

SUBMISSION TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Inquiry into Teacher Education

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The position of the teacher in our society is highly complex, holds different meanings depending on whether the onlooker is a fellow teacher, a parent or a student. Research affirms that effective learning occurs through the efforts of quality teachers or mentors.

The Teacher Education staff at the Charles Darwin University, Northern Territory, have been consulted prior to the submission of this paper. However, this submission has been sent by Helen Spiers as an individual in the belief that it is important that Teacher Education be put under the spotlight nationally and examined in order to identify current good policies and practices and extrapolate on areas for improvement. It is my belief that the School of Education, Faculty of Education, Health and Science at the Charles Darwin University, has an ongoing commitment to reflection and improvement in current education practices in their programs.

I would welcome the opportunity to communicate with the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Vocational Training during this Inquiry into Teacher Education. Staff from the School of Education, Charles Darwin University, who could also be consulted, includes Dr. Jennifer Rennie, Dr Brian Devlin, Dr. Lorraine Connell, Dr. Mike Grenfell, Dr. Bill Palmer, Doreen Rorrison, Helen Harper, Dr. Michael Christie, Karen Sinclair, V Mohan-Ram and Dr. Phil Keys.

Terms of Reference

1 Examine and assess the criteria for selecting students for teacher training courses.

The Teacher Education courses at the Charles Darwin University have a Best Model of Practice in its selection process for students entering its courses. Co-ordinators undertake a two-staged process.

- Initially a written or electronic application form is lodged outlining qualifications, experience and TER scores (if school leaver);
- An interview follows with the Course Co-ordinator to assess commitment and spoken English. This may take the form of detailed transcripts and phone calls if distance is an issue.

The lecturing staff work in close conjunction with the (NT) Department of Education, Employment and Training in the identification of priority curriculum areas and support for student recruitment. For example, Charles Darwin University has attracted from around Australia a unique group of students to its Teacher Education courses: graduates of Steiner education programs who are interested in gaining full teacher registration through advanced standing entry available at Charles Darwin University.

2 Examine the extent to which teacher training courses can attract high quality students, including students from diverse backgrounds and experiences.

The population of the Northern Territory is diverse and unlike other regional universities, the Charles Darwin University caters for the diverse population of the whole of the NT with its regionally-focussed approach to recruitment. Many rural students choose to live in Darwin, a city that also attracts a large number of interstate enrolments (Tyler). The School of Education has a consistent history of providing the supported environment considered essential for success by students from diverse backgrounds and experiences, particularly Indigenous and international students. Strategies such as regular social get-

together, the appointment of Indigenous academic support lecturers and the adoption of culturally-appropriate pedagogy have ensured a supported environment for the student. The availability of academic bridging programs as well as priority being given to the defining of articulating pathways from VET Diploma level courses (i.e. Child Care) to Higher Education programs (Education suite of courses) has also assisted students from diverse backgrounds to enter our programs.

3 Examine attrition rates from teaching courses and reasons for that attrition.

The Charles Darwin University is a relatively unique institution as it caters for a diverse cultural mix of students with a considerable proportion (i.e. 23.3% in Common Units (Tyler, 2004)) of students choosing to enrol in the external mode of delivery where this mode is available. We believe that this reflects the rapidly changing demographics and personal circumstances of current students.

Teacher education at Charles Darwin University provides both preservice and in-service programs.

(1) The *preservice* programs continue to grow and in 2004 had a 17% increase on 2003 student enrolments. The majority of this growth is largely been due to mature age students from interstate looking for a career change, as a large portion already have a higher education award. Preservice pathways into teaching include:

Primary

BACHELOR OF EDUCATION	4 year program
BACHELOR OF ARTS/BACHELOR OF EDUCATION	4 year program
BACHELOR OF SCIENCE/BACHELOR OF EDUCATION	4 year program
BACHELOR OF EDUCATION (GRAD ENTRY)	2 year program

Secondary

BACHELOR OF ARTS/BACHELOR OF EDUCATION	4 year program
BACHELOR OF SCIENCE/BACHELOR OF EDUCATION	4 year program
GRADUATE DIPLOMA IN SECONDARY EDUCATION	1.5 year program
BACHELOR OF EDUCATION (three strands, middle schooling, general and VET in schools)	4 year program

Since 2000, Teacher Education *pre-service* courses at Charles Darwin University have consistently enrolled a student cohort where 11% are School Leavers; 20% are male; 4.4% identify as Indigenous, although this is not necessarily all Indigenous students in the courses; 8% have articulated from VET programs and 8.5% have gained entry through the Special Entry criteria.

