

Thinking student-centric: Hearing students' voices

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Equity, Access, and the First Year Experience in higher education are popular topics. Our paper focusses on how students from low socio-economic backgrounds who enter university with an ATAR less than the standard score, experience the challenges of university-life. This presentation addresses six key student-centric factors stemming from Equity: student diversity; student adjustment and transition; student support; student success; student social and academic belonging; and, student engagement and empowerment.

An interpretivist paradigm was used to organise the data and initial analysis. Students were invited to three interviews in their first year (2015) and one at the beginning of their second (2016), third (2017) and fourth (2018) years. Critical theory was used in the final discussion where student responses linked significantly to 'bigger picture' patterns of power relations in society, especially the wider issue of Equity in higher education.

Two significant findings which encompass the academic and social concerns of students were the prevalence of 'Imposter Syndrome' characteristics and the need for a sense of belonging.

Recommendations focus on how to enhance the learning experience for these students, and the teaching experience and practices for academics, whilst maintaining a more rewarding and engaging teaching and learning environment for all.