

*Conference. Fair for all: Practical Strategies for Equality and Inclusivity.
DMU. Academic Professional Development Unit and Teacher Fellows.*



Research in Progress

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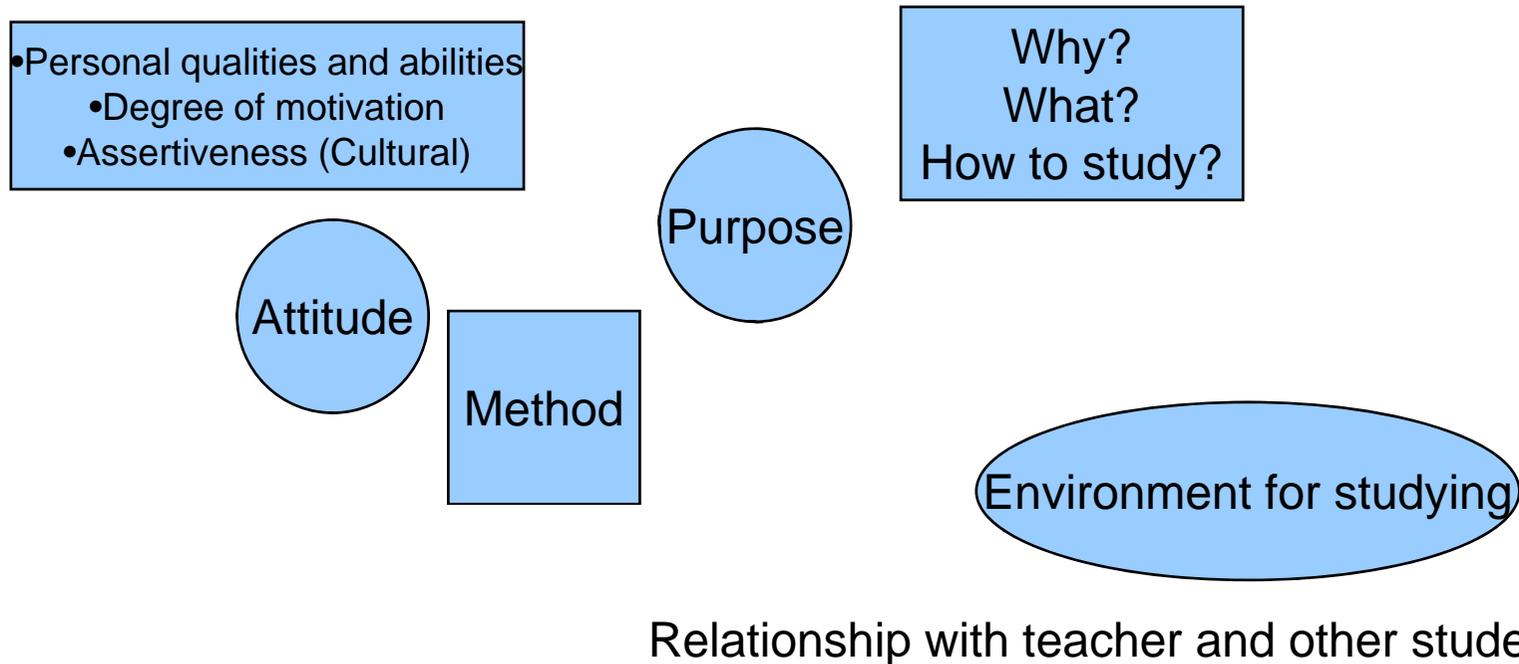
“Working with International Students.

Facing up and confronting the views from teachers and students regarding independent learning.”



