Knowledge beyond colour lines

Towards repurposing
knowledge generation in
South African Higher Education

EDITORS

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THE ROLE OF A UNIVERSITY IN SUPPORT OF FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS

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Introduction

High student drop-out rates challenge universities because of persisting inequalities in the schooling system. These inequalities stem from black learners' historical oppression and resultant poverty in many areas of the country today (Ndelu, 2017). South Africa is one of the most economically divided countries in the world, with some of the lowest literacy rates (Sefalane-Nkohla & Mtonjeni, 2019). Knowing the background, challenges and deprivations of students is an important responsibility of all universities. The second is to provide programmes that enable deprived candidates to draw level to privileged candidates entering tertiary education.

Increased access to South African universities after liberation has increased the size and diversity of the student body. Universities now admit students from various linguistic, cultural, socio-economic, religious, and educational backgrounds (McGhie, 2017; Pineteh, 2014). Universities need to develop effective systemic and institutional support to suit the needs of this new student body: they have to adjust and transform their cultures to adapt to, and reflect, the richness of this new student body in a genuinely democratic way. Some universities have resisted and continue to resist the need to change and adapt to this newly formed student body's learning needs (CHE, 2013). Pather and Dorasamy (2018), Mkonto (2018a), and Paideya and Dunpath (2018) all highlight the need to support students from diverse backgrounds.

Increased university access has meant that learners from underprivileged schools deprived under apartheid are expected to perform just as well as school-leavers from privileged backgrounds who were benefitted from apartheid. This unjust expectation has led to a high failure and attrition rate at the first-year level (CHE, 2013). The first year of study at university is critical in laying the foundation for all subsequent academic study. For many ex-Model C learners, the transition to university is often smooth and easy, whereas learners from rural Quintile 1 and 2 schools experience severe challenges because their schools' teaching level and infrastructure are much lower. Universities need to consider these discrepancies and socio-economic injustices when designing and implementing suitable

support initiatives for first-year students. First-year students view university with mixed emotions: enthusiasm and anxiety. They are excited about their freedom and learning new skills and knowledge but are often anxious about the unknown ahead of them: the unfamiliar pedagogies; and new and challenging assessment requirements (Pineteh, 2014; Van Zyl, 2016). The university can address student anxiety by learning about who the incoming students are and what they need. Universities must match their support approaches to their student profile.

This study adopts a mixed-methods approach to explore the relations between first-year student profiles at a faculty at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT), the promises made to first-year students, and how they perceive socio-academic support. This research revolves around the broad question of how the university's promises to incoming first-year students influence first-year student retention and progress. To better engage with this question, we pose two sub-questions:

- What is the role of first-year student profiles in the delivery of first-year student support?
- How do first-year students perceive the support offered by the university?

Answering the above questions allows for a broader understanding of student perceptions of the university's role plays in supporting first-year students at the critical stage of transitioning from high school to tertiary level.

University context

CPUT is the only university of technology in the Western Cape and, according to student numbers, the largest university in the Western Cape Province, housing 33,000 students and offering over 70 programmes, certificates, diplomas and degrees (CPUT, 2013, 2015). There are six faculties:

- Applied Sciences,
- Business and Management Sciences,
- Education,
- Engineering and the Built Environment,
- Health and Wellness Sciences, and
- Informatics and Design.

These faculties are spread across two main campuses: District Six and Bellville, and four satellite campuses: Athlone, Granger Bay, Mowbray and Wellington. CPUT's student profile represents diverse backgrounds, and this diversity has been noted as a key factor in first-year student retention at the university level (Mkonto, Kakaza & Esambe, 2017).

On 1 January 2005, CPUT was created from a merger between Cape Technikon, a former mainly-white institution, and the Peninsula Technikon, a former mainly-coloured institution (CPUT, 2015). The merger formed part of a national transformation process that

changed the South African higher education landscape by forming the higher education system into a single, nationally coordinated system as opposed to one segregated along racial grouping under apartheid (Jansen, 2003). A national ministerial working group was set up in 2001 that recommended a change in the size and shape of numerous universities, technikons, and colleges. This recommendation reduced the number of universities and technikons from 36 to 21 (Jansen, 2003). Today, the student population at CPUT is largely black and coloured (Ndelu, 2017). A breakdown of this student population at CPUT shows these percentages: blacks 66%; coloureds 24%; whites 7.4%; international students 7.1% and Indians 0.9% (CPUT, 2013, 2015). The high number of blacks and coloureds at CPUT reflects greater access to higher education after liberation. Every year CPUT registers about 8,000 first-year students in different mainstream and extended curriculum programmes (ECP) (CPUT, 2013). The majority (52%) of university students are drawn from previously disadvantaged schools and poor socio-economic backgrounds (Ndelu, 2017). In a province where the three competing universities are traditional, better-resourced universities, the study findings of the student profile in relation to the support they receive at transitioning to university will enable a better understanding of undergraduate student support in general; specifically, first-year student support in the context of a South African university of technology.

