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The First Year Experience: Looking back to inform the future

Karen Nelson* & John Clarke

Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane Australia

The importance of the first year experience (FYE) to success at university has been a focus of attention in the Australian higher education sector since the 1990s. For students a successful transition into university during their first year is now regarded as crucial for student engagement, success and retention. In this review we summarise a decade of research into FYE in the Australasian context. We draw on the findings arising from this comprehensive review of FYE programs and practices to describe FYE trends through the dual lenses of the first year curriculum principles and the generational approach to FYE initiatives. We contend that the generational approach to conceptualising the FYE and first year student engagement has made a useful but limited contribution to our understanding of the first year experience. Acknowledging the criticality of student engagement in a successful FYE, we propose an alternative— the Student Engagement Success and Retention Maturity Model (SESR-MM)— as a sophisticated vehicle for achieving whole-of-institution approaches to the FYE. The SESR-MM embodies the aspirations and characteristics of the transition pedagogy, highlights the need for institutional level evaluation of the FYE, focuses attention on the capacity of institutions to mobilise for first year student engagement, and importantly builds on the generational approach to allow an assessment of institutional capacity to initiate, plan, manage, evaluate and review institutional FYE practices.

Keywords: *first year experience; student engagement; maturity model.*

1. Introduction

It is widely accepted that first year of undergraduate study is a critical period, not only because it is when commencing students establish

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* Email: knelson@usc.edu.au

foundations for their future learning outcomes, but also because it is a central enabling time for ongoing student engagement, learning success and retention (Australian Council for Educational Research, 2008; Tinto, 2009). Ideally, a first year student's learning and classroom experiences will be mediated through an intentionally designed and enacted curriculum or *transition pedagogy* (Kift & Nelson, 2005). Gale (2009) reiterates the notion of Nelson, Kift and Clarke (2008) that this pedagogy needs to be "holistic"— that is, considers the personal, social and academic aspects of learning— developmental and embrace the social justice principle of *self-determination*.

To identify likely future directions for transition pedagogy this review will revisit a comprehensive synthesis of Australasian1 literature on the First Year Experience (FYE) of higher education students during the decade from 2000 to 2010 (Nelson, Clarke, Kift, & Creagh, 2011). In that review, Nelson et al. conducted an extensive analysis of nearly 400 empirical reports and conceptual discussions. These reports also provided invaluable longitudinal trend meta-analyses across the 1995–2010 period and by examining the scope, definitions and processes of FYE research, Nelson et al. framed the literature into three periods: 2000-2003, 2004-2007 and 2008-2010. These time periods were further analysed in terms of their First Year Curriculum Principles (FYCPs) and the Generational Approach to describing the FYE. First Year Curriculum Principles consist of six elements: Transition; Diversity; Design; Engagement; Assessment and Evaluations (Kift 2009). The generational approach describes the evolution of practices believed to enhance the FYE beginning with co-curricular initiatives, then a focus on curriculum-related activities and finally whole-of-institution partnerships (Kift, 2009; Kift, Nelson, & Clarke, 2010; Wilson, 2009).

Nelson, et al. (2011, p. 47) concluded their synthesis by suggesting a more sophisticated approach to the FYE based on maturity modelling (MM) theory and practice. The final sections of this review draws on post-2010 literature, such as Nelson, Smith, and Clarke (2012) and Kahu (2013), to explore the possible role of maturity modelling in extending our understanding of student engagement. With reference to recent empirical work, it is proposed that a MM interpretation of student engagement, success and retention—the *Student Engagement Success and Retention Maturity Model (SESR-MM)*—provides a useful and sophisticated way of advancing the generational descriptions of the FYE for the future.

2. Trends in the literature

Following Nelson et al. (2011), this review will summarise three clusters of FYE research starting in 2000. It begins by identifying the most frequently reported First Year Curriculum Principles (FYCPs), and the generational approach to the FYE described in examples in the FYE literature at that time.

