



Unpacking Underachievement: HBO Student Perspectives

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Problem Statement / Context

- English teacher training department at Hogeschool van Amsterdam (HvA): high attrition rate
 - o Historically, 60-70% of full-time, first-year students don't make it to their second year
 - o For 2017-2018 cohort, 29 out of initial 187 full-time first-year cohort have officially dropped out, as of 4/24/18 → 15.5% attrition rate
 - Likely an underestimate, given unofficial drop-outs and drop-outs in next few months
- Interviews with key administrative stakeholders (managers, teachers, counselors) in order to understand possible factors on a school-wide and national level
 - o Educational background of student population: *mbo* vs. *havo*
 - o Entrance exam doesn't have binding study advice: Lack of filter → lower English level
 - o English language permeates Dutch culture → Students motivated to enroll without appreciation of English mastery needed
 - o Use *hbo* and *propedeuse* as stepping stone to university
 - o Range of English language studies limited at *hbo* level → neglect teaching aspect of program
 - o Re-sitting culture

What's missing here?

Student Perspectives

Qualitative Data

Research Question

How do student perspectives add to existing hypotheses regarding student underachievement within the HvA English teacher training program?

Methods

- 17 interviews with current full-time, first-year students in the English Teacher Training program
- Comparing experiences of "passing" and "non-passing" students
 - o *13 "passing": Passed Semester 1 of English Language Skills (i.e., will receive full 6 study points)
 - * Includes three students who passed Exam 1 and/or 2 with a re-sit.
 - o 4 "non-passing": Did not pass Semester 1 of English Language Skills (i.e., will not receive 6 study points)

Results

	PASSING (N=13)	NON-PASSING (N=4)
(1) Coping Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Despite psychological issues, has effective coping skills (n=9) b. Feels slightly more confident in social support network within HvA; on scale of 1 to 6, \bar{x}_p (5.33) > \bar{x}_{np} (4.62) c. Feels more confident in ability to balance studies with other responsibilities and activities; on scale of 1 to 6, \bar{x}_p (4.25) > \bar{x}_{np} (3.8) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Psychological issues impeding performance (n=1) b. Less confidence in social support network outside of HvA (n=1) c. Extra-curriculars unrelated to study (n=1)
(2) Exposure to English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Background had some English emphasis, e.g., gap year focused on English, bilingual high school or <i>hbo</i>, Cambridge classes, bilingual family (n=12) b. Communicates mostly in English with friends and family (n=11) or interested in writing beyond curriculum requirements (n=6) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Doesn't feel that previous education has adequately prepared them for studies at HvA; on scale of 1 to 6, \bar{x}_{np} (2.3) < \bar{x}_p (4.2) b. Consumption of media is main source of English outside of class; speaks mother tongue with friends and family (n=2)
(3) Identity Status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Experience versus commitment in English and/or teaching b. Mindset 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Identity foreclosure: committed to English teaching without much experience (n=1), or moratorium: experimented (though not necessarily in English and/or teaching) and still unsure of commitment to profession (n=1) b. Fixed mindset (n=1)
(4) Course Expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Knew they were well prepared for academic intensity of program and could easily adapt (n=8); often do not put significant time into studying (n=8) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Felt underprepared for academic intensity of program (n=3); Discrepancy between self-perceived performance and reality: false sense of confidence (n=2)

Note: Symbols (\approx , $>$, $<$) do not indicate statistically significant differences.

Takeaway Points

- No clear differences between groups in terms of: age, educational background, commuting time, predictive power of entrance exam, confidence in student mentor as academic and personal support, attendance
 - o How does this map onto school-wide and national trends as perceived by the HvA's other stakeholders?
- Paying special attention to three students who passed Exam 1 and/or 2 with re-sit
 - o What can we learn?
- Underlying dilemma of program: making sure students don't fall through cracks versus maintaining high standards
 - o What does this tell us about points of intervention?

Limitations / Directions for Further Research

- Only one small snapshot of student body: not generalizable
- Time of year: how would results differ if conducted after completion of year 1?
- Gain perspectives of students who already dropped out: valuable insight missed but hard to gain access to
- Explore how re-sitting culture adds nuances to a cross-cultural understanding of issue
- Compare performance across all courses, not just English Language Skills

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Contact Information

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