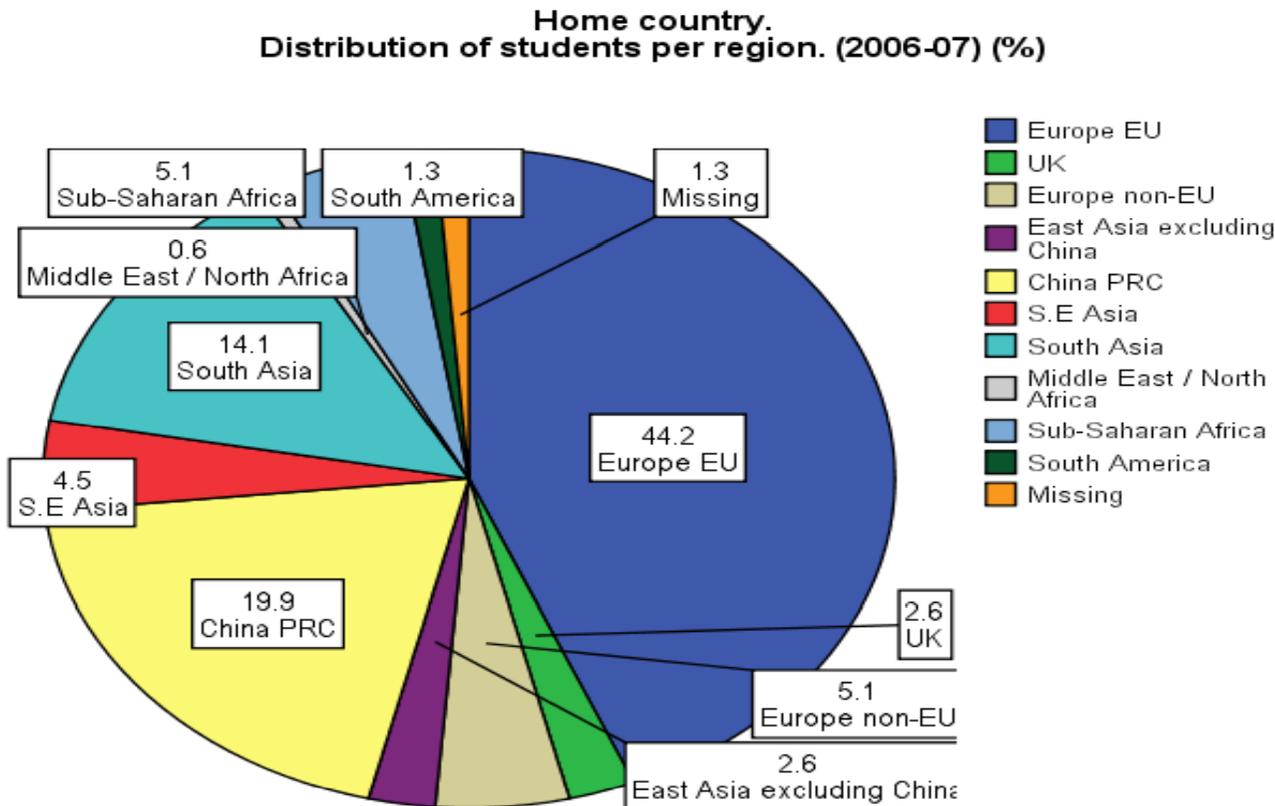
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- Independent learning is about choices and decisions made by the learner.



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● **The Research sample for the Focus Groups and Learning Process Questionnaire:**



52%
female

60% 22-25
years old

31%
Finance

55%
Business

LSBU and
EU-IP
business/finance
students.
2006-07

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1. Findings.

1.a International Students' comments about their main areas or difficulty.



- Self-directed/independent learning [1] is new and bewildering.
- Topics are delivered too fast, taking for granted previous knowledge.
- Availability of lecturers/system of appointments is too formal and problematic.
- The lecturer is not approachable, personal, sympathetic or respectful of international students. The lecturer loses patience with students.
- Incomprehensible answers are given to students' questions.
- Students worked on one single textbook per unit and used few libraries.
- Conflicting opinions from different academic sources/readings.
- Language used in a specific subject, in lectures or books is difficult.
- Reading takes many times over the normal time allocated by native language speakers.

[1] The students' interpretation of this concept is that they have to do most of their own learning with little guidance from the lecturer. Most of their previous education was done in a traditional lecture-centred environment.

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1.a Student's learning profiles. General overview.



The main purpose of your current studies in Higher Education

- Employment related 54.50%
- Knowledge + experience 42.80%
- **The main purpose of your current studies in Higher Education**
 - Knowledge + skills 62.20%
 - Self-confidence 18.00%
- **How long do you think the process of 'learning' lasts ?**
 - Forever, we always go on learning 90.20%
 - The more you learn, the more you need to learn 65.80%
- **Where does learning mainly happen ?**
 - Doing, thinking, personal life 64.40%
 - Interacting with teachers, classmates 35.50%
- **What do you feel about how people learn ?**
 - Hard work is the clue 32.70%
 - Inborn advantage 40.00%
 - Some are quicker... 17.30%
- **Who has the main responsibility to make the learning process effective?**
 - The student 53.60%
 - Learning is a partnership between lecturer and student 43.10%
- **No changes into more "independent learning" 25.30%**

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1.b Student’s learning profiles. A “cultural characterization”.