First Year Experience literature: 2000-2003

The major focus between 2000-2003 was on isolated or "siloed" first generation co-curricular activities, along with programs and strategies reflecting the Transition FYCP. Many of these activities were exploratory in nature, focusing on specific student cohorts and targeting orientation and peer mentoring. A small collection of work exhibited second generation approaches to FYE and there was some evidence of the third generation approach.

Orientation and transition

During this period, approaches to orientation focused consciously on the needs and concerns of the students rather than precedent (Howells, 2003; Lintern, Johnston, & O'Reagan, 2001; K. Walker, 2001)— "student-centred rather than university-centred" (Lintern et al., p. 7). The Lintern et al. and K. Walker studies were responding to "the increasing diversity of students and the changing economic climate ... [which in turn] influenced student and institutional expectations of orientation programs" (Lintern et al., p. 17). Howells, providing a specific example of "needs" versus "precedent", argued that the starting point for orientation should be the students' "self-conception as learner", an aspect that "has been traditionally ignored" (p. 1). There was also interest in residential or camp programs as part of orientation (Crosthwaite & Churchward, 2000; Scott, McKain, & Jarman, 2000). Some authors reported on the development and implementation of programs that focused explicitly on the initial transition such as the Transition Program (Kantanis, 2000b), the Transition Workshop (Peat, Dalziel, & Grant, 2001) and the Diploma in Foundation Studies (Levy & Murray, 2003).

Peer mentoring programs

There were many studies of peer programs in this period (e.g., Clulow, 2000; Macdonald, 2000; Pearson, Roberts, O'Shea, & Lupton, 2002;

Peat et al., 2001; Stone, 2000) with Peat et al. reflecting the general finding that "peer networks ... were helpful in easing the transition of undergraduate students" (p. 199). Reflecting the outcomes of the Krause and Duchesne (2000) study, Kantanis (2000a) highlighted the importance of "social transition underpinning a successful academic transition to university" (p. 103), stressing the significant influence of the social dimension on engagement behaviour (McInnis, 2001).

Emergence of second and possible third generational approaches

There was some evidence of second generation approaches to the FYE during this period. For example: Peat and Franklin (2002) reported on the impact of moving curriculum resources online, Snepvangers and Yorke (2002) fostered engagement by aligning assessment with a real-world professional context, and Perry and Allard (2003) embedded a *Transitions and Connections* module (p. 80) into the curriculum of two core subjects designed to allow students to "make connections [with] some of the issues that they face when making the transition to university" (p. 75).

A few literature items reflected a third generation, whole-of-university approach. In what Harvey, Drew, and Smith (2006) regarded as "a rare example of a more strategic model focussing on a whole university approach" (p. 58), Pitkethly and Prosser (2001) reported on an attempt at developing and implementing a more extensive university-wide FYE Project, while Powell and Peel (2000) reported on a program that included early attempts to identifying and supporting academically "at-risk" students. McGowan (2003) proposed a mainstream teaching and learning focus on "discipline-specific language development … to reduce the incidence of unintentional plagiarism by confused first year students" (para. 1). Other items reported work in progress on developing an institution-wide holistic and coordinated FYE approach—some operational to varying degrees (Emmitt, Callaghan, Warren, & Postill, 2002; Kantanis, 2000b), others at a conceptual level only (McLoughlin, 2002).

First Year Experience literature: 2004–2007

The 2004–2007 period featured both quantitative and qualitative changes in the FYE literature but activity remained largely at a sub-institutional level with most items focusing on pilot or early-stage initiatives. First generation activities were still prevalent, but they were subtly more sophisticated than the previous period. Nevertheless, they were becoming overshadowed by a dominant second generation literature that reflected a learning-centred philosophy underpinned by the emergent FYCPs of Design, Engagement and

Assessment. There was also evidence of the beginnings of cross-institutional cooperation involving academic and professional staff. Of significance, was the introduction and defining of the term *transition pedagogy*, providing the conceptual framework for moving beyond the first and second generation FYE approaches.

