



University of Fort Hare

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FIRST TIME ENTRY: STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES ON THEIR TRANSITION FROM HIGH SCHOOL TO UNIVERSITY

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Study focus

- The transition of first time entry (FTEN) students
- Adjustment issues into university space
- Gaps in student support
- Impact on FTEN on student success and throughput rates
- Put in place student support intervention strategies



Methodology

- A qualitative, contextual, descriptive research design
- Purposive and convenient
- 12 FTEN students from a South African University.
- Semi-structured interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FDG) and document analysis



Why is FTEN student support important?

- Transition from high school to the university culture is often complex and difficult
- Imbalance between their previous world and their new social world
- No family support
- Inadequate institutional support (resources, funding, socio-psychological support)
- Academic support



Research Question:

“What are first time entry students’ perspectives with regards to their transition from high school to university?”

Theoretical grounding

Tinto's 3 stages

- Separation
- Transition
- Incorporation



Unpacking Theoretical underpinnings of the study

Tinto's 3 stages of separation

- a) Separation stage: According to Tinto (1993), first-year students are in a separation phase where they have to distance themselves as members of their past communities, for example, home and school.
- b) Transition stage: The transition phase refers to the shift from the old to the new by conforming to the norms, values and behaviour of the new community (Tinto, 1993).
- c) Incorporation: During the incorporation phase students are required to become involved in the academic and social communities of the institution (Tinto, 1993:59)



Study Findings (Pre-transition stage)

- a) Students who were not adequately prepared for university entry through career guidance.
- b) Personal and social development were frustrated crucial motivators to be at university.
- c) Families' socio-economic status (SES) was viewed as a limiting funding factor.



Study Findings (Separation stage)

Frustrations over waiting for unreasonable periods for responses for application, admission and registration degree they had chosen was not a field that they were passionate about

Homesickness - the distress or impairment caused by actual or anticipated separation from home (Conley et al., 2014)

Pillay (2010) noted that coming from a rural environment could also facilitate feelings of isolation in HEIs



Study Findings (Transition stage)

- Potential drop outs
- Loss and lack of social support - confusion and depression (Pillay, 2010).
- Disengagement from education – skipping lectures and missing tests
- financial difficulties



Study Findings (Incorporation stage)

- Challenges in adapting to university life
- feeling of not belonging to the institution or to the peer group creates
- the week-long orientation programmes, counselling services and university-led social activities were ineffective



Conclusions

- Transition has an effect on FTEN's aspirations and levels of attainment
- Compounding problems due to increased student population with diverse backgrounds
- Disjuncture between access and success is mismatch between higher education and post-secondary preparedness
- Completely ill-informed preconceptions about what they may encounter in the course of their choice
- FTEN university students are left to make their own way through the maze of institutional life and have to "learn the ropes" of university life largely on their own



Study recommendations

- a) Efforts have to be made to assist FTENs to adapt to the different set of university learning expectations and experiences
- b) Good communication is needed to alert students to up-coming guidance opportunities, application deadlines and off-site events
- c) government and the institution should play a more integral role in assisting FTEN university students (funding and psychosocial support)
- d) Extend orientation period
- e) Encourage to attend seminars and workshops



THANK YOU

