

Making a Successful Transition during the First Year of University Study: Do Psychological and Academic Ability Matter?

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ABSTRACT This article presents an explanatory study and focuses on the problem of academic ability and the psychological challenges that affect first-year students as they progress from Grade 12 to first-year university studies; a process that is significant for most universities. A cause of transition can be found in the under-preparedness of the university support system at first-year level. The study was conducted on 102 first-year students registered for the Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) undergraduate degree at Central University of Technology (CUT). The results from this study showed that there is a significant difference in student life, student expectation and psychological status between university first-year students and high school learners. Some of the findings of the study are that induction had an insignificant influence on student academic ability and social integration. However, it is important to recognise that this factor might not have a significant influence on first-year students, but the withdrawal of students in the second and third years is, to a certain extent, due to their academic results. It can be proved that workload has a significant influence on the academic ability of first-year students.

I. INTRODUCTION

The first year of university is a critical stage for inducting students into academic disciplines. This is due to the fact that in most cases, the first-year student does not have any background knowledge of the discipline he has chosen. Traditionally, the social demand for a university education has been exceptionally high among high school learners, and every student who enters the system would like to complete his studies. Hood et al. (2009: 120-122) argue that first-year students experience difficulties when making the transition from high school to university. The transition from high school to university is thus a stressful phase for most students. In addition, first-year students face the challenge of adapting to the new environment, making new friends and, more importantly, learning to function independently of their families. In this regard, they must start immediately to adapt to the new learning and study habits which prevail within the university context.

Academic success at university has proved to be a daunting task which requires commitment from the university lecturer, management and the students. The researcher has attempted to study the transition from high school to university as this may have an impact on the first-year success rate and could assist the university authorities to monitor the throughput and dropout rates. Tinto (1993: 10) argues that first-year students face a variety of new challenges and adjustment issues such as the academic and social well-being. The importance of transition from high school is evidenced by number of studies conducted in higher education institutions (HEI's) in South Africa (for example studies of Bohler 2000; Tait et al. 2002; Nel, Troskie-De Bruin and Bitzer 2009; Cosser 2009a). James and Parker (2005: 13) argue that the ability to build new relationships while modifying existing ones with family and friends is vital during this transition. Failure to meet challenges related to transitioning, significantly impacts on a student's ability to adjust, achieve and persist during the first year of study.

It is hypothesised in this article that the academic differences between university and high school in terms of academic rigours, academic adaptation and academic workload could have an effect on students' ability to succeed in the first year of university, and that some academic development, does occur during the transition

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period from high school to university (Gouws et al. 2010: 166).

It would be a mistake to analyse students' high school performance towards transition purely in functional terms. The objectives of the study intend to achieve the followings:

- ♦ The easy transition from Grade 12 to university
- ♦ To determine the role of induction programme among first years students to accelerate their competence at the university

The study on which this article is based aimed to determine whether universities might assist in ensuring that first-year students are integrated successfully into the academic environment.

It is against this background that the study investigated the scope and complexity of the problems inherent in student transition from high school to university. The national scale of these problems was documented, and demonstrated that initial student experiences at university continue to affect students' success (The Times 20.05.2010). These problems include the academic ability to cope with the course demands as well as poor social and academic adaptations as a result of adjustment to university. A study analysing key factors affecting students' easy transition experience in the first year was then undertaken.

The research reported in this paper is an analysis of the first-year transition from high school to first year at university. This article specifically examines students' academic ability and the psychological challenges that affect first-year students in their first year of studies.

The rationale for this research on transition is the assumption that induction programmes and the smooth mobility of students from high school to university are largely responsible for the intensity of students' responses in the classroom. These factors are thus both predictors of, and contributors to, students' achievement in their studies.

In the first section the conceptual framework is discussed this is followed by the research design, the results and a discussion of the results, and finally, conclusions and recommendations.

