Supporting Student 'Success':
What can we Learn from the Persisters?

Carole Roberts, c.a.roberts@salford.ac.uk
Maggie Watkin, maggie_watkin@hotmail.com
Dorothy Oakey, d.h.oakey@salford.ac.uk
Roland Fox, r.p.fox@salford.ac.uk

Abstract

It is suggested that the current research focus on withdrawal from the first year in higher education (HE) provides a limited account of what may influence persistence. In particular it provides little account of how persistence is facilitated in the cases where students have sometimes doubted whether they should remain at university. The aim of this study was to determine any differences in levels of satisfaction between students who considered leaving in the first year, and those who did not. A further aim was to identify whether students who had doubts about remaining differed in any significant respects from students who had no doubts. No differences were found in student characteristics between the groups. However, a marked difference was noted in attitudinal responses- with doubters responding less favourably than non-doubters across a range of measures suggested by other research to facilitate social and institutional integration.

Introduction

Attempts on the part of the UK Government and higher education institutions (HEIs) to widen participation in a system still acknowledged to cater largely for students with 'traditional' entry characteristics (Longden, 2001), are currently receiving a high public and political profile. However, 'non traditional' students – those from 'lower' socio-economic groups, certain ethnic groups, mature students - are suggested to be more vulnerable to withdrawal, particularly in the 1st year of study (Select Committee on Education & Employment, 6th report, 2001). Thus widening participation has raised awareness of retention issues, particularly in institutions which take a larger proportion of these students.

A tendency for these groups to be first generation in HE with more diverse educational backgrounds and entry qualifications, leads to the assumption that they will experience more problems in adjusting to the rigours of academia than 'traditional' students. Yorke (2001), however, notes the lack of empirical evidence to support the suggestion that little family experience of HE has a negative relationship with completion of a programme of study.

Although certain groups may be more vulnerable, it is important to avoid generating a belief that having 'at risk' characteristics necessarily predicts 'failure'. The issues are suggested to be more complex (Yorke, 2001). HEIs with higher rates of attrition also tend to be less well funded and have higher ratios of students per staff. Despite this, some have better than expected retention rates, possibly due to adopting a student-centred approach to 'the implications of the widening participation agenda' (Ibid, pp155).

The importance of adopting a student-centred approach, i.e. acknowledging that institutional strategies can impact upon retention, and implementing timely support to those deemed 'at risk', is well documented (e.g. Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991: Johnstone, 2001). However, retention is relatively under- researched in the UK, and there appears to be little consensus on what aspects of support are most effective (Johnstone 1997; 2002), or whether support at institutional level *is* the ultimate panacea for retaining students.

Overview of UK Literature

Much of the retention research has been conducted within individual institutions, and can be broadly divided into two camps – research, sometimes without an explicit empirical basis, which focuses on strategies to facilitate retention. (e.g. Fitzgibbon & Prior 2003; Yorke, 2001; Johnstone, 2001; Yorke & Thomas, 2003; Trotter, 2003), and that which provides empirical 'evidence' of the key determinants of withdrawal (Yorke, 1999; Woodley et al, 1992; Johnes, 1990; Johnes & Taylor, 1989). However, attrition is a problematic area to research, due to lack of consensus about what counts as non-completion, inherent difficulties obtaining accurate data, practical constraints, and transferability of results (Johnstone, 1997; 2002). Moreover, soliciting leavers' views may offer limited insights as poor response rates are noted, perspectives are limited to those who are motivated to reply and responses may be biased towards citing external factors as primary causes (Kelly, 1967).

Entry Characteristics

An established body of research into attrition from outside the UK tends to follow Tinto (1987) in suggesting that a variety of student characteristics impact negatively upon the ability to 'integrate' successfully into HE culture, and thus influence the decision to withdraw. Although Tinto's seminal model of attrition (1975) has been criticised for being largely descriptive (Yorke, 1999), determining the causes of an inability to integrate is a common theme in UK research.