(2) Since 2000, an increase from 24.7% to 37.6% of overall student population from the Darwin urban area has occurred in the *in-service* programs for practicing teachers. However, there has been a drop in enrolments in the Masters and Doctoral courses and from students under 30 years of age from interstate.

In-service programs for practicing teachers include:

BACHELOR OF EDUCATION (INSERVICE)	1 year program
DOCTOR OF TEACHING	3 year program
GRADUATE CERTIFICATE IN EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT	0.5 year program
GRADUATE CERTIFICATE IN EDUCATIONAL STUDIES	0.5 year program
GRADUATE CERTIFICATE IN SPECIAL EDUCATION	0.5 year program
GRADUATE DIPLOMA IN EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT	1 year program
MASTER OF EDUCATION	1 year program
MASTER OF EDUCATION (HONOURS)	1 year program

Predictably most students accessing these courses enrol with a previous HE course completed or commenced as they are usually practising teachers.

Reasons for attrition from courses are multi-faceted:

- Occurs in the first few weeks of the beginning of semester due to approaching HECS deadline
- Workload appears to be high to them
- Materials arrive late or sheer volume appears too great – staff noted interception strategy needed here
- Some students leave following practicum
- Some students advised that they are assessed as not of the quality required in spoken English and further study in this area recommended prior to continuation in the course
- Some students have other commitments that overload them
- Intensification of work commitments
- Get a job as can't cope with financial restraints of being a student
- Personal circumstances overwhelm them i.e. Death in family

4 Examine and assess the criteria for selecting and rewarding education faculty members.

Charles Darwin University is Australia's newest university and so, as a result, some Human Resource policies are still being discussed and proposed. However, with the signing of a recent Enterprise Bargaining Agreement between management and staff, it is expected that policies relating to rewarding staff for excellence in teaching/research/student welfare will be back on the agenda in the near future.

5 Examine the educational philosophy underpinning the teacher training courses and assess the extent to which it is informed by research (include the teaching methods used, course structure and materials, and methods for assessment and evaluation).

Overall a constructivist educational philosophy, taking into account the complexity, multiplicity, situatedness and contextualisation of learning. Beginning teachers emerge from our courses as skilled communicators and collaborative constructivists.

6 Examine the interaction and relationships between teacher training courses and other university faculty disciplines.

The CDU Teacher Education suite of courses was developed in conjunction with other faculty disciplines and what they had to offer our students. Notably, there is a continuing high level of interaction between the School of Education staff and students and other Schools (Science & Primary Industries) and Faculties (Technical & Industrial Education/Engineering). The results include:

- Introduction of Common units has brought staff together across disciplines
- All programs contain provision for specialist electives
- Several opportunities exist for students to undertake Double Degrees (B.A./B.Sc/B.Ed)
- Several opportunities exist for students to access other faculty units within Education courses including external units (i.e. School for Social and Policy Research)
- Strong links between Maths methodology lecturers in the School of Education with Mathematics lecturers in Engineering Faculty with guest speaker usage and students being advised to upgrade their mathematics skills (where assessment indicates it is needed) by undertaking a mathematics unit in Engineering.
- High level of formal and informal opportunities for guest speaker involvement across disciplines such as Psychology staff being invited to Education classes (i.e. Developing Child class)
- Ongoing opportunities exist and are utilised for cross-faculty research teams
- Cross-faculty links produce collaborative academic publications
- Ongoing commitment to the production of external units will increase opportunities for students to study across faculty disciplines

7 Examine the preparation of primary and secondary teaching graduates to:

- **teach literacy and numeracy**

The underlying philosophy indicates that attention to literacy and numeracy achievement is across all units in Teacher Education and this is encouraged on a regular basis with team discussions and professional

development opportunities. One unit (one-twelfth of the course) in the Graduate Diploma Secondary is devoted to EAL for Inclusion.