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

For many first-year students the transition from high school to university is a challenge. An

important reason for this is that it exposes students to several discontinuities in the learning setting in terms of both the complexity of study activities and a new system of roles and relationships (Bonica 2008: 1). Wilcox (2005: 19) supports Bonica's view by indicating the importance of recognising the acquisition of new skills and the link with the already acquired skills. Unfamiliar contexts require students to improve their meta-cognitive skills in order to study greater quantities of material, to monitor and organise their learning and study time more independently, and to develop the ability to critically analyse and integrate the variety of learning approaches. Change in the students life is a difficult task, it may be eternally imposed or voluntarily sought, it is important that a modification process is in place to allow student to adjust to needs of the university. Pitkethly and Prosser (2001: 187) state that academic adjustment is a key to perseverance at university. Motivation to learn, taking action to meet academic demands, a clear sense of purpose and general satisfaction with academic environment are important elements to academic adjustments (Pitkethly and Prosser 2001: 187). Muir (2006: 120) also asserts that a further challenge for first-year students lies in the large classes as compared to high school.

The first and most obvious challenge is the major difference between studying at school and at university. At high school, most learners are used to small classes, large amounts of individual attention from teachers and structured study plans. When they arrive at university, they often find themselves in very large classes; most of the first-year classes contain more than 150 students (James 2008: 9-11). Their lecturers may not even recognise them and possibly, for the first time in their lives, they must decide for themselves when and what to study. Many students relish the independence but others are daunted by it. Some students may start skipping lectures when they realise that the lecturer might not observe their absence. Evans and Peel (2010: 165) agree that large classes also discourage students from asking questions during lectures. Many students do not want to 'show themselves up' in front of their peers. As a result, they find themselves not understanding important concepts, and thus following subsequent lectures become more difficult. Others find that working alone is challenging (Stumpf and Hunt 2005: 8).

The Problem of Induction Programmes

The issue of induction or orientation programme has been a topic of research and comment for a number of years in England (Harvey and Drew 2006: 2). Furthermore, the expansion of higher education (HE) has led to an increased necessity to support a diverse student population, which may be the reason for an increasing concern with the first-year student.

One key area for support of first-year students is induction, which is seen as an important factor in retention and in enabling adjustment to a university culture. The induction of first-year students is often criticised for being confusing, sometimes overly bureaucratic and, whilst providing information, does not provide it in a user-friendly way or in a context where it can be readily assimilated. Harvey and Drew (2006: 4) further mention that one problem that has been raised continuously is an overload of information during the induction programme. This information causes confusion in the minds of most new students, as they are 'assaulted' by new information from various university structures and student organizations, all this information must be learned before the commencement of lecturers.

Induction is significant as it offers first-year students relief and a sense of positive self concepts to university studies. In the light of the changing nature of HE in South Africa and in the interest and the needs of these students, it is important to rethink both what it is intended to achieve and how it is going to be implemented. It is through induction that the first-year student can be informed of challenges such as the academic ability and how to overcome them in meeting the expectation of university studies (Kono 2008: 63).

First-Year Student Withdrawal at University

The Congress of the People (Cope) members in Parliament have raised their concern regarding the normal duration of the university qualification in South Africa as a result of high dropout rates and high failure rates (The Times 20.05.2010). Similarly, there is a concern among Australians universities about the extent of first-year university student withdrawal and the recognition of the adjustment that students need to make in their transition from high school to university (Pitkethly and Prosser 2001: 185).

Tinto (1993: 11) further points out that it is common knowledge that one-third of first-year students actually consider withdrawal during their studies. At La Trobe University in Australia this practice of student withdrawal has been witnessed during the second-year and third-year students as a result of events that occur in the first year. There is general agreement that high proportions of students either withdraw or fail because of an inability to adjust to external factors such as the emotional preparedness, social life and internal factors such as the academic preparedness (Tinto 1993: 11). These factors include a lack of clearly defined goals on the part of the student, a mismatch between students and the learning programme or the university culture, as well as feelings of isolation.

It is evident from the literature reviewed that first-year students do not really know what is expected of them, what learning strategies to adopt, and how their chosen field of study fits into more global aspects of the world of work. Transition processes refer, in particular, to the move from high school to university. Many authors have emphasised that the first week at university is particularly crucial to students' later academic achievements (Pascarella and Terenzini 1991: 3). It is in the first year that student expectations might or might not be fulfilled, and the transition might even be seen as a life passage, which has to do with a changed identity (Parkinson and Forrester 2004: 14). Therefore, transition must be seen as a change from inside, as well as outside the classroom this change will influence the academic achievement of the students (Gouws et al. 2010: 148). It is not only the change in the type of the study situation, with a higher demand on students' use of time, but also a new social situation of perhaps moving away from home, increased financial stress and of making new friends, to mention but a few.