Quantitative research based on data from students' records (e.g. Johnes, 1990: Yorke et al, 1997) link a range of characteristics to withdrawal, many of which appear to be linked to socio -economic background, and prior educational experience. Living at home and working part-time are also highlighted as 'risk' factors (National Audit Office 2002; Johnes, 1990; Johnstone 2003) as is being male (Johnes 1990: N.A.O., 2002).

The Student Perspective

The range of reasons students provide mitigate against identification of the key determinants of withdrawal, although Yorke (1997) suggests they can be broadly categorised as a 'poor quality' student experience; inability to cope with the demands/ wrong choice of a programme; discontent with social life; financial concerns and dissatisfaction with aspects of institutional provision. However, some of these factors may be less applicable to mature students.

Time of Departure

Longden (2002) noted that leaving early in the 1st semester was related to a lack of bonding with the institution, sometimes compounded by a lack of commitment to a university education. Students who departed later in the academic year referred to a lack

of cultural capital, for example being a first generation student and a lack of understanding about what being a student in HE entails. The long summer vacation may have been a factor in some cases. Those who were eligible (i.e. passed all 1st year modules) but who did not return for the 2nd year, cited length of time to reflect on the value of 'being a student' and other opportunities arising (Longden, 2002).

Persistence

Whilst providing valuable insights, research which focuses on those who have already left may offer a limited account of the ***process*** of departure, and what may reverse this process. Although it is accepted that for some students the decision to leave is beneficial, for others it may be a cause of future regret. It is acknowledged that in order to understand how to retain these students we need to examine persistence (Johnstone, 2001). This is an area which has been largely neglected in current research. There may be an implicit assumption that those who stay experience an unproblematic journey through the 1st year. However, when persisters have been compared with leavers, it is found that both groups often experience similar doubts, personal problems and struggles but those who persist somehow manage to cope with them better (e.g. Mackie, 1998; Gull, 2001). Mackie (1998) suggested that four interacting forces - social, organisational, external and individual - play a role in 'facilitating or inhibiting' integration in the first year. Many of her sample experienced problems with social and, in particular, organisational integration, but individual student characteristics most strongly influenced stay/quit decisions. Although not focusing specifically on the 1st year experience, Ozga & Sukhandan (1998) came to similar conclusions in their study of completers and non-completers.

Persistence was characterised by strong initial commitment, and its maintenance over the 1st year. Commitment appeared to be enhanced by long-term goals, more realistic expectations and a sense of control over the decision to enter HE. Mackie (1998) notes that lack of a sense of control can also result in the student remaining with doubts unresolved, a phenomena known as learned helplessness (Seligman, 1975).

Whilst individual characteristics appear to be the main influence on student persistence/ withdrawal decisions in the above studies, the authors do not suggest that institutions cannot do anything to prevent withdrawal. They have a role in enabling students to make more informed choices before entry, and to ensure there is no lack of compatibility between student expectations and their chosen course. Constructive feedback about progress is also suggested to be an important factor in facilitating institutional integration (Mackie, 1998: Yorke, 2001).

The above studies are valuable because they do not focus on the 'at risk' characteristics delineated by much attrition research but on other individual student attributes, which institutional strategies can help maintain. However, the ***lack*** of focus on factors deemed to render a student ' at risk' may limit our understanding of how students progress despite being so labelled, or whether indeed these students do experience more problems adjusting to HE. Furthermore, the focus remains on withdrawal; persistence is not fully examined in these studies.

Student Satisfaction

Contemporary students may not only differ from their predecessors in terms of entry characteristics, but also in the ways they approach the student experience. With students increasingly expected to contribute financially for their education, the time spent at university may no longer be viewed as a hiatus between childhood and adult responsibilities (Erikson, 1950), which incurs little long-term financial obligation but rather as a way of buying into a system of accreditation to enhance long-term career prospects. There is also growing evidence that many students are working longer hours in part-time employment (Oakey et al, 2003; Parliamentary Select Committee 2001) – possibly to avoid taking out a student loan. There is also a trend towards living at home, thus potentially providing less opportunities or necessity for social interaction with peers. Oakey et al (2003) note that students who live at home were also more likely to undertake paid employment during term-time.

