

Using Participatory Action Research to Engage and Retain Students: It's the People that Matter!

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Action
Research

Who?

PAR



What?

Participatory
Change

Where?





WHAT MAKES IT PAR?

01

COLLABORATIVE - INCLUDES STAKEHOLDERS

02

PRACTICAL

03

ADVOCATES POLICY CHANGE

04

**CORRECT POWER IMBALANCE
THROUGH KNOWLEDGE
DISIMINATION**



PAULO FREIRE

*Pedagogy of the
Oppressed*

Critical Conscious of
Reality

Pedagogy of Liberation

The
International Literacy Institute
presents

Q SEARCH

The New York Times

WORLD

Paulo Freire, 75, Is Dead; Educator of the Poor in Brazil

By ERIC PACE MAY 6, 1997

Paulo Freire, a radical Brazilian educator known for his methods of using everyday words and ideas to teach illiterates to read -- and to be skeptical about prevailing social and political systems -- died on Friday in Albert Einstein Hospital in Sao Paulo. He was 75 and had lived in Sao Paulo since 1981.

The cause was a heart attack at the hospital after he was admitted there on Thursday after an earlier heart attack, said his stepson Eduardo Hasche.

Mr. Freire refined his education methods beginning in the late 1950's during literacy campaigns among peasants in the poverty-stricken northeast of Brazil. He propounded them in his best-selling 1970 book, "Pedagogy of the Oppressed."

Lewin

Considered one of the most important psychologists of our day

- Refugee (Jewish/WWII era) , Originally Polish
- Group Dynamics, many of his experiments center on children. Found that the children were less aggressive under democratic leadership styles.
- Field Theory – personality shaped by environment and inner, chosen environment.
- Commission on Community Interrelations (CCI) for the American Jewish Congress (AJC)





Freshman Student engagement & retention

...or how to help college students to
stay in school

Rationale

- Average student debt of an undergraduate degree holder is around \$18,000 (Executive Office of the President of the United States, 2016)
- The student debt would be a sound investment because an individual with a four year degree is likely to earn \$32,000 per year more than a high school graduate (Association of Public and Land Grant Universities, 2017)
- Non-traditional students are most likely to accrue high debt loads as well as to drop out (Tinto, 2004)

Literature vs our experience

- Literature suggests that student engagement is key to student retention (Kahu, 2013; Tinto, 2000, 2007; Zepke & Leach, 2010)
- First generation students have difficulty adjusting to campus life due to self-efficacy issues (Ramos-Sánchez & Nichols, 2007)
- Students choose the school based on the perceived “fit” (Tomlinson, 2014)
- Many first year students experience disenchantment with college during their first term (Bruni, 2017)

