

RESEARCH PROJECT (2007- 2011): Alienation and Engagement in Postgraduate Pathology

FUNDING: FIRLT

PROJECT LEADER: Prof. J Bezuidenhout

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HYPOTHESIS: Alienation and engagement influence students learning experiences at a higher education institution

OBJECTIVES: The purpose of this study is to investigate whether alienation and engagement of students in the Pathology postgraduate environment at Stellenbosch University are related to the academic performances of those students. The study aims to address the following research questions: 1. What degree of alienation do students in the postgraduate Pathology experience in the 3 domains proposed by Case (2007b) and what factors generate these perceptions? 2. Is the degree of alienation experienced by students related to their academic performance?

FINDINGS: Students from a *disadvantaged* background feel they are less equipped to function in a postgraduate environment. Despite this, they are better equipped to cope with adversity. The teaching and learning environment is both empowering and disempowering. Impact on the person is more positive than negative, but impact on relationships with family and friends is negative. Strategies for coping revolve around controlling yourself and your environment.

FURTHER RESEARCH: Factors that impact upon postgraduate workplace-based learning (New project – based on provisional findings.)

ARTICLES: Bezuidenhout J, Cilliers F, Van Heusden M, Wasserman E, Burch VC, 2011 *Alienation and engagement in postgraduate training at a South African medical school*. Medical Teacher Web Paper; 33.

CONFERENCES: 2009:SOTL, Research and Practice conference; Poster presentations 2009: SAAHE; Academic Year Day FHS; AMEE (Malaga,Spain); 2010: Poster (3rd Prize) AMEE (Glasgow)