More sophisticated first generation approaches

Orientation and peer programs remained dominant throughout this period but approaches used in the programs were more sophisticated. For example, Jarkey (2004) "viewed orientation not as a 'one-off' information session, but as an ongoing learning experience" (p. 186) and proposed a holistic semester-long approach. Similarly, Morda, Sonn, Ali and Ohtsuka (2007) extended the traditional pre-semester orientation four weeks into the semester, integrating activities into the curriculum (reflecting a second generation approach). Fowler's (2004) assessment was that "the popularity of student-mentoring programs in institutions of higher education seems to be on the rise" (p. 18). Peer programs were reported in various forms with some notably, moving away from "buddy" systems to being explicitly learning focused e.g. PASS (peer-assisted study sessions), SI (supplemental instruction) and PALS (peer-assisted learning strategy)—(e.g., Calder, 2004; Dawson, Lockyer, & Ferry, 2007; Fowler, 2004; Glaser, Hall, & Halperin, 2006; Penman & White, 2006; Sturgess & Kennedy, 2004). A number of these programs were designed for specific cohorts or modes—distance education (Sturgess & Kennedy), SI leaders online (Dawson et al.). Williams and Sher (2007) reported on an extension of the peer mentoring approach to a guidance mentor role where an experienced student support person contacted at-risk students to provide appropriate advice.

Studies of student expectations begun in the previous period continued. For example, Andrews (2006), picking up on Barker's (2000) misalignment of student and lecturer expectations around learning outcomes and processes, proposed "rigorous" and early alignment (p. 1) and Meyer and Shanahan (2004), building on their earlier modelling (Meyer & Shanahan, 2001), advocated the development of metacognitive capacity in students to counter misconceptions and improve achievement.

In general, the focus was on all commencing students. However, studies began to focus on the needs and challenges of specific cohorts. For example: non-traditional cohorts (Benseman, Coxon, Anderson, & Anae, 2006), those with disabilities (Brett & Kavanagh, 2007), who were mature-aged (e.g., Todd & Ballantyne, 2007), were distance education students (Mir & Rahaman, 2007), had a non-English speaking background (Bagot et al., 2004) or were located on campuses with specific and sometimes unique

characteristics (e.g., Pillay, Clarke, & Taylor, 2006; Zimitat & Sebastian, 2007). Zepke and Leach (2007) explored how university lecturers catered for such student diversity.

An increase in second generation approaches and FYCPs

Evidence of curriculum-focused, second generation approaches to FYE began to increase along with the emergence of the Design, Engagement and Assessment FYCPs, as reported in numerous learning-centred FYE strategies. The majority of these studies were subject-based and, to a lesser extent, program- or faculty-based. However a focus on discipline-based FYE programs was apparent (for example, in computer science/software engineering: Moffat, Hughes, Sondergaard, & Gruba, 2005; law: Kift, 2004; nursing: Penman & White, 2006; social work: Cameron & Tesoriero, 2004; and science: R. Ellis, Taylor, & Drury, 2007).

There was also a continuing, although reduced, interest in the factors intrinsic to the individual believed to be associated with first year success or persistence (e.g., Bagot et al., 2004; R. Ellis et al., 2007; Holden, 2005; Madigan, 2006; McKenzie, Gow, & Schweitzer, 2004). Of some significance here is the work of Lizzio and Wilson (2004) that explored students' perceptions of their capability to learn. Building on this, Lizzio (2006) developed the five senses of success model that continues to inform FYE initiatives in his context and beyond.

There were also reviews and studies that explored institutional factors; for example teaching quality with Cameron and Tesoriero (2004), like Kift earlier (2002), stressing the need for more support of casual staff; and factors external to the university (e.g., Anderson & McCrea, 2005; Holden, 2005; Jardine, 2005; Lawrence, 2005; Zepke, Leach, & Prebble, 2006).