In the undergraduate courses this topic is consistently addressed across all units in conjunction with two other areas of interest (IT and Indigenous issues). This philosophy and school practice is monitored by three Working Parties set up recently: Literacy and Numeracy, Indigenous Education and Middle School.

- ***teach vocational education courses***

There is one elective unit (ETP489 School & VET) and one hour within a core unit in both the undergraduate and post-graduate secondary courses. These are taught by a lecturer with many years of experience in VET management and teaching in the NT, who also has the appropriate VET Certificate IV qualification. There is also a VET stream in BEDSE, Bachelor of Education Secondary.

- ***effectively manage classrooms***

This focus is part of the methodology units as well as the core teaching unit in all undergraduate and postgraduate teaching courses.

- ***successfully use information technology***

The use of IT is meant to be across all units and staff are encouraged to both demonstrate and expect students to demonstrate a range of IT skills during their course/unit delivery. An online tutorial is also available.

- ***deal with bullying and disruptive students and dysfunctional families***

This is considered best undertaken within the school situation such as during Practicum.

- ***deal with children with special needs and/or disabilities***

This is often an area of research chosen by students for their Action Learning projects during practical placement.

- ***achieve accreditation***

A new system of teacher registration has just been introduced into the Northern Territory through a Teacher Registration Board. CDU Education staff are encouraging students to become familiar with the standards for accreditation and apply for registration on completion of their course. Guidelines from the Board on VET qualified people wanting to teach in schools are not clear to date. However, the suite of Education courses at CDU has been monitored to ensure that they meet all expectations associated with teacher registration for our students across Australia.

- ***deal with senior staff, fellow teachers, school boards, education authorities, parents, community groups and other related government departments.***

The CDU Teacher Education courses focus on communication skills and such specialised areas as negotiation skills as well as demonstrate links with other government departments through research collaboration and guest speakers. The topic of the teacher as a community member is also emphasised in the teaching methodology units.

8 Examine the role and input of schools and their staff to the preparation of trainee teachers.

The School of Education staff are encouraged to develop ongoing links with schools and their staff as well as with staff from DEET. This has developed into strong feedback opportunities in the form of:

- A DEET/CDU Co-ordinating Committee which documents all formal feedback on policy from DEET.
- Staff from schools regularly being invited to be a part-time specialist lecturer or guest speaker so that students can be informed of current practices in schools.
- Staff from DEET and a variety of schools invited to be members of new course accreditation/development committees where external input is valued and feedback incorporated into final outcomes. For example, in 2002 the re-accreditation of the B.Ed Graduate Entry involved intensive fortnightly workshops with DEET and school staff to discuss course outcomes. Likewise, with the Indigenous Education unit, workshops to develop key learning areas were held in conjunction with key staff from DEET and schools.

- Staff exchange is encouraged so that school staff and university lecturers can exchange their positions for a defined period of time and current practices can be evaluated and incorporated into lecturer practice and school staff can utilise current research results into their practice on resuming classroom duties.
- Joint research activities are encouraged with staff from school and DEET being part of a research team.

9 Investigate the appropriateness of the current split between primary and secondary training.

At CDU there is evidence of a blurring of the split between primary and secondary schooling in the secondary suite of courses as the introduction of the Middle School concept gains ground and permeates lecturer focus. Current practice in the faculty includes the development of several specialist units concerned with Middle Schooling with a timeframe of 1.5-2 years for final product. It is expected that these units will be available electronically to assist practicing teachers to access them. Whilst there is no major focus currently on Middle Schooling in the primary suite of courses, there are several units that generically cross both secondary and primary areas of training, such as EAL for Inclusion, and it is expected that these units will raise the awareness of issues associated with nationally changing schooling practice.

10 Examine the construction, delivery and resourcing of ongoing professional learning for teachers already in the workforce.

There are several opportunities for teachers already in the workforce to engage with ongoing professional learning at CDU:

- Bachelor Education In-service one year full-time (primary)
- Graduate Certificates in Education e.g. Graduate Certificate in Accelerated Learning and other specialisations such as ESL, Special Education and Adult Literacy.
- Masters units especially in the Applied Linguistics area.