In the present climate of increased accountability (Longden, 2001) student retention and student satisfaction with HE are being taken seriously. However, at present there is no available method of examining the 1st year student experience in the UK, despite suggestions that this is the most 'critical' year in terms of non- completion (Johnstone, 1997). Although a National Student Satisfaction Survey is being developed (Higher Education Funding Council for England), it will focus on graduate perceptions of the teaching and learning environment and pay less attention to other aspects of the student experience. Moreover, it does not specifically address the 1st year, nor, with its focus on completers, does it address how lack of satisfaction may have interacted with attrition. Indeed, at present we have no method of assessing how the multiplicity of factors which may appear to adversely affect retention, impact upon levels of satisfaction with the first year.

The Research Project

Research is currently being undertaken in the five schools of the Faculty of Business & Informatics at the University of Salford, which is looking at issues relating to both withdrawal and persistence, using a variety of research methods. The primary aim is to develop a model of student satisfaction and its relationship with 1st year retention, to produce a valid instrument for measuring this relationship and thus to inform strategies seeking to improve retention. Elrod's definition of satisfaction is being used: '*When expectations have been met or exceeded, as reported by students' perception of their college experiences*' (Elrod, 2002). The following report outlines the methods and preliminary results of the first stage of the project, in which a student satisfaction questionnaire was piloted on students returning for the 2nd year of all full-time programmes in the Faculty.

Aims

- To examine different levels of satisfaction with the 1st year experience, and to ascertain whether full integration into the cultures of HE is a prerequisite for persistence.

- Withdrawal is suggested to be the end product of a process of doubting one's ability to remain at university (Mackie, 1998). However, it is also

suggested that doubting this ability is also common among persisters. A further aim is, therefore, to ascertain whether doubting is indeed a common feature of the student experience, and, if so, to discover how students overcome their uncertainties to enable them to progress to year 2.

- To identify any differences between students who remained at university despite sometimes doubting their commitment to 'being a student', and those who never doubted this commitment, to ascertain if there is any relationship with doubting and specific student characteristics deemed to render them more 'at risk'.

- To compare doubters' and non-doubters' satisfaction with their 1st year experience, and to identify factors which correlate significantly with either high or low levels of satisfaction.

Research Methods

Although questionnaire design has been criticised for a reductionist approach, which may limit understanding of the complex issues involved in this area of research, it does allow us to compare large samples in the hope of identifying some general trends. Whilst not suggesting that findings may necessarily be transferable either within, or across, institutions, it is considered important to understand more about one's own students. To do this required a representative sample from across the faculty, and thus necessitated the employment of quantitative methods for this part of the research. To allow a qualitative element, students were requested to give the three best and three worst features of their 1st year experience.

Pilot Questionnaire Design

Questions were constructed from the range of factors suggested to impact upon integration in the 1st year and were grouped according to Mackie's model (1998) of social, organisational, external and individual influences. Factual questions requested information relating to age, gender, part-time work, accommodation etc. Attitudinal questions (presented on 5 point Likert scales) addressed student perceptions of the social and academic environment during the 1st year. These were categorised as: social aspects; choice of programme; the learning environment. Global attitude questions related to the student experience; social environment; ability to cope with the demands of higher education; course-related experiences; financial (after Yorke, 1997) were used to examine the process of integration over the 1st year. Students were asked for current perceptions and to recall perceptions at the start of the 1st year. A Cronbach Alpha test was used to assess the internal validity of attitudinal questions used. These correlated on average 0.7.

Causal 'doubting' was assessed by the expressed desire to leave university. A range of options plus an opportunity to provide a free response was given to the following questions (multiple responses allowed): *'Why did you feel like leaving the University?'*; *'When did you most feel like leaving the University?'*; *'What factors helped you to make the decision to stay?'* The three most important reasons were also requested.

Participants

Questionnaires were presented to all full-time students from the 2001 entry cohort attending induction sessions at the start of their 2nd year. The purpose of the study was explained to students, and they were requested, although not coerced, to fill in the questionnaire. These were completed during the sessions, to ensure a reasonable response rate. Questionnaires were presented on lilac paper, which it is suggested aids reading of written material for dyslexic students.

