The use of various modes of content delivery accommodates for various types of learners. Acquiring further skills such as critical thinking enhances the students learning experience by fostering deeper thought and investigation into the information provided to them. By delving further into information, greater understanding is harnessed. By sharing this understanding with others, in tutorials, group discussions, team efforts and the like, this understanding is set into one's mind. Knowledge is transmitted by various means and received by various means, and it is up to the individual to apply themselves as best they can to create the best understanding they can for academic success.