An emergence of third generation approaches

A number of researchers addressed the problem of student support infrastructure being separate from learning and teaching activities. For example, Waters (2004) reported on UniStart, which "brought together a range of stakeholders with the aims of better coordinating efforts … and establishing an ongoing university-wide consultative mechanism for monitoring and evaluating these activities" (p. 1). Purnell (2004) reported on a university-wide induction strategy designed to include academic and professional staff and Wylie (2005) developed a comprehensive retention model of logically connected intervention alerts designed to improve student persistence, that could act as "a theoretical guide" for local use (p. 14). Kift and Nelson (2005) introduced the term transition pedagogy, stating

their intention to: "pilot, develop and communicate a university-wide sustainable, integrated, coordinated, curriculum-mediated transition framework" (p. 232). Stone (2005) proposed a representative First-Year Retention Committee that "aimed to integrate academic, administrative and support strategies" (p. 33). Skene, Hogan, & Brown (2006) collated ideas used across their institution to facilitate transition to promote cross-institutional dialogue on the FYE using a web-based resource and a network of staff. Nelson, Kift, Humphreys, and Harper (2006) basing their work on premise that "transition is a responsibility that must be shared and understood by all areas of the university" (p. 3) later described "how good practice for managing the transition of students into university is institutionalised" (Nelson, Kift, & Creagh, 2007, p. 1).

First Year Experience literature: 2008–2010

In this period, the Transition FYCP remained prominent and the Design and Engagement FYCPs continued to emerge. First and second generation approaches were still evident and although there was a surge in reports of third generation approaches, second generation approaches to the FYE dominated. Notably, there was a quite dramatic increase in FYE-related outputs. During this period, the FYCPs were formally articulated under the auspices of Kift's (2009) ALTC Senior Fellowship, which also delivered a range of research- and evidence-based resources for the sector. Di Corpo (2009) provides an example of an actual program that incorporates all FYCPs. Duncan and her colleagues (Duncan et al., 2009) further facilitated the application of the FYCPs to curriculum development, implementation and evaluation by operationalising the principles in some detail and producing other readily available resources (Nelson, Creagh, Kift, & Clarke, 2010). However, the key feature of the 2008–2010 period is the emergence of the Engagement FYCP and the centrality of the engagement concept.

A focus on aspects contributing to student engagement

R. Walker et al. (2010) reported on whole curriculum design but more commonly curriculum-related issues focused on the Design, Assessment and Transition FYCPs. All of the activities had the ultimate aim of fostering student engagement and somewhat reflected deployment of the AUSSE. The work reported by Krause and Coates (2008), along with attempts at developing, validating and reporting on the measurement of the engagement construct (Carr, Hagel, & Hellier, 2010; Richardson & Coates, 2010), highlighted "the multifaceted nature of student engagement" (Krause & Coates, p. 503). This multidimensionality, also acknowledged by Zepke and

colleagues (Zepke & Leach, 2010; Zepke, Leach, & Butler, 2010), and more recently by Kahu (2013), is reflected in the many topics which relate to some aspect of the engagement construct.

Second generation approaches included promoting complementary online support and self-directed learning activities and these were either directly related to the curriculum (e.g., Corbin & Karasmanis, 2010; Griffin, Gilchrist, & Thomson, 2009; Scutter & King, 2010; R. Walker et al., 2010; Waycott & Kennedy, 2009), or associated with the curriculum—for example, assessment (e.g., Lilje & Peat, 2010), learning strategies (e.g., Bath & Bourke, 2010), and staff development (Lynch & Paasuke, 2010).

Sawyer and Scutter (2009) used a wiki successfully "to provide opportunities for ... students to interact and develop first virtual and then physical communities and academic and social networks" (p. 603) to overcome structural challenges to student engagement in the FYE (e.g. large class sizes) and to engender a sense of belonging to a community.