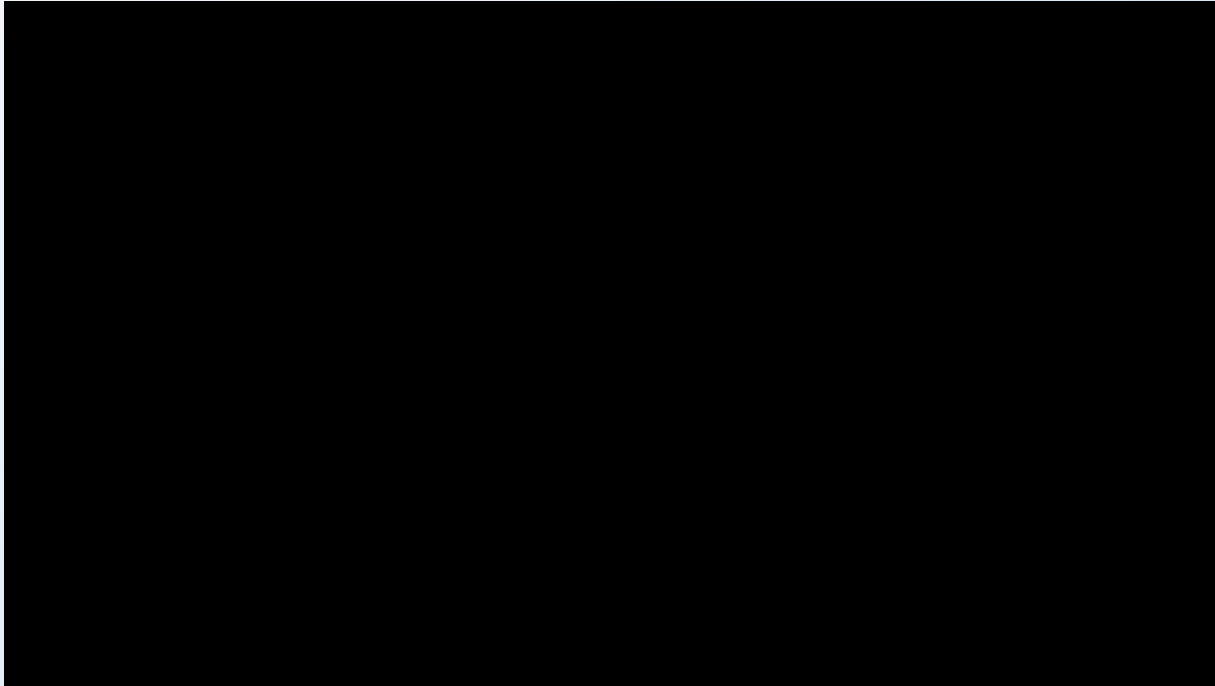
Local information gathering

- Student focus groups and group level assessment exercises helped us determine some of the causes of the avoidance behaviors practiced by our incoming students. They included:
 - Social:
 - Avoiding building connections on campus
 - Following college experiences of the HS friends on social media
 - Academic:
 - Self efficacy related issues (Mager, 1997)
 - Attribution theory as explained by Bocchino (1999)
 - Past aversive experiences
- Extensive discussions with faculty and staff

What works

- Freshman student finding their on-campus “person” or “tribe”
 - Opportunities to get to know peers
 - Small study groups
- “Authentic” communication stands out in the information flow
- Support in time of need
 - Time management takes time to develop – we need to scaffold the process

Action



Process flow improvements

- Enable students to use the app to submit tutoring request through the App's Help Center along with pictures of the problem and/or notes
- Preform learning communities on the app to support obstacle courses
- Integrate small groups into remedial/obstacle courses

And it never ends...

- Continuous action-reflexive cycle is critical
- Involvement of all stakeholders
- Respect for privacy and concerns of all of the participants

Conclusions

- Freshman retention is a critical problem
 - More than 2/3rds of attrition occurs during the first year
- It is a people problem requiring a systemic solution
- Requires participation of a wide range of stakeholders

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Navigating Graduate School

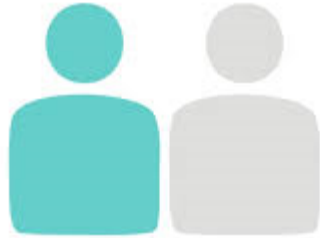
University of Cincinnati



We don't want to be statistics....

What would help us navigate - *and finish* - our
doctoral program?

Together, we can do this!



What factors are correlated with completion?

NO ASSOCIATION

Marital Status
Children Present in the Home
Gender
Age
GRE Score
Undergraduate GPA

ASSOCIATION

Motivation
Financial Support
Relationships
-advisor
-family
-peers

But it's a little old....