Theoretical framework

This study explores relations between

- the first-year student profile from one faculty;
- promises of support made by the university; and
- how first-year students from this faculty perceive this promised support.

Key variables emerging from this broad aim include:

- engaging with student's profile at the faculty level;
- the university's responsibility; and
- undergraduate student support.

This study adopted Kalsbeek's (2013) 4 Ps framework for measuring student retention. Kalsbeek's 4 Ps framework recognises key elements: student 'profile', 'progress', 'process' and 'promise', to decrease drop-out rates caused by disillusionment, alienation and the university's unrealistic responses to differences in first-year students' schooling. These differences are often inadequately attended to or even ignored. Kalsbeek (2013) argues that universities must match their support strategies with individual students' actual 'profiles' by considering disparities in secondary preparation and setting up parallel programmes at the tertiary level to bridge the gaps. Kalsbeek (2013) advocates that greater attention be paid to assisting students than student perseverance alone, stating that the university's retention strategy should focus on recorded academic 'progress'. He asserts

that perseverance without progress does not yield required results, especially when the country's historical and current inequalities are acknowledged and factored in. Student progress should be calibrated towards finishing any course of study successfully. 'Process', which is the third 'P' in the Kalsbeek framework, stands for institutional practices, including:

- enrolment;
- selection of correct courses; and
- setting up support services that help students succeed, not inhibit their progress.

The fourth P refers to the 'promises' that universities make to students and how they deliver on these promises. Kalsbeek's (2013) framework is valuable because it extends our understanding of customising first-year student support by acknowledging students' individual characteristics rather than using the centralised generic student support model common in South African higher education. In this respect, the framework complements other frameworks such as Tinto's (year) and Lizzio's (year) models of undergraduate student retention, commonly used in undergraduate student support in South Africa.

From the above, it is clear that Kalsbeek's (2013) framework provides an appropriate theoretical tool to engage with this study's data because it provides a way to design methods to question first-year students on these key variables:

- student profile;
- university responsibility; and
- undergraduate student support.

The framework is instrumental in ensuring that the study objectives align with theory and methodology. The survey and focus group interviews provide avenues to establish first-year student profiles and note their perceptions of how the institution meets student support promises.

During the recruitment of first-year students, universities make certain promises to support students' studies (Wood, Gray-Ganter & Bailey, 2016). CPUT, through its 'Vision 2020', makes this promise to first-year students:

We will strive to create a vibrant, enabling, and well-resourced living and learning environment for our students and CPUT's priority programmes which promises to create a supportive, integrative first year to enhance student development and success (CPUT, 2013).

CPUT's Vision 2020 and priority programmes promise a conducive learning environment and support to all students from all backgrounds, be it Quintile 1 or 5 secondary school preparation. The university's promise should be linked to:

- university performance;
- retention strategy; and
- ability to convince students that the university will deliver on its promises.

Kalsbeek's (2013) framework focuses on retention as a whole and student readiness for university study. Of Kalsbeek's 4 Ps, this study particularly focused on profile and promise.

Research methodology

This study adopted a mixed-methods approach for eliciting qualitative and quantitative data. A mixed-methods research approach is defined as a process to draw together and examine both quantitative and qualitative research and methods into a single study to understand a specific research problem (Creswell, 2014). The quantitative part of the data emerged from the *Student Profile Questionnaire* (SPQ), administered to 50 first-year students at the Faculty of Business and Management Sciences. The small size of the sample enabled the researchers to delve more deeply into student profiles. Due to the limited scope of the sample for this study, findings cannot be generalised beyond this study, forming part of a larger one. The SPQ is a paper-based, multiple-choice questionnaire that all first-year students on all campuses of the university complete during orientation.