There were investigations of electronic media for example: a comparison of "digital natives" and "digital immigrants" (Kennedy et al., 2008), and levels of digital literacy (McLennan & Gibbs, 2008). Smith (2010) cautioned that significant numbers of students in equity groups "do not possess the digital literacy skills necessary to succeed within the current higher education context" (p. 4). Krause and McEwen (2009) contended that findings such as these "challenge the myth of the 'digital native'" and consistent with a third generation to the FYE, began to develop a "Best Practice Framework to enhance student induction to e-learning in the first year" (p. 251).

Monitoring student (learning) engagement (MSLE)

The genesis of MSLE is found in the attempts by Powell and Peel (2000) and Williams and Sher (2007) reported earlier, but institution-wide sustainable initiatives started to emerge in this period along with the growing interest in the engagement construct. Wilson and Lizzio (2008) classified first year students who failed or marginally passed their first piece of university assessment as "at-risk" and, using a just-in-time intervention to develop self-management and problem-solving capabilities, produced "higher rates of submission and pass rates for the second assessment item" (p. 1). This gave first year advisors a crucial role in the intervention, which is an approach that was replicated successfully elsewhere by Potter and Parkinson (2010).

Scouller, Bonanno, Smith & Krass (2008), in the area of academic literacies, used the premise that "early identification …. should be part of first-year monitoring" (p. 177) and such programs were reported by

Larcombe and Malkin (2008), Brown, Adam, Douglas and Skalicky (2009) and H. Johnston, Duff and Quinn (2009).

More holistically and systematically, Carlson, Scarbrough and Carlson (2009) and Nelson, Duncan and Clarke (2009) developed holistic intervention and monitoring strategies that, in both cases, "sought to provide proactive intervention and support to first year students who are identified at risk" (Carlson et al., p. 67). In both programs, students are proactively contacted by telephone by discipline-experienced and trained later-year students to provide advice and/or referral to specialist services to students showing indicators of potential disengagement (e.g. not submitting or failing an assessment item). Both programs have reported significant benefits to students with Marrington, Nelson, and Clarke (2010) quantifying the considerable financial benefits to their institution and Nelson and Creagh (2011, 2012, 2013) producing a suite of resources to guide good practice.

While there was the increased interest in second generation approaches, first generation were still frequently reported (for details see Nelson, et al., 2011, pp. 32-33). The individual characteristics of students also remained of interest (p. 33) with the relevance of this work to engagement being recently affirmed in Kahu's (2013) synthesis of the engagement literature.

Generational approaches issues

The surge in third generation activities in this period also reflected a qualitative difference in the nature of the institutional-wide FYE approaches. Whereas the few items reported earlier in the decade were works in progress or conceptual, the introduction of the term transition pedagogy as a manifestation of the third generation approach (Kift & Nelson, 2005) and the work of Zepke and colleagues on student outcomes appear to have had a considerable influence (Zepke & Leach, 2005, 2007; Zepke et al., 2005) on this period. However, while the increase in third generation activities appears to be quite dramatic—from 5 in 2004-2007 to 16 in 2008-2010—it pales in comparison to the increase in second generation activities over the same period—from 78 in 2004-2007 to 129 in 2008-2010 (see Table 3 in Nelson et al., 2011, p. 9). Consequently, the following synthesis should be interpreted within that broader context and with caution. There was empirical evidence of robust, functioning institution-wide programs (e.g., Carlson et al., 2009; Kift et al., 2010; Marrington et al., 2010; Nelson et al., 2009; Wilson, 2009). Socio-political determinants of policy for the sector (Bradley, Noonan, Nugent, & Scales, 2008; Cullen, 2006; Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2009) were highly influential on theorising and action during this period; followed by

discussions about widening participation, equity, and associated issues in the FYE literature (e.g., Devlin, 2010; Gale, 2009; Skene & Evamy, 2009).