Owing to the fact that their studies are no longer being guided by a teacher, students may lack motivation and direction. Many students look for help when it is too late and their first words are often "I don't know where to start." In particular, major adaptation problems are associated with moving from a small class environment at school, to a large lecture environment at university. It may result in non-attendance of classes, unorganised study patterns and feelings of isolation and helplessness (Nel et al. 2009: 986).

Early theories on transition such as suicidal and dropout theories were based in psychology, focusing on individual personal characteristics (Pascarella and Terenzini 1991: 3). There has been a shift in recent years where the focus is increasingly on the university context and student integration into the academic environment (Parker 2009: 14). A study by Hicks (2008: 5) indicates that a critical transition for many late adolescents is the move from one's childhood home to university. Similarly, Kono (2008: 61) has argued that the first year of university is the most difficult period of adjustment for students. Social or relational challenges are often primary for first-year students, even though they have individual and academic pressures as part of their transition. Many first-year students live away from their parents' home for the first time, and this move requires the renegotiation of family relationship as the first-year student continues to adjust to his/her new life.

Satisfaction with the university experience in terms of overall enjoyment, benefit and value was found to be an important parameter which may influence a student's decision to enter at first-year level, persist with or leave the university (Lang 2004: 21). Moreover, peer relations are critical for support, confirmation of one's identity, opportunities for socialisation, and other dimensions of university adjustment (Hicks 2008: 7).

Kono (2008: 62) found that at university, a lack of peer and parental support were the most consistent predictors of self-reported loneliness. Pascarella and Terenzini (1991: 3) also mention that students who experience the transition from high school to university as painful reported disappointment in the domain of social interactions with peers. It is in this regard that issues such as stress and psychological challenges become omnipresent in the lives of first-year students. Coping with the psychological and social problems tend to play a major role in the success of first-year students. Researchers such as James and Parker (2005: 15) have indicated that social and emotional competencies have proved to be useful predictors of academic achievement during the transition period; they can be used as a context for examining the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic achievement.

The first year of university life is considered to be a significant and critical period of

transition. Students' initial reaction to the new context can strongly affect the process of further adaptation; thus, supportive teaching is particular crucial during this initial phase (The Times 20.05.2010). This author also indicates that there is a high dropout rate at the university, particularly at first-year level, where many students voluntarily withdraw from their studies. As mentioned above, one reason that students have problems with when they arrive at university is that they have not developed good study habits.

According to Nel et al. (2009: 978) the time is right for South African HEI's to stop complaining about Grade 12 results and the poor quality of learners produced by the school system. Instead the HEI sector needs to send clear signals to Department of Basic Education (DBE) about the entry level competencies it expects from first-year students entering university. Thereafter, HEI's should develop partnerships with Further Education and Training (FET) colleges and the secondary school sector, so as to actively engage with a view to developing potential HEI candidates.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Sample

Participants in this study were 102 first year student teachers from Central University of Technology. There were 48 male first years student teachers and 54 female first years students teachers. The participants were randomly selected. These random selections include students from two different groups, namely students in the B.Ed: Language and B.Ed: Economics and Management Sciences. The B.Ed: Languages contributed 55 students while the B.Ed: Economics and Management Sciences contributed 47 students. The class lists were obtained from the student administration and individual students' names were randomly selected from the lists. The sample size was 102 and the response rate was 100 percent. The sampled population comprised sixty percent of the first year population in teacher education programs in CUT. This good response rate can be attributed to the fact that the questionnaires were administered during General Subject Didactics 1 periods at the end of the first semester in 2010.

Data Collection Instrument

Self-administered questionnaires containing structured and unstructured items were applied. Items in the questionnaire focused on the transition from high school to university as variables that drive student’s mobility and success at university. It is this regard that this study ought to follow the questionnaires as the data collection instruments. A questionnaire based on data gathered in the classroom setting was used. Closed questions helped in eliciting specific information, while the open ended question enabled the respondents to express their views freely, without restriction. Prior distribution of questionnaires, a pilot study of 20 students was conducted in order to test the reliability, validity and practicality of the questionnaires. In some instances the students were asked to rate their experiences of the various academic orientation initiatives at CUT. In addition, students were asked their thoughts on academic orientation generally.