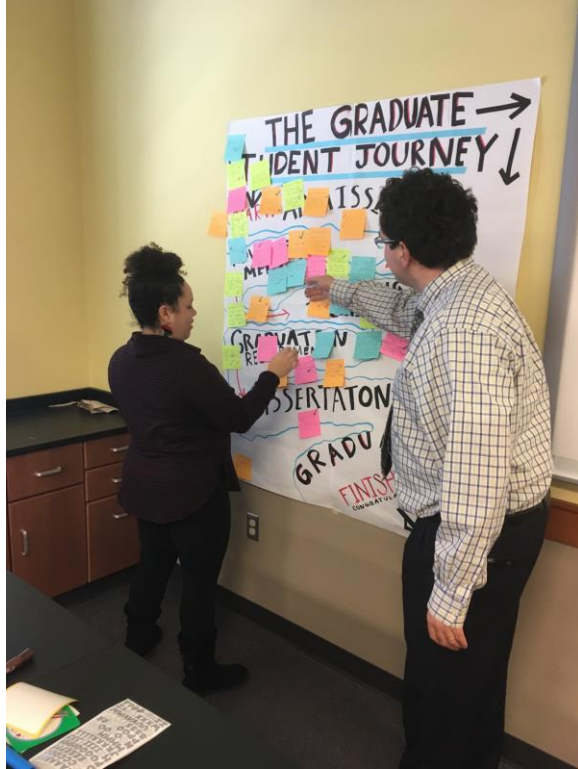
(Pauley, Michael Cunningham, & Powell Toth, 1999)

In EDST PhD Programs....

- **GRE:** Quantitative score impacts time to completion; qualitative does not. (Wao & Onwuegbuzie, 2011).
- **Mentoring/advising:** Structured programs where faculty and peers meet together to help students have been qualitatively shown to aid completion. (Nolte, Bruce, & Becker, 2015). Relationships matter Relationships tend to help people through (Rockinson-Szapkiw, Spaulding, Swezey, & Wicks, 2014; Spaulding & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2012). High quality advising and student community is quantitatively linked to persistence (Ivankova & Stick, 2006)
- **Finances:** Adequate financial support is important, but students from less affluent backgrounds at the doctoral level tend to be exceptionally resilient and determined to find a “way out”. Relationships tend to help people through (Rockinson-Szapkiw, Spaulding, Swezey, & Wicks, 2014). Funding is sometime overemphasized. Relationships are needed to guide what to do need to exist in the first place (Maphosa & Wadesango, 2016)



Participants



“It was interesting to do
and be a part of
Action Research while
learning....”



What obstacles might prevent
us (the EDST students) from
completing our degree?

What supports could be in put
place to help us overcome
these issues?

Methodology: Risk Mapping



Visual method of showing local perceptions of risk. Pioneered in communities and villages and to show environmental and climate-related risks.

Translates nicely to other areas of research.

Findings: Risk Mapping



Participatory Group Theme Sort

Ideally we would have had the group categorize the qualitative themes...

Martha also helped. Credit and a cameo appearance was promised.



Survey Findings

Statistics

- 32% of students felt finances were very stressful.
- Nobody had a full understanding of the doctoral degree process.
- 70% of students struggle to find logistical information.
- 100% of students want strand-wide advising meetings.

“I don’t know what I don’t know.”

“Spell out graduation requirements in a clear language.”

Tell Your Story – Chose JUST one please 😊

Either Or

- NON-fiction: Write an anecdote of a real, successful experience you had navigating grad school.....
- Fiction: What if one of the key supports had been missing? Rewrite the anecdote and result without the key support.

- NON-fiction: Write an anecdote of a problem/failure/issue you had navigating grad school...
- Fiction: What if a solid support had been in place? Rewrite the anecdote with the support in place.



Findings - stories

Stories

In half of the stories, the essential resource was a person!

People are integral to the experience.

People are afraid to admit that they need people.



What we really want to say....

- Maybe we can find a way around finances to an extent...
- Students are confused about how to navigate the process.
- People are what make or break this.
- Everyone has unique capacities for making connections.

Action and Dissemination



- Love to hear more ideas from you!

Thank You Everyone!

Get a (earlier iteration) poster....

Get references...

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@sayitclearlynow

A shout out to all graduate students and people who help along the way.

