



"Engaging the student voices: Putting students at the centre of First Year Student Experience (FYSE) Design"

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- This study sought to establish how selected students (150 out of 300) currently in third, second and first years experienced the first two months of their first year at the Durban University of Technology (DUT).

5 QUESTIONS

- ❖ How was your experience during the first two months as a first year student at a university?
- ❖ Did you feel well prepared for the university life or not?
- ❖ What coping mechanisms/programmes were provided for the first year students by the university during these first two months?
- ❖ Given an opportunity to design a FYSE programme, what would you include in it so it can best serve the needs and expectations of the first year students?
- ❖ Would you recommend any other first-year student to attend the FYSE? Provide a reason for your answer?

What Does Literature Say!!!

- Importance of FYE during transition into HE in relation to students' persistence (Tinto, 1993; Blythman and Orr, 2002).
- Students engaging in FYE programs are more successful than their peers who do not (Brownell, & Swaner, 2010).
- Failed transition = Drop-out and under-achievement (Lowe & Cook 2003)
- Need to explore ways to enhance success and persistence in learning at tertiary education and beyond (Scott 2008; Hillman 2005).

I. How was your experience during the first two months as a first year student at a university?

ADJUSTMENT THEME

- a struggle, hard, very boring
- a lot of challenges
- an overwhelming, traumatic experience
- really scary, strange, terrifying
- Exhausting; Confusing
- not easy to adapt, foreign
- awkward being away from my parents.



GOOD / NICE / GREAT EXPERIENCE

- It was **amazing**; It felt like a **dream**; It has been **really great**
- It was **nice** meeting **new people** in a new place.
- It was **very good** and it was a privilege.
- I **enjoyed** it a lot; its **much better** than high school.
- It was **good** but it was **not what I had expected**.
- It felt as if I had been here for over a year now, I am **very comfortable**.

2. Did you feel well prepared for the university life or not?

PREPARED...

- I was prepared since **it has always been my desire** and **I knew what to expect.** (x79)
- **Partially prepared.**
- I was **only prepared that university is different and difficult.**
- Yes, I was prepared because I researched about varsity and I knew what to expect.
- I was because I have a past university experience



NOT PREPARED/ UNDER PREPARED...

- I was not prepared at all (emotionally) (x23)
- Didn't know what a university is like
- Not at all for the workload and for long nights without sleeping
- No, but I'm hoping for the best as time goes on
- No, was not 100% sure that I could enrol in university (x17).

3. What coping mechanisms/programmes were provided for the FYS by the university during these first two months?

3.1. TUTORIAL SERVICES & CONSULTATIONS

- **Consultation** with Lecturers, Residence Advisors & House Committee
- Residence Educational Programme (**REP**)
Tutorials.
- First Year Student Experience (**FYSE**) **Tutorials/Seminars** - on transition.



3.2. ORIENTATION: Departmental & Institutional

- **Meet and Greet programs.**
- Student Counselling consultations.

3.3.3. COPING SKILLS

- Generic/targeted presentations on: Time and Stress management; How to manage Workload; Diversity in a University etc

3.4. RESOURCES: Computer labs; Study Material/ Guides

- Technology for Learning sessions – Teaching students computer skills



NOTHING...

- Nothing, as we had to adjust due to time lost during strikes.
- Nothing, as we were provided late tutorials.
- Non, I have not attended any programmes
- No coping mechanisms provided.

4. Given an opportunity to design a FYSE programme, what would you include in it so it can best serve the needs and expectations of the first year students?

4.1. PROPER ORIENTATION

- **Arrange more meet and greet sessions**
- **Year long departmental/Institutional**
- **Customized Student surveys**
- **Provide maps to the lecture venues**

4.2. Technology Lessons/ Computer Skills

4.3. Referencing workshop; time management skills; compulsory counselling; Financial literacy



4.4. Workplace visits

4.5. First year mentorship

4.6. Student engagement forums/activities

4.7. FYSE seminars-credit bearing, more periods

4.8. First-year diversity programme



- I think the university has done all its best to serve the needs of the students and expectations of the first year students, we are even provided with notes and text books.

5. **Would you recommend any other first-year student to attend the FYSE? Provide a reason for your answer?**

- Help overcome **fear** of the unknown (x48).
- Tips on how to study and exam preps (x38).
- **Same journeys, relationships** (x41).
- learn about careers, res life, showcase talents (x32).
- Advise and encouragement helps when **stressed**, depressed and thinking of suicide. (x24).
- helps to understand the university before you do any academic activity.
- No because I have no idea about it (x62)

THANK YOU