Procedure

The researcher conveniently selected first year teacher education student at Central University of Technology, Free State from which participants were drawn. The first year students were selected on the basis of their accessibility to the researcher and furthermore they are mostly affected by induction programme. The researcher personally administered the questionnaires to the conveniently selected student’s teachers and collected completed questionnaires. This technique was ideal, for it allowed for triangulation of the data and threading of key responses and thus provided valuable insights into the transition dimension in relation to first year induction programme. Data analysis and interpretation were done using the interactive model of qualitative data analysis (Miles and Huberman 1994), which first involved sorting or shifting through the data and identifying similar phrases, relationships between themes, distinct differences between target blocks and common sequences.

As the methodological paradigm applied in this research is explanatory, the study may be classified as qualitative, although a quantitative element is a feature of this research.

Data Analyses

After all the questionnaires had been returned, it was important that mass data collected should then be reduced to a format suitable for analysis. The respondents’ responses were then coded according to the emerging themes. The data was analysed by using the excel programme.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In accordance with the aims of the study, questionnaires were received from a total of 102 first-year students. The findings are presented and discussed under the various themes in the study.

Question 1.1-1.3: Demographics of the Participants

Table 1 of the study shows the gender, race and age composition of the respondents. These are important factors in determining the perceived difficulties encountered by first-year students at university.

Table 1: Demographics of the participants

<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Blacks</i>	<i>Coloured</i>	<i>White</i>	<i>Age below 20 years</i>	<i>Age above 20 years</i>
48 (47%)	54 (53%)	70 (69%)	11 (11%)	21 (20%)	81 (79%)	21 (21%)

Table 1 questions were directed at the first-year student’s demographic profile of gender, race and age. Consistent with the demographics in the School of Teacher Education, most of the sample was composed of females (53 percent), while 47 percent was males. The majority (70 percent) of students in this particular class comprises black students, while 20 percent are white and the remaining 11 percent are coloured.

The average sample age was 19.5 (s.d=4.8). It should be noted that age plays an important factor in determining the balance between study and personal life. For instance, some students will miss the home environment while others will be influenced easily by their peers.

Question 1.4-1.6: Student High School Academic Background

Table 2 shows students' high school academic background and first-year academic progress in the first semester. The respondents were requested to answer questions on their high school academic history and first-year academic progress. The high school background and first-year academic status will determine the perceived difficulties encountered by first-year students at university.

Table 2: Students' high school academic background

<i>Students who failed one or more grades in high school</i>	<i>Students who did not fail any grade in high school</i>	<i>First-year students achieving an average below 60%</i>	<i>First-year students achieving an average above 60%</i>
10 (10%)	92 (90%)	39 (40%)	61 (60%)

Table 2 reveals details of the students' high school backgrounds; questions were directed at first-year students regarding their high school academic progress. The second question was based on their first semester academic progress. The school trajectory for most of the student sample was characterised by positive achievements, since 90 percent had never failed in high school, and the majority had achieved marks above 60 percent in their first semester of their first year. Therefore, the researcher did not perceive any obstacle for them not to succeed given their grade 12 results and their schooling background. It may be concluded that their Grade 12 results did not have a negative impact on their first-year studies based on the comparison in Table 2. Therefore, they cannot be classified as at risk students who underperform. However, this does not completely rule out their withdrawal or the dropout factor.

Question 1.7- 1.9: Participation in Induction Programme

Table 3 shows details of students' perceptions of the induction programme conducted by Central University of Technology and of the different learning programmes. It was important that the researcher established their perceptions regarding the induction offered to them, whether it did

actually orientate them to their chosen and the university as a whole for their four-year study duration.

Table 3: Participation in the induction programme

<i>Participated</i>	<i>Did not participate</i>	<i>No answer</i>	<i>Duration of induction +</i>	<i>Was the induction helpful</i>		
				<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No response</i>
53	42	7	6 Hours (100%)	25%	65%	10%
52%	41%	7%	100%	100%		

Table 3 reveals details of students' perceptions of their first-year induction programme at CUT. Questions probed whether the respondents participated in the induction programme, the duration of the induction programme and whether the induction was helpful.

These findings are important since induction in general seems to be inadequate (Harvey and Drew 2006: 5) and conducted in a 'quick-fix' fashion. Induction has hitherto been a one-day event devoted almost exclusively to the dissemination of information to the class seated in a lecture room.

