Evaluation of a teacher-focused widening participation intervention

Kirsty Younger

Outline

- Describe the Teacher Summer School programmes and research methodology

- Research rationale / survey findings

- Interview method and findings

- Conclusions

- Suggestions for further research

Teacher Summer Schools

- Eight 'leading universities'
- Preference given to schools with lower than average attainment / lower than average progression to HE
- Residential CPD
- Aim to:
  - Extend the reach of the Trust's student summer schools
  - Break down misconceptions teachers and students may have about leading universities
  - Support teachers to provide high quality subject-specific enrichment
  - Give teachers additional resources to offer education and careers advice to their students
  - A forum to explore subject interests and new research within their field
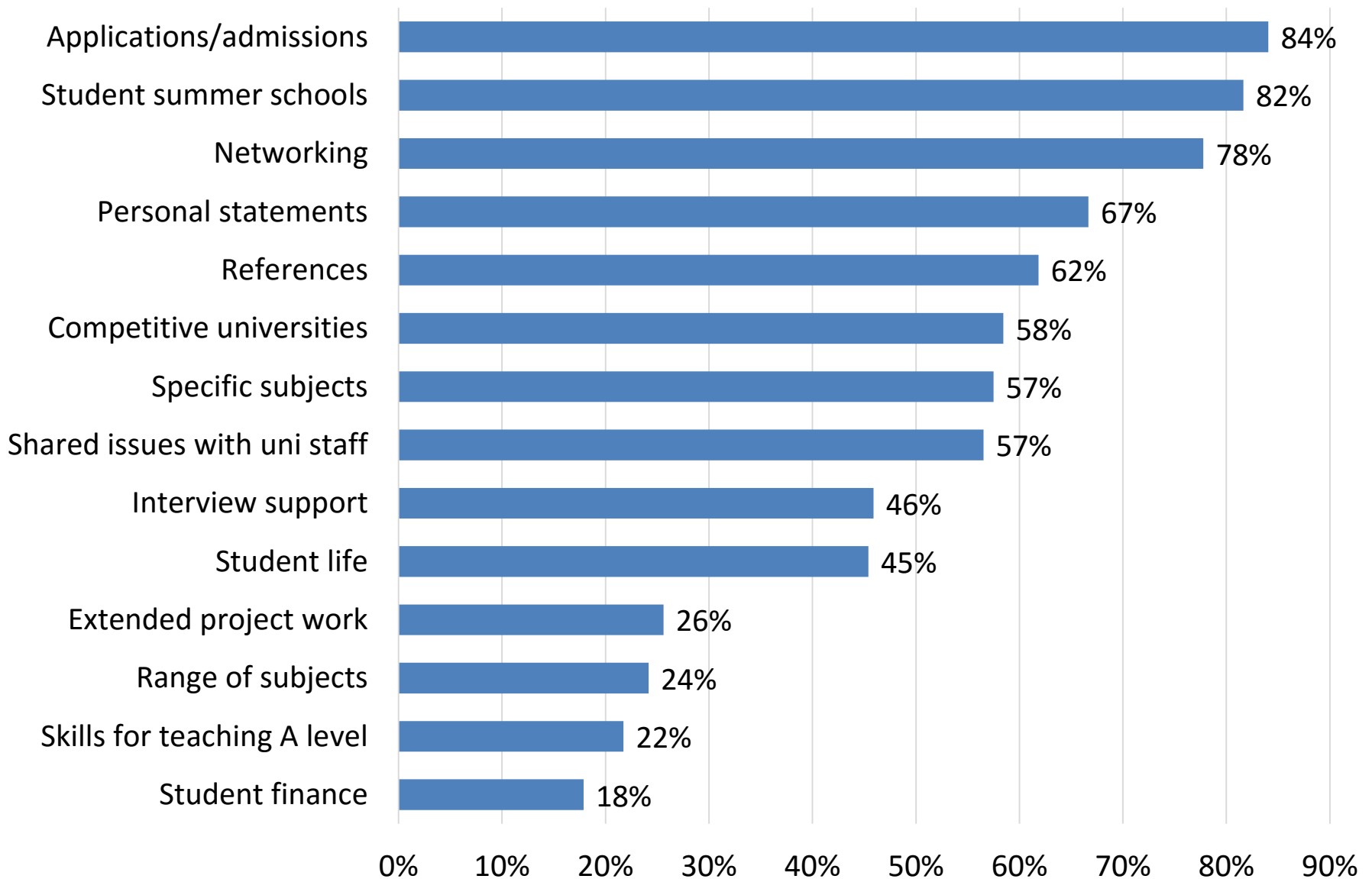
HE Access Network

- Evidence-based advice and guidance
- HEAN support system including:
  - specific feedback on two references and two statements
  - consultation and action plan
  - OSCAR: UCAS reference and personal statement support
- Structured to facilitate action

