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ACADEMIC INDUCTION: AN APPROACH TO IMPROVING STUDENTS' TRANSITION TO HIGHER UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

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SUMMARY

Academic orientation is a fundamental strategy for facilitating students' transition to higher education and promoting their social and academic adaptation. The objective of this study was to determine the effect of academic orientation on the university transition. The research was conducted using a quantitative, applied, non-experimental, correlational design. The population consisted of 1,736 incoming students from the 2024-II semester, from which a sample of 316 participants was selected and surveyed. The results show that 54% of the students perceive a positive impact of the orientation program on their university adaptation, while 19% consider it necessary to strengthen personalized strategies for academic support and monitoring. It is concluded that students exhibit positive adaptation related to their professional training, social interaction, and a favorable perception of their academic performance; however, difficulties such as shyness, discomfort in expressing themselves, and lack of confidence persist, highlighting the need to implement ongoing support programs.

KEYWORDS: Academic induction; academic transition; adaptation to university life; student retention; higher education.

1 INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, higher education has undergone a process of constant transformation and innovation due to economic, social, and technological changes that require new teaching methodologies and ways of supporting students (Tuero et al., 2017; Soler Contreras et al., 2017). In this context, access to university represents a crucial moment in students' educational journey, especially for those transitioning from secondary education to an academic environment with higher levels of autonomy, intellectual rigor, and personal responsibility.

Several studies agree that this transition process is often accompanied by vocational uncertainty, academic difficulties, emotional maladjustment, and challenges with social integration. If these factors are not addressed in a timely manner, the risk of underachievement and early dropout increases (Tinto, 2012; Fasanando-Puyo, 2025a). Worldwide, despite the steady increase in university enrollment, significant inequalities persist in access to, retention in, and completion of higher education. According to UNESCO, only 43% of the global university-age population has access to higher education. This highlights the structural disparities between regions and countries (Higher Education | UNESCO, n.d.). To address this issue, Sustainable Development Goal 4.3 aims to ensure equitable, quality, and affordable access to higher education by 2030.

Within this framework, academic orientation is established as a fundamental strategy for the institution to promote a successful transition to university. According to Placencia-Ibadango et al. (2022), academic orientation enables students to understand university dynamics, form interpersonal relationships from the outset, and reduce the sense of isolation typical of the beginning of their university life. From this perspective, orientation should not be considered an isolated or merely informative activity, but rather a systematic process of support in academic, emotional, and social terms.

According to Viveros and Sánchez (2018), academic induction is a group of organized and structured activities designed to help students adapt to and integrate into the university environment, encompassing academic, social, and emotional aspects. The goal of these activities is to strengthen fundamental skills, such as self-management, autonomous learning, and effective communication, which are essential for successfully meeting the demands of higher education.

Tinto (2012), from the perspective of student integration theory, states that the level of a student's

social and academic integration is a determining factor in their retention at the university. In this context, academic orientation programs play a preventive role by reducing initial anxiety, providing relevant information about institutional rules and services, and creating support networks that facilitate early adaptation. According to Guisard et al. (2012), academic orientation programs should be structured around four essential dimensions: informational, social, academic, and psycho-affective support. These dimensions enable comprehensive attention to the needs of incoming students, fostering their academic performance and emotional well-being.

Furthermore, the transition from secondary education to university is currently considered a dynamic, complex, and multidimensional process that impacts students' academic performance, social adjustment, and emotional well-being (Fasanando-Puyo, 2025b). This process entails significant changes in academic workload, assessment and teaching methods, time management, and the student's role within the educational system. According to Michell et al. (2014), university transitions are inductive processes of personal evolution and transformation. They emphasize that it is not simply an isolated event, but a gradual process requiring students to adapt, which involves changes in identity, social relationships, and personal autonomy.

Global literature shows that academic orientation programs significantly help university students adapt better and remain in their studies. Tutoring, peer support, and collaborative learning are fundamental strategies in orientation processes, according to research conducted in Asia, Latin America, and Europe (Matheson & Sutcliffe, 2017; Sánchez-Tarazaga et al., 2024; Quan & Reilly, 2024; Breeze et al., 2018). Furthermore, recent studies highlight the importance of creating adaptable, inclusive, and contextualized programs tailored to students' needs, emphasizing holistic education and socio-emotional well-being (Ball et al., 2024; López et al., 2022; Moreno & Vásquez, 2022; Martínez-Otero & Gaeta, 2024).