Whilst this practice has occurred in the past in an ad hoc manner, there are currently ongoing discussions with DEET for CDU to be contracted by DEET to deliver regular, planned, on-site professional development sessions for teachers in schools, perhaps based on cluster groupings. Expertise across a variety of teaching specialisations such as Transformational Geometry and Cultural Diversity could be utilised by DEET to expand their current PD profile. There is currently a committee at CDU looking into PD sessions for schools and getting feedback from interested teachers.

11 Examine the adequacy of the funding of teacher training courses by university administrations.

This is an issue that raises concerns. It would appear to be ad hoc with no collaboration with grass roots staff. It is the belief of teacher education staff that it is essential that the School of Education be able to purchase sets of resources that are currently in use in schools so that they can produce pre-service teachers that are literate in the use of up to date software packages, graphic calculators (where relevant), multi-media etc

APPENDIX A

Teacher education at Charles Darwin University provides both preservice and inservice programs.

Preservice pathways into teaching include:

Primary

BACHELOR OF EDUCATION	4 year program
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BACHELOR OF EDUCATION	4 year program

Inservice programs for practicing teachers include:

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GRADUATE CERTIFICATE IN SPECIAL EDUCATION	0.5 year program
GRADUATE DIPLOMA IN EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT	1 year program
MASTER OF EDUCATION	1 year program
MASTER OF EDUCATION (HONOURS)	1 year program

The preservice programs continue to grow and in 2004 had a 17% increase on 2003 student enrolments. The majority of this growth is in the primary sector and largely been due to mature age students from interstate looking for a career change, as a large portion already have a higher education award. The following tables present data on student enrolments for 1998-2004.

Count of Student	Year							
Name	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	
BACHELOR OF ARTS/BACHELOR OF EDUCATION	<i>not offered</i>		13	25	28	33	41	58
BACHELOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES	43	35	41	33	42	33	38	
BACHELOR OF EDUCATION	172	95	39	18	9	4	1	
BACHELOR OF EDUCATION (GRADUATE ENTRY)	<i>not offered</i>	<i>not offered</i>	<i>not offered</i>	<i>not offered</i>	<i>not offered</i>	<i>not offered</i>	11	
BACHELOR OF EDUCATION (HONOURS)	3	1	4	0	2	1	1	
BACHELOR OF EDUCATION (PRESERVICE)	18	43	57	93	166	282	356	
BACHELOR OF SCIENCE/BACHELOR OF EDUCATION	<i>not offered</i>		8	19	22	29	32	45
BACHELOR OF TEACHING (PRIMARY, EARLY CHILDHOOD)	157	179	218	198	210	117	70	
GRADUATE DIPLOMA IN PRIMARY EDUCATION	55	43	66	76	106	139	183	
GRADUATE DIPLOMA IN SECONDARY EDUCATION	22	35	49	43	60	66	75	
Grand Total	470	452	518	511	657	715	838	

BACHELOR OF MUSIC TEACHING

6 7 8 7 8 7 6

offered by the Faculty of Law Business Arts

NB In 2003 the Bachelor of Teaching was not available for new students, these commencing students now enrol in the Bachelor of Ed (preservice).

The combined degrees include data for continuing students in the Bachelor of Arts/Teach & Bachelor Sc/Teach.

Count of Student	Year						
Gender	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Female	389	362	432	439	530	565	661
Male	81	90	86	72	127	150	177
Grand Total	470	452	518	511	657	715	838
<i>% Male students</i>	<i>17.23</i>	<i>19.91</i>	<i>16.60</i>	<i>14.09</i>	<i>19.33</i>	<i>20.98</i>	<i>21.12</i>

Count of Student	Year						
ATSI Indicator	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
ATSI	14	13	23	26	24	29	33
No Information	8	1	0	2	2	7	1
Non ATSI	448	438	495	483	631	679	804
Grand Total	470	452	518	511	657	715	838