3. Reflecting on a decade of attention to the FYE: Looking back

The large body of conceptual and empirical evidence summarised here—and more extensively in Nelson et al. (2011)—charts advancements in the FYE in Australasia. Although the period under review finished in 2010, the processing and the writing of the story of that data continued until it was published in 2011 and at that time, there were indications that a more sophisticated approach to research and practice was required to achieve the integrated, whole-of-institution reform envisaged by the transition pedagogy. The Transition, Design, Engagement and Assessment FYCPs were being addressed reasonably well, however the Diversity and the Evaluation principle in particular, required further attention. Furthermore, it became clear that the potential for the emergence of third generation approaches— and hence transition pedagogies—foreshadowed by the increased occurrence of second generation approaches during the 2004-2007 and 2008-2010 periods did not eventuate. Researchers and institutions found that progression from second to third generation FYE initiatives in the main, stalled at co-curricular and second generation program-focused levels of good practice.

Possible solution: Informing the future

As useful as the generational classification has been, attempts to operationalise transition pedagogy encountered problems because the generational concept had no rigorous theoretical base. It was generated post hoc as an historical description of activities—it described the past. In attempting to address these issues, and drawing on earlier work (Nelson et al., 2006), we, circa 2010-2011, were exploring the potential of applying the concept of maturity modelling to tertiary student engagement behaviour (Nelson & Clarke, 2011). We have subsequently developed and populated the Student Engagement, Success and Retention Maturity Model (SESR-MM) (e.g., Nelson, Clarke, & Stoodley, 2013; Nelson, Clarke, Stoodley, & Creagh, in press). Maturity models (MMs) are used to assess the capabilities or maturity of organisational processes and the SESR-MM is specifically designed to assess the capacity of higher education institutions to initiate, plan, frame, manage and evaluate institutional student engagement and retention strategies and programs.

The institutional focus of the SESR-MM is consistent with the essence of transition pedagogy and enables a coordinated, institution-wide approach to the FYE. Further, a MM approach is future-focused, providing a framework for action and it highlights the Evaluation FYCP, on which the literature on institutional programs has been largely silent. Critically, a MM approach provides a common framework for sharing good FYE practice between institutions within a sector and possibly between sectors.

Components of the SESR-MM

The SESR-MM has three essential components: (i) institutional practices associated with student engagement, (ii) indicators of maturity status, and (iii) an assessment of the quality of the practices. Details of the development and population of the SESR-MM are available in Nelson, Clarke, and Stoodley (2013) and Nelson et al. (in press) but briefly:

There are 63 generic practices synthesised into 18 processes and 5 categories. The practices are a comprehensive collection of institutional practices associated with SESR in higher education institutions and have been derived from empirical and theoretical literature and practitioner input. Two categories (Supporting and Belonging) identify the practices that occur within first generation (co-curricular) approaches to the FYE and focus on timely access to support and a sense of belonging. One category (Learning) focuses on the activities that appear in second generation, learning-oriented approaches to mediating the FYE through curriculum, and another category (Integrating) contains the practices association with third generation (transition pedagogy) approaches to the FYE. The fifth category (Resourcing) is focused on resources and infrastructure.

Secondly, there is a set of five indicators of maturity—Providing, Planning, Institutional framing, Monitoring and Optimising. Each generic practice is interpreted for each dimension to provide a complete framework of institutional practices. Hence the SESR-MM framework provides 315 (63x5) specific practices against which the evidence of actual institutional practices can be compared.

Finally, a procedure has been designed to assess the quality or maturity of the practices designed to achieve SESR. This procedure assesses the capacity of the evidence of the actual practice to achieve the practices identified in the SESR-MM.

The SESR-MM provides a framework to guide the search for evidence of FYE practices including evidence of the evaluation of those practices by allowing assessors to compare evidence of existing practices, against those in the SESR-MM framework. Assessors then use the capacity of the evidence

to assess how mature the practices are at achieving SESR. The SESR-MM practices are those that have been used in exploring first, second and third generation approaches to conceptualising the FYE.