The first-year students were purposefully sampled as participants for this study. The participants included 28 females and 22 males between the ages of 18 and 38. The SPQ is an instrument used to gather information on first-year students' characteristics (Van Zyl, 2011). It comprises 11 questions that focus on:

- demographics,
- proficiency in the language of learning,
- finances,
- proximity to campus, and
- use of technology.

A teaching assistant manually captured and collated responses from the SPQ that provided numerical data, the SPQ topics, and student profile, including student demographics and language of learning proficiency. Data analysis themes – proximity to campus, finances and technology usage – were used to make sense of and relate data to the research question (Nowell, Norris, White & Moules, 2017).

Five focus group discussions with sub-groups of the same sample of participating students took place a month after orientation when students had attended classes and possibly engaged with the university's support services. Focus group discussions were used to establish whether students had received any kind of support at the university; and whether their support had helped them significantly to overcome their challenges. Focus group discussions comprised five groups of ten students and lasted for an hour. In these discussions, the following questions were posed:

- What kind of support did you receive since you arrived at the university?
- Did the support help you with the challenges you were facing?

Focus group discussions were audio-recorded, transcribed and provided qualitative data; field notes were taken to capture important points.

Since the study focused on two of Kalsbeek 4 Ps: 'profile' and 'promise,' data from the SPQ were analysed by using Kalsbeek's 'profile,' which advocates that universities get to know their students to provide substantial and relevant support (Kalsbeek & Zucker, 2013). Data from the focus group discussions were analysed using Kalsbeek's promise to understand whether the university had delivered on the promises made to students.

Ethical clearance to conduct the research was obtained from the university. The questionnaire's introduction included a short outline of the study's aims and objectives, stating that completing the questionnaire was voluntary and confidentiality would be maintained throughout the research. Participants in the focus group discussions received written letters of consent informing them of their right to withdraw from the study at any time and without any consequences.

Findings and discussion

This section reflects on the findings of this study. Two of Kalsbeek's (2013) 4 Ps framework: profile and promise, were used to analyse and interpret data. Information extracted from the SPQ corresponded to research questions about students' profiles, and focus group discussion corresponded to research questions about the university's promises.

Student profile

Student demographics

Student demographics include questions about student age, home language, socio-economic and educational backgrounds relevant to them. The SPQ showed that students' ages ranged from 18-24 (52%), 25-35 (33%) and 36-45 (15%). A typical first-year student in South Africa is 18 years old, but mature students also enter university. Mature students, who have experiences gained from contexts other than coming directly from school, have different support needs to 18-year-olds; thus, the university needs to cater to their needs, too.

Most of the students participating in this study were from disadvantaged educational backgrounds and are likely to be inadequately prepared for university study (McGhie, 2017; Van Zyl, 2016), given the socio-economic disparities and injustices endemic to the country. Due to the lack of a learning-oriented interface between school and university knowledge levels, the knowledge that students from disadvantaged backgrounds possess is not attuned to intellectual expectations set at university. University eligibility is not the same as being ready for university. University eligibility refers to acquiring a place at a university, which is

not enough to guarantee success. Students entering university require what Morrow (2008) calls 'epistemological access', which necessitates a right to knowledge and ways of knowing in academia.

Proficiency in the language of learning

One of the leading questions in the SPQ concerns student proficiency in English. The SPQ revealed that English is the third language for 60% of students, a second language for 25%, and the first language for 15%. This means that for 85% of participants in this study, English was the students' second or third language. In the focus group discussions, students indicated that they struggled to write assignments or partake in class discussions for fear of being ridiculed when they made mistakes because they lacked adequate English preparation. Diversity in South African universities is defined by 11 official languages spoken in South Africa (Mayaba, Ralarala & Angu, 2018; Van Zyl, 2016), yet English remains the language of teaching and learning at the majority of South African universities, including CPUT. This means that, at CPUT, all academic materials are presented in English (CPUT, 2013).

English as the language of teaching and learning presents more than one hurdle for students from disadvantaged educational backgrounds with other challenges, including Quintile 1 schooling; homes without books or resources; parents who cannot help with tutoring or financing because they themselves were denied quality education under apartheid. At universities, the risk factors are associated with limited English proficiency (LEP), poor schooling and poverty (Pineteh, 2014; Sefalane-Nkohla & Mtonjeni, 2019). Being aware of these risk factors, such as inadequate preparation and poverty, a university must provide targeted support programmes that address such challenges.

