Citation for published version


DOI

Link to record in KAR

http://kar.kent.ac.uk/51442/

Document Version

UNSPECIFIED

Copyright & reuse
Content in the Kent Academic Repository is made available for research purposes. Unless otherwise stated all content is protected by copyright and in the absence of an open licence (eg Creative Commons), permissions for further reuse of content should be sought from the publisher, author or other copyright holder.

Versions of research
The version in the Kent Academic Repository may differ from the final published version. Users are advised to check http://kar.kent.ac.uk for the status of the paper. Users should always cite the published version of record.

Enquiries
For any further enquiries regarding the licence status of this document, please contact:
researchsupport@kent.ac.uk

If you believe this document infringes copyright then please contact the KAR admin team with the take-down information provided at http://kar.kent.ac.uk/contact.html
STRUCTURED ABSTRACT

Exploring Students’ Conception of Learning through Narratives

Sebastian Dziallas and Sally Fincher
University of Kent
Corresponding Author’s Email: sd485@kent.ac.uk

CONTEXT
In contrast to studies that solely explore students’ identity development during their time at university and beyond – and so have minimal focus on disciplinary and institutional context – others have sought a richer picture. For example, Stevens et al. developed an engineering-specific three-dimensional framework of learning consisting of disciplinary knowledge, identification (as an engineer), and navigation (through engineering education) [1]. And Begel and Simon observed novice software developers in industry and described instructional techniques to better prepare recent college graduates for their careers [2]. We draw on these (and other) works to examine students’ experience of, and the effect of, an engineering education.

PURPOSE AND RESEARCH QUESTION
In this work we take a holistic view of students’ development: we are interested in how students make sense of their educational experiences at particular institutions, how these institutions influence student learning, and what this reveals about students’ wider learning trajectories.

APPROACH
We adopted a life story protocol for narrative elicitations of students’ and graduates’ learning experiences and conducted interviews with a small number of students at Olin College of Engineering. A life story approach presents an appropriate methodology to explore students’ sense-making as evidence from research in psychology suggests that we construct stories to make sense of our lived experiences (which form our narrative identity). For the analysis of the interviews we used methods of grounded theory and narrative enquiry.

KEY FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
The work we report here is a preliminary study. We present five thematic groups that emerged from our analysis of interviews with students at Olin College (of which all but one were either in their junior or senior year) [3]. Whilst these themes are particular to the cohort of students we interviewed, they also indicate the education that Olin provides, reflecting a curriculum that anticipates needs for a new kind of engineer and is designed to disrupt existing structures.

CONCLUSIONS
Narrative methodologies have allowed us to explore students’ conception of learning. Longitudinally, we hope that they will also expose characteristics of “graduateness”. We will revisit the students, who are now graduates, using the same narrative elicitation technique in the coming year.

REFERENCES

KEYWORDS
narrative methodology; qualitative research; student experience