Numerous studies indicate that university dropout remains a structural problem in the country. Duche et al. (2020) report that approximately 27% of students in Peru drop out of university in their first year, primarily due to difficulties adapting academically and a lack of institutional guidance. In turn, recent studies emphasize that intrinsic motivation, social support, and involvement in academic support activities are crucial elements for a successful transition to university (Alcarraz-Curi &

Sánchez, 2021; Gismondi & Huiman, 2021; Timmis et al., 2024).

The primary motivation for this study stems from empirical evidence and the institutional environment of the National University "San Luis Gonzaga," where it has been observed that many incoming students struggle to adjust to the social, academic, and emotional demands of university life. Although the university conducts preparatory activities, such as introductory courses or foundational programs, these tend to be quite varied and focus primarily on academic content, without forming part of a comprehensive academic orientation program.

This situation is reflected in worrying institutional indicators. According to statistics from the National Institute of Statistics and Informatics, in 2023 the university enrolled 8,243 students, but only 2,732 graduated and 1,363 received their professional degrees (Statistical Compendium. Peru 2023, n.d.). These numbers demonstrate the need to strengthen academic support strategies from the beginning of university life to optimize academic performance, student retention, and the transition to university.

From a theoretical perspective, this work is based on Bronfenbrenner's ecological model (1979), Kift's (2015) first-year pedagogy, and the theory of social and cultural capital (Ferrant, 2022). These approaches allow us to understand that the transition to university is a process affected by various inequalities and systemic influences. The research aims to provide empirical evidence to guide the design of data-driven academic induction programs, thereby contributing to equity, retention, and academic success for university students from both a social and practical standpoint.

In this context, the objective of the study is to determine the effect of academic induction on the transition of students to higher university education.

1.1 University academic induction

Academic induction at the university can be understood as a set of organized institutional actions, either before or during the first year, that aim to familiarize newly admitted students with the rules, resources, academic culture, services, and performance expectations. Simultaneously, these actions activate socio-emotional support and networks that help students integrate and feel comfortable during the transition to their first year. Recent evidence suggests that "welcome" or "orientation" strategies are methods for supporting incoming students to optimize their initial experience and integration with the university (Leonard et al., 2024). Induction is also understood as a component

of a comprehensive institutional perspective that integrates curriculum, co-curriculum, and support services to facilitate student transition and success; not merely as a one-day informational event, but rather as a process aligned with current first-year frameworks (Egea & McKenzie, 2025).

1.2 Importance of academic induction

Recent research on first-year experience shows that the university transition is often associated with challenges in:

a) Academic adaptation: This is the process through which incoming students understand how to respond to the new demands of the university environment, which are characterized by a heavier workload of specialized readings, more complex assessment methods, and a significant increase in learning autonomy. In contrast to secondary education, at university students must organize their time, plan their academic tasks, and take an active part in constructing their knowledge (Reyes-González et al., 2022).

Throughout this transition process, many students struggle to understand lengthy academic texts, manage multiple assessments simultaneously, and establish independent study routines. Without early orientation, these demands can lead to initial insecurity and poor performance. In this context, academic orientation plays a preventative role by allowing students to familiarize themselves with the educational model, assessment methods, and institutional expectations, thus facilitating a gradual adjustment to the university pace.

From a pedagogical perspective, academic adaptation involves not only learning study methods but also assimilating the university's academic culture: participating in class, using institutional resources, and self-regulating during the learning process (Reyes et al., 2024). When this process is supported from the outset, the chances of achieving more stable academic performance during the first semesters increase.

b) Social connection and sense of belonging: This refers to the creation of interpersonal bonds with peers, professors and administrative staff of the university; the sense of belonging (Videla et al., 2023), on the other hand, is related to how the student perceives that he or she is accepted, valued and an active member of the university community. Students often feel lonely or socially disconnected when they first start university, particularly if they come from different educational backgrounds or lack established social networks. This lack of connection in the early stages can negatively impact motivation,

engagement in academic activities, and staying in their studies.

Academic orientation, by facilitating spaces for initial interaction, institutional exposure, and teamwork, promotes the early creation of social bonds and strengthens the connection between students and their university environment. This sense of belonging acts as a protective factor against dropout, since students who feel included demonstrate greater commitment to their university life and studies.

In this context, initial socialization is not a secondary element, but a fundamental one in the training process, since it directly promotes well-being and continuity in studies.

c) Emotional well-being and confidence to participate: Emotional well-being encompasses the student's state of mind in response to university demands, including levels of anxiety, self-confidence, and perceived competence in the academic sphere (Sinchigalo-Martínez *et al.*, 2022). On the other hand, confidence to participate is reflected in the student's willingness to participate in class, verbalize their ideas, give presentations, and face academic challenges.