Count of Student	Year						
Age Group	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
15 - 19	34	53	50	37	54	59	45
20 - 24	113	127	137	139	160	166	199
25 - 29	86	73	95	99	138	130	164
30 - 34	76	64	82	82	104	123	152
35 - 39	56	60	61	77	84	100	107
40 - 44	53	34	49	34	63	78	90
45 - 49	23	26	24	24	36	37	48
50 or older	29	15	20	19	18	22	33
Grand Total	470	452	518	511	657	715	838

Count of Student	Year						
Admission	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Complete HE Course	119	86	105	74	99	113	239
Incomplete TAFE	21	14	23	11	1	4	3
Employment Experience	0	0	3	3	0	1	2
Incomplete HE Course	24	41	48	57	55	64	108
Mature Age	0	0	1	3	2	3	9
Not Commencing (i.e. continuing)	235	189	232	245	348	402	249
NTU Examination	11	24	33	13	27	29	47
Other basis	27	25	0	13	4	1	21
Professional Qualification	1	3	1	2	0	3	2
Special Entry	8	6	22	14	25	37	50
TAFE Course	0	1	14	25	36	20	44
Year 12 School	24	63	36	51	60	38	64
Grand Total	470	452	518	511	657	715	838

*Only students commencing a course for the first time have an admission status, students continuing in the same course are considered "not commencing".

Count of Student	Year						
Home Address Region	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Darwin City Area							
Darwin City	5	6	9	8	11	14	22
Casuarina	207	200	209	206	237	252	260
Winnellie	39	41	39	48	69	68	56
Berrimah	4	1	2	2	3	5	3
Darwin City Area subtotal	255	248	259	264	320	339	341
% Total Enrolments	54.3	54.9	50.0	51.7	48.5	47.6	40.7
Palmerston							
Palmerston	48	56	56	55	55	53	55
% Total Enrolments	10.2	12.4	10.8	10.8	8.3	7.4	6.6
Darwin Rural Areas							
Adelaide River	0	1	0	1	2	1	1
Berry Springs, Noonamah	4	4	3	2	5	7	5
Batchelor	1	1	1	1	1	3	2
Howard Springs	9	10	10	8	16	19	15
Humpty Doo	7	16	23	21	26	13	20
Darwin Rural Areas subtotal	21	32	37	33	50	43	43
% Total Enrolments	4.5	7.1	7.1	6.5	7.6	6.0	5.1
Other NT (not stated above)							
Alice Springs	17	14	26	31	37	50	51
Alyangula	2	1	1	0	2	1	1
Borroloola	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Nhulumbuy	3	1	6	3	4	3	6
Communities (Katherine Area)	5	13	19	18	28	26	36
Aboriginal Communities (North)	8	3	5	4	4	9	8
Aboriginal Communities (South)	4	6	7	8	5	4	7
Jabiru	4	1	1	7	3	2	4
Katherine	9	7	8	9	14	14	15
Tennant Creek	2	6	5	3	3	7	5
Other NT (not stated above) subtotal	55	52	78	83	100	116	134
% Total Enrolments	11.7	11.5	15.1	16.2	15.2	16.3	16.0
Interstate	84	59	78	71	129	151	252
% Total Enrolments	17.9	13.1	15.1	13.9	19.5	21.2	30.1
No Information	1	0	0	0	3	1	3
Overseas	6	5	10	5	3	9	10
% Total Enrolments	1.3	1.1	1.9	1.0	0.5	1.3	1.2
Grand Total	470	452	518	511	660	712	838

Data Source: M. Landrigan, CDU, 2004

APPENDIX B

STUDENT OUTCOMES IN COMMON UNITS

A REPORT TO THE COMMON UNIT COMMITTEE ON THE PREDICTORS OF ATTRITION IN THE COMMON UNIT PROGRAM (1999-2002)

BILL TYLER (CONSULTANT)

WITH NICOLA PRITCHARD (PROJECT CO-ORDINATOR)

Executive Summary

This project began as specific investigation into the differential rates of withdrawal and failure between internal and external enrolments in the Common Unit Program (*at the Northern Territory University, now Charles Darwin University*). Under direction from the Committee, the initial inquiry was subsequently developed into a much more comprehensive analysis of the relationships between modes of unit delivery and a host of other student characteristics, both socio-demographic and situational. The development of generic model of prediction of student outcomes was firmly grounded in the research literature, both Australian and international, on the effects of these predictor variables, as well as in the experience of other universities in delivering core or foundation programs to first year students.