Question 2.1: Comparison between Grade 12 and First-Year University Students

Table 4 points to first-year student perceptions of experiences in Grade 12 at school and their first-year at university; that is, a comparison between Grade 12 and first-year at university are explored. The rationale is to determine the integration between the two levels, in terms of the living conditions to determine the adjustment to university life, the workload, class size and social integration.

In Table 4, living conditions ranked high among first-year students; 51 percent strongly agree that they are happy with the living conditions, while 44 percent agree with the statement. It was also important to recognise that 5 percent were not happy with their living conditions. It was in this regard that the majority (95 percent) of the students indicated that they find living in private residences more satisfactory than living in the university residences. It was important to include this question as part of the transition as a result of the current student unrest with regard to residences in most universities.

Table 4: Comparison between Grade 12 and first-year university students

<i>Items agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Total</i>
	4	3	4+3	2	1	2+1	
1. Are you happy with your university living conditions?	52 (51%)	45 (44%)	95	0	(5%)	5	102
2. Do you think the academic workload is manageable?	26 (26%)	15 (15%)	41	29 (29%)	30 (30%)	59	102
3. Do you think class sizes are conducive to effective teaching and learning?	30 (29%)	6 (6%)	36	36 (35%)	30 (29%)	64	102
4. Do you find the social life on campus suitable?	50 (50%)	7 (7%)	57	23 (23%)	20 (20%)	43	102
5. Did Grade 12 provide you with a solid academic background for first year studies?	49 (48%)	32 (31%)	79	0	22 (21%)	21	102

Question 2.2: Comparison of Grade 12 and First-Year Student Workload

When asked about workload in the first year, the majority of the respondents (59 percent) were not happy with the academic workload as compared to high school. From a total of 100 percent, 59 percent disagreed with the statement that suggested that the 'workload is manageable'. They disagreed with this statement very strongly, 41 percent stated that the workload was manageable, indicating that the volume of work was not a problem to their learning. Although 59 percent were not really happy with their workload as compared with the Grade 12 workload, 41 percent did not complain about their workload. This was the question to receive the strongest negative answer from the respondents. Managing the workload is one of their greatest challenges, which has a negative impact on their success at the end of the academic year. HE is increasingly subject to economic and managerial considerations and many lecturers today are not necessarily tenured, but are on short-term contracts (Hicks 2008: 9). Institutions are under pressure regarding accountability, change and quality control. This also means that larger classes become the order of the day; increasing student intake is set against fewer teaching staff as universities have to make ends meet with what it is available. In most instances, students have to cope in these large classes.

Question 2.3: Comparison of Grade 12 and First-Year Student Class Size

The majority (64 percent) of the students were dissatisfied, as they felt that it was difficult for

them to adjust to learning at the university as a result of large classes. Moreover, some had difficulty in comprehending the learning material presented to them. There were large differences, but perhaps the most telling indicator of the positive and negative initial academic adjustment, was whether the students have a clear idea of where the learning programme is going. More than half of the sample responded negatively to this item, compared to the 36 percent that were satisfied.

University classes are far too large for lecturers to provide the type of shared guidance required and are unable even to monitor progress and adapt to students' needs as expected (Heirdsfield 2008: 110).

Question 2.4: Comparison of Grade 12 and First-Year Student Personal Interaction

It was in this question that the majority (57 percent) of students responded positively to the personal and social interaction with their fellow students. Most were very excited about living on their own, instead of being in their parents' care. They indicated that in some instances they have to attend classes for only 20 hours per week, with sufficient time to do social activities and academic work. The academic social interaction among first-year students was overwhelming. Some indicated that their new classmates, new lecturers and new roommates can take their toll both mentally and physically. It was at this point that some students indicated that there are a number of distractions in the first semester; for instance, the use of alcohol and drugs are high among some students. The freedom of being away from parents can also present problems in the academic development

of a first-year student, particularly if the student is not mentally strong enough to withstand various unhealthy lifestyles. Cantwell and Servak (2004: 133) have argued that many first-year students experience feelings of isolation and uncertainty in making the transition. Other key challenges include the degree of independence required, and balancing work with other commitments.