58% of students state they are slightly independent learners, but require “a lot of guidance”(12-16% EU, Ch, SSA; 38% SA). Nearly 6% consider themselves mainly dependent (4% EU, Ch, 19% SA) or very dependent (25% EA). Students registering bigger changes into more independent learning are ME and Ch.

Working with others seems to be the best way of learning for most students (working with students: Ch, non-EU, SA) (working with teachers: EU, SSA, SA, Ch).

However, mixing with students from different cultures can be seen as damaging for individual learning. Over 35% LA, SEA, EU, non-EU and UK students feel they learn more when working on project and by themselves (Opposite results found for Ch, SEA, SSA).

Students from all regions prefer learning by practical experiences. Formal lectures and seminars are preferred by Ch, UK, SA, EA, SSA (and less by EU, non-EU, SSA and LA). Although most students enjoy small group tutorials and student-led group work, UK EU Ch, SSA show a high proportion of dissatisfaction.



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2.a The Role of Lecturer. What the students say about a “good lecturer”.

Good lecturers are those who ...

- **Make the subject interesting because they show knowledge and motivation towards their subject, rather than reading from notes/slides in a tiresome manner.**
- **Are well organised and methodical.**
- **Are friendly, supportive and professional in lectures, seminars and outside lessons.**
- **Answer questions with simple examples.**
- **Provide good study cases and/or relate the theory to real practical up-to-date examples, especially those that could be found in the news. This helps students to understand the relevance and applicability of what is taught.**
- **Rather than blaming the students for not knowing, help them to learn how to find the answers.**
- **Give clear models/parameters for preparing tasks/assessments.**
- **Provide detailed feedback that reflects on the mistakes and guide towards the correct answer.**

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2.a The Role of the Lecturer. General overview.

32% of students have more contact with their teachers than before while 24% has less than before. 59% are happy with the amount of contact. However, 27 % of students feel their lecturers should be more available to them.

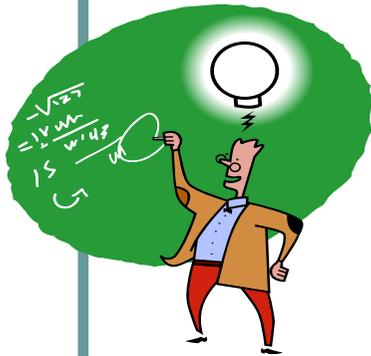
Although 43% students talk about a “partnership” in the process of learning. They believe a teacher’s role is vital (91% say that contribution of lecturers is very important). The level of importance involves: advice on how to study (64%); give knowledge and information (90%), offer a variety of academic opinions (66%), answering questions (55%), listening to student’s ideas (14%), being a friend (17%) or a mentor (49%).

51.7 % of students think that the relationship with their lecturers should be informal and friendly while 42% prefer “open and professional”.



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2.b The role of the Lecturer. A “cultural characterization”.



67% of UK students think researching is an essential necessity for a HE lecturer. Other regions that consider this activity quite important are: EA, SEA, SSA (70%+), SA and Ch (63%+). The ability of lecturers to offer knowledge and information is of primary importance to all regions (over 67% of all students).

Students need more advice about how to study (UK, Ch, EU, SA) and what to do (Ch, SA, EU). The issues of “giving more information” or “telling more clearly what to do” are common among any regions (including the UK). The same applies to the matter of how lecturers answer questions from students.



Some students feel they have less contact with their teachers than before (ME, SEA, over 80% of students; LA 50%; SA+SSA 25-29%). These students reckon it is very important that lecturers will make themselves more available.

Only students from Ch, SA and EU think that it is important for lecturers to be friendly.

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□ Concluding remarks.

- This is an “incomplete” research and this presentation is showing only partial results from the overall investigation.
- Results are only indicative (limitations in the sample employed).
- Further research is required to complement and expand the findings and to guide lecturers in their work.

- **The results suggest that despite of some specific characteristics, students’ learning styles, strategies and preferences show general common across cultures.**
- **Students may not understand what “independent learning” is about.**
- **Differing learning styles and strategies emerging from culture and personality, do not represent right/wrong behaviour.**
- **Students need to “learn from others” in preparation for becoming independent learners.**
- **Students’ learning practices are induced by their academic life (influence of foreign HEI in “acculturation process”).**
- **Teachers play a substantial role in helping students to learn. Students rely on their teachers to “know what is expected”.**
- **Different teaching techniques may reach different students and help to develop additional skills.**