Major Findings: Though far from exhaustive of all the possible predictors of student outcomes, the following findings are put forward as the basis for further research and intervention:

- a) The two indices of attrition in Common Units enrolments – rates of withdrawal before census date and of fail result appear to be quite distinct kinds of outcomes, each with its own unique pattern of prediction from various student characteristics.
- b) Higher incidence of failure was predicted by Indigenous identity, external mode of delivery, male gender, being under 25 yrs and enrolment in a social or cultural studies field.
- c) Higher incidence of withdrawal was associated with an internal mode of delivery, full-time status and age 25+ yrs at time of enrolment in the unit. Both health studies and social and cultural studies fields predicted lower rates of withdrawal when other factors were controlled.

- d) With the exception of Indigenous identity, student enrolment characteristics did not predict the category of fail grade awarded (i.e. F vs. FA/ WF) and thereby do not appear to be a factor inflating the failure rate of groups with lower rates of withdrawal. Indigenous enrolments, however, were found to be a special case in that there appears to be a strong link between their lower withdrawal rate and their higher failure rate.
- e) Enrolments from a course in a Health field of studies had a lower rate of failure and a lower rate of withdrawal. Affiliation with a course in a Social and Cultural field predicted a higher rate of failure but lower rate of withdrawal.
- f) Overseas citizenship was associated with a lower rate of failure, though this was not statistically significant, when other student characteristics were controlled for. This variable may require further breakdown on the basis of nationality.
- g) English as a second language was found to have a slight and non-significant association with a lower pass rate and with a lower rate of withdrawal. It was not a significant factor in this analysis.
- h) A risk of failure analysis based on regression modeling suggests that an enrolment from a student who is Indigenous, male, under 25 yrs and studying in the external mode of delivery will have 2.5 times the probability of receiving a failed grade than an enrolment by a student who is non-Indigenous, female, 25+ yrs and studying internally.
- i) Data-mining methods revealed wide discrepancies in the pass rates of fifteen subgroups segmented by age, gender, mode of delivery and Indigeneity. These are unique effects which provide more precise definition of groups at risk.
- j) Segments identified by percentage difference in their pass rates were (lower rating group first): (i) 38% between Indigenous and non-Indigenous enrolments in 35 + yrs age group, (ii) 25% difference between external and internal enrolments in the 17-19 yr age group (iii) 18% difference between Australian and Overseas enrolments in the 20-25 yr age group and (iv) 17.5 % difference between male and female enrolments in the 25-35 yr age group.

Recommendations:

- a) Because, the complex pattern of differential pass rates reflects the diverse socio-demographic profile of the client body, the problem of attrition requires a differentiated and considered response.
- b) Inequalities in academic performance are best addressed in terms of “market” segmentations defined by unique combinations or intersections of gender, age, Indigeneity and other predictors, rather than as single dimensions of disadvantage.
- c) The effects of diverse student characteristics and situations indicate a need for a more finely-attuned response in terms of range of content materials, assessment options, delivery strategies and support and feedback mechanisms. This response should recognise the need for continual integration between general education and skill components of the program.

- d) In this respect, a graduated transition toward more flexible delivery strategies for all students (both internal and external) may be considered as a desirable option.
- e) Low rates of academic performance may also require university-wide forms of intervention, such as specialised remedial courses for basic skills, adjustment to entry levels and attention to the interface between the Common Units and the goals and methodologies of the student's parent or primary course.
- f) In light of the restructurings of Common Units in recent years, it is highly desirable that the Committee review the governance structure of the program, with the objective of securing its stability in terms of content, structuring and range of unit offerings.
- g) Coordinators, tutors and lecturers should be informed of the main findings of this study so that issues raised by this analysis might be addressed in all aspects of program development and delivery.
- H) An integrated database should be developed for the purposes monitoring student responses to the Common Units. This database should seek to incorporate levels of student satisfaction with all aspects of the program, enrolment patterns and academic performance, as well as the attitudes and perceptions of students in the first year of a course.