Question 2.5: Comparison of Grade 12 and First-Year Academic Background

The transfer of knowledge from Grade 12 to first year forms the basis for future development. The degree of acceptance was very high as many students (48 percent) strongly agree with the statement, while 31 percent agree that the transition is quite easy in subjects such as Accounting I and Business Studies I. In courses such as Education I, General Subject Didactics and Education Psychology, students felt that their Grade 12 experience did not assist them in coping with them. The relationship between student ability level in high school and first-year University is fairly difficult to explain, as some students have prior knowledge of the work gained from work experience, while for others, it is the first time that they find themselves confronted by these subjects. Students with no high school Accounting and low overall academic ability will find it difficult to pass Accounting at first-year level.

A significant number of students (55 percent) cited aspects such as unsatisfactory study skills, and a lack of support in developing study skills. A lack of opportunities to expose first-year students to the right academic development will, in turn, put more pressure on students. It should be stated that student performance in the first year, to a certain extent, depends largely on their own perception of their academic ability.

Some students indicated that their fellow students who passed with flying colours in Grade 12 struggled in their studies. They reported that they had hoped to repeat their good marks at university but things changed and they were no longer as certain of achieving success.

The purpose of the study was to determine whether the transition programmes improve a student's life at university, as well as his/her performance. The induction programme was seen as an important tool in a gradual process that

linked with the courses of the learning programme. CUT should take cognisance of the importance of the social integration of their students; the need for peer support network, and consistently understood and applied tutorial systems. The study furthermore, highlighted the diverse backgrounds of students and this should be recognised. Induction is not sufficient to do everything in one day. This study indicates the importance of establishing the induction programme as a mechanism of ensuring that students are really integrated into the university set-up. If we are to effectively orient and support first-year students in their transition to university study, we must seriously consider academic counselling in the form of mentoring as an effective and sustainable option. Future mentoring programmes should consider presenting a model for mentoring as part of induction into mentoring, rather than using it only as a backdrop in the development of programme content.

An induction coordinator should first identify and acknowledge the affective dimensions associated with mentoring before focusing on more cognitive and meta-cognitive tasks. Mentors need to be aware of their own reasons for embarking upon the mentoring role and the inherent responsibility that goes with it. They should also be prepared to face uncertainties and possible self-doubt. At the same time, they need to know where to find help and resources. Meta-cognitive dimensions of mentoring such as preparing study skills activities, searching literature and information on university orientation should be conducted with the knowledge that such skills influence interaction with course content, or the cognitive aspects of mentoring. The efficacy of such an approach could be explored in future research. This intriguing possibility can also be explored in inter-faculty comparative research. Heirdsfield (2008: 111) describes three different levels of guidance in learning: full external guidance from the teacher only, shared guidance where the teacher and student work together and full internal guidance where the students regulate their own learning independently of the teacher. Although untested in research to date, it is suggested that mentors might also benefit from learning explicitly about these levels and how they can apply them within their roles as mentors to foster productive learning and contribute to a positive university experience for first-year students. Further exploration of the efficacy of

these proposals should be explored in future research.

In the survey it was evident that some students were still struggling with a heavy workload. If universities want to improve their retention rates, intensive interventions are necessary during the earliest possible phase, not only to identify students at risk but also to prepare prospective students for continuance at university.

Most students were very confident that their high schools had indeed prepared them for the myriad of challenges at university. The successful transition from high school to university plays a decisive role in subsequent academic success and throughput rates. It is a fact that the highest dropout takes place as a result of first-year problems. Thus, the study was conducted at the end of the first semester of students' first year. Many first-year university students experience a feeling of isolation and uncertainty in making the transition to university study. Other challenges include the increased degree of independence required. It is important that universities should improve their student performance while decreasing attrition rates. Failure to meet challenges related to transitioning significantly impacts on a student's ability to adjust, achieve, and persist during the first year of university.

V. CONCLUSION

In concluding, if the difference in the results of this study can be judged to be an accurate reflection of the differences from high school compared with the first year at university, then the patterns of these responses suggest that in spite of the similarities, there are sufficient differences to indicate distinct areas for development. Attitudes towards poorly prepared learners from high school cannot be viewed as stable, but are strongly responsive to contextual conditions, especially changing conditions which occur during the significant transition from high school to university. Because these contextual conditions are never static over time, further changes in supporting students may occur during the course of students' university careers, as well as after the significant transition from university to work. Once again, further research is needed in this regard.

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