Proximity to campus

Where students reside during semesters indicates the kind of support they need for their studies. Only 35% of students in this study stayed at university residences; 10% stayed in private accommodation; 55% stayed at home or rented a room in the so-called 'townships' or stayed in squatter camps. Many students faced difficulties with unsuitable conditions of residence. Students staying at home are sometimes required to do chores before going to or after returning from university, which may compromise studies. One student revealed that she lived with a family of eight in a one-roomed house and had serious difficulty studying. The benefit of students staying at home during their studies may be that students receive emotional and social support from their extended family (Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak & Terenzini, 2004).

Unlike some non-resident students who do not have the space to study, students resident in university and private residences have the luxury of having a room and a place to study.

Ishler and Upcraft (2005) argue that students staying in students' residences tend to persist at university ahead of non-resident students. This difference is because university support services are within the proximity of students' residences, and students can explore and access the available support outside class time since they do not have to rush to catch a train, bus or a taxi or leave early to 'beat the traffic'. Students who do not stay in university residences and rely on public transport face related challenges and are often late for early morning classes, adding to their stress levels.

Finances

Another question in the SPQ enquired how students financed their studies. About 80% of students in this study indicated that they were struggling to pay for their studies and were constantly anxious about money. Of the group, 15% indicated that their studies were paid for by their parents, while another 15% indicated that they had bursaries or a loan financing their studies; 5% of students worked part-time to finance their studies; 65% received the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS). NSFAS was meant to provide financial aid to students from poor and working-class families to promote access and success at higher education in South Africa in the form of a loan (of which 40% can be converted into a bursary when a student passes all courses) (NSFAS, 2019). About 70% of students in this study (the 5% of students who pay for their own studies and the 65% on NSFAS) were anxious about who would pay and how their fees would be paid; how they were going to get to university, and who would pay for their food and living expenses. Financial difficulties add to the tension of first-year students in higher education and affect their ability to focus on their studies. Considering that such students are often the first members of their family to reach university because of apartheid restrictions of the past, these harsh conditions seem particularly inappropriate and undeserved in a post-liberation country which, more than anything else, requires a skilled workforce to compete globally in the Fourth Industrial Revolution (Kelly-Laubscher & Luckett, 2016). Funding for students comes from different sources, such as parents or family, scholarships, bursaries, loans, or personal resources. A family that does not contribute to a student's university expenses; a bursary, scholarship or loan that does not pay on time; the need for students to find part-time employment to cover living expenses adds to student anxiety and distress. Awareness of student anxiety should prompt universities to appreciate and allow for the effect of financial strain compromising student retention and reputation.

Use of technology

Technology has taken over university teaching and learning spaces. Learning material is uploaded onto electronic platforms for students to access. Students were asked about their internet and computer skills, and 90% of them indicated that they did not have internet

access at home nor possess a computer or a laptop. Some students arrive at university with minimal or no computer skills (Czerniewicz & Brown, 2010). Students often lack computer skills, do not have computers, smartphones, or internet access off-campus; thus, they face challenges meeting university study demands. McLean (2018) argues that rural and township schools, from which students generally come, are poorly resourced and have no technology access. To access the Internet, students have to come to the university on weekends or leave university late; however, most of the time, the computer laboratories are full. Students then end up going to internet cafes where they have to pay to use online facilities. This expense erodes their ability to manage, write and complete tasks and assignments on time.

The SPQ's findings revealed that challenges some first-year students face range from their accommodation not being conducive to studying to their struggle to survive in the university due to the lack of finances to pay for even basic needs. While these findings support those from other studies such as Pather and Dorosamy (2018), McGhie (2017), and Van Zyl (2016), this study's findings revealed that knowing the profile of first-year students is important in identifying their strengths and risk factors. This is significant because it contributes to shedding more light on the student demographic issue and first-year student support. Knowing incoming first-year students' profile allows for implementing more thoughtful, sensitive, effective and well-constructed early intervention strategies. A sincere commitment by university faculties towards its students will play a major role in student retention.

University promise

One of Kalsbeek's 4 Ps is the promises the university makes to students and how the university delivers on these promises. From an ethics perspective, universities are expected to create structures and systems to support and facilitate a smooth transition from secondary school to university; engage and promote first-year students' progress and success at university. For universities to create successful structures, they need to:

- focus on knowing who their students are;
- prioritise student learning;
- coordinate and invest money in support services, opening up prospects for students, and
- recognise the significance of student diversity.