Academic orientation before classes begin reduces this initial uncertainty by providing clear information, institutional guidance, and advance interaction experiences, which helps to reinforce academic self-esteem (Quiñonez, 2022). Likewise, early support helps to normalize the difficulties inherent in joining the university and fosters a positive attitude toward learning.

When students build confidence from the beginning, they participate more in academic activities, are more willing to work in teams, and are more committed to their chosen profession.

Incoming students often feel insecure communicating in academic settings, fearful of making mistakes, or shy as they transition to higher education. These emotions can restrict their active participation and hinder their learning, particularly in the initial months.

d) Persistence and retention: Persistence refers to the student continuing their studies, and retention refers to the institution being able to keep enrolled students until they complete their professional training.

The quality of the first-year experience is closely linked to these two concepts. Recent studies agree that dropping out of university is generally associated with difficulties adapting academically, minimal social integration, and low emotional well-being during the initial years.

In this context, academic induction emerges as an essential method for the institution to strengthen student retention, as it addresses early on the factors that contribute to dropout. By fostering a sense of belonging, offering initial support, and facilitating adaptation, favorable conditions are created for students to thrive at the university.

Therefore, induction programs should not be considered merely as informative activities (Moreno & Vásquez, 2022), but as a component of an institutional policy focused on academic success, inclusion, and the sustainability of educational pathways.

In this context, it is reasonable to have induction or orientation programs, as they can help strengthen the sense of belonging, improve social connection and support initial achievements; all of these elements are related to more stable trajectories during the first year (Smalley, 2024).

Furthermore, evidence regarding university retention indicates that institutions carry out a variety of academic and psychosocial support activities to increase the success of university students, which highlights the importance of carrying out systematic and evaluated actions, particularly in the early periods of study (Gonçalves *et al.* 2024).

1.3 Characteristics of academic induction

- a) Comprehensive character: Understood as the sum of the academic plus the social and well-being; it is not limited to informing; it incorporates actions of welcome, care, accompaniment and clear paths of support, considering the transition as a complex experience of the student (Leonard, 2024).
- b) Progressive approach: It is advisable to organize initial sessions with follow-up (mentoring/tutoring, early supervision, integrative activities), since adaptation is not achieved in just one week (Egea & McKenzie, 2025).
- c) Connection with key academic skills: In addition to tactics for academic communication and class participation, advice on the use of educational resources, study routines and time management.
- d) Program evaluation and improvement: Guidance studies show that it is useful to plan, measure participation, and modify the program to increase engagement and perceived usefulness (Ballada & Austria, 2023).
- e) Adaptation to modalities: The format has the potential to affect social connectivity; for this

reason, the design must guarantee authentic opportunities to interact and belong.

1.4 Relationship between academic induction and university education:

University education requires students to gradually adapt to a new academic culture, characterized by higher standards of autonomy, more rigorous assessment systems, personal discipline, an understanding of institutional norms, interaction with professors, and active participation in university life. To address these demands, academic orientation is the first institutional tool designed to bridge this need. This is achieved by providing guidance, promoting initial integration, and offering early support to facilitate a successful transition to higher education. When this process is approached from a holistic, rather than merely informational, perspective, it helps strengthen social connection and a sense of belonging, encourages students to achieve early results by clarifying their academic expectations, facilitates the timely identification of individual needs to provide personalized support, and thus creates more favorable conditions for students to remain at the institution and achieve academic success during their first year at university.

2 METHODOLOGY

The research employed a quantitative method to examine how academic induction influences students' transition to higher education through the analysis of numerical data. An applied and correlational study was conducted to generate practical knowledge for addressing a specific educational problem and to determine the correlation between the analyzed variables. Because the variables were examined in their natural context and quantified at different points during the 2024-II academic semester, the design was longitudinal and non-experimental.

The population consisted of 1,736 students who enrolled at the National University "San Luis Gonzaga" during the 2024-II semester, distributed across the branches of Social Sciences and Humanities, Sciences and Engineering, and Health Sciences. The sample comprised 316 students, selected through stratified probability sampling, ensuring that each academic field was represented. The study was conducted with the participation of enrolled students and students in the academic induction program who chose to participate voluntarily.

