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Abstract

Background: Literature draws attention to the relationships between the initial experiences of students as they begin their higher education and how they fare subsequently. In Portugal, the new student?s reception is ritualised by tradition, and involves the organisation of an entire integration ceremony (known as praxe) proposed by peers. This paper argues that initiation practices in Portuguese higher education can be regarded as a transition ritual, a group of symbolic activities that brand the shift from secondary to tertiary education. Purpose: This paper aims to analyse students? observations about initiation practices within this framework. Sample: Participants were 30 first-year undergraduate students (?freshmen?) attending a Portuguese university. Design and methods: Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with the students. Qualitative analysis was undertaken. Transcripts were coded according to themes and analysed using a constant comparison approach, to allow for the emergence of categories. Findings: The findings from this small-scale investigation describe and categorise freshmen?s experiences and perspectives on initiation practices. Both positive and negative perspectives about praxe were identified. Conclusions: The submission relationship that underlies

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these transition rituals tended to be regarded by first-year students as an inevitable and necessary

?price to pay? for their entrance in the academic world.(HRK / Abstract übernommen)