A university's role is vital in successful student transition and engagement (Pather, Norodien-Fataar, Cupido & Mkonto, 2017). Support services in universities should develop comprehensive strategies that cater to the new, diverse student body's needs. University services should align with the kind of students that the university attracts. It is of no use for a university to have world-class support services that do not consider actual student profiles. Universities whose culture and mission focus on their students, constant development, and

investing funds in support services facilitate student transition (Kift, 2015; Motala, 2017). Universities have to build environments that are friendly, tolerant, uphold diversity, and are culturally sensitive.

For a university to provide support effectively, it needs to capacitate its staff to support the transition of first-year students who have been unfairly disadvantaged, poorly educated, and hardly exposed to a print-rich environment and lack computer skills. First-year students benefit from services that include:

- English language support;
- guidance counselling;
- library support;
- student housing;
- pastoral or religious care;
- peer support;
- mathematics support, and
- a writing centre (Paideya & Dunpath, 2018; Pather et al., 2017).

These services are critical for first-year students who are regarded as 'at risk' (McGhie, 2017).

To ameliorate under-preparedness and close the articulation gap, CPUT offers support programmes. Caution needs to be exercised in designing support interventions so that they do not stigmatise first-year students:

Tutorial programme

Providing a tutorial programme as academic support has been recognised as an effective tool in retaining students who experience challenges in their courses (Cupido & Narodien-Fataar, 2019; Mkonto, 2018b). CPUT students (from the second year upwards) are trained as tutors to provide academic support to first-year students. Students in focus group discussions indicated the advantages of consulting with a tutor to assist them with parts of their courses that they did not understand:

I did not do marketing in high school and I was struggling with marketing terms, I, therefore, attended tutorial sessions. The tutor helped me a lot (Student 12).

Apart from providing academic support, tutors also directed students to where they can find support:

When I failed the first assignment my lecturer sent me to a tutor. The tutor was very patient with me and took me through the steps of writing an assignment including referencing which I did not know. The tutor also told me about the Writing Centre where I can get help with my assignment (Student 5).

Mentoring programme

Formal and informal engagement with peers provides first-year students with an opportunity to attain academic goals (Pather et al., 2017). On arrival at the university, all first-year students are allocated mentors. The mentoring programme concentrates on psycho-social support and remains within the context of building improved student-to-student relations between a senior student (mentor) and a first-year student (mentee). The department involved in this study provides mentors for first-year students. Students in the focus group discussions confirmed receiving support from mentors who assisted them with answers to questions that they were afraid to ask for fear of appearing stupid:

Unlike high school CPUT is quite big, for the first week I missed my classes because I did not know where the lecture theatres were and I was afraid to ask other students. I asked my mentor and she accompanied me to lecture theatre and showed me the easiest route (Student 29).

Mentors also provided emotional and social support to the students:

During the first two weeks of my arrival at the university I missed home terribly, I cried a lot. The mentor put me in touch with other students in my situation. The support from the fellow students and the mentor helped me to cope (Student 9).

The Writing Centre

This centre provides writing support to students to acquire academic writing skills by guiding them through their written assignments and assisting those who experience difficulties in the language of learning and teaching. Academic writing plays an important role in socialising students into the discourse of subjects and disciplines in universities (Pineteh, 2014; Sefalane-Nkohla & Mtonjeni, 2019). Due to being underprepared for higher education, CPUT students struggle to uphold academic writing standards acceptable for higher education. CPUT has to deal with students from previously disadvantaged communities who are underprepared for higher education. Being academically underprepared affects students' total academic development.

At high school I never wrote an assignment and when I was given an assignment at the university I did not [know] what to do until I remembered a presentation by the Writing Centre about helping students with writing of assignments. I went to the Writing Centre and I was assisted with the writing of the assignment. I got 55% for my first assignment and improved more with my second assignment (Student 7).