Document analysis and survey methods were

used for data collection. A registration form was used to collect academic data, and a structured questionnaire was used to analyze students' perceptions of the academic induction process and their transition to university. The instrument was validated through both a pilot test and expert review, ensuring its reliability and validity.

The data obtained were coded and analyzed using SPSS statistical software. To determine relevant relationships between the variables, a descriptive analysis was used, employing measures of dispersion and central tendency, as well as an inferential analysis using statistical tests such as the chi-square test and analysis of variance (ANOVA). Tables and graphs were used to present the results and facilitate their interpretation.

The research adhered to fundamental ethical principles, ensuring participant anonymity, confidentiality, and informed consent. Students participated voluntarily and were free to withdraw from the study at any time without academic repercussions. The project was evaluated and approved by the relevant university bodies.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research shows that the academic induction program plays an important role in students' adaptation to higher education, especially in terms of social integration, learning, and student retention. Overall, there is a positive trend toward the medium and high frequency categories, indicating that the program has a positive impact on the initial university experience.

Table 1 Percentage distribution of academic induction by dimensions

Dimension	Never	Sometimes	Many times	Almost always	Always
Changes in learning	5-9%	27-36%	25-33%	20-25%	9-12%
Social integration	4-8%	25-27%	26-31%	21-27%	10-19%
Student retention	4-9%	15-23%	27-35%	21-23%	12-25%

The learning changes dimension shown in Table 1 reveals that a significant portion of students feel that academic orientation helped them understand university expectations, plan their study time, and adapt to pedagogical methodologies. The high concentration of responses in the "sometimes" and "often" categories frequently demonstrates that the program aided the academic transition. These results align with Tinto's (2017) observation that understanding the institution's academic demands and resources in a timely manner enhances student performance and retention. Similarly, Timmis et al. (2024) assert that orientation programs foster the

development of autonomous learning methods.

Likewise, the social integration dimension shows that the induction program promoted interaction among students, closeness with teachers, and the strengthening of the sense of belonging to the institution.

Table 2 Levels of adaptation to university life

Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Very low adaptation	3	0.8
Low adaptation	10	2.8
Average adaptation	167	46.0
Good adaptation	160	44.0
Very good adaptation	20	5.6

The proposal by Martínez-Otero & Gaeta (2024) is supported by these findings, which highlight that social interaction in early stages fosters the development of support networks and university identity.

Furthermore, the findings demonstrate that academic induction increased academic engagement, confidence, and motivation, which had a positive impact on student retention at the university. These findings are consistent with Tinto's (2012) integration theory, which states that retention depends on social and academic integration.

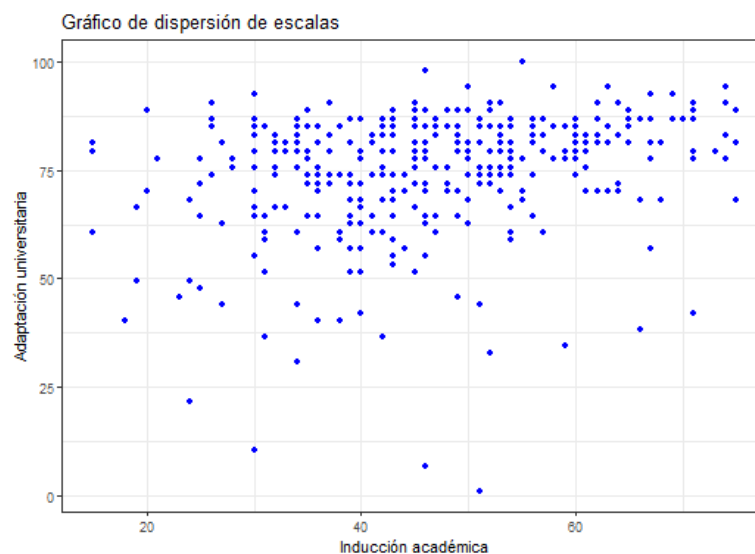


Figure I Relationship between academic induction and university adaptation

The correlation analysis revealed a positive and moderate relationship ($r \approx .35$) between academic induction and adaptation to university, indicating that higher levels of induction are linked to higher levels of adaptation.

4 CONCLUSIONS

The academic induction program had a beneficial effect on the dimensions analyzed with respect to permanence in university life, the social integration

component and variations in learning.

Induction is linked to higher levels of adaptation in academic, social, and emotional terms, as evidenced by descriptive analyses and Pearson's correlation coefficient.

According to studies, university students exhibit appropriate levels of adaptation to university life because they possess personal, vocational, and social resources that enable them to succeed in their academic life.

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