Trajectories towards failure: Stories focusing on post-16 transitions within the UK Sport- Education sector

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Outline of Research Focus

- 18th-month PhD ethnographic study understanding the FE-HE transitions of sport students (Aldous, Sparkes & Brown, 2012; 2014)

- Exploration of ‘pedagogic relations’ within college based sport and coaching qualifications (Aldous, 2012; Aldous & Freeman, 2015)

- Implementation of pedagogic and pastoral strategies within Level 4 BSc Sport & Physical Education programme (ongoing)

- We now draw on data generated by an 18-month ethnographic study to focus on the experiences of two students, Peter and Charlie (all names are pseudonyms) who underwent the transition from an FdSc onto a BSc qualification. In so doing, we seek to provide insights into the increasing dichotomy that exists between the construction of official forms of opportunity within policy, and the actual ‘lived experience’ within FdSc–BSc transitions. [Aldous et al, 2014, p.4]
The participants...

- I went to college from High School not really knowing what I wanted to do in life... *When it came to choose what sort of university course I wanted to do I was a little bit, .... I don’t know, scared [is] not the word but sort of shocked*. I don’t think I was really ready for it. [Charlie, Interview 1]

- Before I decided to go to college I went around and did a few interviews for full-time and part-time jobs. The impressions I got from that, was I’d rather be going to college than be going to work. *The prospect of a full-time job at Sainsbury’s or Tesco’s didn’t really appeal to me*. [Peter: Interview 1]

“*framed by the alluring necessity of needing a degree qualification to progress or avoid employment*”. Implications for the way they engage with university structures...
Facilitators of transition

• School, it’s sort of almost pushing you. I think I can remember one [teacher] even giving me a coursework to copy to make sure that I did it. The way they write it out is that they give you: for a pass you must do this, for a merit you must do this, for a distinction you must do this. You look back and it’s like ‘Peter do this, tick’. [Peter: Interview 1]

the disparity between official discourses of opportunity and lived experience of transition.

Choice was strongly facilitated by the discourses of access and widening participation. The combination of school encouragement and the porosity of FE–HE acted as conditions of action

• It might, alienate us a little bit? I think they are going to exclude us. They’re going to be really wary of us. They’ll probably be a massive divide. I don’t know ... I think on a whole, the lecturers don’t know us and the existing students don’t know us so we might be treated slightly different [Charlie, Interview 2]
Managing expectations

• It was a bit of a shock, like it was our first bit of work within the first two weeks of getting here ... I think its the whole step up...to the degree. [Charlie: Interview 2]

inward process in which agents reproduce rather than elaborate on their experience led to a series of transformations that slowly isolated them from academic and social positions.

• I feel just left alone really. Okay, we were treated as any other student who had been there but we weren’t there for the two years before. In lessons we were labelled the ‘CAFE progression students’ and were singled out. You feel like everyone is looking at you and thinking ‘who the hell are they’. [Charlie: Interview 3]

data highlighted an apparently irreversible detachment of general dispositions from the processes
Transformation

- It’s different than at Hope. At Hope it’s a ratio of 1:5 between teacher and student. Whereas here at TUC, it’s usually a ratio of about 1:50. Some of the rooms are like 2 or 3 times the size of what they are at Hope college. To begin with, I wouldn’t say I was daunted but I wanted to find out what the experience was going to be like. [Peter, Interview 3]

Future research is required to facilitate some re-examination of the conditions that prevent students within sports education becoming lost within the current myriad of academic discourses of performativity, academic achievement and career success.

- I kinda went downhill a little bit; didn’t really cope with the work. I haven’t been back yet but I am not expecting a great amount and possibly might have to retake [the final year]. That’s how bad it was. I was handing it [work] back to lecturers but they weren’t getting back to me in time. If they did, they were giving me a day to sort of fix it. I was sort of panicking. [Charlie, Interview 4]
## Outcomes/recommendations

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<th>Research-Based Recommendations</th>
<th>Possible Actions</th>
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<td>Needs-Analysis of vocational qualifications (e.g. BTEC, FDSc)</td>
<td>1. Greater understanding of structural difference BTEC/BSc qualifications [curricula, pedagogies &amp; assessment]</td>
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<td>Re-Examination of the conditions that support student transition within &amp; between qualifications</td>
<td>1. Staff Training  2. Creation, Implementation &amp; Evaluation of Academic Skills Modules at both college and university  3. Personal Tutor System</td>
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<td>Adaptation of curriculum, pedagogy &amp; assessment structures within college and university</td>
<td>1. Decrease in summative assessment  2. Increase focus on Staff &amp; Student skills/pedagogic practice</td>
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<td>Enhanced collaboration between partnership institutions</td>
<td>1. Greater understanding of pedagogical practices in college &amp; university settings  2. Develop of staff awareness on transition process</td>
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Aldous, D., Sparkes, A.C., and Brown, D (2014) Trajectories towards failure: considerations regarding post-16 transitions within the UK Sport-Education sector, Sport, Education and Society, DOI: 10.1080/13573322.2014.890929

Aldous, D., & Freeman, J. (2015), Framing pedagogic relations within the boundaries of Foundation Degree Sport and Coaching qualifications, Sport Education and Society, 19(4), 1-11.