Some Preliminary Findings

There were 466 usable replies, a response rate of 54% of the number of students projected to re – enrol. A high response rate was noted over all questions, despite the questionnaire taking approximately 20 minutes to complete. Data from students who did not respond to the question 'Did you ever consider leaving Salford University during your first year?' were removed. 280 students who responded 'never' were classified as non-doubters. The remaining 178 students were classified as doubters.

Using Chi-squared tests, no marked differences were noted between doubters and non-doubters over a range of variables, which have been suggested to make a student more
'at risk' for example, gender, age, ethnicity, being first generation in HE, living at home, working part-time. Students who entered with A-levels appeared to be significantly less likely to doubt than those who entered with 'other' qualifications, although no significant differences were found in self-reported end of 1st year results. It may be that differences in these areas may be found in our leaver sample, however amongst persisters they do not appear to influence doubting.

Attitudinal Responses

Independent sample T-tests revealed that doubters were significantly less likely to respond positively than non-doubters across the whole range of attitudinal questions

Table 1   Perceptions of Social and Organisational Aspects of HE

Average scores	Doubters	Difference	Non doubters
Social environment	3.32	0.30**	3.62
Choice of course	3.93	0.21**	4.15
Learning and teaching Environment	3.12	0.16**	3.28

(1 to 5 scale where 5 represents a positive experience, ** significant at the 1% level)

A marked difference in attitudes was also noted across the sub-set of questions comparing perceptions of the student experience at the beginning of the 1st year with their current perceptions.

Table 2 Global Attitudes at Start of Year 1 and Start of Year 2

Yorke's categories	Doubters 1st year	Change	Doubters 2nd year	Non doubters 1st year	Change	Non doubters 2nd year
Student experience	3.51	0.27**	3.78	3.86	0.28**	4.14
Coping with HE	3.14	0.27**	3.41	3.47	0.13**	3.60
Social environment	3.43	0.32**	3.75	3.77	0.29**	4.06
Choice of programme	3.13	0.26**	3.39	3.47	0.13**	3.60
Coping with Finance	3.22	0.20*	3.42	3.27	0.14*	3.41

(1 to 5 scale where 5 represents a positive experience, ** significant at the 1% level. *significant at the 5% level)

Although all students responded more positively on these measures by the start of the 2nd year, doubters' responses at this stage still only corresponded with responses from non-doubters at the start of the 1st year, across all measures except 'coping with finance'.

Although it is encouraging to see more positive responses from non doubters by the start of year 2, we must be wary of assuming that they are necessarily 'out of danger' - independent sample t-tests revealed a marked difference in perceived levels of satisfaction at the time of completing the questionnaire. Doubters were giving significantly less positive responses than non-doubters to the questions, *'I would recommend this programme to others'* (t = -4.862, p = 0.00 one - tailed test). *'I have no regrets about choosing this programme'* (t = - 9.004 p = 0.00 one-tailed test).

Doubting
The majority of the 178 doubters stated that they had wanted to leave occasionally, although a significant proportion suggested that they had wanted to leave 'very often'.

Table 3 Percentage Wanting to Leave University in the 1st Year (N = 458)

Never	Occasionally	Quite often	Very often
61%	27%	7%	5%

Further, the number of reasons given for wanting to leave increased with the frequency of wanting to leave.

Table 4 Mean Number of Reasons for Doubting in each Frequency Category

Occasionally	Quite often	Very often
2.9	3.7	5.8

Why?

All reasons given in the questionnaire were responded to, although the main reasons cited were financial, general discontent with the course and personal problems. Only 16% of students cited 'university different than expected' as a reason.

Table 5 Main Reasons for Wanting to Leave

Reason	Percentage of students responding
Financial	38%
General discontent with programme	35%
Personal problems	32%

When?

It would appear that students feel 'at risk' at various points during the academic year and when having personal problems, but that the first few weeks may be a particular risk period and also the summer vacation, when students may disengage with the institution.