Funding at university is a challenge for both students who are considering attending university and those already participating. The majority of CPUT students struggle to meet basic needs. The #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall student protest movements across South African universities in 2015-2017 focussed on the funding issue (Calitz & Fourie, 2016; Sosibo, 2019). Poverty in South Africa has become increasingly acute as the wealth gap

widens. Rich parents can send their children to ex-Model C schools with excellent teachers, infrastructure, playing fields and computer laboratories, while those who are historically most justified to receive a quality education can only afford Quintile 1 schooling, which has little to offer. Statistics South Africa (StatsSA, 2014) reported that 45% of the South African population is categorised as 'poor', with 20.2% living in 'extreme poverty'.

Non-resident students have difficulty finding safe and affordable transport, so they miss or arrive late for their early classes; 55% do not stay in university residences and rely upon public transport to reach university. The university provides a shuttle service to bring students from university residences to campus and moving between campuses. However, the university shuttle service does not cater for non-resident students by collecting them from where they stay and transporting them to campuses or from train or bus stations to the campuses.

When there was a bus strike I could not come to university for two weeks because I only buy monthly bus ticket and I did not have money for daily taxi fare and I leave far from the train station to catch a train. I wish the university could provide a shuttle service for the students that do [not] stay at the residences (Student 41).

The university's computer laboratories are open 24 hours. Here students can search for information and work on their assignments. Students in the focus group discussions indicated that the computer laboratories are always full, so they can hardly find spaces to work on their assignments.

If I want to work on an assignment at the computer lab I need to arrive early and bunk all the classes for that day because if I leave to attend classes when I come back to the computer lab I won't get a space to work on my assignment (Student 22).

Some students do not own laptops and lack access to the Internet where they stay; the university does not supply them with data, negatively impacting their studies and affecting their progress when they need to access information on the Internet and submit assignments.

I am forced to get the information for my assignment at the university because there is no internet at home and the internet café are expensive (Student 2).

Students who stay at the university residence are at an advantage as they can access the computer laboratories at night. Students staying elsewhere cannot do so.

Staying at the res is helping me; I can rest after classes and then go to the computer lab at night when it is quiet to work on my assignment (Student 15).

Because I stay at the res I do not need a laptop I can use the desktop at the computer lab to work on my assignment (Student 33).

South African universities urgently need to take cognisance of students' contexts and the social and political backgrounds where they are from (Hu & Kuh, 2002). First-year

students deserve to have access to student guidance and support that aligns with their needs because, in South Africa's higher education, a significant portion of first-year students is first-generation students. In this study, the university's promises of student support align with the call to support first-year students transitioning from high school to university and persist towards graduation. However, the participating students' views on the Writing Centre, the mentoring and tutoring programmes demonstrate the need for a more nuanced approach in designing these programmes. These findings suggest that while the programmes are commendable, more work is needed if the university intends to ensure that these programmes are not blind to the persistent social and economic inequalities, which affect many first-year students' university learning.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated how the individual profiles of first-year students in one faculty at CPUT are different and how these differences impact students' academic survival. Reading these findings, together with the university's promises to first-year students, confirm the need for the institution to invest in first-year student support initiatives that will take cognisance of student diversities and subjectivities. The data presented evidence that in one faculty at CPUT, first-year student support initiatives can sometimes be generic and often leaves some students unable to participate as fully as they would have desired. Considering that first-year students are mostly transitioning from high school to university and that this transition phase is a delicate one for students' academic journeys, a constant review of first-year student support initiatives and strategies is needed. This study's findings confirm this need and add to the growing calls from within academic development circles for universities to move away from generic conceptualisation of student support to customised versions, which would favour even the most disenfranchised student. Kalsbeek 4 Ps framework (2013) enables us to deepen our analysis of first-year student support within a specific context, and in this case, to highlight areas in current student support that needs further attention and review.

The data that this chapter presents and the analysis done is limited in scope and sample size. Even though a mixed-method approach was adopted for the study, the quantitative data is not intended to make statistical claims. It is used as a precursor to engaging with the qualitative findings. The study is relevant because it presents an exploratory attempt to review first-year student support in one faculty at CPUT to meet different first-year students' profiles. We do not, however, generalise. Instead, we suggest that a larger study consisting of more students and sample more university faculties could provide richer data and depth of analysis that would allow for generalisations to be made. Finally, being 'first-year experience' (FYE) practitioners at CPUT, this study's authors offer practitioners' view of first-year student support at CPUT. In so doing, we can identify weaknesses and

challenges inherent in the models we are adopting for first-year student support and explore how other frameworks such as Kalsbeek's (2013) can improve our craft.

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