4. A future strategy for framing the FYE: Moving transition pedagogy beyond the generational approach

Currently, institutional leaders are striving to achieve a delicate balance between optimising the student's first year experience and maximising their institution's ability to engage and retain students. This is while addressing the socio-political influences of funding, regulation, accreditation and widening participation. To respond to these challenges, institutional leaders need robust sources of information, not only about students' first and later year experiences but also about the capabilities of institutions to optimise that experience. The SESR-MM provides the latter, because it is an interpretation of student engagement evidence and practice. The SESR-MM has the potential to assist FYE practitioners address the Evaluation FYCP and third generational challenges that appear to exist within some institutions. It seems to provide a complementary extension to the generational approach as it allows an assessment of institutional capability to initiate, plan, frame, manage and evaluate the institutional student engagement practices so critical to the FYE. Evidence of the potential advantage of the MM over the generational approach is reported next.

Comparison of generational and maturity model data

An instrumental multi-site case study reported in Nelson, Clarke, Stoodley, and Creagh, (2013) ascertained the usefulness of the SESR-MM and is used here to illustrate the potential of the SESR-MM to advance the generational concept. The case data collected from three large metropolitan universities on the east coast of Australia contained considerable evidence of practices falling into the first, second and third generation approaches to the FYE and highlighted the dearth of evidence regarding the Evaluation FYCP. The generational model describes practices and in MM terminology, the focus of these activities is on the *providing* dimension and to a lesser extent, the *planning* and *framing* dimensions. For example; the provision of co-curricular orientation or peer mentoring (providing dimension - first generation) activities, curriculum plans to develop academic literacies and language within curricula (planning dimension - second generation) or the existence of a university-level policy requiring the participation of both discipline

academic staff and professional educators in curriculum design and review (framing dimension – third generation).

However, the SESR-MM can offer more; complementing and building on the generational approach by highlighting practices currently not being undertaken. For example, to be "mature" in the inter-generational FYE strategy of providing peer programs, the SESR-MM dimensions of planning, framing, monitoring and optimising highlight that plans, strategy or policy for peer programs, as well as evaluation, and evidence-based review and refinement of the programs are also required to achieve sustainable good practice.

In sum, the totality of actual evidence the SESR-MM mapped for a particular institution provides an assessment of how capable or mature the institution is in delivering those practices based on the capacity assessments. Further, identifying the "gaps" between the actuality of the institutional SESR-MM and the potential identified in the SESR-MM framework provides objective evidence on which to make decisions about future institutional directions and priorities, particularly those designed to enhance the FYE.

5. Conclusion: Informing the future

This review assumed the mantra of "looking back to inform the future" by interpreting a decade of Australasian FYE literature through the dual lenses of FYCPs and generational approaches to conceptualising the FYE. It has shown that Transition, Design, Assessment and Engagement FYCPs are reasonably well addressed in the literature but there is potential for a future focus on activities applying Diversity and Evaluation principles. It has also shown that achieving a third generation approach— a holistic, integrated, university-wide, joined-up approach to the FYE formulated by the transition pedagogy— is challenging to implement. The majority of current practices still remain focused on first and second generation approaches. As useful as the generational classification has been to describing past efforts to achieve good practice for the FYE, a potentially richer and more future-focused alternative is required.

To that end we have proposed the SESR-MM. The literature analysed in this review confirms that higher education institutions must direct coordinated, whole-of-institution attention to changing— practically, structurally and culturally— the fundamental and prevailing character of the FYE through a focus on student engagement. The Kahu (2013) framework provides the kind of comprehensive conceptualisation of student engagement that is critical to a successful FYE and can inform institutional

understanding. The SESR-MM, as a sophisticated vehicle for achieving whole-of-institution approaches to the FYE, provides a methodology to overcome current limitations in FYE theory and evidence. These are the challenges and the opportunities for FYE scholars and practitioners to grapple with in the current and future decades.

6. Note

1) Following Nelson et al. (2011) we will treat the literature arising from the New Zealand and Australian contexts as a unified body of work which implies that the higher education sectors in the two countries are the broadly similar. Differences do exist and a detailed comparison of the two sectors can be found in Nelson et al. (2011, p. 2).

7. Acknowledgement

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