Table 6 Times When Students Were Most Likely to Want to Leave

When	Percentage of students responding
First few weeks	37%
When having personal problems	28%
During summer vacation	27%
When deadlines were approaching	23%
Around exam time	21%

Persistence

Persistence appeared to be facilitated largely by within-the-individual factors – goal orientation and its antecedent self-efficacy, and increased ability to adapt to the new environment. However, persistence was for some determined by less 'positive' reasons – disapproval, losing face and not knowing what else to do. Support from others was a less critical factor in influencing the decision to stay.

Table 7 Reasons Provided for Staying

Reason	Percentage of students responding
Determination to get a good career	65%
Not the sort of person to give up easily	57%
Learnt to cope better	43%
Support from family/ friends at home	33%
Support from friends at university	25%
Not knowing what else to do	17%
Personal problems resolved	16%
Parental/family disapproval	14%
Support from tutors	11%
Losing face	10%
Support from other sources within the university	5%
Other	6%

Discussion

The aim of this stage of the research was to identify any differences between students who remained at university despite sometimes doubting their commitment to 'being a student', and those who never doubted this commitment. Importantly, we hoped to gain an insight into which factors contributed to doubting, and which contributed to persistence. The next stage of the project, using an adapted version of the questionnaire presented to persisters, will examine the characteristics of those who left the Faculty during their 1st year. This is to determine if they differ in significant respects from those who remain, and in particular to examine how doubting but persisting differs from doubting which results in withdrawal.

Research (Yorke, 1999: Woodley et al, 1992: Johnes, 1990 Johnes & Taylor, 1989) suggests a range of entry characteristics deemed to make students more 'at risk' - living at home, SEG (socio-economic group), entry route etc. Thus it may reasonable to assume that doubters present with more of these characteristics than non-doubters. The assumption was, however, unsupported in this study (with the caveat that these characteristics may be present amongst leavers). These findings suggest that we should be cautious in assuming that 'non- traditional' students will necessarily experience more problems in adjusting to HE. Many may possess other characteristics which facilitate persistence.

In this study, doubting appears to be related to individual perceptions of the student experience rather than to 'at risk' characteristics. In common with leavers (e.g. Johnstone, 1997), doubters in our sample cited a wide range of issues - in particular financial, general discontent with course and personal problems - which contributed to the desire to leave university during the 1st year. This suggests a general lack of satisfaction with the student experience per se.

So what influenced doubters' more negative perceptions? Although the tendency was for both groups to respond more positively on the sub-set of questions which addressed perceptions at the start of the 2nd year, doubters current responses still only corresponded with responses from non-doubters at the start of the 1st year. It is suggested that the inability to cope quickly with change, results in the perception of a new environment as more threatening (Kaplan, 1983). Do doubters take longer to adapt to the changes they encountered during the process of integration, and thus perceive the whole experience less favourably?

A significant difference was noted in levels of satisfaction at the start of year 2, as measured by responses to questions relating to regrets about choice of programme, and recommending the programme to others, with doubters significantly more likely to respond negatively than non-doubters.

Interestingly, the analysis also showed that doubters expressed significantly less satisfaction with their end of 1st year results, despite no differences between both groups in reported end grades. Do some doubters have higher expectations of them, and set themselves higher goals, than non-doubters, and does this impact on levels of satisfaction with all aspects of the 1st year experience?

Persistence

Our doubters may be slower to adapt to a new environment, and thus perceive the integration process as more problematic than non-doubters, but there is little evidence here to suggest that this alone determines withdrawal. Although doubters appeared to face many obstacles, for example financial and personal problems, and concerns about social and academic aspects of the student experience, ultimately they overcame these. So why did these students persist?

In this study reasons for staying were dominated by factors intrinsic to the individual, and are positively related to self-esteem, motivation and commitment, such as goal orientation and self efficacy (Maslow 1954, Bandura, 1978). Nearly half the sample also stated that they had learnt to cope better – this is an adaptational attribute (Kaplan, 1983). Self-efficacy, an aspect of the self concept (Rogers, 1956) which refers to the belief in one's own power to act effectively, is often considered to be an enduring characteristic formed by early positive regard (ibid.). Levels do not remain static but are enhanced by positive feedback from others (Bandura, 1978: Jussim, 1992). It is considered to be an antecedent of goal orientation, and individuals with high self-efficacy beliefs are known to make more effort and do not 'give up easily'(Bandura & Cervone, 1983). Importantly self-efficacy judgements are suggested to mediate between goals and goal-directed effort. Those with high self-efficacy will take on increasingly difficult tasks in order to achieve their goal (ibid.).