Research design

Activity	Timing	Response rates / sample
Exit survey	Immediately after TSS – June – August 2015; October 2015	Overall 82% (range from 53% to 97%)
UCAS applications: September 2015 – January 2016		
Follow-up survey	February 2016	Overall 43% (range from 14% to 58%)
Follow-up interviews	April 2016	6 interviewees from 5 institutions

What do you feel you got out of the Teacher Summer School?
Please tick all that apply

Category	Percentage
Applications/admissions	84%
Student summer schools	82%
Networking	78%
Personal statements	67%
References	62%
Competitive universities	58%
Specific subjects	57%
Shared issues with uni staff	57%
Interview support	46%
Student life	45%
Extended project work	26%
Range of subjects	24%
Skills for teaching A level	22%
Student finance	18%

Intentions vs long-term

- In the exit survey:
  - 100% of respondents were 'very likely' or 'quite likely' to use the advice and guidance
  - 98% likely to use online personal statement system

- By May 2016…
  - 92% of schools had taken up at least one element of support and 67% had used OSCAR
  - but survey responses (quantitative and free response) indicated that there were barriers

Interviews: sampling

- Those who had agreed to be interviewed: 73 respondents
- Excluded:
  - Dropped out part-way through survey / hadn't completed free response
  - Schools that weren't well-matched to eligibility criteria
- Invited 10 potential interviewees based on survey responses – interviewed 6
  - Had implemented lots of change, especially at department-/school-level
  - Had wanted to implement change but identified barriers

Interview process

- List of questions – sometimes deviation
- Recorded and transcribed; coded in Nvivo
- Revised initial codes to refine concepts and categories
- Process still ongoing – this is early findings.
- Emerging themes:
  - Disseminating information
  - Personal motivation
  - Evidence, reassurance
  - School context

Disseminating information

I've had to laugh. They sent round an email going: "Ooh, there's this wonderful course running this year" – i.e. the equivalent of what I went on last year – "It would be fantastic if somebody went, we're gonna offer them days off in lieu." And I'm like "But I went there last year. Didn't anyone sort of realise?"

Yeah, they were I think worried about - we've got a thing about spending - if it's not one of the preferred suppliers on our list for [local] council then we couldn't use it…. There's maybe some confusion about that. We were trying to tell them that it's free, [but] we never ever got the actual go-ahead to go and actually start using it.

*And then I gave up. Hitting a dead end****. I wish I'd just maybe, in hindsight, just went and logged on and just said myself? Have a go by myself with it.***

Disseminating information

Yeah, we've got to be quite careful, because most of the senior management teach what would be regarded as the softer subjects. I have been talking to the careers person and she is going to try to intervene when we enrol students. We've had an issue this year…

And that's why I went and discussed this with the careers person. That I could really pick out from looking at these two students – [and] we did get data to back it up. And then she was going to go to senior managers and just put this forward and say we have got to be a bit more careful about advice we give when we are enrolling students and talking to students.

Personal motivation

I am a first generation student: My parents didn't get A levels and didn't go to university. And I was so grateful for all the help I had from my teachers. So, I am really glad that I can do the same job! To help other people. It's a nice vocational thing for me to help students to see and help their parents to understand as well.

I went to a university myself and that's why I try to get the kids to go and do science at university

And if an opportunity arises, which it often does, you are able to give them some information informally, about what's available. But this school is also heavily involved with the Sutton Trust, I'm pleased to say. That's one of the attractions of the post being here, that Sutton Trust is doing great work here too.

Personal motivation

With your role with the medicine stuff, is there a line manager who is responsible for that..?

No. It's sort of almost voluntary. It's not really a formal role.

So those lunch time classes, is it something you have been doing a long time or is it something you've started since attending the TSS?

No, I have been doing anyway. I've only been teaching for six years and I started I think on my second year there.

If anybody is interested in going to one of these summer schools, come along and speak to me. And that would have to be at lunchtime or after school or whatever.

Evidence, reassurance

*What the [event] has done, it has showed me that that is useful! I could talk other people about it. And it was just, I don't know, sort of little subject specific things, thinking: Oh, I should focus on this type of … I mean what Cambridge are very much looking for, is problem solving and also resilience, this having a go at difficult things and carrying on even if you don't get it right. Which again the Olympiad is very, very good. **In a way I was already doing what I should be doing, but it was confirming it, and confirming that I should be pushing students to do this**.*

School context

[If you look at the Ofsted report] you'll see that attention is probably elsewhere

It's just learning the basics and knowing the fundamentals of the subjects. And then that also then leads to a lack of basic knowledge. When I'm teaching chemistry, I am still amazed by students coming in to do A level chemistry but don't have a grasp of the fundamentals of chemistry I think they should have picked up couple of years ago.

'Conclusions'

- Successful dissemination relies on a supportive school culture – or empowered teachers

- Teachers are often engaged for personal reasons / 'moral obligation'

- Interventions could think about helping teachers to take sustained action

- 'Personal conclusions'

Future research

- Repeating survey for 2016
- How to build more data collection into ongoing practice?
- Potentially looking across interventions – e.g. the Advancing Access programme to generalise findings more broadly