These findings support Gull (2001) who suggested that a strong determination to succeed and a strong sense of self-identity were key factors in facilitating persistence amongst ex-Access students at Salford. They also support Mackie (1998) who suggested that strong personal commitment to the chosen programme was an essential pre-requisite for progression.

However, a significant number of the doubters gave less 'positive reasons for staying – for example, ' not knowing what else to do'. Mackie (1998) suggests that some students may feel they have little control over their life, which manifests as a feeling that there are no better alternatives, so they remain, with doubts unresolved. It is suggested that those who perceive little control over their lives may be more likely to have an external locus of control, (Rotter, 1966) – a tendency to believe that outcomes are dependant on factors outside the control of the individual.

Support

Doubters cited support from others less often than personal characteristics, as factors which facilitated persistence. In common with other research (e.g. Johnston, 1997), central support services were rarely cited as influencing the decision to remain. Reasons underlying the general reluctance to access support are worthy of further investigation.

Impact on Current Strategies

Oakey & Rae (1998) suggest that we should initially 'support for acclimatisation and cultural adaptation to a new physical and social environment' (Oakey & Rae, 1998: 11), with 'friendly, efficient and effective' (ibid.) induction programmes. Having embarked upon the programme of study, individuals need to feel that others regard them positively

for self-efficacy to be enhanced (Rogers, 1961a). Positive feedback, social support and collaboration with others are suggested to play key roles (e.g. Jussim et al, 1992, Abrams & Hogg, 1990) and are frequently suggested as strategies to aid retention (e.g. Johnstone, 1997, Yorke, 2001).

A significant finding was that doubters were highly goal-orientated – indeed generally students in our Faculty appear to be career-focused – 82% of all respondents agreed/ strongly agreed that they chose the course to enable them to get a good career. We should, therefore, ensure employability skills are well embedded (and recognisable!) particularly in year 1.

Whilst it is well recognised that the above mentioned strategies are important determinants of retention, and have been acted upon in many HEIs, we also need to address which current strategies may be negatively impacting on retention. This may be considered from the perspective of the length of time it may take some students to adapt successfully to their new role and to readapt to the 2nd year, for example the effect of semesterisation and length of summer vacation.

Notes

This report is based on a retrospective account of the process of adjustment during the 1st year and it must be taken into account that the adjustment process itself may affect perceptions of how students actually felt when they entered the 1st year. However, significant changes in feelings across measures that impact upon successful integration were noted in the whole sample. This suggests that students made a relatively 'honest' attempt to differentiate how they felt at the start of the second year from how they felt when they first came to the University.

Finally, it must be noted that this research was conducted in a Business Faculty. It may be that the more vocational programmes attract more career-orientated students, and thus that some aspects of our results may not be applicable to students studying other degree programmes.

References

Abrams, D & Hogg, MA (Eds) (1990). *Social Identity Theory: Constructive and critical advances*. Hertfordshire, Harvester- Wheatsheaf.
Bandura, A. (1978). The self-system in reciprocal determinism. *American Psychologist*, Vol 33: 344-358(b).
Bandura, A. & Cervone, D. (1983). Self-evaluative and self-efficacy mechanisms governing the motivational effect of goal systems.
Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, Vol 45: 1017 – 1028.
Deci, E.L. & Ryan, R.M. (1985). *Intrinsic Motivational and Self – determination in Human Behaviour*. New York, Plenum.
Elrod, M & Ramirez, R. (2002). A Comparison of Institutional Factors & Student Satisfaction: Retention Implications in a Hispanic Serving Community College. NCCHC; 7th Annual Summer Leadership Conference 12th July 2002
Erikson, E.H. (1968). *Identity, Youth and Crisis*. New York, Norton.
Fitzgibbon, K. & Prior, J. (2003). Student expectations & University Interventions –

A time line to aid undergraduate student retention. Paper presented at the BEST Conference (- 11 April, 2003)

Gull, D. (2001). Unpublished Doctoral dissertation, Faculty of Health & Social Care, University of Salford.

Johnes, J. (1990). Determinants of student wastage in higher education. *Studies in Higher Education,* Vol 15, No 1: 87 –99.

Johnston, V. (1997). Why do First Year Students Fail to Progress to their Second Year? Paper presented at the British Educational Research Association Annual Conference, September 11 – 14 1997 University of York

Johnston, V. (2001). Developing strategies to improve student retention. Reflections from the work of Napier University's Student retention project. Paper presented to SRHE Conference, Cambridge, December 2001.

Johnston, V. (2002). Improving Student Retention – By accident or design. *Exchange*, 1 spring 2002.

Jussim L. Brown, R. Soffin, S. Ley, J & Kohlhepp, K (1992). Understanding reactions to feedback by integrating ideas from Symbolic Interactionism and Cognitive Evaluation Theory. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol 62 No. 3: 402 - 421

Kaplan, J. (Ed) (1983). *Psychosocial Stress.* New York. Academic Press.

Kelly, H.H. (1972). Causal schemata and the attribution process. In E.E.Jones, D.E. Kanouse, H.H. Kelly, R.E.Nisbett, S.valins & B.Weiner (eds). *Attribution: Perceiving the Causes of Behaviour*. Morristown, N.J. General learning Press.

Longden, B. (2001). Off Course – Renewed Interest in Retention but Whose Interest is Being Served? Paper presented at the Higher Education Close Up Conference 2, Lancaster University 16 – 18 July 2001.

Longden, B. (2001) Leaving College Early: A qualitative case study. Report commissioned by HEFCE

Mackie, S. (1998). Jumping the Hurdles, Paper presented at Higher Education Close Up. UCL, Preston 6 – 8 July 1998.

Maslow, A. (1954). *Motivation and Personality*. New York, Harper Collins.

National Student Survey: interim report on the 2003 pilot and outline of issues for future implementation. http://iet.open.ac.uk/nss/

Oakey, D. and Rae, J. (1998). Research into Student Non-Completion. Staff and Curriculum Development, Education Development Unit Publication, University of Salford.

Oakey, D. Oleksik, G & Surridge, P. (2003). Working for a Degree: The role of employment in contemporary student life. Paper presented at the SRHE Annual Conference, 10 –12th December 2002. Version prepared for University of Salford Teaching and Learning Development Sub – Committee (May, 2003)

Ozga, J. & Sukhnandan, L. (1998). Undergraduate non – completion: developing an explanatory model. *Higher Education Quarterly*, 52(3): 36-333.

Roberts, C (2000). Faculty Widening Participation Project Report, Faculty of Business & Informatics, University of Salford.

Rogers, C. R. (1961a). *On Becoming a Person.* Boston, Houghton Miffin.

Rotter, J.B. (1971). External control and internal control. *Psychology Today*, 5: 37-42.

Seligman, M.E.P. (1975). Helplessness: *On Depression, Development and Death.* San Francisco, Freeman.

Extract from:
Education in a Changing Environment 17th-18th September 2003
Conference Proceedings

Select Committee on Education and Employment 6th report (2001) http://www. publications: parliament .uk/pa/cm200001/cmselect/cmeduemp/124/12404.htm
Tinto, V. (1987). *Leaving College: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition,* University of Chicago Press.
Trotter, E. (2003). Enhancing the early student experience Report to TLDSC 15th October 2003
Yorke, M. (1997) Report 1 in Undergraduate non-completion in Higher Education in England, HEFCE, December 97/29
Yorke, M. (1999). *Leaving Early: Undergraduate Non- completion in Higher Education.* London, Falmer Press.
Yorke , M. (2001). Outside benchmark expectations? Variation in non – completion rates in English Higher Education.
Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management, Vol. 23, No 2: 147 – 157.
Yorke, M. (2001). Formative assessment and its relevance to retention.
Higher Education Research and Development, Vol 20. No 2
Yorke, M & Thomas, L. (2003). Improving the retention of students from lower socio-economic groups. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, Vol. 25, No 1